2025
2026

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
GOVERNING DOCUMENTS VOLUME 1

BOOK OF ORDER

INCLUDING RULES FOR ASSEMBLY, ACTS OF ASSEMBLY, AND FORMS FOR DISCIPLINE

epc
A global movement of evangelistic presbyterians

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PREFACE

The Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church consists of the **Book of Order** (comprised of *The Book of Government*, *The Book of Discipline,* and *The Book of Worship*), the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (including the **Larger** and **Shorter Catechisms**), and the document **Essentials of Our Faith.**[1] All these documents are subordinate to the Scripture, which is "the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks."[2]

The 1st General Assembly (1981) adopted *The Book of Government* and *The Book of Worship*, and succeeding Assemblies adopted numerous amendments. The *Book of Discipline* in its present form was ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016), substantially revising the version approved by the 17th General Assembly (1997). The 34th General Assembly (2014) ratified a revision of the *Book of Government,* and the 35th General Assembly (2015) ratified a revision of the *Book of Worship*. Recent revisions include standardized terminology and numerous footnotes with references to Scripture and cross-references to relevant *Acts of Assembly* and *Rules for Assembly* so the connections between these documents are more apparent to readers. These footnotes are not part of the text of the **Book of Order** proper and therefore are not subject to the amendment process described in *Book of Government* chapter 23. They may be updated in the editorial process or at the direction of the General Assembly.

Cross-references in the text and footnotes to the **Book of Order** are designated with the appropriate capital letter (**G:** *Book of Government*, **D:** *Book of Discipline*, **W:** *Book of Worship*).

Prior to 2008, the **Book of Order** was published in a small three-ring binder. In addition to the **Book of Order** proper (the books of Government, Worship, and Discipline), it also contained *Rules for Assembly*, *Acts of Assembly*, *Forms for Discipline,* and *Service Forms* for convenience and because of their importance to the connectional life of our denomination. The EPC governing documents are now available as:

The Constitution: Volume 1 – The Book of Order
(including *Rules for Assembly*, *Acts of Assembly*, and *Forms for Discipline*.)

The Constitution: Volume 2 – The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms
(in Modern English) and the **Essentials of Our Faith**

The *Service Forms* are now available as individual documents for download online at www.epconnect.org/downloads.

Volume 1 is reprinted annually and available both in print and online at www.epcresources.org.

There was one amendment to the **Book of Government** by the 45th General Assembly (2025). This volume includes the Acts of the 45th General Assembly.

D. Dean Weaver
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Evangelical Presbyterian Church

NOTES FOR THE 2025-26 EDITION

Terminology

1. Church – when capitalized, refers to the universal church (defined in *Book of Government*, Chapter 1)
2. Congregation – A broad term including all who gather for worship, including members and other attendees.
3. Local Church – An entity composed of its duly received members with specifically defined rights and responsibilities both ecclesiastically and corporately.
4. Minister – Refers broadly to lawfully ordained clergy from both EPC and other Christian traditions.
5. Pastor – designates any of the EPC Teaching Elders in a church, whether Pastor, Associate, or Assistant. Refers only to a Teaching Elder duly called by an EPC church as Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Assistant Pastor as per the *Book of Government*.
6. Teaching Elder – those ordained in one of the varieties of callings for a Pastor in the EPC (**G.**9-5).
7. "Shall" and "will" refer to mandatory provisions. "May" or "should" refer to matters that are commended but discretionary.
8. "Ordinarily" refers to a normal process but is not mandatory. When an exception is made to a normal process, there should be sufficient reason for doing so.

Status of Footnotes

Footnotes in this edition are intended to aid the user by referencing relevant Scripture and applicable sections of the *Book of Order*, the *Westminster Confession and Catechisms,* and *Acts of Assembly.* Footnotes are not part of the Constitution and are not subject to the amending provisions stipulated in the *Book of Government*. They may be changed by an action of the General Assembly or in the editorial process. The same principle applies to indices and tables of contents.

PART ONE
BOOK OF GOVERNMENT

Ratified by the 34th General Assembly (2014)[1]

— 1 —

THE CHURCH DEFINED

1-1 **The true Universal Church** is described by two terms, invisible and visible.

1-2 **The Invisible Church** "consists of all the elect who have been, are, or ever will be gathered into one under Christ, the head."[2]

1-3 **The Visible Church** is the Church on earth established by Jesus, its Lord, for the gathering and perfecting of His saints, and to fulfill His mission of reconciling the world to Himself.[3]

A. This visible Kingdom of God is one and the same in all ages. The Visible Church is "not confined to one nation, as previously under the Mosaic Law. It consists of everyone in the world who professes [true faith in Christ] together with their children."[4]

B. The Visible Church is not defined by, nor limited to, particular forms of government or denominational structures. While such divisions may more or less obscure the true Church in its visible form, nevertheless, such uniformity is not essential to its existence. The Visible Church, though more or less divided and obscured, is bound together in its essential unity where the Word is rightly proclaimed, where the sacraments are properly observed, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained.[5] Such groups who demonstrate this fundamental integrity of the Church shall be recognized as true parts of the Church, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

[1] Amendments following June 2014 are indicated in footnotes.
[2] **Westminster Confession of Faith** 25.1.
[3] 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Matthew 28:18-20.
[4] **Westminster Confession of Faith** 25.2.
[5] Essentials of Our Faith, p. ix.

— 2 —
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

2-1 The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form.

This is government by Teaching Elders[6] and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church courts.

A. These Church courts, in their ascending order, are the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly.[7]

B. Churches may also elect Deacons,[8] but the Board of Deacons is not a Church court.[9]

2-2 While this Presbyterian form of government is biblical, it is not essential to the existence of the true Church.

However, the order of the Visible Church is best established where the Presbyterian form of government is practiced.

2-3 The governing units of the Church are distinct from the civil government.

Their jurisdiction is spiritual and moral, with no civil jurisdiction or power to inflict civil penalties. Church government is established for the purpose of exercising spiritual discipline and giving proper order to the Church. In the exercise of its jurisdiction, the Church has one unchanging limitation. For the Christian, the Scriptures are the ultimate rule of faith and practice. Thus, the Church may create no laws that will bind the conscience.[10]

2-4 Review and Control

A. For an orderly process of Review and Control, each organizational unit shall submit its minutes to the Church court above.[11] The Board of Deacons shall submit its minutes at least semi-annually to the Session; the Session shall submit its minutes to the Presbytery annually; the Presbytery shall submit its minutes to the General Assembly annually.[12]

B. Each court shall review the minutes submitted to it to ensure that the lower body has faithfully and diligently fulfilled all duties and responsibilities assigned to each court. It may refer matters back for reconsideration, call attention to omissions, require amendment of actions out of conformity with the Constitution, or otherwise exercise proper review and control of the lower body.

C. In judicial proceedings against a lower court, the trial shall be conducted according to the rules provided for judicial proceedings against individuals (see *Book of Discipline*), as far as they may be applicable.

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[6] The office of Teaching Elder is designated by many titles, such as Bishop, Pastor, Minister, Presbyter, Elder, Ambassador, Evangelist, Preacher, and Teacher, all of which refer to various aspects of the whole ministry.
[7] See **G.**18, **G.**19, and **G.**20.
[8] **G.**6-3; **G.**17.
[9] **G.**16-2B.
[10] **G.**25-2A.
[11] **G.**2-1A.
[12] Rules for Assembly IX.9-12 (p. 162).

— 3 —
THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

3-1 **The authority given to the Church by Christ is moral and spiritual only**, thus distinguishing the government of the Church from civil government. The authority of Church courts is limited to the expressed provisions of the Constitution and is exercised in its Church courts, not by individuals. The authority given to the Church is for the purpose of proclamation, administration, and enforcement[13] of the commands of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. Exercise of this authority must always be in conformity with the Scripture.

3-2 **The Responsibility of Order**

Christ's law of love[14] is incumbent upon each Christian but shall be discharged by officers as an official duty as they serve, proclaim, and minister in the name of Christ as under-shepherds. The officers' Responsibility of Order includes especially the sharing of the gospel, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and otherwise exhibiting to the world the fruit of the Spirit.

3-3 **The Authority of Jurisdiction**

The Authority of Jurisdiction is the authority to rule and is exercised jointly in ascending Church courts.[15] The Authority of Jurisdiction is always to be exercised in accordance with Scripture, the **Confession and Catechisms**, and the **Book of Order**. Specific authority and responsibilities of the Church courts are enumerated in chapters 18, 19, and 20.[16] The exercise of such authority shall always reflect the essential unity of the Church.

3-4 **The responsibilities and authority given to the Church by Jesus Christ are not ends in themselves**, but are given to edify God's people, to promote the faith of the Church, and to evangelize the whole world to the end that all might know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.[17]

[13] Matthew 18:15-17, 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.
[14] John 13:34; James 2:8.
[15] **G.**2-1.
[16] *Book of Government.*
[17] Acts 1:8.

— 4 —
THE LOCAL CHURCH

4-1 **Local churches** consist of all those professing Christians who, along with their children, covenant to live out their faith together by worshiping and serving the Lord in their words and deeds, submitting themselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promising to promote its unity, purity, and peace.[18]

4-2 **It is the privilege and primary responsibility of the local church to worship God regularly.[19]**

Out of the experience of worship, the church renews her faith and clarifies her understanding of obedient service to God.

4-3 **It is the primary mission of the local church to evangelize**, making disciples by extending the gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and providing for the nurture of that faith that all might worship the true God and grow in grace and sanctification.[20] It is to be remembered that good deeds in ministry and service to others, offering relief to those in need, are the fruits of the gospel. Without the clear evidence of such fruit, all else is brought into question. However, the Church must never confuse its primary mission of evangelism (the gospel) with the fruit of faith (good works).[21]

4-4 **Principal responsibilities of the local church**

A. To promote true religion in the home

The spiritual nurture, instruction, and training of the children of the church are committed by God primarily to their parents. They are responsible to the church for the faithful discharge of their obligations.[22] The home and the church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and the Church Catechisms.[23] The church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership.[24] If they are wayward, they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

B. To provide for the nurture of its members

To promote the welfare of the whole Church, to provide the sacraments, to teach the faith, to observe special days, including times of prayer and fasting, and to otherwise further its common life together as hereafter set forth in the *Book of Worship*.

[18] See **G.**2 for information on the governance of the local church.
[19] Hebrews 10:24-25; **W.**3.
[20] Matthew 28:19-20.
[21] **W.**7.
[22] Ephesians 6:4.
[23] **G.**18-3F.
[24] **G.**8.

— 5 —

THE CONSTITUTION, ESTABLISHMENT, DISSOLUTION, DISMISSAL, OR RECEPTION OF A LOCAL CHURCH

5-1 **Presbytery** has the exclusive ecclesiastical right to constitute mission churches; establish, dissolve, or dismiss local churches; or to receive local churches from some other body.

5-2 While a **Session** has the responsibility and right to initiate missions, mission churches, or extensions of the congregation, but not to constitute or establish congregations, they should always do this in consultation with the presbytery.

5-3 A **mission group** is the first stage in the development of a mission church. A mission group may be initiated by a Church court or by groups from outside the denomination recognized by a presbytery. Mission groups fall under the oversight of an appropriate committee or commission of a Church court.

5-4 A **mission church** is constituted by the presbytery and is distinguished from a local church in that it has no permanent governing body and must be governed or supervised by others as defined below. Its goal is to be established as a local church as soon as this can be done in good order. Mission churches enjoy the same status as local churches in relation to civil government.

A. Governance

Presbytery shall provide for the governance of mission churches in one of the following ways:

1. Presbytery may appoint an Evangelist[25] or a Commissioned Pastor.[26]
2. A session may serve as a temporary governing body of the mission church.
3. A presbytery or a session may appoint an administrative commission[27] to serve as a temporary governing body of the mission church.

B. Membership

1. Receiving members.

   The temporary governing body[28] shall receive members into the mission church as prescribed in chapter 8. Mission churches shall maintain membership rolls in the same manner as, but separate from, other local churches.

2. Discipline.

   Members of mission churches are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline as described in the *Book of Discipline*.

C. Minutes

The temporary governing body of the mission church[29] shall record and submit its minutes to the Presbytery for review in the same manner as a local church.[30]

[25] **G.**9-5C.
[26] **G.**9-11.
[27] **G.**21-1C.
[28] **G.**5-4A.
[29] **G.**5-4A.
[30] **G.**2-4B; **G.**18-2B.2.

5-5 Establishing a mission church as a local church

A. A petition to be established as a local church signed by members of the mission church shall be presented to the presbytery to initiate its establishment. The Petition represents a covenant among those desiring to be charter members of the established local church, indicating their willingness and commitment, in reliance upon God, to walk together as a local church based on the faith and government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, to be faithful to one another, to the Lordship of Christ, to the support of the whole Church, to be obedient to the order and doctrines of our faith, submitting themselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promising to promote its purity and peace.

B. The Presbytery may establish a local church directly or through an administrative commission formed for that purpose[31] following the guidelines in manuals developed by the General Assembly and/or the Presbytery.

5-6 The reception of a local church from another body or from independency

A. When a non-EPC congregation desires to become a part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, it shall petition the Presbytery in which it is located to be received (see exception in **G.**5-8). Such petition should indicate that the congregation and its governing body have concurred in the request and have agreed to walk together as a church, based upon the faith and government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, to be faithful to one another, to the Lordship of Christ, to the support of the whole Church, to be obedient to the order and doctrines of our faith, submitting themselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promising to promote its purity and peace.[32]

B. The Petition shall include a list of the membership and a list of elected officers. Upon approval of the request, either the Presbytery or a duly appointed commission shall meet with the petitioning congregation and, depending on the particular situation:

1. Arrange for the election of Ruling Elders.[33]
2. Require and arrange for training of existing officers.[34]
3. If the congregation is from a body with a similar form of government, declare the officers of that congregation to be duly installed.

C. If the petitioning congregation is served by a Pastor(s) and if said Pastor(s) has been duly received by the Presbytery,[35] the receiving body may declare the Pastor(s) duly installed.

5-7 Transfer of an EPC church to another Presbytery

Only in the case where 1) a local church desires to call a woman Teaching Elder, or 2) the Session of a local church desires to endorse or has endorsed a woman who seeks to become a Candidate Under Care, and the local church is located in a Presbytery that by a majority vote refuses to receive or ordain a woman as a Teaching Elder or as a Candidate Under Care, that local church may petition for membership in a Presbytery sharing a common boundary (i.e., a bordering Presbytery) that will receive or ordain a woman as a Teaching Elder or Candidate Under Care. The local church petitioning for membership in a bordering Presbytery will be transferred to the requested Presbytery upon the fulfillment of all the following requirements:

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[31] **G.**21-1C.
[32] (Deleted).
[33] **G.**10-10.
[34] **G.**11-3.
[35] **G.**12-3.

A. The Session of the local church seeking transfer petitions its current geographic Presbytery for permission to petition the bordering Presbytery for membership, setting forth as reasons either the prohibition of the ordination and/or the reception of women as Teaching Elders or as Candidates Under Care.

B. The bordering Presbytery petitioned by the Session of the local church seeking transfer receives the local church pending "C" below.

C. The current geographic Presbytery of the local church seeking transfer approves the dismissal of the local church to the bordering Presbytery.

D. No complaint against the above process of transfer may be made by any person or entity except for procedural defects. Any complaint of procedural defects must be made in writing to the next higher court within 15 days of the completion of the above **G.**5-7 requirements and set forth the details of the procedural defects in accordance with *Book of Discipline*, chapter 13.

5-8 Reception of a church from outside the EPC into a bordering Presbytery

If a church that is not a member of the EPC and is seeking membership in the EPC, and it is the case that it (1) has a woman Teaching Elder, (2) desires to call a woman Teaching Elder, or (3) has a woman who seeks to become a Candidate Under Care, then that church may petition for membership in a Presbytery sharing a common boundary (i.e., a bordering Presbytery) that will receive or ordain women as Teaching Elders or as Candidates Under Care instead of its geographic Presbytery. The church petitioning for membership in a bordering Presbytery may be received by the requested bordering Presbytery instead of its geographic Presbytery upon the fulfillment of all the following requirements:

A. The church requesting reception in a bordering Presbytery consults with the Presbytery Ministerial Committee of its geographic Presbytery concerning the potential for the reception of women as Teaching Elders or as Candidates Under Care.

B. The Ministerial Committee of the geographic Presbytery for the church requesting reception into the EPC discerns the need for the church to be received by a bordering Presbytery on the basis set forth in this section **G.**5-7. The Ministerial Committee of the geographic Presbytery contacts the requested bordering Presbytery and refers to it the issue of reception of the church.

C. The bordering Presbytery that receives the referral receives the church seeking membership.

D. No complaint against the above process of reception by a bordering Presbytery may be made by any person or entity except for procedural defects. Any complaint of procedural defects must be made in writing to the next higher court within 15 days of the completion of the above **G.**5-8 requirements and set forth the details of the procedural defects in accordance with *Book of Discipline*, chapter 13.

5-9 The dissolution of a local church or mission church

When a congregation ceases to exist or is dissolved by the Presbytery, the property, both real and personal, that may remain shall be delivered, transferred, and conveyed to the Presbytery by those holding title. The disposition of the remaining property shall be at the discretion of the Presbytery. However, in no case shall the Presbytery dissolve a local church which can be reasonably deemed viable. This paragraph shall not be construed to constitute a trust or implied trust of any church property enforceable by the Presbytery (see also **G.**25-2C).[36] The Presbytery

[36] Addition of this sentence ratified by the 35th General Assembly (2015).

shall hold the membership of any remaining members until such time as the individual members request transfer to another Christian church, following the stipulations of **G.**8-4.

5-10 The dismissal of a local church to another body or to independence

A. The Church Session shall notify the Presbytery of its desire to be dismissed. Once a Church Session has notified the Presbytery of its desire under this section, the Presbytery shall take no action to dismiss, dissolve, or divide the local church and its elders until all proceedings under this section 5-10 are fully completed. This provision shall not be construed to prohibit the Presbytery from reasonable means of access to the Session or church members in order to present its position. Nor shall this provision be construed to prohibit the presbytery from taking action under the *Book of Discipline* on matters unrelated to the request for dismissal.

B. At a duly called meeting of the congregation, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, the motion to request dismissal shall be put and discussed. The meeting shall recess for no less than three months and no more than six months, to a date determined at the meeting.

C. At the time set, the congregation shall reconvene, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, and the request to dismiss shall again be put to the congregation and the floor opened for discussion. The congregation shall then vote on the motion by written ballot. If it passes by a two-thirds majority,[37] the Presbytery shall dismiss the congregation as requested with all of its property and assets. Those not desiring to participate in the dismissal shall notify the Presbytery, which will assign them to other congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

D. If a request for dismissal fails to achieve the required two-thirds majority,[38] the process of dismissal (**G.**5-10) may not be repeated until at least 12 months have elapsed following the vote.

[37] **G.**7-8.
[38] **G.**7-8.

— 6 —
RIGHTS RESERVED TO A LOCAL CHURCH

6-1 The rights and privileges enumerated below are irrevocably reserved to a local church and its members.[39]

6-2 The local church has the right to elect its own officers.

6-3 The local church has the right to determine how many officers it will have, whether or not a system of rotation will be used, and the length of terms if rotation is chosen, subject to the limitations in **G.**9-15.

6-4 The local church has the right to determine whether or not it shall have a Board of Deacons.

6-5 The local church has ownership of its own property. It may buy, sell, lease, rent, or otherwise determine the use of its property. It may incur debt and other legal obligations. However, care should be exercised so that the good name and the reputation of the Church not be harmed through unwise and imprudent management.

6-6 The local church has the right to call its own pastor(s), provided the Presbytery concurs by receiving such pastor(s) into its membership.

6-7 The local church has the right to withdraw from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church with its property following the process described in **G.**5-10 and in accordance with applicable constitutional and civil law.

6-8 The local church has the right to elect Trustees from within its membership who have demonstrated a consistent Christian life.

A. Trustees shall have the power, upon authorization from the local church, to buy, sell, and mortgage real property, accept and execute deeds, to hold and defend titles to the same, and to assume other such related duties as may be assigned to them.

B. The responsibilities of the Trustees shall not infringe upon the duties or powers of the Church Session or the Board of Deacons, and their authority is always subject to the instruction of the local church.

C. All personal property is under the authority of the Session. If the local church does not elect a Board of Trustees, the responsibilities above are retained by the Session.

D. If a local church does not elect Trustees, the Session or a designated portion of the court shall serve as the Trustees of the local church.

6-9 When a mission church or local church is legally incorporated, its Articles of Incorporation shall be consistent with the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in establishing its Charter and By-laws.

[39] See **G.**25, "Limitations in Perpetuity."

— 7 —
MEETINGS OF A CONGREGATION

7-1 Calling a meeting

The Session may call a congregational meeting when deemed necessary. Also, when at least one-fifth of the active membership shall request a meeting in writing, the Session shall do so without delay. Further, the Session shall call a meeting when instructed to do so by the Presbytery.

7-2 Notice of meeting

At least two Sunday's notice shall be given. The meeting may be conducted on the same day the second notice is given. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.

7-3 Agenda of meeting

Only those matters stated in the call may be presented and handled.

7-4 Moderator of meeting

A. Ordinarily, the Pastor will be the Moderator.

B. In the case of sickness or temporary absence of the Pastor, or if it is deemed impractical or unwise by the Session for the Pastor to moderate a congregational meeting, the Session shall either:

1. Appoint one of its members, with the concurrence of the Pastor, to call the meeting to order and to preside, or
2. Request the Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint another Teaching Elder from outside the congregation to call the meeting to order and to preside.

7-5 Quorum

For congregations of less than 100 members, a quorum shall be one-fifth of the active membership. For congregations larger than 100, a quorum shall be one-tenth of the membership but not less than 20.

7-6 Clerk for the meeting

A. Ordinarily, the Clerk of the Session shall serve as Clerk for the congregational meetings.

B. In the absence of the Clerk, the Moderator shall appoint a temporary Clerk.

C. The Clerk shall keep a permanent record[40] of the proceedings and business transacted. After approval by the Moderator of the meeting, the record shall be transmitted to the Church Session for insertion in the minutes of that body.

7-7 Eligibility to vote

Those persons who are active members of the congregation as determined by the Session[41] and who are present at the meeting are eligible to vote. The Moderator of the congregational meeting may not vote.

[40] Minutes on pre-numbered pages in a bound book, which are the property of the church, satisfy the requirement for a "permanent record."

[41] **G.**8-3.

7-8 Majority vote

Unless stipulated otherwise, any majority vote specified in this *Book of Government* means a majority of those present and voting.

7-9 Tie votes

When a matter has been put to the congregation and the vote results in a tie, the Moderator shall put the question a second time. If there is still a tie, the matter shall be declared defeated.

7-10 Robert's Rules of Order shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure unless stipulated otherwise in a church's bylaws.

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THE AUTHORITY OF THE SESSION OVER CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

8-1 Authority to receive members

The Session of a local church shall be responsible for receiving, dismissing, retiring to the inactive roll, or otherwise determining membership in the local church.

8-2 Receiving members

A. The Session should provide a suitable course of instruction in faith, worship, and the mission of the Church, as well as instruction for participating in the governing and decision-making life of the congregation.

B. The person(s) seeking membership shall meet with the Session and indicate their readiness.

C. The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant for membership demonstrates evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ. It is appropriate for the Session to ask for testimonials of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a sharing of one's growth in faith.

D. The Session may not deny membership for any reason not related to profession of faith and obedience.

E. If not previously baptized, each applicant shall be baptized in accordance with the *Book of Worship*.[42]

F. The Session shall seek to notify in writing the churches to which individuals formerly belonged of their reception into active membership.

8-3 Membership rolls

A. Baptized Roll

1. This roll shall include the names of those infants and children baptized in the local church and the names of those baptized children of confirmed members received from other churches.
2. Those on the baptized roll are members of the covenant by right of birth and adoption. As such, they are entitled to pastoral oversight, instruction, and nurture, and should be encouraged to embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. Their rights and privileges under the Covenant of Grace should be frequently and fully explained, and they should be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant obligations. All those baptized are entitled to this pastoral care even though they are adults and have not made a profession of faith in Christ.
3. The Session shall remove a person from the baptized roll upon enrolling that person as a confirmed member (**G.**8-3B.1) or upon receiving credible information that the person has become a member of another church.

B. Active Roll

1. This roll includes confirmed members, that is, those who have been baptized, made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, have had their membership confirmed by the Session, and are entitled to participate in the

[42] **W.**3-2.

governing of the Church by voting in meetings of the congregation.[43] Only this Active Roll shall be reported to the Presbytery for membership purposes

2. Persons may be received into active membership in the following manner:

   a. By profession of faith

      Ordinarily, the person(s) being received on profession of faith shall make that profession in a public service of worship in the presence of the congregation. If not previously baptized, each person shall be baptized in accordance with the *Book of Worship* as it deals with adult baptism.[44] If already on the baptized roll,[45] the person shall be transferred to the active roll.

   b. By reaffirmation of faith

      Persons who have previously made a profession of faith and apply for active membership may be unable to secure a certificate of membership or may wish to reaffirm their faith.

   c. By transfer of membership

      Persons may be received by a transfer of membership from another Evangelical Presbyterian Church or from some other body recognized as a part of the true Church.[46] The Session may not deny membership for any reason not related to profession of faith and obedience.

3. Those being received by profession or reaffirmation of faith shall answer the following or like questions before the Session:

   a. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God and without hope for your salvation except in His sovereign mercy?

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

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

   d. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating with this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?

   e. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and to the spiritual oversight of this Church Session, and do you promise to promote the unity, purity, and peace of the Church?

4. Persons coming from bodies other than the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be asked the following questions:

   a. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating in this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?

[43] See *Book of Worship* 3-3I (p. 145) and *Act of Assembly* 93-08 (p. 178) for provisions for Session admitting a child to the Lord's Table prior to being placed on the Active Roll and participation in the governance of the church.
[44] **W.**3-2.
[45] **G.**8-3A.
[46] See **G.**1-3B.

b. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and to the spiritual oversight of this Church Session, and promise to further the unity, purity, and peace of the Church?

5. The Session shall announce to the congregation the names of those received into active membership and commend them to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection.[47]

C. Affiliate Roll

1. This roll shall include those believers temporarily residing in locations other than their permanent homes. Such believers may be received as affiliate members of a local church without ceasing to be members of their home churches.
2. An affiliate member shall have all the rights and privileges of the Church, with the exception of voting in a congregational or corporate meeting, and holding an elected office in the Church. The procedure for receiving affiliate members shall be the same as that for receiving members by transfer of membership. An affiliate membership is effective for one year and is renewable.

D. Inactive Roll

1. This roll shall include those who have failed to actively participate in the life of the local church for a period of one year (or six months in the case of changing residence) and have been moved by the Session to this roll.
2. To place a person on the inactive roll not only reflects on the commitments made to Christ by that individual, but it may also reflect on the failure of the Session to be diligent in its pastoral duties. For that reason, certain requirements are placed on the Session before it may place a person on inactive status.

a. The Session must earnestly seek to discover the causes of the failure to participate and seek to encourage the person to resume active involvement in the life of the congregation.

b. When a member changes residence so that it is no longer possible or practical to participate actively in the life of the local church, the Session shall encourage that person to establish a relationship with a church where participation is possible. After six months, the Session may then move that person's name to the inactive roll. In any event, the Session should notify a church in the area of the member's residence and suggest that pastoral oversight be given.

c. A person placed on the inactive roll may be restored to the active roll upon request to the Session and when the individual has resumed active participation in the life of the church. The Session shall satisfy itself of the intention of renewed commitment.

d. If a person remains on the inactive roll for a period of at least one year and has not resumed active participation in the life of the church despite the diligent efforts of the Session in its pastoral duties, that individual may be removed from membership of the local church upon written notification from the Session.

e. If a member of the Session or Deacon Board is placed on the inactive roll, that active officer relationship is automatically dissolved. This fact shall be reported to the congregation by the Session.

f. Members on the inactive roll remain under the government and discipline of the Session.

[47] A suggested service for receiving members will be incorporated in the *Manual of Services,* currently under development.

8-4 Dismissing Members

A. The request of any member in good standing to be dismissed to any church considered to be part of the true Church must be honored.

B. Letters of dismissal are always to the governing body of another church.

C. The request of an inactive member to be dismissed to any church considered to be a part of the true Church must be honored, but the dismissal shall note the inactive status.

D. The request of any member, active or inactive, for a certificate of membership with the view to establishing an affiliate membership in another congregation shall be honored, provided the body with which application is made is considered to be a part of the true Church. The person requesting such an affiliate membership shall be maintained on the roll where currently inscribed.

E. The Session, upon notification from a presbytery, shall remove the name of any member who has been ordained to the ministry from its rolls and record in its minutes the removal due to ordination.

8-5 Review of rolls

The Session shall review its four rolls[48] annually, ordinarily at a meeting in February. It shall review its ministry to those on each roll, giving special care to examine its ministry to those on the baptized roll, and its continuing efforts to restore to active participation those on the inactive roll.

8-6 Record of rolls

The Clerk of Session shall record all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding members.

[48] **G.**8-3.

— 9 —
OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

9-1 Offices

The Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, has given three offices to the Church. These are: Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons. In higher courts, Teaching and Ruling Elders are also known as Presbyters or Commissioners and share in the governing of the Church. These offices are not indications of special pre-eminence by those who hold them but rather indicate a call to service, to ministry, to special discipleship, and the evidencing of the fruit of the Spirit in every part of life.

9-2 Ordination of women

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church believes that the issue of the ordination of women is not an essential of the faith. Since people of good faith who equally love the Lord and hold to the infallibility of Scripture differ on this issue, and since uniformity of view and practice is not essential to the existence of the Visible Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has chosen to leave this decision to the Spirit-guided consciences of local churches concerning the ordination of women as Ruling Elders and Deacons, and to the presbyteries concerning the ordination of women as Teaching Elders.

9-3 Life and character of officers

A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.[49]

B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.

9-4 Qualifications of officers

A. Those who fill these offices should be mature in the faith, should be people of wisdom and discretion, and should have adequate training to equip them for their calling. Elders, especially those called to the office of Teaching Elder, should have an aptitude for teaching.[50]

B. A local church should prayerfully search the Scriptures and choose for officers those who are best qualified.

9-5 The office of Teaching Elder

Within the office of Teaching Elder, there are a variety of callings that require ordination. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:

A. Pastor

1. Titles

A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate

[49] Examples are 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
[50] 1 Timothy 5:17.

Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as Stated Supply Pastor or Occasional Supply Pastor. The Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.[51] The office of the "co-pastor" is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the *Book of Government*, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.

2. Authority and Responsibilities.

Pastors shall preach and expound the Word, to be God's prophet to the people and to be the people's priest before God.[52] Pastors shall lead the people in worship, celebrate the sacraments, and oversee the education, nurture, and mission of the church. The Pastors with the Ruling Elders shall exercise joint ministry to the needs of the flock and to all those who have need of a Pastor's care, love, and compassion. With the active Ruling Elders, the Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) shall exercise the joint responsibility of jurisdiction.[53] Teaching Elders shall be diligent in serving actively in the courts of which they are members.

B. Teacher

A Teaching Elder may be called to teach in an institution deemed appropriate by presbytery that has as a primary purpose the preparation of people for ministry or entrance into seminary. Such calling shall ordinarily include the responsibility for preaching the Word and administration of the Sacraments. As a Teacher, the Teaching Elder is also to serve as a pastor, caring for the spiritual well-being of others.

C. Evangelist

A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church or by some organization approved by the Presbytery to serve as an Evangelist. Evangelists may serve as missionaries, church planters, or in an itinerant ministry.

1. An Evangelist serving as missionary has as a primary duty the preaching of the gospel. The Presbytery may authorize the Teaching Elder to administer the sacraments in that role. When a Teaching Elder is called by the General Assembly as an Evangelist,[54] the Presbytery may also empower the Evangelist to ordain and install Ruling Elders and Deacons to serve in emerging national churches that are not part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in accordance with applicable rules and regulations established by the General Assembly.
2. An Evangelist serving as church planter may be entrusted by the calling court to develop churches, to conduct preparational meetings of such churches, and to oversee the required preparation of Elders and Deacons.
3. An Evangelist serving in an itinerant ministry. Teaching Elders may be called to serve in a ministry of itinerant evangelism that does not involve church planting.
4. Those powers given to the Evangelist, including the power to receive and dismiss members, shall be specified by the Presbytery in writing.

[51] While it is common practice for local churches to use titles such as "Senior Pastor" or "Executive Pastor," these titles are not constitutionally recognized.

[52] *Prophet* highlights the Pastor's special responsibility to proclaim the truth and call God's people to commitment to His will as revealed in the Scripture. *Priest* highlights the Pastor's special responsibility to pray for the needs of the congregation and regularly administer the means of grace through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

[53] **G.**3-3; **G.**18-1; **G.**19-2.

[54] Ordinarily, this would be an EPC World Outreach worker.

D. Administrator

A court of the Church or one of its agencies may call a Teaching Elder to serve in some administrative capacity. An organization deemed proper by the Presbytery may also issue a similar call. In such cases, it is always the responsibility of the Administrator to seek opportunities to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments.

E. Chaplain

A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.

9-6 Teaching Elders serving outside of Presbytery bounds

A. Whenever a Teaching Elder is called to one of the positions provided for under **G.**9-5 by an agency that is outside the jurisdiction of a court of the Church and after being fully satisfied that the ministry is consistent with the calling to the ministry of the Word, the Presbytery may grant permission for the Minister to labor outside of its jurisdictional bounds for a term of up to three years. After the expiration of that time, the Minister must receive further Presbytery approval to continue. The Teaching Elder shall make an annual report to the Presbytery of faithfulness to the gospel. The Teaching Elder serving out of bounds shall be diligent in serving actively in the court. If the particular call prohibits such service, the Teaching Elder should seek Associate Member status.[55]

B. In the event that the outside-of-bounds ministry falls within the geographic boundaries of a Presbytery in which the Teaching Elder is not a member, the Teaching Elder shall seek advice and obtain the approval of both Presbyteries.

9-7 The life of the Teaching Elder

According to Scripture, those who bear the office of Teaching Elder should be mature believers, led by the Holy Spirit, who exhibit a manner of life that conforms to the biblical description of an officer in Christ's Church.[56]

9-8 The office of Ruling Elder

In the Old Testament, the office of Elder was established for the oversight of the Church. In the New Testament, this office is continued. Those who fill this office today for governing the Church are called Ruling Elders. Chosen by the people of a local church,[57] these Ruling Elders are to watch over the spiritual welfare of that congregation. When appointed to participate in Presbytery or General Assembly, they shall watch over the spiritual welfare and participate diligently in the workings of that portion of the Church to which they are commissioned, recognizing that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is a connectional church. The Ruling Elder shares authority with the Teaching Elder in all of the courts of the Church, in both rights and duties. It is the first duty of the Ruling Elder to represent the mind of Christ, as that person understands it, in the various courts of the Church.

9-9 The life of the Ruling Elder

According to Scripture, those who bear the office of Ruling Elder should be mature believers, led by the Holy Spirit, who exhibit a manner of life that conforms to the biblical description of an

[55] **G.**19-2B.1a.
[56] **G.**9-3, 9-4.
[57] **G.**10-10.

officer in Christ's Church.[58]

9-10 The Ruling Elder and the Responsibility of Order

The authority to govern is exercised jointly by church courts in ascending gradation. Each Ruling Elder, by virtue of ordination, individually exercises the responsibility of order.

A. Ruling Elders should study and learn the Word. They should become equipped to teach the Word, lead worship and prayer, and may be invited or commissioned to supply the ministry of the Word where none is available.[59]

B. Ruling Elders, as Undershepherds,[60] should visit the sick, the bereaved, the lonely, the aged, the shut-in, and all those who have a pastoral need. In cases where there is a special need, the Ruling Elder shall be careful to inform the Pastor.

C. Ruling Elders have a special responsibility to see to the development of the children of the congregation, to inquire after the inactive members, to encourage new members in spiritual development, and to otherwise show care for those whom they serve.

D. Ruling Elders should be attentive to themselves and church members, guarding against dangers to the faith and to dangers to the moral life of believers. They are also responsible to warn, admonish, and reclaim those who stray. Where it is deemed necessary, such situations should be brought to the attention of the Session for appropriate action in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.

9-11 The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor

A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.

A. Authorization shall be for a term of up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.

B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by the Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.

C. A Ruling Elder previously commissioned as a lay pastor by another Reformed body may become a Commissioned Pastor as deemed appropriate by the Presbytery and subject to the same requirements of the EPC Commissioned Pastor.[61]

D. Presbytery shall assign a Teaching Elder to each Commissioned Pastor as supervisor to act as mentor and to assist the Commissioned Pastor in writing an annual report to Presbytery.

E. Presbytery may terminate the authorization to serve as a Commissioned Pastor at any time prior to the expiration of the commission.

F. Upon authorization of a Commissioned Pastor, the Presbytery shall administer the vows of commissioning below either immediately or through an administrative commission at

[58] Numbers 11:16-17; Exodus 18:21; Romans 8:1-17; Romans 12; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; **G.**9-3, **G.**9-4.
[59] 1 Timothy 3:2; **G.**9-11.
[60] Acts 20:26-28.
[61] **G.**9-11C ratified by the 33rd General Assembly (2013).

a designated time.

1. Do you now reaffirm the vows you took upon your ordination as a Ruling Elder, and do you recommit yourself to them in the discharge of your obligations as a Commissioned Pastor?
2. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
3. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as Commissioned Pastor, 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 this congregation of which God will make you an officer?
4. Are you now willing to take responsibility in the life of this congregation/in this ministry as a Commissioned Pastor, and will you seek to discharge your duties relying upon the grace of God, in such a way that the entire Church of Jesus Christ will be blessed?

9-12 The office of Deacon

The office of Deacon, as set forth in Scripture, is one of compassion, concern for needs, and of serving others. Therefore, the first duty of the Deacon is sympathy and service. Historically, this office has been given the duty of being the Church's instrument for the ministry of compassion.[62]

9-13 The life of the Deacon

According to Scripture, those who bear the office of Deacon should be mature believers, led by the Holy Spirit, who exhibit a manner of life that conforms to the biblical description of an officer in Christ's Church.[63]

9-14 The responsibilities of the Deacon

Since the Board of Deacons is not a court of the Church,[64] and since it is under the authority of the Session,[65] the Session may assign special duties appropriate to that office. Such duties may include the care, maintenance, and preparation of the church and its facilities.

9-15 Term of service of Ruling Elders and Deacons

While ordination is for life, active service on a church Session or Board of Deacons may be for a specified term. A local church, at a duly constituted congregational meeting,[66] may elect to establish limited terms of service for either or both Ruling Elders and Deacons. If so, the following stipulations apply:

A. Terms shall be for no less than three years except to initiate the system or to fill vacancies.

B. There must be at least three classes, and an officer who has served all or part of two consecutive full terms shall be ineligible for reelection for one year.

9-16 Ruling Elders not currently serving on the Session

Ruling Elders who are not in a current term of service on the Session may be elected by the

[62] Acts 6:1-6; **G.**9-3; **G.**9-4.
[63] 1 Timothy 3:8-13; **G.**9-3.
[64] **G.**2-1B.
[65] **G.**17-1; **G.**17-2; **G.**17-3.
[66] **G.**7.

Session to be a commissioner to the Presbytery or General Assembly. The person so elected shall report to the Session immediately following the meeting of the higher court.

9-17 Recognizing the ordination of Elders and Deacons from other congregations

A Session may recognize the ordination of a person being received by transfer from another EPC or Reformed congregation. Such recognition gives the person the status of an officer not currently serving on the Session or Board of Deacons. The Session should assure itself by adequate training and examination that such a person affirms the vows of office within the EPC. Under no circumstances should the Session recognize the ordination of a person who has been removed from office.

— 10 —
CALLING TO OFFICE

10-1 It is God through the Holy Spirit who calls persons to office in the Church

This calling to office consists of three parts: first, the inward call to individuals where they bear testimony of that calling; second, the call of a local church, Church court, or other appropriate agency to them to fill that office; third, the approval by an appropriate court of the Church.

10-2 The right of calling may never be taken away or conditioned for non-Scriptural reasons

This right is inalienable and may not be changed. At the same time, a Church court also has the inalienable right not to approve an individual for reasons the court determines to be proper and in keeping with Scripture.

10-3 Calling must always be to a specific task

A local church must call a Ruling Elder or Deacon from within its membership to office in that church. A Teaching Elder must be called by a local church, Church court, or some specific agency to a particular task deemed appropriate by the ordaining, installing, or approving Presbytery. Retired Teaching Elders may be received from other Reformed denominations as Associate Members without a call.[67]

10-4 The call of a Pastor by a local church

When a local church desires to call a Pastor, the procedure shall be as follows

A. The Session shall call a congregational meeting[68] for the purpose of electing a Search Committee. The Session may nominate a Search Committee to the congregation, although the floor must also be opened for other nominations. The congregation shall proceed to determine how many persons are to serve and to select them.

B. The Search Committee shall carry on its work in regular consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery.

C. Upon agreeing on a person they feel led by God to nominate, the Search Committee shall secure the consent of the Ministerial Committee. Should that Committee decline to consent, the Search Committee may persist with the nomination, recognizing the Presbytery has the right to reject the call.[69]

D. Ordinarily, an Associate Pastor is not eligible to succeed the Pastor. However, should a Search Committee desire to consider an Associate Pastor as Pastor, approval by a three-fourths vote of Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee shall be required for the Search Committee to proceed.

E. A person serving as Assistant Pastor on the same church staff at the time the pastor position becomes vacant shall not be called to fill that position in the same church by any means.

F. After consulting with the Ministerial Committee, the Search Committee shall notify the Session in writing of its nominee, and the Session shall call a congregational meeting.

G. When the congregational meeting has been convened, the Search Committee shall make its report and recommendations to call a Pastor. This recommendation shall include the

[67] **G.**15-2C; **G.**19-2B.
[68] **G.**7.
[69] **G.**10-2.

details for remuneration, including all benefits. The congregation shall conduct a counted vote in a fashion it deems appropriate. A majority favoring the recommendation is required to elect a Pastor. The exact vote must be recorded in the minutes, and the person being elected notified of the count. The congregation shall appoint representatives to advocate the call at a meeting of the Presbytery.

H. The call of the congregation shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.[70]

10-5 The call of an Associate Pastor by a local church

A congregation may call an Associate Pastor by means of a Search Committee in the same fashion as indicated above, with the exception that the call of the congregation shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Associate.[71]

10-6 The call of an Assistant Pastor by a Session[72]

A. A Session, in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of Presbytery, may call an Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session prior to that time only with the consent and approval of the Presbytery. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant. The call of the Session shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.[73]

B. A Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of the Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor of the local church be called as an Associate Pastor without a Search Committee being elected. The call as Associate Pastor must be approved by the Presbytery, and an installation service shall be conducted by the Presbytery or by its appointed Commission.[74]

10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships

A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained Ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a pastor.

1. Transitional Pastor
   a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.
   b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home presbytery.
   c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).
   d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and seeks to transfer ordination, the presbytery shall

[70] See *Rules for Assembly* section X (p. 163) and *Act of Assembly* 98-03 (p. 198).
[71] For special conditions under which an Associate Pastor may succeed a pastor, see **G.**10-4D.
[72] An Assistant Pastor may not succeed a Pastor (see **G.**10-4E).
[73] See *Rules for Assembly* section X (p. 163) and *Act of Assembly* 98-03 (p. 198).
[74] **G.**21-1C.

examine and transfer the pastor according to applicable provisions of this *Book of Government.*

e. If a Transitional Pastor from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is not seeking to transfer ordination, the Session may extend an invitation in the same manner as a Stated Supply Pastor, except that the invitation will remain in effect during the period the congregation is seeking a Pastor.[75]

2. Stated Supply Pastor

a. A Stated Supply Pastor is invited by the Session to serve for a definite period of time, not less than one month and no more than twelve months. The term of service is renewable. Although this invitation is not a call,[76] the invitation to serve, authority to preach the Word, to administer sacraments, and to moderate Session must be approved by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.[77]

b. Stated Supply Pastors from outside the Evangelical Presbytery Church are invited by the Session and shall be interviewed and approved by the Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee if authorized by the Presbytery.

3. Occasional Supply Pastor

a. An Occasional Supply Pastor is invited to serve regularly on specified days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.

B. Ordinarily, a person currently serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Should a Search Committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, it must secure approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed.

10-8 Calls approved by the Presbytery

A. Source of calls

1. From a local church within the geographic bounds of the Presbytery, as modified by the inclusion or exclusion of churches according to the provision of **G**.5-7 and **G.**5-8.

2. From a denominational court or agency.

If some court or agency of the denomination issues a call to a Teaching Elder, the calling body shall issue a call that conforms with the Acts of the General Assembly and follows the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.[78] The approving Presbytery shall proceed in a similar fashion for approving a call to a local church, except the Commission to install may be omitted.

3. From outside the geographic and/or jurisdictional bounds[79] of the Presbytery.

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[75] See *Acts of Assembly* 25-01 (p. 177)

[76] When an Associate Member serves in a temporary pastoral relationship, the TE is placed on the active roll (**G.**19-2B.1c). If retired, the TE remains retired but, as an active member, has both voice and vote in the Presbytery and General Assembly.

[77] **G.**21-1C; **G.**21-2D.2f.

[78] See *Rules for Assembly* section X (p. 163) and *Act of Assembly* 98-03 (p. 198).

[79] Bounds: specific geographic boundaries as modified by the stipulations of **G.**5-7 and 5-8 in which the Presbytery has jurisdiction over its member churches and Teaching Elders. Jurisdiction: Churches, agencies, and Teaching Elders over which the Presbytery has immediate oversight.

A Teaching Elder called by a church or agency outside the bounds of the Presbytery remains under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

B. Process for approving calls

1. From within the geographic and jurisdictional bounds of the Presbytery

   a. Having determined that the person is suitable for the call, that the good of the whole Church shall be served, and that the person being called accepts the call, it shall inform the Minister/Teaching Elder/Candidate of its approval and proceed to place the call in the hands of said person.

   b. A call may be placed in the hands of a Teaching Elder or Candidate only by the Presbytery in which that person is being called.

   c. The Presbytery shall appoint a Commission according to the stipulations of **G.**21-1C.2 to proceed with ordination and/or installation.

   d. The Teaching Elder is enrolled in the Presbytery upon the Presbytery's approval of the examinations and call and upon signing the ministerial obligation (**G.**19-4B.4).

2. From a church or agency outside the bounds of Presbytery

   a. If a Teaching Elder desires to accept a call outside the jurisdictional or geographic bounds of the approving Presbytery, the Teaching Elder shall present a call from that body to the Presbytery, indicating the nature of the work and the terms of the call. If the Presbytery approves the nature of the work as appropriate to the gospel ministry and requiring ordination, it may approve the call for a term of up to three years. After the expiration of that time, the Minister must receive further approval to continue.

   b. If the nature of this call impedes or prevents regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings, the Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member.[80]

   c. In the event that the call outside of bounds falls within the geographic boundaries of a Presbytery of which the Teaching Elder is not a member, the Teaching Elder shall obtain the approval of both Presbyteries.

C. Transfer

1. Teaching Elders transferring from another EPC Presbytery or other church body

   The receiving Presbytery shall not enroll that Teaching Elder without an approved call unless the Minister is retired and being enrolled as an Associate Member.[81]

2. Official communication regarding transfer

   The dismissing church body shall be informed by the receiving Presbytery for the purpose of taking appropriate action. The Presbyteries shall deal directly with each other through their Stated Clerks in certifying both the call of the church and the credentials of the Minister, Teaching Elder, or Candidate.

10-9 Call Disapproved by Presbytery

In the event a Teaching Elder accepts a call disapproved by Presbytery, that Teaching Elder shall be placed on inactive status.[82]

10-10 The Calling of Ruling Elders and Deacons by a local church

When a local church desires to call Ruling Elders and Deacons, the following procedures shall ordinarily be followed:

[80] **G.**19-2B.
[81] **G.**19-2B; **G.**15-2C.
[82] **G.**14-3.

A. The congregation may nominate and elect its Ruling Elders and Deacons by any procedure it desires to establish.

B. Should a Nominating Committee be used, the congregation will include among those elected to the committee at least two active Elders, one of whom shall be appointed by the Session as chairman. The Session shall call congregational meetings as needed for this purpose.[83]

[83] **G.**7-2.

— 11 —
PREPARATION FOR OFFICE

11-1 Calling to office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church places certain obligations on an ordinand. Those being ordained to office are required to make certain commitments in terms of faith and order and to give a good testimony of Jesus Christ. For that reason, certain preparations for office are required.

11-2 Preparation for ordained ministry as a Teaching Elder

Since the office of Teaching Elder is seen as the first office in the Church both for dignity and usefulness, special preparation is required.[84]

A. A person desiring to become a Teaching Elder shall first become a Candidate under the care of the Presbytery of which that person's church is a member. That person begins this process by seeking the endorsement of the Session of the local church where the person's membership has been held for at least six months. When the Session has approved the Candidate, application shall be made to the appropriate Committee of Presbytery.

B. The Presbytery Committee charged with the oversight of Candidates shall make whatever tests of gifts and abilities, as well as of sincerity of purpose, it deems necessary. If the Candidate is approved, the Committee shall recommend to the Presbytery the approval of candidacy.[85]

C. The Presbytery shall make a public examination of the Candidate as to Christian experience and growth, the motive for seeking ordination by a Presbytery of the EPC, and a statement regarding the person's call to the Ministry. If approved, the Presbytery shall proceed as follows.[86]

The Candidate shall respond affirmatively to the following questions to be put by the Moderator of the Presbytery:

1. As you understand God's working in your heart and life, do you continue to believe yourself called to the office of Teaching Elder?
2. Do you now submit yourself to the care and supervision of this Presbytery as you prepare yourself for this office?
3. Do you renew your commitment as a Christian, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live and become a follower of Jesus?

The Moderator, or someone appointed by the Moderator, shall offer a prayer of thanksgiving and a blessing for the Candidate.

A charge shall be given to the Candidate by someone appointed by the Moderator. The Moderator shall then declare the person received as a Candidate; the person's name shall be placed on the Candidate roll of the Presbytery and welcomed in an appropriate manner.

D. The Candidate continues to be a member of the local church and is subject to the Session. But with regard to the Candidate's training for the ministry, the Candidate is under the oversight of the Presbytery. It is appropriate for the home church of the Candidate to have a service of recognition.

E. The Presbytery shall assign a Teaching Elder in the Presbytery, ordinarily not the Candidate's Pastor, to serve as advisor to the Candidate. The advisor and the Candidate's

[84] 1 Timothy 5:17.
[85] **G.**21-2D.1c.
[86] **G.**21-2D.1d.

Pastor shall submit regular reports to the appropriate committee on the progress of the Candidate.

F. The Presbytery shall have some Committee to which the oversight of Candidates is assigned.[87] This Committee shall oversee the training of the Candidate, giving encouragement and pastoral attention, and making an annual report to the Presbytery on the progress of the Candidate.

G. A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery and such other standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for Candidates under extraordinary status (**G.**11-2I).[88]

H. Ordinarily, a Candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination. A Candidate, for reasons acceptable to the Presbytery, may request transfer to another Presbytery. The Candidate's membership must also be transferred to an EPC congregation within that Presbytery.

I. A Presbytery, for reasons it judges adequate, may receive a Candidate under extraordinary circumstances for whom it may waive part or all of the total educational requirements for ordination. This action requires a two-thirds vote by the Presbytery. When such a Candidate is received, it is appropriate to assign courses of independent study or study under some appropriate person.[89]

J. A Candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in **G.**12-2. Any Candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of **G.**11-2.[90]

11-3 Preparation for Ruling Elders and Deacons

A. Those who serve well must be prepared for such service, and it is the responsibility of the Session to provide adequate opportunity for those elected to office to prepare themselves for their ministry.

B. The Session shall make provision for courses of instruction in the following matters: Church government, the Sacraments, the Faith of the Church, the Worship of the Church, the Discipline of the Church, the History of the Church, and an understanding of the office to which one is elected.

[87] **G.**21-2D.1a.

[88] **G.**11-2G ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016); See also **G.**12.2 and *Act of Assembly* 82-07 *(Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination*, p. 193).

[89] See also *Acts of Assembly* 82-07 (*Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination*, p. 193) and 83-07 (p. 194).

[90] **G.**11-2J ratified by the 33rd General Assembly (2013).

— 12 —
EXAMINATION FOR ORDINATION AND/OR INSTALLATION

12-1 Prior to approving a Candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon, it is important for the ordaining court to assure itself of the competency of the individual being ordained to serve. Therefore, certain examinations should be made.

12-2 The examination of a Candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder

A. The Candidate shall present evidence of competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of coursework taken, along with the required exegesis.[91]

B. The Candidate shall be examined in the Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.

C. The Candidate shall be examined in writing[92] and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, the English Bible, the **Book of Order**, the history of the Church and the Reformed tradition, and the nature of the office of Teaching Elder.

D. The Candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery to demonstrate the ability to expound the Word of God effectively.

E. If the Presbytery has previously received a Candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary,[93] the requirements for language shall be omitted.[94] However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.

12-3 Examination of Transferees

A. Examination of an EPC Teaching Elder seeking to transfer into a Presbytery

EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in **G.**12-2, and they shall relate their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.

B. Examination of non-EPC ordained Ministers

1. Examination of an ordained Minister from another Reformed denomination:[95]

   A Minister seeking to become a Teaching Elder in a Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from another denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination in the EPC. The Minister shall be examined on views and beliefs and may be examined on knowledge.[96, 97]

[91] **G.**11-2G; *Act of Assembly* 82-07 (*Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination*, p. 193).
[92] See *Acts of Assembly* 82-07 (p. 193), 91-03 (p. 196), and 04-01 (p. 200).
[93] **G.**11-2G.
[94] **G.**12-2A.
[95] See *Act of Assembly* 05-10 (p. 214) for a definition of "Reformed tradition."
[96] **G.**12-3A.
[97] **G.**12-3B.1 ratified by the 35th General Assembly (2015), allowing Presbyteries broader discretion on how they examine those transferring from other Reformed denominations; see also *Act of Assembly* 05-10 (p. 214).

2. Examination of Ministers from non-Reformed Traditions:

   A minister presenting current and valid ordination credentials from any other ecclesiastical tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination.[98]

C. Presbytery shall not ordinarily receive a Minister seeking to transfer while discipline, inquiry, or charges are pending. Presbytery may, after careful review of the case, by three-fourths vote, declare pending charges insufficient for refusal of membership.

12-4 Exceptions to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms

The Candidate or transferring Teaching Elder shall provide a written statement of any exceptions to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of this Church, and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow the exceptions. The Presbytery shall not allow any exception to the "Essentials of Our Faith." Following ordination, should the Teaching Elder develop exceptions to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, he or she shall report those exceptions to the Ministerial Committee, and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow these exceptions.[99]

12-5 Individuals lacking current ordination credentials previously ordained in another Reformed denomination

with a pending call in the EPC but who, for reasons other than disciplinary action, lack current ordination credentials shall be examined by the Presbytery on views of those subjects set forth for ordination.[100] Those individuals shall, upon approval, become immediately eligible for ordination and to receive a call approved by the Presbytery.

12-6 The examination of a Candidate for Ruling Elder or Deacon

The Session shall confer with each person elected to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on 1) personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth, 2) theology and Sacraments of the Church, 3) the government, discipline, worship**,** and history of the Church, and 4) an understanding of the office to which one is elected.

12-7 The examination of a previously ordained Ruling Elder or Deacon

A. **Those previously ordained into the office** to which one has been called shall be examined by the Session on views of those subjects set forth for ordination.[101] Each shall also give testimony of the personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.

B. **Those ordained to corresponding offices in other Reformed denominations** shall be examined by the Session as one being ordained.[102] Upon successful examination, previous ordination shall be recognized. The act of ordination shall not be repeated.

[98] **G.**12-2. Presbyteries must evaluate the transferee's educational credentials (*Acts of Assembly* 02-07, p. 199).
[99] See *Acts of Assembly* 03-04.1 (p. 186) for requirements for recording exceptions in Presbytery Minutes.
[100] **G.**12-2.
[101] **G.**12-6.
[102] **G.**12-6; see **G.**9-17 for recognizing the ordination of those not being elected to serve an active term.

— 13 —
THE ORDINATION AND/OR INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

13-1 The Ordination and Installation of Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons[103]

A. Teaching Elders

1. Ordinarily, the ordaining/installing Presbytery will appoint an administrative commission[104] to conduct a worship service at a date and time approved by the court. A sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The person presiding shall recount the conditions necessary for ordination and/or installation, the solemnity of the event, and its importance in the life of the Church.
2. Presbyteries may also directly ordain a Teaching Elder.

B. Ruling Elders and Deacons

Ordinarily, the Session will ordain Ruling Elders and Deacons at a regular or special service of worship. The person presiding, normally the Moderator of Session,[105] shall recount the conditions necessary for ordination and/or installation, the solemnity of the event, and its importance in the life of the Church.

13-2 Administration of vows and questions

A. Ordination vows

The person presiding shall administer the following ordination vows for those being ordained and for those coming into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from some other denomination:

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the Catechisms of this Church, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery (or to your Session in the case of Ruling Elders and Deacons) the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
5. Do you affirm and adopt the "*Essentials of Our Faith*" without exception?
6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?
7. Do you promise subjection to your fellow Presbyters in the Lord?[106]

[103] A *Handbook of Procedures, Service, and Forms* is currently under development.
[104] **G.**21-1C.
[105] **G.**18-2A.
[106] For Deacons, the vow is "Do you promise subjection to your fellow Church Officers in the Lord?" (**G.**13-7B).

8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy Ministry (or the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon) from a love of God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

B. Installation vows:

The person presiding shall administer the following installation vows for those being installed to office in an EPC congregation:

1. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Teaching Elder/Ruling Elder/Deacon, whether personal or interpersonal, 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 congregation of which God is making you overseer?
2. Are you now willing to accept the call of this church as Pastor/Associate Pastor/Ruling Elder/Deacon and, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties required of that office?[107]

C. Questions to the congregation

When the person being ordained has responded affirmatively to these vows, the person presiding shall address the following questions to the congregation:

1. Are you, the members of this congregation, ready to receive _____ *(name)* as your (*office to which the person is being ordained/installed*)?
2. *(Teaching and Ruling Elders only)* Do you promise to submit to_____ *(name)* in matters of spiritual discipline, and to receive with humility and love the word of truth?
3. Do you promise to support _____(*name*) with your prayers, to give encouragement and assistance in every way as _____ (*name*) seeks to instruct you in the things of the Lord and to lead you in the building of the Kingdom of God in this place?
4. *(Teaching Elder only)* Do you commit yourselves to fulfill the terms of the call and to make provision for _____ (*name*) needs that the name of Christ might be glorified?

13-3 The Act of Ordination

A. Following the congregation's affirmation, those being ordained shall kneel, and members of the ordaining court or Commission shall lay hands on the Ordinand(s).

B. An appropriate prayer shall be offered, and the Ordinand(s) shall thereby be set apart to the office of Teaching Elder/Ruling Elder/Deacon.

C. The presiding person shall state: "By the authority of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of_____, I declare that_____ has been ordained to the office of (Teaching Elder/Ruling Elder/Deacon), and that he/she has been duly and properly installed as (Pastor/Associate Pastor/Assistant Pastor/Ruling Elder/Deacon) of this congregation, in accord with the Word of God and the laws of this Church. As such,_____*(name)* is entitled to be given support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

[107] In the case of an Assistant Pastor, the phrase "Are you now willing to accept the call of the Session as Assistant Pastor…" is appropriate.

D. It is appropriate that a charge be given to the Ordinand(s) and to the congregation suitable for the occasion. Following the installation, it is appropriate that the members of the congregation or the Officers and their representatives demonstrate their reception of and commitment to the Ordinand(s) by coming forward and giving an appropriate greeting.

E. The event shall be recorded in the minutes of the Commission (if appointed) and the ordaining/installing court.

13-4 The installation of a Teaching Elder previously ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

A Teaching Elder previously ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be installed as the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Assistant Pastor of a local church in the manner prescribed in **G.**13-1 and **G.**13-2 with the following exceptions:

A. In place of the vows of ordination,[108] the person presiding shall ask: "Do you now reaffirm the vows you took upon your ordination, and do you recommit yourself to them in the discharge of your obligations?"

B. The person presiding shall then administer the vows of installation as prescribed in **G.**13-2B.

C. The laying on of hands for ordination shall be omitted.

D. The person presiding shall ask the questions to the congregation as prescribed in **G.**13-2C.

13-5 Ordination and/or installation of a Pastor in more than one congregation

When a Pastor is called to a multiple field, it is appropriate that the procedures for ordination and/or installation be conducted in each congregation, or a joint service may be held.

13-6 Ordination and installation of a Teaching Elder in a call outside an EPC congregation

A. In the event a Teaching Elder is being ordained with a call approved by Presbytery that is outside an EPC congregation, agency, or church court,[109] the ordaining court may ordain the Teaching Elder directly or appoint an Administrative Commission to conduct the ordination.

B. Following the vows for ordination prescribed in **G.**13-2A, the person presiding shall ask:

1. Are you willing to take charge of the work to which you have been called, agreeable to your declaration when accepting the call?
2. And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge it to the duties you have accepted?"

C. The ordaining commission or court shall proceed with the act of ordination prescribed in **G.**13-3 as appropriate for the setting.

13-7 The ordination and installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons

A. The person presiding shall administer the vows prescribed in **G.**13-2A for the affirmation of those being ordained and installed and for those who have been ordained previously in some other denomination and are being installed.

B. For Deacons, the seventh vow of ordination (**G.**13-2A) shall be: "Do you promise subjection to your fellow Church Officers in the Lord?"

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[108] **G.**13-2A.
[109] **G.**10-8B.2.

C. The person presiding shall then proceed with the vows of installation, the questions to the congregation, and the act of ordination prescribed in **G.**13-2B, **G.**13-2C, and **G.**13-3.

13-8 The installation of previously ordained Ruling Elders and Deacons

A. The procedure for installing a Ruling Elder or Deacon who has been previously ordained will be the same as that for ordination, except that the following question shall be substituted for vows 1 through 9 (**G.**13-2A): "Do you now reaffirm the vows you took upon your ordination, and do you recommit yourself to them in the discharge of your obligations?"

B. The person presiding shall then administer the vows of installation as prescribed in **G.**13-2B.

C. The laying on of hands for ordination shall be omitted.

D. The person presiding shall ask the questions to the congregation as prescribed in **G.**13-2C.

— 14 —

DISSOLUTION OF AN OFFICER'S RELATIONSHIP / REMOVAL TO INACTIVE STATUS / REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

14-1 The dissolution of a pastoral relationship

A. Authority to dissolve a pastoral relationship

Presbytery has the sole authority to dissolve a pastoral relationship. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss Ministers when both the congregation and the Pastor/Associate Pastor concur in the dissolution.[110]

B. Initiative to dissolve a pastoral relationship

Either the Teaching Elder or a Session may initiate a request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Either party shall first consult with the Ministerial Committee before making a request to the congregation. A congregational meeting shall be duly called,[111] and the congregation requested to concur with the Pastor/Associate Pastor or the Session in the request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

C. When a party declines to concur in dissolving a pastoral relationship

When any party declines to concur in the dissolution of a pastoral relation, the congregation shall appoint representatives to the Presbytery to explain its action. The Presbytery or an Administrative Commission appointed for this purpose, having consulted with the Pastor and duly appointed representatives, shall then be the sole judge of whether or not to dissolve the relationship.

D. Dissolution by reason of age

When a Teaching Elder serving in any capacity in the Church reaches the age of 70, that relationship shall be terminated. The Teaching Elder is obligated to notify the Presbytery six months prior to his/her 70th birthday.

1. Annual renewal of the pastoral relationship or call after age 70.

   The Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older is eligible, at his or her initiative, to be reelected annually in the same relationship with the approval of the calling body, the Session, and the Presbytery. When such a call is renewed, no installation is necessary.

2. Receiving a new call past age 70.

   The Presbytery, on the recommendation of the Ministerial Committee, by a 2/3 vote, may approve a new call for the Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older. That Teaching Elder is eligible to be re-elected in this new relationship yearly with the approval of the calling body and Presbytery.

3. Serving in temporary pastoral relationships after age 70.

   A Teaching Elder who is past age 70 is eligible to serve in a temporary pastoral relationship[112] for a period of up to one year as approved by the Presbytery. The

[110] **G.**21-2D.2e.
[111] **G.**7.
[112] **G.**10-7.

Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as an Administrative Commission to establish such relationships.[113]

14-2 Dissolution of a Ruling Elder or Deacon relationship

A. At the officer's initiative.

A Ruling Elder or Deacon may have valid reasons for requesting that active service on a Session or Board of Deacons be dissolved. Should the Session concur after careful consideration, it may dissolve the active relationship and its action shall be reported to the congregation.

B. Other conditions under which the relationship shall be dissolved:

1. When the officer is placed on the inactive roll.
2. When membership is placed with another congregation of the EPC or with a non-EPC congregation.
3. When membership in or jurisdiction of the local church is renounced.
4. When the Ruling Elder or Deacon is elected to the office of Ruling Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus. This shall be accomplished when, due to disability, age, or other sufficient cause, the Session, at a meeting of the congregation, is led to nominate the officer to the position of Emeritus. To be elected an officer Emeritus is a high honor and should not be bestowed indiscriminately.
5. When the officer is divested of office by due process according to the *Book of Discipline*.
6. When the active relationship is dissolved by an action of the Presbytery when the Presbytery deems it advisable for the welfare of the Church.

14-3 Removal of an officer to inactive membership status

A. Inactive Membership Status

When an officer is placed on inactive membership status, all rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside, including the right to vote and participate in the meetings of the Church courts.

B. Special provisions for removing Teaching Elders to Inactive Membership Status

1. Removal at the Teaching Elder's initiative
   a. When a Teaching Elder accepts a call disapproved by Presbytery, Presbytery shall place the Teaching Elder on inactive status.[114]
   b. For reasons deemed valid by the Presbytery, a Teaching Elder may request to[115] be placed on Inactive Membership Status. If the Presbytery concurs, the Teaching Elder shall be placed on such status. After at least one year, the Teaching Elder may request the Presbytery to be restored to Active Membership Status. The Presbytery, after careful deliberation, may do so provided the Teaching Elder has a valid call that the Presbytery approves or provided the Teaching Elder is being transferred to another Presbytery in order to receive a call.
2. Removal at the Presbytery's initiative

   When the Teaching Elder who is not retired has been without an approved call

[113] **G.**21-1C; **G.**21-2D.2f.
[114] **G.**10-9.
[115] Corrected in the 2016-2017 edition by authorization of the 36th General Assembly (*Act of Assembly* 16-24, p. 180).

for a period of one year, the Ministerial Committee shall confer with the Teaching Elder as to the Teaching Elder's continued sense of call and expectations for future ministry. The Committee will then recommend to the Presbytery whether the Teaching Elder should remain on Active Membership Status in the Presbytery or be placed on Inactive Membership Status. The Presbytery, at its discretion and after judicious consideration, may place the Minister on the Inactive Status Roll involuntarily, provided the vote to do so is by a two-thirds majority.

3. Limit for Inactive Status

   A limit of 5 years shall be placed on the time during which a Teaching Elder on Inactive Status who is not retired shall remain on the rolls of Presbytery. After five years, the Presbytery has the right to remove that minister from office without sanction.[116]

14-4 Removal from office

An officer of the church remains ordained to the office and remains obligated to fulfill the vows of ordination. However, there are certain conditions under which the officer may be removed:

A. By judicial process as set forth in the *Book of Discipline*

B. By removal from office without sanction

Presbytery may remove a Teaching Elder from office without judicial process (without sanction) for the following reasons:

1. The Teaching Elder no longer senses a call to ministry and requests removal from office.
2. The Teaching Elder, who does not meet the criteria for retirement,[117] exhibits compelling evidence of inability to serve the Church over a reasonable period of time.
3. The Teaching Elder has failed to inform the Presbytery of a new residence or place of ministry, and the Presbytery, after diligent effort, is unable to obtain current contact information after one year.
4. The Teaching Elder has been on the inactive roll for at least five years.[118]

C. By renouncing jurisdiction of the Church

Renunciation of jurisdiction shall have the effect of removing the officer from membership and ordained office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and terminating that person's exercise of office. Notice of renunciation shall be given in writing to the Clerk of the appropriate court and becomes effective upon receipt of the notice. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the court acknowledging that renunciation. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days, the acknowledgment of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final.

[116] **G.**14-4B.
[117] **G.**15-1.
[118] **G.**14-3B.3.

— 15 —
RETIREMENT OF TEACHING ELDERS

15-1 The retirement of a Teaching Elder

A. Eligibility for retirement

A Teaching Elder may request to be placed on the Retired Roll of Presbytery due to age, infirmity, or other debilitating conditions.

B. Recognition of retirement

If the Presbytery concurs, a service of appreciation and thanksgiving should be conducted, either at the meeting of the Presbytery or at the place of service of the retiring Teaching Elder. Ordinarily, a Presbytery shall appoint a special commission to conduct this service[119] and a record of it inserted in the minutes of the Presbytery.

C. Pastoral care of retired Teaching Elders

The Presbytery shall be responsible for making an annual review of its retired members to be sure of their welfare and to rectify any deficiencies. Such annual review shall be reported to the court and recorded in its minutes.

D. Upon reaching age 70

When a Teaching Elder reaches age 70, special conditions apply as prescribed in **G.**14-1D.

15-2 Status of Retired Teaching Elders

A. Active Status

A Teaching Elder who is retired according to the provision of **G.**15-1 remains on the active rolls of Presbytery. Membership may be transferred to another Presbytery.

B. Inactive Retired Status

A Retired Teaching Elder who does not participate in the life of the Presbytery by attending at least one Stated Meeting during a calendar year may be placed on Inactive Status[120] at the discretion of the Presbytery. After at least one year, the Retired Teaching Elder may request Presbytery to be restored to Active Status. The Presbytery shall make the determination based on the Teaching Elder's participation in the meetings of the Presbytery and need not require a specific call to be restored to Active Status. A Retired Teaching Elder on Inactive Status shall not be removed from the Presbytery rolls for that cause and is to be afforded the same pastoral care as Retired Teaching Elders on Active Status.

C. Associate Member Status

A retired Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member as defined in **G.**19-2B.1. A retired Minister may be received from another Presbytery or another Reformed denomination as an Associate Member.

15-3 Pastor Emeritus

When any Teaching Elder shall terminate a pastorate because of age or incapacity, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary

[119] **G.**21-1C.
[120] **G.**14-3.

relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect the Teaching Elder as Pastor Emeritus, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action will be subject to the approval of the Presbytery and shall take effect upon the approval of the Presbytery.

— 16 —
THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

16-1 Authority and responsibilities of the courts and their officers

Each court of the Church and its officers shall have certain authority for the efficient dispatch of its business and for the exercise of its responsibilities.

A. The Moderator of a court has the necessary authority to keep order, to expedite business, to convene recess, and adjourn meetings in conformity with the rules of the court. In an emergency, with due notification to members of the court, the Moderator, in consultation with the Clerk of that court, may change the date, time, and place of the meeting of the court. The Moderator is responsible for assuring that each meeting is opened and closed with prayer.

B. A court has authority to bear witness against error or doctrine that is contrary to Christian faith, both in and out of the Church.

C. A court has authority to establish rules for its own governance as long as they are in conformity with Scripture, the Constitution of the Church, and the acts of the Church courts.

D. A court may apply discipline to its members or those under its charge in keeping with the regulations established in the *Book of Discipline*.

E. A court or agency of the Church may issue calls to persons to serve in various capacities assigned to that court or agency. Such calls shall always be for a specific period of time, not to exceed three years. Such calls shall ordinarily be renewable.

F. A court has authority to organize itself to implement the responsibilities delivered to it in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution.

16-2 Jurisdiction of the organizational units and courts of the Church

Each organizational unit of the Church has a definite sphere of authority.

A. The Congregation has the particular rights reserved to it as defined in **G.**6.

B. The Board of Deacons[121] shall have that area of responsibility hereafter assigned to it or assigned by the Session. The authority of the Board of Deacons is limited to the designated portion of the worship and ministry of a local church.

C. The Session[122] has jurisdiction over all that belongs to the worship and ministry of a local church except for those limitations prescribed in **W.**2-7B.

D. The Presbytery[123] has jurisdiction over all that belongs to the worship and ministry of a group of churches within designated bounds.

E. The General Assembly[124] has jurisdiction over all that belongs to the worship and ministry of the whole Church.

[121] See chapter 17.
[122] See chapter 18.
[123] See chapter 19.
[124] See chapter 20.

16-3 Jurisdictional relationships of organizational units

Because all courts of the Church have a mutual connection with one another, the act of each court should be considered representative of the whole Church. Therefore, no one court is separate and distinct from all the other courts. This mutuality and connection find expression in the right of review and control in the ascending order of the courts. Actions and decisions of one court may be appealed to higher courts.[125]

[125] **G.**2; **G.**3; **D.**12; **D.**13.

— 17 —
THE BOARD OF DEACONS

17-1 The Board of Deacons

Ordinarily, each congregation will have a Board of Deacons composed of all Deacons on active service. A congregation may vote to commit the responsibilities of the Board of Deacons to Session.

17-2 Ordinary Responsibilities

A. To oversee the ministry of compassion of the congregation to the sick, friendless, bereaved, and those in any way distressed.

B. To oversee those who serve as ushers, those receiving the offerings of the people, and those preparing the facilities for the use by the people.

C. The Session may also assign to the Board such duties as stewardship development, property maintenance, disbursement of funds according to an approved budget, and other related matters.

17-3 Other Responsibilities

The Session may retain some or all of the above duties for itself. It may assign other duties instead of or in addition to the ordinary duties.

17-4 Officers of the Board of Deacons

A. Moderator

The Board may elect a Moderator for a term of one year, or the Session may appoint a Pastor of the congregation to serve as Moderator.

B. Recording Clerk

In addition, a Recording Clerk shall be elected for a term of one year. The Board may elect such other officers as it may determine are needful.

17-5 Meetings

A. Frequency

The Board shall meet at least quarterly unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator or when ordered to convene by the Session. When requested in writing by one-fourth of the Board, the Chairman shall call a meeting. The purpose shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted.

B. Quorum

Each Board shall determine its own quorum, provided the number is not less than one-third of its membership.

C. Minutes

A careful record of the meetings shall be kept by the Recording Clerk. The Board must approve its minutes, and they shall be signed upon approval by the Moderator and the Recording Clerk. At least once each six months, unless otherwise determined by the Session, the minutes shall be submitted to the Session, which has the right to rescind any action of the Board or return it for further consideration.

17-6 The Board and the Pastor(s)

Though not a voting member of the Board, the Pastor(s) is officially designated an advisory member. As such, the Pastor(s) is entitled to participate in deliberations, giving advice and wisdom.

17-7 Assistants to the Board

The Session, upon request of the Board, or at its own discretion, may appoint godly persons from the congregation to assist the Board in its various duties, especially in its ministry of compassion. In addition, the Board or Session may appoint persons from the congregation to assist in the ushering and other duties related to the worship of the local church.

— 18 —
THE SESSION

18-1 The Session

The entire life of the local church is under the oversight and supervision of the Session. The Session is composed of the Pastor[126] and Associate Pastor(s)[127] and all the Ruling Elders on active service.[128] The Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) are full members of the Session and have the privilege of voting.

18-2 Officers of the Session

A. Moderator

1. The Pastor shall be the Moderator and is a voting member of the Session.[129] If the Moderator wishes to make motions or otherwise participate in debate, some other member of the Session should serve as Temporary Moderator.
2. An Associate Pastor, at the request of the Pastor and with the consent of the Session, may serve as Moderator for the Pastor.
3. If there is no Pastor or Associate Pastor or if there is no Associate Pastor and the Pastor is absent for more than one month, the Session may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator.
4. Presbytery, at its discretion, may appoint a Teaching Elder of the Presbytery to serve as Moderator when a church has no Pastor.[130] The Presbytery may authorize its Ministerial Committee to appoint, at its discretion with concurrence of the Church Session, a Minister of Presbytery to serve as Interim Moderator of the Church Session until such time as the Presbytery can act in the matter.

B. Clerk of Session

Each Session shall elect a Clerk.

1. Eligibility

   The Clerk of Session must be a Ruling Elder but does not need to be currently serving on the Session.
2. Minutes

   The Clerk of Session shall ensure that a careful record of the proceedings of the court is kept. When the Session has approved the Minutes, they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall submit the minutes to the Presbytery annually.
3. Church Registry

   The Clerk of Session shall ensure that a careful record is kept in the minutes and in a separate registry of all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding membership.

[126] **G.**10-4.
[127] **G.**10-5.
[128] **G.**9-9.
[129] **G.**18-1.
[130] Or in traditional terminology, "when the pulpit is vacant."

4. Property transactions

The Clerk of Session shall ensure that all transactions regarding real and personal property have been properly recorded with civil authorities as required unless this responsibility has been committed to the church Trustees or Deacons.[131]

18-3 Authority and Responsibilities of the Session

In maintaining the spiritual supervision of the local church, the Session has the following authority and responsibilities:[132]

A. To oversee the worship of the congregation in accordance with the *Book of Worship*,[133] including the time and place of worship, special services, the music program, and the celebration of the sacraments. This shall not infringe on the responsibility of the Pastor in the selection of hymns, Scriptures, sermons, administration of the sacraments, or other duties that are incumbent on the office of Pastor.

B. To organize itself within the bounds of this Constitution and lawful acts of the higher Church courts for the advancement of the gospel and the mission of that congregation.[134]

C. To initiate the ministry of evangelism as the first business of the Church and to seek to lead persons to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

D. To oversee the discipleship ministries of the church, leading members to maturity in Christ.

E. To monitor the spiritual conduct of the members and to take action when appropriate according to procedures set forth in the *Book of Discipline*.

F. To remind parents of the responsibility of presenting their children for baptism and to provide instruction as indicated in the *Book of Worship*, Section 3-2.G. To this end, Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the Church to guide their children in the catechizing and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.[135]

G. To receive, dismiss, restore, grant affiliation, remove members, and keep rolls in accordance with **G.**8-1, 8-2, and 8-3. The Session may establish a minimum age for the active roll and to vote in congregational meetings.

H. To determine and oversee the finances of the local church including the budget and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.

I. To oversee the educational program of the congregation and to approve its literature.

J. To oversee the work of the Board of Deacons and to review its minutes at least semi-annually unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It is also desirable for the Session to call a joint meeting at least semi-annually to discuss matters of common interest, although each body must act separately on matters under its charge.

K. To fulfill its obligations to train and examine those elected to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon as set forth in Sections 12-3 and 13-8, 9, and 10.

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[131] **G.**17-2C; **G.**17-3; **G.**6-8.

[132] In addition to the responsibilities listed here, note also the Session responsibilities for instructing, examining, and ordaining/installing Ruling Elders and Deacons (**G.**11-3B; **G.**12-6; **G.**13-1B).

[133] **W.**2.7B.

[134] *Book of Worship* 7-4C.2 and 7-5 describe the Session's responsibility for determining how best to exemplify God's love and compassion in its own community and situation.

[135] See **G.**4-4A.

L. To determine policies regarding the use of the property and facilities of the congregation.[136]

M. When there is no Pastor, to convene the people for worship on the Lord's Day, offering prayers, praise, reading the Scriptures and teaching thereof. It is also appropriate for a Ruling Elder to preach or to read a sermon by some Minister of the Word of the Church.

N. To overture Presbytery on matters it believes vital or helpful to the whole Church and to observe and carry out the injunctions and instructions of the higher courts. The Session shall elect commissioners to Presbytery and shall hear a subsequent report on that court.

O. To order special offerings, special days of prayer and fasting, special days of worship, and other matters that benefit the spiritual life of the people.

P. To do whatever else may be necessary for the spread of the gospel, the edification of the members, the wellbeing of the Church, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the growth in grace of all.

18-4 Meetings of the Session

A. Frequency

1. Stated Meetings

   The Session shall meet at least quarterly.

2. Called meetings

   The Session shall meet at the call of the Moderator or when ordered to convene by the Presbytery. When one-fourth of the members make a request in writing for a meeting, the Moderator shall immediately call a meeting. The purpose of the meeting shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted.

3. Meetings in the absence of the Pastor

   In the absence of the Pastor, the Session may not meet except in the case of an emergency. In that event, two Ruling Elders must convene the Session, and no business may be transacted other than that which precipitated the meeting.[137]

B. Quorum

1. If there are five or more Ruling Elders on the Session, the Pastor and two Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum. If there is no Pastor, three Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum.
2. If there are fewer than five Ruling Elders on the Session, the Pastor and one Ruling Elder shall constitute a quorum. If there is no Pastor, two Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum.
3. Sessions may set their own quorum, provided it is not less than the minimum stated above.

C. Minutes

A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Clerk of Session, who bears responsibility for providing certified extracts when required. When the Church Session has approved the Minutes they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall submit the minutes to the Presbytery annually.

[136] See **D.**2-4 for the Session's authority "to exclude anyone from its property, services or ministries on such terms and conditions as it may desire."

[137] See **G.**18-2A.3 for situations in which there is an extended absence of a Pastor.

— 19 —
THE PRESBYTERY

19-1 The Presbytery

The Presbytery has the oversight of the life of a number of churches within a designated area, as modified by the inclusion or exclusion of churches according to the provisions of **G.**5-7 and **G.**5-8.

19-2 Membership of Presbytery

The Presbytery is composed of all the Teaching Elders on its rolls as ongoing members any Ruling Elder officers of the Presbytery[138] and Ruling Elders elected by each Session as commissioners for a stated or called meeting as per **G.**19-2A.4.

A. Voting Members of Presbytery

1. Active Teaching Elders: Teaching Elders who are serving in an approved call or actively seeking a call
2. Retired (Active) Teaching Elders[139]
3. Ruling Elder Officers of the Presbytery[140]
4. Ruling Elder Commissioners elected by each Session
   a. The Session shall elect two Ruling Elders for each Pastor, Associate, and/or Assistant. A local church shall have no fewer than two Ruling Elders for each 500 members or a major portion thereof.
   b. Disparity Correction

      When a disproportionate ratio of Teaching Elders to Ruling Elders occurs in a Presbytery, the Presbytery shall move to correct the ratio by assigning to member churches on a yearly alphabetical rotational basis the right to elect additional Ruling Elder Commissioners to the Presbytery. Associate Members[141] are not counted as part of the ratio of Ruling and Teaching Elders.

B. Non-voting Members of Presbytery

1. Associate Member Teaching Elders
   a. Qualifications

      The Presbytery shall establish a roll of Associate Members. A Teaching Elder who is retired or serving in a capacity outside of bounds that may impede or prevent regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings may, upon request, within two years of this change in call, be granted the status of Associate Member. Those who are retired, serving in a capacity that prevents regular and/or required attendance, or those without a Presbytery-approved call for two years will automatically be placed on the Associate Membership roll. Presbytery, by a 2/3 vote, may exempt a Minister from becoming an Associate Member for one year. This exemption may be granted to the minister on an annual basis.[142] Presbyteries may, by 2/3 vote, receive a retired Minister from another

[138] **G.**19-3.
[139] **G.**15-2.
[140] **G.**19-3.
[141] **G.**19-2B.1.
[142] **G.**19-2B.1a was ratified by the 33rd General Assembly (2013).

Reformed body as an Associate Member, following the normal process of examination.[143]

b. Rights and Restrictions

Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice and vote on all committees of the Presbytery and the General Assembly. Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice but not vote on Commissions to ordain and install pastors and to receive churches. Associate Members shall have a voice but not vote at all Presbytery and General Assembly meetings. Associate Members are not eligible to serve as officers of any court but do retain all rights and privileges of ordination and are to be afforded the same pastoral care as Active Members.

c. Temporary pastoral relationships

Any Associate Member called to serve as Stated Supply or Interim Supply shall automatically be returned to active membership status during such service.[144]

d. Return to Active Status

An Associate Member may request to be placed on Active Status. The Presbytery may do so upon recommendation by the Ministerial Committee and provided the Minister has a call Presbytery approves, or provided the Minister is being transferred to another body in order to receive a call.

e. Transfer of Associate Members

Associate Members, against whom no charges are pending, may transfer with the same status to another Presbytery, following the normal examination process.[145]

2. Inactive Teaching Elders[146]

3. Retired (Inactive) Teaching Elders[147]

4. Teaching Elders under the sanction of suspension from office[148]

19-3 Officers of the Presbytery

A. Moderator

The Moderator of the Presbytery shall be elected by that court. The person elected must be a Ruling or Teaching Elder. A Ruling Elder, once elected, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.

1. Length of Term

Election may be for that stated meeting of the court or, at the discretion of the Presbytery, for one year. A Ruling Elder, once elected as Moderator, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.

2. Special provisions if unable to serve

In the event of death or inability to serve, the most recently elected Moderator

[143] **G.**15-2C.
[144] **G.**10-7.
[145] **G**.12-3A.
[146] **G.**14-3.
[147] **G.**15.2B.
[148] **D.**10-4.

shall serve until the court can elect a new Moderator. If no former Moderator is present, the Minister present with the earliest date of ordination shall convene the court until a Moderator is elected.

B. Stated Clerk

The court shall also elect a Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk shall be a Teaching or Ruling Elder. Such election shall be for a specified period of time. If a Ruling Elder, the Stated Clerk shall be a full member of the court for the duration of the term.

19-4 Authority and Responsibilities of the Presbytery

In maintaining the spiritual supervision of the churches within its bounds, the Presbytery has the necessary authority to fulfill its responsibilities:

A. With respect to local churches

1. To encourage evangelism, church planting, and renewal within its bounds as a first priority (see **G.**5).
2. To organize itself as it deems best, within the bounds of this Constitution and lawful acts of the General Assembly, for the propagation of the gospel, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the edification of the people.
3. To establish, dissolve, divide, unite, receive, and dismiss churches in accord with the provisions in **G.**5.
4. To control the location or relocation of churches and to take under its supervision churches without Pastors.
5. To encourage local churches in their ministry of compassion and provide opportunity for a broader ministry at the Presbytery level.[149]
6. To provide services to the local churches within its bounds, to offer encouragement, training, and other help in conjunction with the General Assembly so that the local churches may be effective in such areas as evangelism, education, stewardship, officer training, member instruction, and other facets of an effective Christian life and ministry.
7. To implement review and control of Sessions through an annual review of Minutes to remand what may be contrary to the Constitution and to see that all lawful injunctions of the Presbytery and General Assembly are followed.[150]
8. To oversee the peace and unity within local churches, to inquire into the effectiveness of ministry, and when necessary, dissolve the active relationship of Ruling Elders and Deacons as well as the pastoral relationship when proper procedures have been followed.

B. With respect to Teaching Elders

1. To establish the required Ministerial Committee.[151]
2. To examine Ministers and Candidates, to receive and dismiss Ministers and Candidates.
3. To ordain and install, to dissolve pastoral relationships, to approve calls, and to grant permission to labor outside the bounds of Presbytery.
4. To establish a Ministerial Obligation record to which all Ministers must subscribe before being received into membership. This obligation shall consist of the ordination vows for Ministers to which shall be added a subscription as

[149] **W.**7-4C.3.
[150] **G.**2-4.
[151] **G.**21-2.

follows: "I do receive and adopt the above vows as a true statement of my faith, commitment, and obligation, and I do resolve and promise to exercise my calling to the gospel ministry in obedience to those vows."

5. To retire and to place on Inactive Status member Ministers.
6. To take disciplinary action according to the *Book of Discipline*.
7. To decide judicial cases brought before it in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.

C. With respect to the General Assembly

1. To work with other Presbyteries and the General Assembly to identify resources for ministry to and inclusion of the orphaned, the aged, and the disabled.
2. To overture the General Assembly on those matters it believes vital or helpful to the whole Church.
3. To vote on descending overtures from the General Assembly.[152]
4. To observe and carry out the injunctions and instructions of the higher court.

19-5 Meetings of the Presbytery

A. Stated Meetings

The Presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least three times a year.

B. Called Meetings

The Moderator may call a meeting, or a meeting may be ordered by the General Assembly. When requested in writing by two Ministers and four Ruling Elders from at least two congregations, the Moderator shall convene the court. If the Moderator is unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall call the meeting. Any called meeting must have at least ten days' notice, and the call shall state the purpose of the meeting. No other business may be conducted by the Presbytery at that called meeting.

C. Quorum

Two Ministers and four Ruling Elders from at least two congregations shall constitute a quorum. However, a Presbytery may fix its own quorum, provided it is not less than that stated above.

D. Minutes

A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Stated Clerk, who bears responsibility for providing certified extracts when required. When the Presbytery has approved the Minutes they shall be signed by the Moderator and the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk shall submit the minutes annually to the General Assembly.[153]

[152] **G.**23-1.
[153] **G.**2-4A; *Rules for Assembly* IX.9-12 (p. 162); *Act of Assembly* 98-05 (p. 185).

— 20 —
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20-1 The General Assembly

The General Assembly, composed of all the courts and local churches of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, expresses the unity and relatedness of all the parts. It has the responsibility of overseeing the total work of the Church.

20-2 Membership of the General Assembly

The basis of representation to the General Assembly shall be the same as representation to Presbytery.[154]

20-3 Officers of the General Assembly

A. The General Assembly shall have a Moderator, a Moderator-elect, and a Stated Clerk.

1. Moderator and Moderator-elect

   The General Assembly shall have a Moderator and a Moderator-elect who will be elected at each stated meeting. They may be Ministers or Ruling Elders. The persons elected must be members of the court and are not eligible for succession to their respective offices. They shall continue to be members of the court until their successors are elected. In the event of the death or disability of the Moderator, the most immediate past Moderator shall serve until a Moderator is elected. The Moderator-elect shall normally be the nominee for Moderator at the succeeding Assembly.[155]

2. Stated Clerk

   The General Assembly shall elect a Stated Clerk who shall serve for a period of three years, with eligibility for reelection for two additional terms. The Stated Clerk may be elected for additional terms if the General Assembly, by a 2/3 vote, sets aside this limitation for each additional term. The Stated Clerk must be eligible for membership in the court.[156]

B. Past Ruling Elder Moderators continue as members of the court as long as each maintains active membership in a church of the EPC. Past Ruling Elder Moderators who are not able to maintain membership in an EPC congregation for reasons other than church discipline may continue to be eligible for membership in the General Assembly upon approval by the Presbytery in whose geographic boundaries they reside.

20-4 Authority and Responsibilities of the General Assembly

In maintaining the spiritual supervision of the work of the total Church, the General Assembly has the necessary authority to fulfill its responsibilities:

A. With regard to the whole Church

1. To organize itself as it deems best for the propagation of the gospel, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the edification of the whole Church.

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[154] **G.**19-2A.

[155] See *Rules for Assembly*, Sections III and IV (p. 159).

[156] See *Rules for Assembly*, Section V (p. 159).

2. To provide human resource services by establishing those committees, boards, and agencies necessary to serve the Ministers, Missionaries, and full-time staff of the whole Church. This may include:
   a. A health, disability, and retirement program for Ministers, Missionaries, and other full-time church staff.
   b. An agency for aiding churches and Presbyteries in calling Ministers and other staff members.
3. To identify separately or in conjunction with the Presbyteries those agencies or institutions needed for education or other purposes that would enhance the life and ministry of the whole Church.
4. To provide guidance for the theological preparation of candidates in mission fields outside North America where Presbyteries do not yet exist, and to arrange for the ordination, where appropriate, of those persons who are duly called and prepared for the office of Minister, Elder, or Deacon.
5. To examine and commission non-ordained global workers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church with the authority to administer sacraments in places where no Teaching or Ruling Elders are reasonably available (**W.**3-1).[157]
6. To correspond and cooperate with other denominations and national and international groups.

B. With regard to Presbyteries and local churches

1. To equip and encourage EPC leaders, churches, and Presbyteries to pursue God's mission in the world.
2. To support the Presbyteries and churches in making evangelism and discipleship their priorities. This may include establishing committees, boards, agencies, training events, networks and/or staff positions.
3. To establish, unite, divide, or dissolve Presbyteries.
4. To approve and recommend to the Presbyteries such changes in the constitutional documents as it deems wise, fit, and helpful. Such changes reported to the General Assembly by its Permanent Judicial Commission shall, upon approval:
   a. Be referred to the Presbyteries, and
   b. Upon approval by a three-fourths majority of the Presbyteries and in a succeeding Assembly (unless constitutional provisions hereafter stated require a different vote), shall be enacted.
5. To establish a Permanent Judicial Commission.[158]
6. To make final decisions on judicial cases brought before it in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.
7. To hold Presbyteries accountable by exercising the principle of review and control[159] through an annual review of Minutes for:
   a. Encouraging and equipping their local churches to fulfill the Great Commission.
   b. Remanding to the lower court what may be contrary to the Constitution and to see that all lawful injunctions are followed.

20-5 Meetings of the General Assembly

[157] **G.**20-4A.5 ratified by the 36th Assembly (2016); see also **W.**3-1, *Act of Assembly* 16-05 (p. 210), and *Rules for Assembly* X.10.1B-2 (p. 164).
[158] **G.**21-1B; **G.**21-3.
[159] **G.**2-4A.

A. Stated Meeting

The General Assembly shall meet annually.[160]

B. Called Meetings

The General Assembly shall meet in called session when ten percent of both Ruling and Teaching Elder Commissioners from the previously stated meeting have signed a petition requesting such a meeting. The call shall state the purpose of the meeting, and no other business may be transacted. If the Moderator is unable to act, and there is no past Moderator to act, the Stated Clerk shall issue the call and convene the court until a Moderator is elected. In such called meetings, only the Commissioners (or their previously designated alternates) to the previously stated meeting are eligible to vote. The Presbytery shall give each Commissioner to the General Assembly a certificate of election.

C. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of at least five Ministers and five Ruling Elders representing at least three Presbyteries. However, the General Assembly may fix its own quorum provided it is not less than that stated above.

D. Minutes

A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Stated Clerk. The minutes shall be approved prior to adjournment. These, along with a statistical record of the churches, shall be available to the denomination electronically and distributed in print without cost to each Session, Presbytery, and any Minister or Court Officer requesting such.

[160] See *Rules for Assembly*, section I (p. 158).

— 21 —
COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

21-1 Committees and Commissions

A. Definitions

1. A committee is appointed by a court to study a matter and make recommendations back to the appointing body or to carry out decisions already made. It shall then make written reports to the court that created it.
2. A commission is appointed to act for the appointing court. The appointing court shall state specifically the powers and duration given to a commission. The only permanent commission is the Permanent Judicial Commission.[161] A commission shall make a written report of its actions, which shall then be inserted in the minutes of the appointing court and be regarded as the actions of the court itself.

B. Judicial Commissions

A Judicial Commission is appointed to handle cases according to judicial process as set forth in the *Book of Discipline*.[162]

C. Administrative Commissions

1. Authority and Responsibilities

   Administrative Commissions are appointed to perform special functions. The functions entrusted to such commissions include, but are not limited to, the following:

   a. To ordain Teaching Elders and to install them where appropriate.[163]
   b. To organize, dissolve, dismiss, or receive local churches or to constitute a mission church.[164]
   c. To serve as a temporary Session of a mission church.
   d. To visit local churches having difficulties or appearing to be failing in their mission, to inquire into and resolve the difficulties therein. If it is necessary that a Session be dissolved,[165] the authority of an Administrative Commission may be limited by actions of the General Assembly.[166]

2. Membership

   Administrative Commissions of Presbytery and General Assembly shall be composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Teaching Elder as possible. The minimum numbers and distribution of members shall be:

   a. For the General Assembly, not fewer than three Presbyteries.
   b. For the Presbytery, not fewer than five members, with Ruling Elders representing not fewer than two-member churches.

3. Quorum

   A commission shall have as its quorum a minimum of one-half of its membership.

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[161] **G.**21-3.
[162] **D.**7-2B.
[163] **G.**19-4B.2, 3.
[164] **G.**5-1, 2.
[165] **G.**19-4A.8.
[166] See *Act of Assembly* 94-24 (p. 184).

D. Required Committees and Commissions

1. For the orderly working of the Church, it is necessary that certain committees and commissions be established in certain courts on a permanent basis, with duties outlined and established.
2. Each Presbytery shall have a Ministerial Committee.
3. The General Assembly shall have a Permanent Judicial Commission.

21-2 The Ministerial Committee

Each Presbytery shall have a Ministerial Committee consisting only of Teaching and Ruling Elders.

A. Membership

The Ministerial Committee shall have at least six members and be established and maintained in such a way as to ensure that the differences between the number of Teaching and Ruling Elders on the Committee shall never be greater than one.

B. Quorum

Its quorum for action shall be a simple majority of the membership, to include at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder.

C. Succession

Eligibility to succeed will be determined by the appointing court.

D. Authority and Responsibilities

1. With regard to Teaching Elders and Candidates
   a. It shall have the oversight of Candidates for the gospel ministry of the Presbytery, although the Presbytery may assign this function to some other committee.[167]
   b. It shall confer with each Teaching Elder desiring to become a member of the Presbytery or Candidate desiring ordination.
   c. It shall conduct any examination and assessment it deems necessary in order to make a decision for its recommendation to the Presbytery concerning the application.[168]
   d. It shall conduct the examination by the Presbytery of the applicant according to the *Book of Government*.[169]
   e. It shall report annually on the work of the Teaching Elders to the Presbytery, along with any recommendations it might have. This includes an annual report from those Teaching Elders approved for labor outside the bounds of Presbytery.
   f. The Committee shall be responsible for an annual review of the remuneration of Teaching Elders, shall consult with Sessions if deemed necessary concerning such remuneration, and may recommend to the Presbytery minimum terms for the call of Teaching Elders. Requests to the Presbytery for a change in the terms of call shall come through this committee.
   g. It shall review each request for dissolution of a pastoral relationship and make a recommendation to Presbytery.[170]

[167] **G.**11-2F.
[168] **G.**11-2B.
[169] **G.**11-2C; **G.**12.
[170] **G.**14-1.

2. With regard to local churches
   a. It shall counsel with local churches in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this Committee, who shall then make its recommendation to the Presbytery. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation that has not first consulted with the Committee.
   b. It shall recommend to the Presbytery a Teaching Elder to serve as Moderator of Session[171] and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply.[172] The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to appoint, with concurrence of the Session, an Interim Moderator of the Session.[173]
   c. The Committee, or a Presbytery-designated alternate committee, shall consult with local churches receiving aid from the Presbytery and shall make recommendations to the Presbytery concerning that aid.
   d. Although no complaint may have been received, if, in the judgment of the Committee, a local church may be having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the Committee has the authority to investigate and to make recommendations to the Presbytery.
   e. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as a Judicial or Administrative Commission. The Committee may also be appointed as an ongoing Administrative Commission to:[174, 175, 176]
      1) Dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss Teaching Elders according to the **Book of Order** when both the congregation and the Pastor concur in the dissolution.
      2) Approve temporary pastoral relationships.*
      3) Review terms of call or invitations for all pastoral relationships, excluding out-of-bounds terms of calls, to ensure that the terms meet the minimum established standards.
      4) Ordain and/or install Teaching Elders in accordance with provisions in this *Book of Government.*
      5) Appoint advisors for Candidates Under Care and mentors for Commissioned Pastors.

[171] **G.**18-2A.4.
[172] **G.**10-7.
[173] **G.**18-2A.4.
[174] **G.**14-1A.
[175] **G.**21-1.
[176] **G.**10-7.

* The approval of temporary pastoral relationships is limited to the authority provided for in **G.**10-7 (Footnote approved by the 37th General Assembly).

21-3 The Permanent Judicial Commission

The General Assembly shall establish a Permanent Judicial Commission.[177]

A. Membership

1. The Permanent Judicial Commission shall consist of a minimum of nine persons in three classes of three each, and of which at least two-thirds must be Ruling Elders. The General Assembly shall determine their eligibility for succession. Efforts shall be made to give fair representation to the various Presbyteries.
2. During service on this Commission, no member may hold office or employment in the court.

B. Quorum

The quorum for the Permanent Judicial Commission shall be two-thirds of its membership.

C. Officers

The Permanent Judicial Commission shall elect a Moderator from its own body and appoint a clerk.[178] A careful and accurate record shall be kept of its deliberations and actions, with a permanent record of these minutes filed with the office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

D. Authority and Responsibilities

1. Interpretations of the **Book of Order**

   Questions concerning interpretation of the **Book of Order** coming to the General Assembly shall be referred by the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk may issue a provisional opinion that is binding until acted upon by the next General Assembly. The Stated Clerk, with the concurrence of the Permanent Judicial Commission, may assign these duties to a Chief Constitutional Officer.

   The Permanent Judicial Commission, acting as a committee:

   a. Shall review all referrals and shall recommend to the Assembly its interpretation, along with reasons. The Assembly shall act as it deems wise.

   b. Shall review all provisional opinions and shall recommend to the Assembly that they be sustained, not sustained, or amended, along with reasons.

2. Amendments to the Constitution

   a. All proposals requesting amendment to the Constitution shall be communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 60 days[179] prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall refer all such proposed amendments to the Permanent Judicial Commission, which shall examine the proposed amendment for clarity and consistency of language and for compatibility with other provisions of the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

   b. The Permanent Judicial Commission shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations, which may include

[177] See also *Rules for Assembly* X.10.1.G (p. 165).

[178] Amendment ratified by the 35th General Assembly (2015), giving the Permanent Judicial Commission discretion to appoint a clerk from outside of its own membership.

[179] The provision for 60 days was ratified by the 33rd General Assembly (2013); if the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

an amended version of any proposed constitutional changes as well as advice to accept or decline the proposals referred to the Commission. The General Assembly shall not consider any amendment until there has been a report from the Permanent Judicial Commission.

3. Cases referred to the General Assembly in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*

   a. The Permanent Judicial Commission shall make a preliminary judgment to the General Assembly. That judgment shall be binding on parties involved until the General Assembly has sustained or rejected the recommendation of the Commission. Any dissenting opinion in the Commission shall be communicated in writing with the preliminary judgment to the General Assembly.

   b. In voting on the preliminary judgment, questions for clarification will be entertained, but the merits of the case are non-debatable. Without amendment, the General Assembly shall vote to sustain or not to sustain the judgment of the Commission, in which case the vote is final and becomes the decision of the General Assembly. If the judgment of the Permanent Judicial Commission is not sustained, the General Assembly shall determine whether the case shall be remanded to the Commission or committed to a new Judicial Commission.[180]

4. Recommendations to the General Assembly

   The Permanent Judicial Commission shall have the authority to make recommendations of its own to the General Assembly concerning wording, changes, amendments, additions, or other matters relating to the Constitution of the Church.

5. The Commission may appoint a Hearing Officer or Committee from its members to hear appeals under Chapter 13 or complaints under Chapter 14 of the Book of Discipline. The General Assembly Stated Clerk or his designee may serve as a resource person in any such proceeding. After any such hearing, the Hearing Officer / Committee will report his/its findings, with recommendations, if any, to the Commission, which will take whatever action it deems appropriate in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 13 and 14 of the *Book of Discipline,* and/or Chapter 21-3 of the *Book of Government*.[181]

[180] **D.**9-5.

[181] **G.**21-3D.5 ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016).

— 22 —
REFERENCES TO A HIGHER COURT

22-1 A reference is a written representation and application made by a lower court to a higher Court for advice or other action on a matter pending before the lower Court and is ordinarily to be made to the next higher Court.

22-2 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[182] and legal procedures respecting which the lower Court feels the need of guidance.

22-3 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.

22-4 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 by so much of the record as shall be necessary for proper understanding and consideration of the matter referred.

A. In the case of a reference from the Session, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery may, if necessary, issue a provisional opinion that is binding until acted upon by the next stated or called meeting of the Presbytery.

B. In any cases of discipline or remediation, those cases shall be concluded under the version of the **Book of Order** in effect when the case originated.

C. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary above,[183] no higher Court that accepts a reference from a lower Court may render a decision that conflicts with any other provision of the Constitution of the EPC.[184]

22-5 Although references are sometimes proper, in general, it is better that every Court should discharge the duty assigned to it under the law of the Church.

22-6 A higher Court is not required to accede to the request of the lower, but it should ordinarily give advice when so requested.

22-7 When a Court makes a reference, it ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced, and in perfect readiness so that the higher Court may be able to fully consider and handle the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

[182] **G.**21-3.D.1.

[183] *Notwithstanding anything to the contrary above* means that even if something is written that is opposite in meaning to the provision, the provision will still apply.

[184] **G.**22-4C ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016).

— 23 —
AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND CONFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS

23-1 Herein are set forth the procedures whereby the Constitution (*Book of Government*, *Book of Discipline*, *Book of Worship*, and the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms)** may be amended.[185]

A. After approval by the General Assembly, in accordance with **G.**21-3D.2, the recommended change shall be sent to the Presbyteries.

B. No changes may be made to the **Book of Order,** including any of its parts composed of the *Book of Government*, the *Book of Discipline*, and the *Book of Worship,* that would be contrary to the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.**

C. Approval by three-fourths of the Presbyteries is required.[186]

D. Ratification by the subsequent General Assembly is required. If, however, by the subsequent General Assembly, an insufficient number of Presbyteries has voted, the General Assembly shall urge those Presbyteries to vote. If by the second Assembly following the original enactment, an insufficient number of Presbyteries has approved the amendment, it shall be declared lost.

23-2 This provision for amending the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms** may be amended only by the same method prescribed for changes to the Constitution and confessional documents.

[185] Amendments to the Constitution may be initiated by overture from a lower court (**G.**18-3L, **G.**19-4C.2), or by other means as permitted by the *Rules for Assembly.*

[186] For an explanation of Presbytery voting in a year in which a Presbytery has been established, see *Act of Assembly* 11-01 (p. 174).

— 24 —
UNION WITH ANOTHER DENOMINATION OR ECCLESIASTICAL BODY

24-1 Union with another denomination. Union with another ecclesiastical body is possible under the terms set forth below.[187]

A. After approval by a vote of the General Assembly, the recommendation for union shall be sent to the Presbyteries.

B. Approval by three-fourths of the Presbyteries is required.

C. Ratification by the next General Assembly is required.

D. This provision can be amended only by the same method it prescribes for union.

24-2 Local churches of this Church may unite to form union churches with one or more local churches of other Reformed bodies, with the approval of the Presbytery. Presbyteries of this Church may act in concert with comparable judicatories of other Reformed bodies to organize union churches or to reorganize a local church to become a union church. Such union churches shall be subject to the provisions of Sections 24-2 and 24-3 as applicable.

24-3 The following Plan of Union shall be adopted by the union church so formed:

A. The following Plan of Union is adopted by the_____Presbyterian Church of _____ and the_____Church of _____, effective as of the date when each of the congregations has approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by the Constitution of each Church, and when the Presbytery (Classis) of jurisdiction of each Church has approved the particular union and this Plan of Union.

B. The purpose of this union is to provide for the worship of Almighty God and instruction in the Christian religion by a united congregation that will share the property, real and personal, of the uniting churches and provide for the services of a Minister or Ministers for the united church.

C. The united church shall be known as the_____Church of_____.

D. The united church shall be subject to the Constitution of each Church involved as set forth in Sections 24-3R, 24-3S, 24-3U, and 24-3V.

E. The Session (Consistory) shall submit its records annually and, whenever requested, to each judicatory of jurisdiction.

F. The membership of the united church shall consist of those who were members of the uniting churches plus those received by the Session (Consistory) of the united church.

[187] Corrections in this chapter made in the 2015-16 and following editions by authorization of the 35th General Assembly (*Act of Assembly* 15-03, p. 180).

G. The Session (Consistory) of the united church shall report an equal share of the total membership to each judicatory of jurisdiction, and such membership shall be published in the Minutes (Acts and Proceedings) of the General Assembly, with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union church, and with an indication of the total actual membership. A similar report of church school members, baptisms, etc., and financial expenditures shall be made by the Session (Consistory) and noted by each General Assembly in its minutes.

H. Initially, the officers of the united church, Elders and Deacons, shall be those officers in active service of the uniting churches, who will undertake to perform their ordination responsibilities under the Constitution of each Church, as indicated in Sections 24-3D and 24-3R, 24-3S, 24-3U, and 24-3V.

I. At the first annual meeting subsequent to the effective date of the union, new classes of officers to replace the officers noted in Section 24-2.H shall be elected by the united congregation according to the constitutional procedure in force as a consequence of Section 24-3V.

J. The pastoral relations of the Ministers of the uniting churches shall be dissolved automatically by the action of the Presbytery (Classis) of jurisdiction in approving this plan, but they may be eligible to be Ministers (Pastors or Associate Pastors) of the united church according to the approval of the Presbyteries (both the Classis and the Presbytery).

K. The Minister or Ministers of the united church shall be full and responsible members of each judicatory of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided in Section 24-3Q.

L. The united church shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state, where permissible. That corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of Sections 24-3B, 24-3C, and 24-3D.

M. All property of the uniting churches, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in Section 24-3L. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting churches, and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or monies received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the uniting churches shall be liabilities of the united church. In any state where a church corporation is forbidden, the purposes of this paragraph shall be achieved in harmony with the law of that state.

N. Trustees of the corporation (or the unincorporated body) shall be elected in harmony with civil law according to the constitutional provisions outlined in Section 24-3D, as interpreted by Section 24-3V.

O. While recognizing the basic right of all givers to designate the cause or causes to which their own gifts shall go, the Session (Consistory) of the united church shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the Session (Consistory) shall decide in response to the requests of the higher judicatories.

P. Per capita apportionments or assessments shall be paid to each Presbytery (Classis) of jurisdiction on the basis of the total confirmed (communicant) membership of the union church, equally divided among the denominations involved.

Q. All members of the united church shall be under the discipline of the Session (Consistory) according to rules agreed upon in harmony with the Constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the Constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the Session (Consistory) where they may be contradictory.

R. Appeals or complaints against the actions of the Session (Consistory) shall be made to one judicatory only (Presbytery or Classis) at the choice of the members, and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the courts of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the Session (Consistory) and on the member. The Minister or Ministers shall be subject to the discipline of the Presbyteries (the Presbytery and the Classis) provided that when either shall begin an action, it shall invite a committee from the others to join the commissioner, prosecutor, or prosecuting committee in formulating and pressing the charges. In the event of appeal, the case shall be finally decided by the highest Court to which the appeal is taken in the Church that commenced the action, and that decision shall be equally binding on the Presbyteries (both the Presbytery and the Classis).

S. The Minister or Ministers shall participate in the denominational Pension Plan of one of the Churches. If a Minister is already participating in one plan, that Minister shall remain in that plan. If a Minister is not a member of any, that Minister shall choose among them.

T. Complaints against the administrative acts of the Session (Consistory) may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant, and once being complained to one judicatory, no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same matter.

U. Wherever the Constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in Section 24-3Q), the Session (Consistory) of the united church shall petition the judicatories of immediate jurisdiction to overture their respective highest courts to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.

V. A union church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings, held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the Presbyteries (Classis) involved. In case of dissolution of a union church, all property of the united church, real and personal, shall be divided equally between the Presbyteries (the Presbytery and the Classis) of jurisdiction.

W. No sooner than six months after its formation, a union church may elect to become a member solely of either Presbytery (Classis) of which it is a member. By a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting called for that purpose, the congregation may elect to be a member solely of one Presbytery or the other. In such a case it is mandatory that the united church with all its property, real and personal, become a member solely of that Presbytery (Classis) of its election.

24-4 No provision in this chapter shall be construed as modifying or amending the Constitution of this Church in its application to any but union churches organized under this chapter, their members, officers, or Ministers.

— 25 —
LIMITATIONS IN PERPETUITY

25-1 Limitations in perpetuity

Certain rights are held in perpetuity by Christians, both individually and gathered in congregations. These rights must always be guaranteed by the Church.[188]

25-2 These rights include, but not by way of exclusion, the following:

A. The Church may make no laws to bind the conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture. No person may be rejected for membership or ordination because of such matters of conscience unless that matter has been officially declared a heresy by the Church or unless it obstructs the constitutional governance of the Church. However, those seeking ordination in the EPC, either initially or by transfer, voluntarily limit their free exercise of conscience to the lawful bounds of the Essentials of Our Faith, the **Westminster** Standards, and the **Book of Order** of the EPC.[189]

B. The Church may make no laws that infringe on the rights of the local church to elect its own officers, to own and control its own property under the laws of the state in which it is located, to determine its own benevolence and other budgetary objectives, and to determine its own internal life so long as it does not violate the Constitution of the Church.

C. The Denomination may make no provision in the *Book of Government* to establish any trust, implied or expressed, on property, both real or personal, held by or for a local church in favor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The voluntary establishment of a trust is not prohibited, but any trust, to be enforceable, must be the clear intent of the owner and follow the legal requirements for trusts in the state in which the property is located.[190]

D. This section (i.e., chapter) may be added to by the procedures set forth for amending the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms,** but no deletions may be made.[191]

[188] See also **G.**6 for "Rights Reserved to a Local Church."
[189] **G.**13.2.
[190] Section C ratified by the 35th General Assembly (2015); see also **G.**5-9.
[191] **G.**2.

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PART TWO
BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

Ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016)[192]

— 1 —

DISCIPLINE: ITS NATURE, SUBJECTS, AND PURPOSE

1-1 Definition of Church Discipline

There are two kinds of authority vested in the church: the responsibility of order and the authority of jurisdiction.[193] Both kinds of authority are given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the responsibility of order, particularly in regard to the reproving of the erring.[194] As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority requires the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.

The word "discipline," when used in the *Book of Discipline*, chapters 1-11, shall therefore refer to the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.

Church discipline does not supersede or negate the legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse to civil authorities according to local and state requirements.

1-2 Grounds for Discipline

Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for discipline. The offenses that require discipline and are subject to ecclesiastical judicial procedures are as follows:

A. Heresy.
B. Immorality.
C. Contempt.

1-3 Church Members Who Are Also Employees

The employer/employee relationship is not within the scope of the *Book of Discipline*. Church members who are also employees of the church shall be subject to discipline as an employee under whatever procedures may be established by the church for employees. They may also be subject to discipline as a member under the *Book of Discipline*.

1-4 Persons Subject to Discipline

All active and inactive members of the church,[195] confirmed, baptized, and affiliate, are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline.

All Teaching Elders are subject to discipline. Accordingly, no Teaching Elder should be shielded from discipline or lightly sanctioned on account of his office. Neither should serious charges be received against him[196] on slight grounds.

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[192] The 36th General Assembly ratified extensive revisions of the 1997 *Book of Discipline.*

[193] See **G.**3-2 and 3-3.

[194] See **G.**3-2.

[195] This includes Commissioned Pastors (**G.**9-11), who are under the original jurisdiction of the Session of the local church of which they are members.

[196] When used herein, the masculine gender shall include the feminine and the singular number shall include the

1-5 Purpose of Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to maintain the honor of God, to restore the sinner, and to remove offense from the church. Teaching Elders must instruct the officers and congregation in the use of discipline and jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and courts of the church.

1-6 Basis of Discipline

As the revelation of God's holy will, Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline. Therefore, proper disciplinary principles as set forth in the Scriptures must be followed before any charge alleging a personal offense can be brought before a court of the church.

When a charge of personal offense is brought before any court of the church, the party bringing the charge must include a certified statement detailing how the principles outlined in Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 have been met.[197]

If anyone has evidence to suggest that a Teaching Elder may be guilty of a private offense, he should warn him in private. But if the offense persists or becomes public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other Teaching Elder of the Presbytery.

1-7 Definition of "Church"

As used in this *Book of Discipline,* the word "church" shall refer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including her General Assembly, Presbyteries (including mission churches), and local churches.

1-8 Definition of "Contempt"

Contempt is willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities.

1-9 Definition of "Heresy"

Heresy is the expressed or implied denial, openly taught and obstinately maintained, of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity.

1-10 Definition of "Immorality"

Immorality is conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping,[198] hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality.

1-11 Definition of "Jurisdiction"

Jurisdiction, as defined herein, is the authority of a court to render a decision in a case requiring discipline. This is the exercise of the responsibility of order. A court must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision. This definition is not to be confused with the authority of jurisdiction. The authority of jurisdiction is the power to rule and is a joint power to be exercised in church courts in regular gradation. The exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the church.[199] The exercise of the authority of jurisdiction provides the court with the authority to decide issues of government, administration, or law as it pertains to the rule of the church.

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plural unless the context demands otherwise.

[197] Use Form 1 (p. 106).

[198] The terms "bickering and "gossiping" as used herein are intended to deal with those acts that are disruptive to the peace and unity of the church.

[199] See **G.**3-2B.

In the case of actions by a church court raising issues, misunderstandings, and disputes—which are not personal offenses requiring discipline but which raise issues that bear upon the authority of jurisdiction— one may seek review / file a complaint (petition, request for review by) in the court having original jurisdiction thereof. Such complaint, however, will not be subject to ecclesiastical judicial procedures unless the court determines that the conduct made the basis of the complaint is willful and done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities. If such determination is made, the court will then signify the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures in all further proceedings, and upon judgment, an automatic appeal will be taken to the next higher court.

— 2 —
PASTORAL CARE

2-1 The Duty to Evangelize

In terms of its work, the first duty of the church is to evangelize by extending the gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to provide for the nurture of that faith that all might grow in grace and in sanctification *(Book of Government 4-3).*[200]

2-2 The Spiritual Power of the Church

The power of the church is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of the church from civil government *(Book of Government* 3-1**)**. This means that the church does not have civil authority over anyone.

2-3 Spiritual Nurture of Members

Among other duties, it is the duty of the church to provide for the nurture of its members *(Book of Government* 4-4A).

2-4 Retention of Authority over Church Property

While possessing no civil authority over any person, the church does retain authority over its property and ministries. In providing a secure and nurturing atmosphere for worship and spiritual growth, the church retains the right to exclude anyone from its property, services, or ministries on such terms and conditions as it may desire. Thus, for example, a particular church may require certain standards before permitting adults to teach Sunday School, lead ministries, or otherwise participate in the life and ministry of the church.

[200] This reference quotes from the *Book of Government* prior to the 2014 revision. The *Book of Government* (adopted June 2014) now reads in **G.**4-3: "**It is the primary mission of the local church to evangelize**, making disciples by extending the gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, providing for the nurture of that faith that all might worship the true God and grow in grace and in sanctification. It is to be remembered that good deeds in ministry and service to others, offering relief to those in need, are the fruit of the gospel. Without the clear evidence of such fruit, all else is brought into question. However, the Church must never confuse its primary mission of evangelism (the gospel) with the fruit of faith (good works)."

— 3 —

PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ALL ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES

3-1 Ex parte Communications

A. Once any ecclesiastical judicial procedure under this *Book of Discipline* is commenced, ex parte communications are prohibited.

B. An ex parte communication is any form of communication to the presiding court or commission (Session, Presbytery, Judicial Commission, or Permanent Judicial Commission, including the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly) by one party to a proceeding in the absence of the other parties to that proceeding that relates to the merits of the proceeding. It includes but is not limited to verbal, written, electronic, or any other form of communication.

C. This prohibition against ex parte communication does not include questions on procedural matters that may be addressed to the Clerk of the court or commission. But otherwise, the prohibition against ex parte communication on the merits of the proceeding applies to the Clerk of the court or commission.

D. Therefore, the church courts, its officers, and judicial commissions shall act in accordance with the following:

1. Any attempt at ex parte verbal communication shall be immediately interrupted by the member of the court to whom the communication is directed. The member of the court shall make a record of the attempted communication, place it in a separate file, and communicate to the other side the attempted ex parte communication. The record of the attempted communication shall include the name of the person(s) attempting to so communicate and the date of the attempted communication; under no circumstances shall the content of any ex parte communication be added to the case file of the subject ecclesiastical judicial proceeding;

2. Any form of ex parte communication, including notes from verbal communication, shall be placed in a separate file and communicated to the other parties and members of the presiding court or commission.

3. If a party desires communication with a court or a judicial commission, that party shall request a conference call with the court or commission. The court or commission, or its designee, shall determine if the conference call is in order and, if so, shall schedule the conference call. The party desiring communication shall be responsible for arranging the call and will bear the cost thereof.

3-2 Mediation

A. At the sole discretion of a court or commission (Session, Presbytery, or General Assembly), an ecclesiastical judicial procedure brought under this *Book of Discipline* may be assigned to a mediator(s). A matter so assigned for mediation may only proceed with the written consent of all necessary individuals as determined by the court or commission referring the matter to mediation.

B. Upon the court's assignment of a church member(s) to serve as a mediator, he will not be eligible to serve as a member of the court should it prove necessary for the matter to be brought before the court or judicial commission.

C. Prior to the commencement of mediation, the mediator(s) shall obtain the written agreement of all participants in the mediation to be bound by the following:

1. All discussions are to be considered confidential unless all parties and the mediator(s) agree otherwise.
2. Any admissions made and settlement offers made will not be cited in any further proceeding concerning any other matter before the court should the matter not be resolved in mediation. No participant in the mediation will call a mediator(s) as a witness to the mediation in any subsequent hearing and/or in any other forum.

   Any person who violates the terms of this agreement may be subject to sanction for rebellion under *Book of Discipline* 1-8.
3. A mediator(s) may only report to the court or commission whether the matter has been settled, or not settled, or partially settled. If settled, the terms of any settlement will be disclosed to the court or judicial commission. However, no settlement can be entered into which conflicts shall conflict with any provision of the Constitution of the EPC. Any such settlement will be considered null and void ab initio (from the beginning). Written settlements are to be sealed and kept by the Clerk of the court separate from the court's or commission's regular minutes.
4. No formal record of any settlement discussions will be made. This prohibition includes the use of any recording device or a stenographer.
5. If any party to mediation desires to have legal counsel, the other party shall be afforded the same opportunity. The provisions of **D.**10-3 shall apply to all counse

— 4 —
JURISDICTION

4-1 The Right of Private Judgment

Since "God alone is Lord of the conscience," we consider the right of private judgment in religious matters to be universal and unalienable. Therefore, the church, in disciplinary cases, has jurisdiction only over her members (**D.**1-4).

4-2 Original Jurisdiction

In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply:

A. The Session

The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of that local church.

B. The Presbytery

The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving Teaching Elders of the Presbytery and jurisdiction over Chapter 14 complaints regarding actions or decisions of sessions within its designated area (**G.**19-1).

C. The General Assembly

The General Assembly has original jurisdiction over Chapter 14 complaints regarding actions or decisions of Presbyteries and judicial cases referred to it by a lower court (**G.**22-3)

D. Dissolved Churches

If a particular church is dissolved, the Presbytery shall assume jurisdiction with regard to any case of discipline begun by the Session but not concluded.

E. Transfer of Membership

A member of a local church or a Presbytery whose membership is being transferred shall remain under the jurisdiction of the first until received by the second.

4-3 Assumption of Jurisdiction

In the event a court shall be unable or unwilling to try a person or persons accused, the next higher court may assume jurisdiction after giving thirty days' written notice to the lower court of its intention to assume jurisdiction.[201]

4-4 Failure to Act

When a court of original jurisdiction fails to act in a disciplinary case before it for a period of ninety days after initiation of the case, the next higher court may, on motion by any member of the church, assume jurisdiction. It may issue instructions to the lower court, or it may conclude the case itself.[202]

[201] Use Form 13 (p. 121).
[202] Use Form 13 (p. 121).

4-5 Termination of Jurisdiction[203]

Jurisdiction in judicial cases ends upon receipt of written notice of renunciation by the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the court acknowledging that renunciation. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days,[204] the acknowledgment of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the permission of the accused.

[203] Revised 06/2008, 06/2010, 06/2013.

[204] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

— 5 —
OFFENSES

5-1 Offenses

As defined in **D.**1-2,[205] offenses that require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, Immorality, and Contempt for the established order of the church. Nothing ought to be considered by any court as an offense or admitted as a matter of accusation that cannot be proved to be such from Scripture. The **Westminster Confession of Faith**, with the **Larger and Shorter Catechisms** and the **Book of Order** consisting of the *Book of Government*, the *Book of Discipline*, and the *Book of Worship,* are the standards adopted by the church as expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to faith and practice.

5-2 Personal and General Offenses

A personal offense is an offense as defined in **D.**5-1 in a way of wrong done to some particular person or persons, including one's own self. A general offense is an offense as defined in **D.**5-1 but not directed against any particular person.

5-3 Private and Public Offenses

Private offenses are those known only to an individual or, at most, only to a few persons. Public offenses are those that are known to more than a few persons.

5-4 Preliminary Sanctions

When it is impracticable to commence an action against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the church requires it, exclude the accused from the sacraments until the charges against him can be examined.

5-5 Out-of-Bounds Offenses

When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely to otherwise become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself there is a strong presumption of guilt, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be transferred for trial and imposition of sanctions, if any, to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.

[205] See also **D.**1-8, 1-9, and 1-10.

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COMMENCING AN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURE INVOLVING DISCIPLINE

6-1 Commencement of Actions for Discipline

An action for discipline shall commence:

A. By a Person or Persons

When a person files a written charge with the Clerk of the court of appropriate jurisdiction.[206]

B. By the Court

When the court having jurisdiction determines that a charge is in order and there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

6-2 Limitation on Actions

An action for discipline must be commenced within three years[207] after the acts constituting the offense were committed unless the acts were unknown and were not reasonably knowable by the offended person or court.

In the event that the offended person is under the age of 18, the action for discipline must be commenced before that person's twenty-first birthday.

6-3 Preliminary Investigation of a Charge by a Person or Persons

After an action is commenced by a person:

A. The court or commission shall commence a preliminary investigation in accordance with **D.**7-1.

B. After the preliminary investigation is concluded, the court or commission shall make a determination whether or not there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

6-4 Proceedings upon a Determination of a Strong Presumption of Guilt

In the event of a determination of a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused, the court or commission shall appoint a prosecutor, who shall prepare an indictment and proceed to trial in accordance with Chapters 7 through 10.

6-5 Trial

The court or commission shall conduct a trial in accordance with Chapters 9 and 10.

6-6 Decision

The court or commission shall render its decision in accordance with Chapter 11.

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[206] Use Form 1 (p. 106).

[207] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

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PRE-HEARING PROCESS IN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES INVOLVING DISCIPLINE

7-1 Investigation of a Charge

A. Care over the Church

It is the duty of all church courts to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses that require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved by an offense shall request an investigation in writing.

B. Written Charges

No investigation against an accused offender shall be commenced unless some person files a written charge with the Clerk of the court or unless the court finds it necessary under *Book of Discipline* 1-5 and 1-6 for itself to undertake an investigation.

C. Judicial Investigative Committee[208]

The court may appoint a judicial investigative committee to serve as a finder of fact, which shall report its findings to the court with its recommendations. The judicial investigative committee shall have no authority to act for the court other than as an investigative body.[209, 210]

7-2 Appointment of a Prosecutor

If an investigation should result in raising a strong presumption of guilt of the party accused, the court shall institute an ecclesiastical judicial procedure and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare an indictment and to prosecute the case. The prosecutor shall be a member of the court. In cases before the Session, however, he need not be a member of that court but needs only to be a communing member of the church (as defined in **D.**1-7).

7-3 Selection of Prosecutor

Ordinarily, no offended person (or person knowing of an offense) shall become a prosecutor of personal offenses. A church court, however, may investigate personal offenses requiring discipline under **D.**6-1 when they become known to members of the court.[211]

7-4 Parties in a Case

The original and only parties in a case of ecclesiastical judicial procedure are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor is always the representative of the church. On appeal, the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

[208] Revised 6/2004, changing "Judicial Committee" to "Judicial Investigative Committee."
[209] Use Form 2 (p. 118).
[210] Use Form 8 (p. 116).
[211] Use Form 3 (p. 109).

7-5 Private Reconciliation

When the prosecution is instituted by the court or commission, the steps required by **D.**1-6 in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will be advisable to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring him to a sense of repentance before instituting actual ecclesiastical judicial procedures. The committee may then make recommendations to the court or commission concerning further prosecution of the case.

7-6 Biased Accusations and Testimony

Great caution should be exercised by the court or commission in receiving accusations and testimony from any person:

A. Who is known to hold a malignant spirit against the accused;

B. Who is not of good character;

C. Who is under sanction, or who is the subject of an action for ecclesiastical judicial procedures;

D. Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused, or

E. Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash, or highly imprudent.

7-7 Suspension of Official Functions

When an action for discipline has been commenced against a member of a court, any or all of his official functions may be suspended at the court's or commission's discretion, but this shall never be done in the way of sanction.[212]

[212] Use Form 7 (p. 115).

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HEARINGS IN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES INVOLVING DISCIPLINE

8-1 Warning to All

Every member of a court or commission engaged in an ecclesiastical judicial procedure shall bear in mind the command of Scripture: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." Galatians 6:1 (NIV).

8-2 Processing a Charge

A. Commencement

When ecclesiastical judicial procedures are commenced in accordance with **D.**6-1, nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court thereafter, unless by consent of the parties, except:

1. To appoint a prosecutor in accordance with **D.**7-1 and **D.**7-3.

2. To order the indictment drawn and a copy, including names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, in person or by means requiring a written receipt.

3. To set a date for trial.

B. Commissions

Ordinarily, the court shall decide at this time whether it shall try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission in accordance with **D.**10-5 and **G.**21-1B. Commissioners shall be ordained Elders within the jurisdiction of the court involved.

C. Moderator Pro-Tempore

With the consent of the Moderator, and if the court so desires, it may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator Pro-Tempore for a particular case. The Moderator Pro-Tempore shall exercise the duties of a Moderator as described in **G.**18-2 or **G.**19-3 with respect to the particular judicial case only.

8-3 Indictment

A. Heading of the Indictment[213]

Every indictment shall begin: "In the name of the Evangelical 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."

B. Contents of the Indictment

The indictment shall clearly state the times, places, and circumstances as to the actions alleged to require disciplinary sanctions so that the accused may have adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make his defense.

[213] Use Form 4 (p. 110).

8-4 Formal Summons

A. Issuance of Formal Summons[214]

The Moderator or Clerk shall issue formal summons in the name of the court or

to the accused and to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf.

B. Contents

The formal summons shall identify the parties to the trial, shall state the time and place of the trial, and shall warn the parties and witnesses of the sanctions for refusal to obey a formal summons.

C. Service of Summons and Indictment

The Clerk of the court or commission shall deliver a copy of the summons and the indictment to the defendant in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. The Clerk shall further deliver a summons to necessary witnesses in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt.

D. Witness and Exhibits List

Each of the parties shall provide the other with a list of expected witnesses and copies of all exhibits not later than five days before trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt.[215]

8-5 Refusal to Obey a Formal Summons

A. Accused Person

When an accused person shall refuse to obey a formal summons, he shall be served with a second formal summons.

B. Second Summons[216]

A second formal summons shall be accompanied by a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court) or that if he appears and refuses to plead, he shall be dealt with for his rebellion.

C. Sanctions for Failure to Appear

When an accused person, having been twice formally summoned in accord with **D.**8-5B shall fail to appear, the court or commission shall enter this fact upon its records, together with a copy of the indictment, and shall suspend the accused person from the sacraments for his rebellion in failing to appear.

In the event the accused person shall be an officer, the court or commission shall remove him from office and suspend or excommunicate him from the church.

In the event the accused person shall be a member but not an officer and the charge be one of a serious nature as described in **D.**1-2, the court may proceed to removal of the accused person from the membership and fellowship of the church.

[214] Use Form 5 (p. 111).
[215] Use Form 9 (p. 117).
[216] Use Form 6 (p. 113).

D. Failure of a Witness to Appear

In the event a duly summoned officer or member of the church willfully fails to appear or refuses to testify, the court may treat the refusal of the witness to appear as rebellion and may proceed to admonish, suspend, remove from office, and/or expel him from the membership and fellowship of the church without need for further action.

8-6 Time Periods

The time which must elapse between the serving of the first formal summons on the accused person and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear shall be at least ten days.[217] The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent summons shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it is quite sufficient for a reasonable and convenient compliance with the summons.

[217] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

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EVIDENCE

9-1 Competency of Witnesses

Competency means the ability to testify. All persons, including the parties, who have sufficient intelligence to understand the obligation of an oath or affirmation are competent witnesses.

9-2 Testimony of the Accused

The accused party may be allowed but not compelled to testify. No inference of guilt may be drawn from his failure to testify. The person or persons who filed the charges under **D.**6-1A shall be required to testify on the demand of the accused.

9-3 Families

Husbands and wives, parents and children, shall not be required to testify against each other.

9-4 Exclusion of Witnesses

Any witness to be examined, other than the accused or a member of the court, may be excluded from the examination of any other witness in the same case if any party objects.

9-5 Disqualification of Witnesses

A member of the court who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified for sitting as a judge if either party objects.

9-6 Oath or Affirmation

The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms: "Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?" If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court and, for conscientious reasons, prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so.

9-7 Examination of Witnesses[218]

A. Examination and Cross-Examination

Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them and then cross-examined by the opposite party, after which any party or member of the court may ask additional questions. No question shall be asked or answered except by permission of the Moderator subject to an appeal to the court or commission. The court or commission shall not permit cumulative or repetitive questions or questions that are frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

B. Witness Inconvenience[219]

When the alleged offense 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 judicial investigative committee or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it.

[218] Use Form 9 (p. 117).
[219] Revised 6/2004.

Due notice of the time and place of the taking of testimony by the judicial investigative committee or the coordinate court shall be given to the opposite party. Testimony may be taken by questions asked to the witness with answers recorded in writing or recorded by electronic or other means. All parties shall have the right to examine the witness.

9-8 Credibility

Credibility means the degree of credit which may be given to the testimony of a witness. In assessing the credibility of a witness, the court may consider any matter that bears on the credibility of the witness, including, but not limited to, the witness's relationship to the parties or other witnesses, his interest in the result, his weakness of understanding, his demeanor while testifying, his character for honesty or truthfulness, and his belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments.

9-9 The Record

A. Authentication

The records of a court or commission, 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 any other court. Authentication shall be in writing in the following or similar form:

I, _____ , Clerk [or Moderator] of the _____

[name of court] do hereby certify that the foregoing are true, correct, and complete copies of the Record in the Case of _____ .

Signed: _____ Date: _____

B. Testimony

The testimony taken by one court or commission and regularly authenticated shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

9-10 Burden of Proof

The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to prove an allegation of the indictment. However, if, in addition to the testimony of one witness, other supporting evidence is proved, the allegation may be considered to be proved.

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THE TRIAL

10-1 Trial Proceedings

When a court or commission proceeds to trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

A. The Charge to the Court or Commission

The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall exhort the members to remember and consider their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to participate.

B. Indictment

The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall read the indictment,[220] and the accused shall be called upon to declare whether he is guilty or not. If the accused pleads guilty, the court or commission may deal with him according to its discretion. If he pleads not guilty, the trial shall proceed. Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Accused parties necessarily absent shall have counsel assigned to them.

C. Service of Summons

Before proceeding to trial, the court or commission shall ascertain that its summons has been duly served.[221]

D. Opening Statements

Each party shall be permitted to make a brief opening statement not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court or commission. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused party or parties.

E. Testimony

The witnesses for the prosecution and then those for the accused shall be examined in accordance with Chapter 9.[222]

F. Exclusion of Prosecutor and the Accused Person

On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the prosecutor and the accused persons. When they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. The Moderator shall announce the court's or commission's decision upon the return of the prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom.

G. Closing Argument

Each party shall be permitted to make a brief closing argument not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused party or parties. The prosecutor shall be permitted to close, but the total amount of time allocated to each party shall be equal.

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[220] **D.**8-3.
[221] **D.**8-4.
[222] Use Form 9 (p. 117).

H. Deliberations

The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinions in the case. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question.

I. The Vote

The vote shall be by secret ballot, and all members of the court or commission shall vote "Guilty" or "Not Guilty" on each charge of the indictment. A verdict of guilty shall be rendered only upon a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall announce the court's decision upon the return of the prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom.[223]

J. Imposition of Sanctions

Before sanctions are determined, the prosecutor and accused person found guilty shall be given the opportunity to present evidence or argument bearing on the administration of sanctions only.

Thereupon, the count or commission shall proceed to a determination of sanctions pursuant to Chapter 11. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and determine sanctions. Sanctions may be rendered upon a simple majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the court's determination of sanctions, which shall be entered into the records upon return of the prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom.

K. Motion for New Trial

If, after trial before any court, new testimony is discovered which the accused believes is important, he shall have the right to ask for a new trial. The court shall have the power to grant his request.

10-2 Challenges to the Court

Any party may, for cause hereinafter described, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case. The question shall be decided by other members of the court. A challenge for cause against a member of the court shall be granted when:

A. Disclosure of Opinion: The member of the court expresses his opinion of the guilt of any party to any person not a member of the court before the conclusion of the trial.

B. Absence: The member of the court shall absent himself from any sitting of the trial without the permission of the court or satisfactory reasons rendered.

C. Conflict of Interest: The member of the court appears to the court to be related to the parties or other witnesses, to have an interest in the result, or to have a similar impediment or conflict of interest.

10-3 Professional or Learned Counsel

A. No Paid Counsel

No person serving as counsel shall be permitted to receive compensation for services rendered to any party. However, parties may reimburse counsel for their reasonable expenses.[224]

[223] Use Form 11 (p. 119).
[224] Use Form 10 (p. 118).

B. Professional or Learned Counsel

In the event any party shall be represented by a person who is a graduate of an accredited school of law, the other parties shall be likewise permitted to be represented by learned or professional counsel. However, learned or professional counsel must be a member of the church as church as defined in **D.**1-7. A member of the court serving as counsel in the case shall not be allowed to sit in judgment on the case.

10-4 The Record

A. The Record

The Clerk or other person designated by the court or commission shall, within thirty days after the trial, make and maintain as part of the permanent records of the court or commission a complete record of the proceedings, including the charges, the indictment, the answer (if any), all the testimony, whether transcribed or prepared in summary form, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the court or commission relating to the case including the written ballots evidencing the decision and the determination of sanctions. These documents shall constitute the Record of the Case and should ordinarily be maintained separately from the Minutes of the court or commission.

B. Expenses of the Record:

The court or commission shall make and maintain a transcript or record of the proceedings by written or electronic means. The parties shall be permitted to make copies (by transcript or electronic recording) of the whole proceedings at their own expense.

C. Appeals

When a case is appealed or removed to a higher court by complaint, the lower court shall transmit the Record of the Case to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint. The higher court shall render its decision based only on that which is contained in the Record. On the final decision of a case by a higher court, the decision shall be communicated to all lower courts.

10-5 Judicial Commissions[225]

A. Rights and Duties

A judicial commission created in accordance with **D.**8-2 B shall have all the rights, privileges, duties, and obligations of the court in the matter assigned to it.

B. Composition

Judicial commissions shall be composed of no less than three or more than seven members elected by the court.

C. Membership

Judicial commissions of Presbytery shall be composed of Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Minister as possible in accordance with *Book of Government* **G.**21-1C.[226]

[225] See also **G.**21-1C.
[226] Use Form 8 (p. 116).

— 11 —
DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

11-1 Exhortation to Meekness

When any person shall be found guilty of an offense, the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother or sister in the spirit of meekness. The members are exhorted to watch themselves so that they may avoid temptation.

11-2 Disciplinary Sanctions

Disciplinary sanctions that may be administered by church courts or commissions are admonition, suspension, removal from church office, and excommunication. When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction.

If the court finds 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 person's ministry, it shall take all prudent measures to see that the infirmity is amended.

11-3 Definition of Admonition

Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning of his guilt and danger, and encouraging him to be more careful and watchful in the future.

11-4 Definition of Suspension

Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities.

With respect to church officers, suspension may include the exclusion of the officer from office and the sacraments. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration.

Suspension should generally be indefinite in its duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its repeal. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though he confesses his sin and gives evidence of repentance.

11-5 Definition of Removal from Office

Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender's ordination and election are set aside, and the offender is removed from all church offices without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.

11-6 Definition of Excommunication

Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent.

The purpose of this sanction is to reclaim the offender, to deliver the church from the disgrace and injury of his offense, and to motivate the church with fear by the example of his discipline.

11-7 Principles for the Administration of Sanctions[227, 228]

The administration of church sanctions shall be suited to the nature of the offense. For private

[227] Revised 06/10.
[228] Use Form 12 (p. 120).

offenses, sanctions should be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in private by one or more members of the court or commission. In the case of public offenses, the degree of sanction and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court or commission, acting in accordance with the paragraphs below, which deal with particular sanctions.

If the charge is one of serious immorality or heresy and the accused person persists in his rebellion, the court or commission may proceed to inflict the highest sanction.

When a Teaching Elder is removed from office, his pastoral relationship shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the sanction shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

When a Presbytery shall remove a Teaching Elder from his office without excommunication, it shall assign him to membership at some local church subject to the approval of the Session of that local church.

11-8 The Sanction of Admonition

The sanction of admonition may be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public, the admonition shall be administered by the Moderator or Chair in the presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it appropriate.

11-9 Confession and Restoration

A. Confession

When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court or commission, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment rendered without judicial procedures.

When an officer, before judgment is entered, shall make a confession of a matter that is marked by outrageous or scandalous crime or vice, such as substance abuse, marital infidelity, embezzlement, or the like, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court or commission shall without delay suspend[229] or remove him from his office.

B. Restoration

An officer suspended or removed from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which, in the case of removal from office, shall be for not less than one year. Any officer must present evidence that it is virtually certain that the conduct causing his suspension or removal from office will not occur again.

C. Restoration of a Teaching Elder

A Teaching Elder removed from office shall not be restored until it appears that the general sentiment of the church is strongly in his favor and demands his restoration. In that event, restoration shall be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent.

When an application for restoration and a statement of support from the Session of the church to which the former Teaching Elder has been assigned is filed with the clerk of the Presbytery, the application will be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee for its review and recommendation. Consideration of the application will proceed as follows:

[229] Use Form 7 (p. 115).

1. Should the Ministerial Committee choose to recommend restoration to the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall consider the recommendation for restoration in executive session.
2. The Teaching Elder seeking restoration and the Ministerial Committee will be provided the opportunity to address the Presbytery.
3. Upon hearing from the Teaching Elder seeking restoration, he shall be excused.
4. A motion to restore or not restore may be brought before the Presbytery only by its Ministerial Committee.
5. All votes concerning Teaching Elder restoration are to be by secret ballot.
6. A 4/5 affirmative vote shall be required for restoration to office.
7. Restoration may be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent.

11-10 The Sanction of Suspension may be for a definite or indefinite period of time.

The goal of suspension is to impress the offender of the evil of his sin and, under God's blessing, to lead him to repentance.

Definite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's or commission's discretion.[230]

11-11 Indefinite suspension

Indefinite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's or commission's discretion.[231]

When the court or commission has resolved to pass the sentence, the Moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

"Whereas you, _____ [here describe the person as a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, Deacon, or member of the Church] are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin _____ [here insert the offense], 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.

11-12 Removal from Office

The sanction of removal from office shall be administered by the Moderator or Chair in the following words:

"Whereas _____ , a Teaching Elder 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 Minister (or Ruling Elder or Deacon), and therefore, we do hereby, in the name and by the

[230] Use Form 7 (p. 115).
[231] Ibid.

authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, remove him from the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon) of the said _____ and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof." If the sanction includes suspension or excommunication, the Moderator or Chair shall proceed to say: "We do, moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the membership and fellowship of the Church."

The sentence of removal from office ought to be accompanied by solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

11-13 Excommunication

Excommunication may be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or it may be inflicted in public as the court may decide. In administering this sanction, the Moderator of the court or Chair of the commission shall make a statement of the several steps that have been taken with respect to the offending person and of the decision to cut him off from the membership and fellowship of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members and shall explain the nature, use, and consequences of this sanction. He shall then administer the sanction in the following words:

"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."

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REMOVAL OF SANCTIONS

12-1 Court Should Pray for the Offender

After any person has been suspended from the sacraments, it is proper that the Elders 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.

12-2 Restoration to the Sacraments

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 or commission alone or publicly and be restored to the sacraments of the church and to his office, if such be the judgment of the court or commission, which restoration shall be declared to the penitent in words of the following import:

"Whereas you, _____, have been suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the office of Teaching Elder, or Ruling Elder, or Deacon) but have now demonstrated 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, restore you from the said sentence of suspension and 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.

12-3 Restoration of an Excommunicated Person

Subject to the provisions of **D.**12-7**,** when an excommunicated person shall be so moved with his excommunication that he is brought to repentance and he desires to be readmitted to the membership and fellowship of the church, he may request that the Session restore him.

The Session shall proceed to restore him if it finds sufficient evidence of his sincere repentance. This may be done in the presence of the court or commission or of the congregation as seems best to the Session.

On the day appointed for his restoration, the Moderator of the court or Chair of the commission shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him the following questions:

"Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God and in refusing to hear His Church?" Answer, "I do."

"Do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the church?" Answer, "I do."

"Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and sorrow for your sin and rebellion, and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?" Answer, "I do."

"Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humility of mind and carefulness to avoid sin and to attempt to live a lifestyle that will glorify God our Savior?" Answer, "I do."

Here, the Moderator or Chair shall give the person being restored 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 membership and fellowship of the Church but now have demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we, the Session of

this Church, do declare you restored from the sentence of excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the membership and fellowship of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation."

After which, there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

12-4 Restoration to Office

When an officer who has been removed from office makes a public confession in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the restoration of an excommunicated person, he may be restored to office. His restoration to office shall be announced to him by the Moderator or Chair as follows:

"Whereas you, _____ , formerly a Teaching of this Presbytery (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), have been removed from your office but have now demonstrated 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 restored from the said sentence of removal from office formerly pronounced against you, and we do furthermore restore you to your office and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be duly called."

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

12-5 Reelection Required for Exercise of Office

When a Ruling Elder or Deacon has been pardoned from the sanction of removal from office, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without reelection by the people.

12-6 Special Provisions for the Restoration of a Minister

In the restoration of a Teaching Elder who has been suspended or removed from office, it is the duty of the Presbytery to proceed with great caution. In conjunction with the Presbytery and the church to which he has been assigned, pursuant to **D.**11-7, the Presbytery and the Session of that church should first admit him to the sacraments, if he has been suspended from them, and afterward should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time. The court shall oversee his lifestyle so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness. When the Presbytery is satisfied in these respects, it shall restore him to his office.

The case shall remain under judicial consideration until the sentence of restoration has been pronounced.

12-7 Transfer of Case to More Convenient Forum

When a person under sanction shall move to a place that is remote from the court by which he was sentenced and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, the court may, if it deems it appropriate, transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the person under sanction resides. The court of the person's residence shall then assume jurisdiction over the case and proceed with it as though it had original jurisdiction.[232]

[232] Use Form 13 (p. 121).

— 13 —
APPEALS

13-1 Definition

An appeal is a request made to a higher court to review a judgment made by a lower court by and through the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures (cases of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt). An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher court unless the higher court directs and authorizes that the appeal be heard in another court or by a commission created for the express purpose of hearing the appeal and rendering a decision thereupon.

13-2 Standing to Appeal; Parties to Appeal

A. Only an accused party, found guilty and sanctioned by a lower court, has standing to appeal the lower court's decision to a higher court.

B. The party bringing the appeal shall be known as "Appellant." The party against whom the appeal is taken shall be known as "Appellee."

13-3 Newly Discovered Evidence

Newly discovered evidence is evidence that a party did not know, nor should have known, existed during the lower court proceedings.

If, in the prosecution of an appeal, newly discovered evidence is sought to be introduced, a party seeking its introduction must file a motion with notice to all other parties demonstrating justification for its introduction. Upon approval of the motion, the appellate court may remand the case to the lower court for a new trial or may receive the evidence and proceed with the case.

13-4 Grounds for Appeal

The grounds for appeal are:

A. Any misapplication of the EPC Constitution;

B. Any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court;

C. Receiving improper evidence or declining to receive proper evidence;

D. Rendering a decision before all the testimony is reasonably heard;

E. Manifestation of prejudice in the case; and

F. Mistake or injustice in the judgment or sanction.

13-5 Notice of Appeal

Written notice of appeal shall be filed no later than thirty (30) days[233] after the entry of judgment of the lower court. The filing of the Notice of Appeal with the Clerk of the appellate court places the appeal before that court. A copy of the Notice of Appeal also shall be filed with the lower court from which the appeal is taken.[234]

[233] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

[234] Use Form 14 (p. 122).

13-6 Statement of Grounds for Appeal

Written statement of grounds for appeal shall be filed no later than fifteen (15) days[235] after the Notice of Appeal is filed. The statement must state the factual or constitutional bases forming the issues on appeal.

13-7 Filing the Record

Within thirty (30) days[236] after receipt of a Notice of Appeal, it shall be the duty of the Clerk of the lower court to prepare and file with the Clerk of the higher court the Record of the Case as defined in **D.**10-4.

13-8 Stay Pending Appeal

The filing of a Notice of Appeal does not stay the judgment of the lower court. If, however, the sanction is suspension, excommunication, or removal from office, the sanctioned party may, for sufficient reasons provided in writing, petition the higher court to stay the sanction until the case is finally decided. The higher court, in its discretion, may stay the sanction or later modify the stay. In the case that a stay is imposed or later modified, the higher court will notify the lower court. The lower court will confirm receipt of the stay and its compliance with it.

13-9 Procedures on Appeal

After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be considered, the following procedures shall be followed:

A. The court shall read the complete Record of the Case as submitted by the lower court. The higher court shall provide the Record to the Appellant. Before sending the Record to the Appellant, the higher court may, at its discretion, redact the Record in order to protect confidential or sensitive information that is not relevant to the appeal.

B. The Appellant shall file a written statement which sets forth the issues on appeal and the arguments in support thereof within thirty (30) days[237] of the receipt of the Record of the Case by the higher court. In addition, a copy of the written statement shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written statement to the appellee.

C. The Appellee may file a written response within fifteen (15) days[238] of the receipt by the higher court of the appellant's written statement. In addition, a copy of the written response shall be delivered to the Appellant. Appellee shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written response to the appellant.

D. The Appellant may file a written reply to the Appellee's written response within fifteen (15) days[239] of the receipt by the higher court of Appellee's written response, if any. In addition, a copy of the written reply shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written reply to the appellee.

E. The Appellant or Appellee may file a written request for oral argument, explaining why it is necessary and should be permitted. In response to such a request, or at its own discretion, the higher court may allow oral argument. If oral argument is allowed, the

[235] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.

court will advise all parties of the date, time, and place of oral argument and the time allotted to each party.

In the alternative, the higher court may determine the issues on the appeal based solely on the Record of the Case, the written statements, responses, and replies.

F. In every case in which an oral argument is heard, a record of the oral argument shall be kept. The recording of the oral argument may be transcribed, and the recording or copy of the transcription maintained by the Stated Clerk of the higher court. In the case of an appeal to the next higher court, a party may request a copy of the transcript. The cost of transcription shall be borne by the requesting party.

G. The members of the higher court, in their deliberations, shall express their opinions, deliberate upon, and vote on the issues raised.

H. The vote shall be taken on each ground for appeal set forth in the statement filed pursuant to **D.**13-6 above in this form: "Shall this ground for appeal be sustained?"

13-10 Decision on Appeal

A. The higher court may:[240]

1. Confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court; or
2. Remand the case to the lower court for the purpose of amending the Record of the Case, should it appear incorrect or defective or
3. Remand the case to the lower court with instructions.

B. If the higher court or commission deems it wise, it may also render a written opinion, which shall become a part of the Record of the Case.

C. Any and all persons, including members of the higher court who were involved with, have intimate knowledge of or otherwise participated in the underlying judgment of the lower court, are precluded from involvement with the higher court in its determination of the issues on appeal.

13-11 Counsel

All parties shall have the right of counsel consistent with **D.**10-3.

13-12 Abandonment of Appeal

Absent extenuating circumstances made known to the higher court beforehand, the appellant shall be deemed to have abandoned his appeal if he does not comply with the procedures set forth above. In such cases, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the higher court determines that the subject matter of the appeal is so serious that the peace and purity of the church is at stake. In such a case, the higher court, in its discretion, may nonetheless decide the appeal.[241, 242]

13-13 Conduct of the Parties

If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude in the appeal process, he may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court.

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[240] Use Form 16 (p. 124).

[241] See **D.**4-5 for stipulations regarding renunciation of jurisdiction.

[242] Use Form 15 (p. 123).

13-14 Failure to File the Record

If the Clerk of a lower court neglects or willfully fails to file the Record of the Case or any part of it, the Clerk may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. Until the complete

Record of the Case is filed with the higher court, the judgment of the lower court may be stayed at the discretion of the higher court.

If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the appellant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at his own expense.

— 14 —
COMPLAINTS

14-1 Complaint Defined

A complaint is a written contention made to a higher court challenging some act or decision of a lower court that seeks a remedy.

14-2 Standing to File a Complaint

A. It is the right of any member of the church in good standing to make a complaint against any action of a lower court to whose jurisdiction he is subject. A complaint shall not be made to any court other than the next higher court except with the consent of the next higher court.

B. Notwithstanding the above, a member of the church shall not have standing to file a complaint under this chapter in the following circumstances:

1. When an ecclesiastical judicial proceeding has been appealed pursuant to Chapter 13 of this *Book of Discipline* and the member is a party to that ecclesiastical judicial proceeding, or
2. When the member is a Teaching or Ruling Elder who was present at the meeting at which the challenged action was taken unless a prompt written dissent or protest to the decision by the lower court or commission made the basis of the complaint has been submitted.[243]

14-3 Initiation of Chapter 14 Case

A complaint initiates a case under this Chapter 14 against a court in the following manner:

A. A complaint shall only be made when the action or decision of the court is alleged to be procedurally irregular and/or in clear violation of the EPC Constitution.

B. A complaint shall set forth with particularity all of the facts and reasons why the action or decision of the court is being challenged. This includes reference to the specific provisions of the EPC Constitution or any applicable bylaws or rules alleged to have been violated.

14-4 Designation of the Parties

The party filing the complaint shall be designated as the "Complainant."[244] The court shall be designated as the "Respondent," even if the action or decision being challenged is the action or decision of a commission appointed by the court.

14-5 Filing a Complaint

A. A complaint challenging an action or decision of a court or a commission appointed by the court shall be filed with the Clerk of the next higher court.[245]

1. A complaint challenging an action or decision taken by a Session or by its duly appointed commission shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the Presbytery in which the church is located or is otherwise aligned.

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[243] See **D.**13.

[244] If multiple parties join together to file a complaint, the plural form, "Complainants," is allowed.

[245] Use Form 17 (p. 125).

2. A complaint challenging an action or decision of the Presbytery, or by its duly appointed commission, shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the General Assembly.

B. A copy of the complaint shall be served upon the lower court by providing its Clerk with a copy thereof at the same time that the complaint is filed with the Clerk of the next higher court.[246]

14-6 Time Period for Filing a Complaint

A complaint shall be filed with the next higher court no later than thirty (30) days[247] after the date of the lower court action or decision made on the basis of the complaint. Exceptions to this time period may be allowed in cases when:

A. The Complainant legitimately had no knowledge of the lower court action or decision within the thirty (30) day period.[248, 249]

B. The Complainant may otherwise petition the higher court to file an untimely complaint to avoid manifest injustice. The decision on such a petition is solely within the discretion of the higher court.

14-7 Stay Pending Hearing on the Complaint

A. When a complaint is properly filed regarding a judgment made in a disciplinary action, rather than an appeal under **D.**13, notice of filing of the complaint 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 matter concerns the purity or peace of the church, the court may, either on its own motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided.

B. When a complaint is properly filed challenging the action or decision of a lower court in a non-disciplinary proceeding, notice of filing the complaint shall not automatically stay the action or decision of the lower court. However, the higher court, in which the complaint is filed, may, either on its own motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided.

14-8 Court Procedures upon the Filing of a Complaint

A. When a complaint is filed with the higher court, the court shall determine whether the complaint states grounds on which relief may be granted. If the court determines the complaint does not state grounds on which relief may be granted, it may either:

1. Dismiss the complaint in its entirety,
2. Strike portions thereof and proceed forward, or
3. Order the Complainant to provide a more definite statement of the grounds on which relief may be granted.

B. When a complaint is filed with the next higher court and it is determined by the court that

[246] See Form 17 (p. 125).

[247] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).

[248] Ibid.

[249] This scenario could take place in actions or decisions of an administrative commission that does not routinely announce its actions to a congregation.

the complaint states grounds on which relief may be granted, the higher court has the authority:

1. Where circumstances warrant, to void the whole or any part of the lower court action against which the complaint has been made or send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for further consideration or action.
2. To direct the lower court to appoint one or more representatives to defend the complaint against it and further direct the appointed representative to file an answer to the complaint no later than thirty (30) days[250] from the order of the higher court. The lower court may request a one-time extension of fifteen (15) days[251] to file its answer. The answer shall respond to each allegation in the complaint and shall set forth with specificity all defenses on which the lower court relies.

C. The Record of the Case

The lower court shall file the record of the case concurrently with its answer to the complaint pursuant to B.2 above. The Record of the Case shall consist of any and all documents in the lower court's possession relating to the complaint made against it. In every case, a full record shall be made, and a copy of it shall be sent to the Complainant. If the Complainant, on motion duly filed, contends that the record is incomplete or incorrect, the Complainant may file a proposed supplement to the Record of the Case within fifteen (15) days[252] of the filing of the Record of the Case.

D. Reviewing the Record

Upon receipt of the full and complete record of the case, as determined by the higher court, the higher court shall then review the record in its entirety, except any part of it that may be omitted with the mutual consent of the parties and the higher court.

E. The higher court may seek clarification of matters or direct questions to the Complainant and/or Respondent in writing.

F. Oral Argument and Notice of Hearing

The higher court may permit oral argument. If the higher court determines oral argument will be allowed, it shall provide all parties with reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing on the complaint. This notice may be provided in person or by other means establishing proof of service.

G. If oral argument is allowed, either party may file a written summary of their argument with the higher court no later than fifteen (15) days[253] before the date of the hearing. The Complainant shall have the right of opening and closing the argument.

H. Deliberations of the Court: Upon conclusion of the arguments, the members of the higher court shall convene in private, and each member shall be given an opportunity to express his opinions, deliberate upon, and vote on the question.

14-9 Voting upon a Complaint

A. Specification of the vote

In voting upon a complaint, the vote shall be either to sustain, to sustain in part, or not to sustain.

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[250] If the end of the timeline falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday (see *Act of Assembly* 14-04, p. 175).
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.

B. Effect of a vote to sustain or not to sustain

A vote to sustain shall be to sustain each and all of the items or counts of the complaint. A vote not to sustain shall be to deny the relief sought by each count of the complaint. A vote to sustain in part shall be to sustain one or more specific items or counts of the complaint.

C. A majority vote of those members of the court present is required to sustain, not to sustain, or to sustain in part the counts of the complaint.

D. Written opinion.

The court may issue a written opinion explaining its decision, which shall become part of the Record of the Case.

E. Right to Vote

No member of the lower court who participated in the action or decision made on the basis of the complaint shall hear, deliberate upon, or vote on the allegations of the complaint being heard by the next higher court.

14-10 Counsel

All parties shall have the right of counsel as described in **D.**10-3.

14-11 Abandonment of Complaint

A Complainant shall be considered to have abandoned his complaint if he does not appear before the higher court in person or by counsel at the time set for the hearing. In such cases, the act or decision of the lower court will stand unless the complainant can provide the court with a satisfactory explanation for his failure to appear or the higher court, in its discretion, chooses to act upon the complaint in the interests of the Church.

14-12 Unchristian Attitude

If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude, he may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court.

14-13 Failure to File the Record

If a lower court shall neglect to file the Record of the Case or any part of it to the harm of the complainant, it may receive a proper rebuke from the higher court. Thereupon, the act or decision upon which the complaint is based shall be suspended until the record is produced upon which the issue can be fairly heard.

If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the complainant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at his own expense.

— 15 —
DISSENT AND PROTEST

15-1 Dissent

A dissent is a statement on the record by members of a minority objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any expression of dissent shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for dissent.[254]

15-2 Protest

A protest is a more solemn and formal statement on the record by members of a minority, strenuously objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any protest shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for protest.[255]

15-3 Record of Protest or Dissent

If a protest or dissent contains temperate language and is respectful to the court, it shall be placed in the Record of the Case. The court may, if it believes it is necessary, respond to the protest or dissent. The matter shall be ended unless the persons protesting obtain permission to withdraw or amend their protest.

15-4 Right to Vote Required

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

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[254] Use Form 19 (p. 127).
[255] Use Form 18 (p. 126).

FORMS FOR DISCIPLINE

Adopted by the 20th General Assembly
(June 2000)

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FORM 1 – CHARGE

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 9-1, 6-2)

_____	_____
Name of Charging Party	Name of Charging Party
_____	_____
Name of Charging Party	Name of Charging Party
_____	_____
Name of Accused	Name of Accused
_____	_____
Date(s) of Alleged Offense	**Date(s) of Alleged Offense**

1. Was the accused under age 18 at the time of the offense? ☐ No ☐ Yes

   If yes, what was the age of the accused? _____ (*Book of Discipline* 6-2)

2. Have the charging party/parties followed the procedures under Matthew 18:15-16 and Galatians 6:1 in addressing this/these matters? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Matthew 18:15-16

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

3. Provide a detailed statement of the alleged offense(s), including—but not limited to— the nature of the offense(s), date(s) of occurrence, possible witnesses, and all other matters charging party or parties believes relevant. Use additional pages if needed.

CERTIFICATION BY CHARGING PARTY/PARTIES

As God is my/our witness, I/we hereby certify that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my/our knowledge and belief. I/we understand that such charges may result in significant actions being taken that could affect another individual(s), and I/we also understand that any fraudulent statements made by me/us may subject me/us to possible disciplinary actions.

Signature of Charging Party	Signature of Charging Party
Signature of Charging Party	Signature of Charging Party

FORM 2 – JUDICIAL INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 7-1C)

_____
Accuser

vs.

_____
Accused

The _____ hereby appoints
Church/Presbytery

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

to serve as a judicial investigative committee for the limited purpose of gathering evidence concerning the offense(s) against the accused and to report its findings to the court along with its recommendations.

_____ _____
Signature of Clerk Date Signed

FORM 3 – APPOINTMENT OF PROSECUTOR

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 7-2, 7-3)

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

The _____ at a duty called
Church/Presbytery

meeting of _____ appointed _____ to

serve as prosecutor in the above-captioned matter.

_____

Date

_____

Clerk

ACCEPTANCE BY PROSECUTOR

I hereby accept the role as prosecutor. I have no conflicts or have made full disclosure of my knowledge of the alleged offense.

_____

Prosecutor

FORM 4 – INDICTMENT

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 1-8, 1-9, 1-10, 8-2, 8-3)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

IN THE NAME OF THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, you are hereby charged with the offense(s) of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt. Specifically, you are accused of:

The offense(s) set forth above is/are 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.

_____ _____

Signature of Clerk Date Signed

FORM 5 – FORMAL SUMMONS

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 8-4)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

TO _____

Accused or Witness

FROM _____

Moderator or Clerk of Session

You are hereby summoned to appear before the court of the _____

Name of Governing Body

meeting at _____

Place

on the _____ day of _____ a trial, as described in chapters 8 through 10 of the *Book of Discipline,* concerning the indictment brought against _____ _____ by the _____.

Accused Governing Body

_____

Signature of Moderator, Clerk of Session, or Stated Clerk (Presbytery or GA)

_____

Date Signed

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE OF FORMAL SUMMONS

TO _____

Clerk

FROM _____

Individual Serving Formal Summons

☐ I certify that I have served a Formal Summons on _____

Name

by personally delivering the Summons on the _____ day of _____.

or

☐ I certify that I was unable to locate and deliver the Formal Summons.

_____ _____

Signature Date

FORM 6 – SECOND SUMMONS

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 8-5B)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

TO _____

Accused or Witness

FROM _____

Moderator or Clerk of Session

You are hereby summoned to appear before the court of the _____

Name of Governing Body

meeting at _____

Place

on the _____ day of _____ a trial, as described in chapters 8 through 10 of the *Book of Discipline,* concerning the indictment brought against ____ _____ by the _____.

Accused Governing Body

if you fail to appear at the appointed place and time (unless providentially hindered, which fact must be made known to the court), or that you appear and refuse to plead, you shall be dealt with for your rebellion in accordance with Sections 8-5C and 8-5D of the *Book of Discipline.*

_____

Signature of Moderator, Clerk of Session, or Stated Clerk (Presbytery or GA)

_____

Date Signed

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE OF FORMAL SUMMONS

TO _____

Clerk

FROM _____

Individual Serving Formal Summons

☐ I certify that I have served a Formal Summons on _____

Name

by personally delivering the Summons on the _____ day of _____.

or

☐ I certify that I was unable to locate and deliver the Formal Summons.

_____ _____

Signature Date

FORM 7 – SUSPENSION OF OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 7-7)

SUSPENSION OF OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS OF _____

Pursuant to Section 7-7 of the *Book of Discipline,* as of _____, the
Date

_____
Church/Presbytery

hereby suspends all of the official functions of the above-named officer (or if limited suspension, then the functions as set forth below):

_____ _____
Clerk Date

FORM 8 – JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 10-5)

_____
Accuser

vs.

_____
Accused

The _____ hereby appoints
Church/Presbytery

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

to serve as a judicial commission with the rights, privileges, duties, and obligations of:

_____ _____
Clerk Date

FORM 9 – WITNESS AND EXHIBITION LIST

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 8-4D)

_____
Accuser

vs.

_____
Accused

TO _____
Prosecutor or Accused

FROM _____
Accused or Prosecutor

The following are the expected witnesses for the trial (list others on reverse as necessary):

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

The following is a list of exhibits for the trial, true and correct copies of which are attached hereto (list others on reverse as necessary):

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Note: Each party shall provide the other with this list no later than five (5) days before the trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt. See Section 8-4D of the *Book of Discipline*.

_____ _____
Signature of Party Date

FORM 10 – CERTIFICATION OF NON-PAYMENT OF COUNSEL

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 8-3A)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

I hereby certify as counsel for _____ in the above matter that I am not receiving compensation for services rendered to _____ or any party, and that the only funds I may receive are the reimbursement for expenses as allowed under Section 10-3 of the *Book of Discipline.*

_____ _____

Counsel Date

FORM 11 – JUDGEMENT

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 10-11)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

The governing body in the above matter has determined that the accused is

☐ Guilty

☐ Not Guilty

of the offense(s) as set forth in the indictment. Accordingly,

☐ The sanctions as determined are imposed

☐ This matter is dismissed

_____ _____

Moderator Date

_____ _____

Clerk Date

FORM 12 – SANCTIONS

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 11)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

The governing body, having found the accused named above guilty of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt, imposes the following sanctions:

_____ _____

Moderator Date

_____ _____

Clerk Date

FORM 13 – TRANSFER OF CASE

Church/Presbytery _____

(*Book of Discipline* 4-3, 4-4, 12-7)

_____

Accuser

vs.

_____

Accused

This governing body has determined that the above matter should be transferred to

_____

Church/Presbytery

for investigation, trial, and/or administration of sanctions for the following reason(s):

_____ _____

Moderator Date

_____ _____

Clerk Date

FORM 14 – NOTICE OF APPEAL

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 13-5)

_____
Appellant

vs.

_____
Appellee

TO _____
(Clerk of Session or Stated Clerk of Governing Body from whose judgment appeal is made)

vs.

FROM _____
Appellant

Notice is hereby given of appeal to the _____
next higher Governing Body

from the judgment entered in the above matter by the _____
Governing Body entering decision

on the _____ day of _____ at _____.
Day Month Place

The grounds for the appeal are (see *Book of Discipline* 13-4 for a list of possible grounds):

_____ _____
Moderator Date

Note: An appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days after the entry of judgment. See *Book of Discipline* 13-5.

FORM 15 – ABANDONMENT OF APPEAL

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 13-12)

_____

Appellant

vs.

_____

Appellee

Appellant having failed to appear at the scheduled date and time of their appeal at

_____ on _____, the judgment of the lower court is hereby affirmed,
Time Date
and the appeal is dismissed in accordance with Section 13-12 of the *Book of Discipline*.

_____ _____
Clerk Date

FORM 16 – DETERMINATION OF APPEAL

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 13-10)

_____
Appellant

vs.

_____
Appellee

Upon hearing and due deliberation, the _____
Appellate Body

finds as follows in accord with Section 13-10 of the *Book of Discipline*.

FORM 17 – COMPLAINT

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 14)

_____
Complainant

vs.

_____
Respondent (Session, Presbytery, or General Assembly)

I/we, _____ ,
Name(s) of Complainant(s)

complain(s) to the _____
Name of the next higher Governing Body or General Assembly

against _____
Name of Church Session or Presbytery

concerning _____ ,

in that at a meeting _____ on the _____ day
Place Date

of _____ , said _____ did
Month Governing Body

_____
Decision of the lower court complained of

The reasons for the complaint are as follows:

Complainant(s) request that the _____
Governing Body to which complaint is addressed

order the _____
Governing Body complained against

to _____
Specific relief requested

_____ _____
Signature of Complainant Date

FORM 18 – PROTEST

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 15-2)

I, _____ , a member of or Commissioner to
Name

_____ , wish to protest
Name of Governing Body

_____.
Irregularity or Delinquency

The reasons for my protest are:

_____ _____
Signature Date

Written notice of protest shall be given at the particular session of the Governing Body during which it arose. The protest shall be filled with the Clerk or the Stated Clerk before adjournment.

FORM 19 – DISSENT

Church/Presbytery _____
(*Book of Discipline* 15-1)

I, _____ , a member of or Commissioner to
Name

_____ , register my dissent
Name of Governing Body

from the _____.
Action or Decision

_____ _____
Signature Date

A dissent must be voiced prior to recess of the particular session at which the action is taken. The above form may be presented to the Clerk or Stated Clerk (or that individual's assistant) to confirm the individual's dissent. The name of the individual dissenting shall be recorded.

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PART THREE
BOOK OF WORSHIP

Ratified by the 35th General Assembly (2015)[194]

— 1 —

MAN'S CHIEF END

1-1 Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.[256]

In giving glory to God, the Christian is to worship God as a private exercise of faith and as a part of the spiritual exercise of individual families. However, each person as a Christian becomes a part of the larger family of God, a community of faith called the Church. Within this family, all believers are called to share a corporate fellowship of praise, love, commitment, and service. This life together finds visible expression within the family and to the world through worship together.

1-2 Called to worship

Since natural understanding reveals that there is a God who is Lord and sovereign over all, that this God is holy, loving, good, merciful, and forgiving, it is appropriate for God's own people to hold Him in awe, to praise Him, to pray to Him, to trust in Him, and to magnify Him. While Christians are bound to give God this worship as individuals and as families, it is especially incumbent upon them to join together in corporate worship. In such worship, God's love and power in giving the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ for the remission of sin is to be acknowledged, and the dedication of life in service to Him is to be made.

1-3 Called to serve

The worship of God has, as its natural consequence, the response of commitment and service to Him. This finds expression as God's people gather to worship and then scatter into the world to serve Him. Such service includes witnessing to all peoples the marvelous deeds of Him who calls us out of darkness into His wonderful light. It includes, as a first duty, the proclamation of a grace that reaches out to forgive, to redeem, and to give new spiritual power to life for Him through Jesus Christ and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It includes a witness to the Word of God revealed in Scripture. It includes a witness to God's love and compassion by embodying that love in acts of ministry to the needs of others. Thus, the Church becomes God's instrument in the world for the fulfillment of His divine purposes for mankind.

1-4 The Church as a body of Christ

As the Church gathers in common worship and fellowship and then goes back into the world to live out its faith and commitment before men, it is acting as the Body of Christ. As a result, the individual Christian, the local church, and the Visible Church in the world combine to serve the great Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, when it is engaged in its worship and work. To be in Christ means to be involved actively in the Body by building the inner spiritual life of the Church and by extending its ministry to the world. The goal for the Church and each member of it is to have every knee bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, both within the Church and in the whole world.

[256] **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, answer to Question 1.

— 2 —
PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD

2-1 The acceptable way of worshiping God corporately is established by God Himself. Proper corporate worship is defined and outlined in God's revealed will and is to be followed in giving glory to Him. Proper worship, therefore, finds its foundation in Holy Scripture. Only God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to receive such worship.

A. Proper corporate worship shall include

1. The reverent and attentive reading of the Scriptures, the sound preaching, and conscientious hearing of the Word[257]
2. "Singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"[258]
3. The proper administration and receiving of the sacraments[259]
4. Prayer with thanksgiving[260]
5. The giving of tithes and offerings[261]

B. Proper corporate worship of God shall also include times of solemn prayer and fasting,[262] as well as special days of praise and thanksgiving.[263]

C. All worship should, at all times and in all places, be performed in a holy and respectful manner. The corporate worship of God is not to be carelessly or willfully neglected or forsaken.[264]

2-2 The Lord's Day

It is appropriate that some amount of time be set aside for the worship of God. God has commanded in His Word that all men in every age keep one day in seven holy to Him as a Sabbath. From the beginning of the world up to the resurrection of Jesus, this Sabbath was the last day of the week. Since the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, it has been changed to the first day of the week and is to be continued until the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath. As a day for remembering and celebrating the resurrection of Christ, it is a continuing witness to God's power over sin and death.[265]

A. While Christians may worship God at any time and in any place, they especially worship God in places set aside for that purpose. This does not mean other places are less sacred, but it is a witness to the world when Christians gather together in visible demonstration that God is the Lord of all. For that reason, it is appropriate to gather for corporate worship in a place set aside for the special purpose of praising, glorifying, and worshiping God.

B. It is the responsibility of all Christians to gather on the Lord's Day for worship that it might be kept holy unto the Lord. Christians should arrange their affairs and use their influence so that no one will be kept unnecessarily from worshiping God or observing the day in an appropriate manner.

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[257] 1 Timothy 4.13; **W.**2-5, 2-6.
[258] Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; **W.**2-7.
[259] 1 Corinthians 11:27-32; **W.**3.
[260] 1 Timothy 2:1-4; **W.**2-8.
[261] 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7-8; **W.**2-9.
[262] Acts 13:2-3.
[263] Hebrews 12:22-24.
[264] Hebrews 10:24-25.
[265] See the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 21.

2-3 Preparing and gathering for worship

No Christian should come to the Lord's Day unprepared. Hearts should be prepared so that worshipers might be ready to hear and receive the Word of the Lord. Daily affairs should be taken care of beforehand, and the day should be spent in rest, free from the cares and concerns of the ordinary works and words. Thoughts should not be concerned with worldly activities but should focus on the things of the Lord. Plans should be made to participate in public and private worship. Works should be limited to the duties of necessity and mercy.

A. As the people gather, they should do so in a quiet and reverent manner, remembering beforehand to pray for the Minister, for those who gather to worship, for those who are providentially hindered, and for themselves.

B. All should be present at the appointed hour, unite in all the parts of the worship, and depart only when the benediction has been pronounced. The conduct of all should be reverent, and no unbecoming conduct should be practiced.

2-4 The order of corporate worship

The people of God have been set free from all forms of bondage, including bondage to rigid rules and regulations for worship. However, the people are to remember to do all things decently and in order that all may participate and God may be glorified. For the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, this means no local church is required to follow any predetermined or rigid form of worship. However, it also means that worship should be conducted in such a way that persons are not hindered in their worship and that it not be an offense to God.

A. The Pastor, while advised to consult with the Session, has the duty and responsibility to determine the order, sequence, elements, and proportion of the service that each shall have in public worship. In making those decisions about worship, the Pastor shall be reminded of guidance for worship given in Scripture, the Reformed heritage in which we stand, of the customs, circumstances, and particular needs of the congregation, as well as the admonitions and limitations set by the *Book of Worship*.[266]

B. All who come to worship should actively participate. The worship should be so designed that there is common participation when all share in the various elements of praise to God. Participation by various members of the local church is encouraged to demonstrate that worship is a privilege of all and not relegated to a select few.

C. Each time of worship should give expression to the redemptive work of Christ. It is also appropriate to give special emphasis to certain times of the Church year that highlight specific elements of redemption.[267]

D. It is always appropriate to join with other parts of the Church in the celebration of certain days, seasons, and other special occasions. However, participation should always be in conformity with Scripture and in keeping with the heritage of the Reformed faith. It is always appropriate for the Session to set special days for prayer and fasting, for thanksgiving and praise, for remembering our heritage, and for recognizing the civic duties and responsibilities of the people of God.

2-5 The Word of God in worship

The ordinary worship of God always includes the reverent and attentive reading of the Scriptures. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence so manifest God in all His

[266] **W.**2-7B.

[267] Such times, common to the Church Universal, will be included in the *Manual of Services, Procedures, and Forms* currently under development.

power and glory as to leave mankind without excuse, to know God and His will in a way sufficient for salvation necessitates God's self-revelation made in Holy Scripture. The Scriptures are for the sure establishment of the Church as well as its comfort and protect it from the corruption of the flesh, the malice of Satan, and the world.

A. Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is to be the rule of faith and life for all Christians. The authority of the Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, does not depend upon any other than God Himself. The full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures is the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the heart. All that is necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation is clearly evident in Scripture.[268]

B. The supreme Word of God is Jesus Christ, who, for the salvation of mankind, came and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He is pre-eminently revealed in the Scriptures, and in order to truly know Him, the Scriptures must be heard. Thus, the reading of the Scriptures becomes an essential part of worship.

C. Reading of the Word should be done with a sense of awe and reverence. A prayer for illumination prior to reading is appropriate in which prayer is made for a sensitive and open heart to the leading and speaking of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily, the Scriptures in worship should be read by the Pastor or some other appropriate person who has been invited to do so.

D. The choice of passages and their length to be read from Scripture belongs to the Pastor. Since the whole counsel of God should be heard by the people, care should be exercised to read from both the Old and New Testaments. It is appropriate to use a lectionary in accomplishing this purpose.

2-6 Sound preaching of the Word

The ordinary worship of God always includes the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word in obedience to God. Such preaching should always open the Word of God in such a way that the hearer can respond with clear understanding and simple faith. In dealing with matters in which there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, the preacher is to remember that the only infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.

A. Because preaching is closely related to the reading of Scripture, it is appropriate for the sermon to follow closely the reading of the Word and to be based upon it.

B. The sermon should be related to the congregation. It should address the real issues of that community of faith and should include practical application to life. It should be framed in such terms that all present can understand. Such preaching demands study, meditation, prayer, and time for adequate preparation. Above all, that which is preached should be exemplified in the life of the preacher.

C. Since the reading of Scriptures requires attentiveness and the sermon conscientious hearing, the worshipers have a duty also. As God speaks through the Word as it is read and preached, penetrating hearts,[269] giving guidance in the Christian life, building up in the faith,[270] the worshiper has a solemn duty to be open and receptive to God's revelation. Even as the preacher is to make proper preparation, so the worshiper is to be prepared in every way to hear and respond.

D. While all of the elements of public worship are important and should not be neglected, no worship is complete without the reading and preaching of the Word. For this reason, the Pastor and Session should be careful to protect the pulpit in each local church so that the

[268] See **Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 1.
[269] Hebrews 4:12.
[270] 2 Timothy 3:16.

Word be truly preached. No person should be permitted to preach to a local church without the invitation of the Pastor and the Session, or the Session if there is no Pastor.

2-7 Music in Worship

Singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with grace in the heart[271] is a necessary and indispensable part of the corporate worship of the people of God. The whole congregation is the true choir singing praises and giving glory to God. For this reason, corporate singing is not to be neglected. Emphasis should be given to the content of the hymns that all might sing with understanding.

A. Music is not an end in itself but should serve the whole purpose of giving glory and praise to God. Where there is a choir auxiliary to the congregation, it should be remembered that it is representing the whole congregation before God and is not performing for the people. For this reason, it is appropriate for the choir to be composed of those from the local church as far as possible. Those who participate in a choir inevitably represent a special calling in the life of a congregation and should exhibit a gracious Christian life that brings honor to God. Participants in the choir should have such a character and conduct themselves in such a way that their lives will not be a barrier or hindrance to those who worship.

B. The Pastor has final authority over all parts of the service, including the music. Where there is a music director or other such person working in music, that person shall always consult with the Pastor concerning the music or worship.[272] If there is no Pastor, the Session has final authority over the service.[273]

C. Care should be exercised in selecting music so that all may rejoice in the Lord, singing and making melody in their hearts. Lyrics should be appropriate and reflect Reformed theology.

D. The use of various musical instruments in worship is appropriate unless disapproved by the Session. However, it is to be remembered that all music, including instruments, should be aids and not hindrances to or substitutes for congregational participation.

E. As a community of praise, a congregation should ordinarily conclude its worship with congregational singing suitable for the occasion prior to the benediction.

2-8 Prayer in worship

The Pastor ordinarily has the duty to lead the people in prayer during times of worship, although others may be invited to do so. The one who leads the prayer does so on behalf of the people, representing them before God. In order for prayer to be accepted, it must be made in the name of Jesus, by the help of the Holy Spirit, and be made in accordance with the will of God.[274] It is to be made for things that are lawful for God's people and should be made with understanding, reverence, humility, fervor, faith, love, and perseverance. It should be made in a language that is common to all.

A. In preparing to lead in prayer, the Pastor should give as careful attention to preparation for prayer as for preaching. The duty of voicing the prayers of the people is a solemn one and should be performed with the dignity befitting the occasion. The Pastor's own prayer life, the study of the great prayers of the Church, a close acquaintance with Scripture, and the reading of devotional classics all combine to enhance effectiveness as the Pastor represents the people before God in prayer.

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[271] Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
[272] See **W.**2-4A.
[273] See **G.**18-3A.
[274] John 14:13-14, 16:23-24; Romans 8:26-27.

B. The people are also to prepare themselves for worship and prayer. During those times when the Pastor is leading in prayer, their hearts should give assent to the thoughts that are voiced, and their demeanor should be reverent.

C. Those who lead in prayer need not be limited to fixed forms of prayer in worship, and the Pastor shall determine the emphasis given to the various parts of prayer. However, in the public worship of God, the prayers should include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession, and the communion of saints.

1. Adoration is the offering of glory and honor and praise to the holiness and majesty of God for His works of creation and providence and for the fullness of His revelation in Jesus Christ.
2. Confession is the voicing of sins common to all with opportunity for the people to confess silently private and individual sins and shortcomings, both of commission and omission.
3. Assurance of Pardon is the appropriate response to confession. God's people can approach His throne of holiness because, in Jesus, they are assured of His grace and mercy. Those who believe in Jesus as Savior, who confess their sins, who are truly penitent and sorry for all their offenses, and who intend by God's gift of spiritual power through the Holy Spirit to turn from their evil ways are assured of forgiveness. Therefore, it is the duty of the Pastor in a joyous, affirming voice to declare unto such their forgiveness. It is then appropriate for the people of God to express their own joy and gratitude in the mercy of God by singing some hymn or response such as the Doxology or the *Gloria Patri*.
4. Thanksgiving is the expression of gratitude to God for all His blessings, specific and general, as well as temporal and spiritual. God's gracious providence should be remembered, and special thanksgiving should be made for His unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ.
5. Supplication is the expression of the requests of the people, both corporate and personal, for those things needful for life, for spiritual growth, for help in trouble, for health in sickness, for the development of the fruit of the Spirit, and for all those blessings necessary for witness and service.
6. Intercession is the expression of requests made on behalf of others, especially praying for the visible Church, the Kingdom of Christ on earth, for the civil government, including the president, the congress, the judiciary, the governor, and all those in positions of authority. It shall include petition for widows and orphans and for all those who have need of God.
7. Communion of Saints is comprised of prayers of gratitude for those who have witnessed a good confession and gone to be with the Lord. The prayer should remember the invisible Church whose members number those believers of all ages of all times. It is always appropriate for the prayers of the people of God to conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

2-9 The offerings of the people of God[275]

The acknowledgment that God is the Author of every good gift and that His people are but stewards of His grace should find expression in the offerings of the congregation. In returning to God a proper stewardship of His gifts, the congregation is to be reminded that they are also held accountable not only for proper stewardship but for the use of all they have and are. The giving of the people of God in response to His goodness and love should find expression in three principal areas.

[275] For further elaboration of the "service of giving," see *Book of Worship* 7-4 (p. 152).

A. The offering of self

Stewardship begins with offering of self to God, heart, mind, body, and soul.[276] Each service may properly include a time for rededication or for commitment. It is always appropriate to present individuals with an opportunity for public response to the proclamation of the gospel by public profession of faith or reaffirmation. Such public profession or reaffirmation should be followed by church membership according to the procedure established by the congregation.[277]

B. The offering of tithes and gifts

Each worship service should include a time when the community of believers may present their tithes and gifts to God. It is a visible expression of the commitment of believers to the extension of the gospel, the work of ministry, and the support of the Church of Jesus Christ.[278]

C. The offering of service to others:

Each service of worship should remind the worshipers of God's call to service in ministry to others and provide opportunity from time to time for commitment to special service. This may include the announcement of opportunities within the common life of the congregation to serve.

[276] Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Luke 10:27.
[277] See **G.**8-2.
[278] Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

— 3 —
THE SACRAMENTS

3-1 In the gospel, only two sacraments are ordained by Christ. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A. Administration of sacraments

Ordinarily, only a lawfully ordained Minister[279] may administer the sacraments, but such do not act in their own right rather on behalf of Christ and His Church. In the absence of a lawfully ordained Minister, authority to administer the sacraments may be exercised by Ruling Elders with consent of the Session or by a Commissioned Pastor with consent of the Presbytery (**G.**9-11), or by a non-ordained global worker of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church examined and commissioned by the General Assembly (**G.**20-4A.5).[280] This privilege should be exercised only in extraordinary circumstances in which a lawfully ordained Minister is not reasonably available.

B. Nature of sacraments

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, representing Christ and all His benefits. They confirm our relationship to Him and represent a visible difference between those who belong to the Church and the rest of the world. There is a spiritual or sacramental relationship in the sacraments between the sign (water and bread and wine) and what is signified. The power revealed in the sacraments does not reside in them or in the one administering them but is in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the promise of God who gives benefits to those who worthily receive them. Thus, the sacraments are powerful and effective in the life of the recipient because of God's Word, which instituted them. For this reason, the sacraments should not be neglected or omitted.[281]

3-2 The Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ. By the act of Baptism, a person becomes a part of the Visible Church, for it is a sign and a seal of the Covenant of Grace for believers and their children. As a sign, it proclaims God's forgiveness and our redemption in Jesus Christ. As a seal, God marks us as adopted children of our heavenly Father. It indicates our engrafting into Christ, our rebirth, the remission of sins, and our ability by the power of the Spirit to walk in newness of life. This sacrament is to be continued by God's people until the end of the world.[282]

A. Candidates for Baptism

Those eligible to receive this sacrament are those who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and have promised to be obedient to Him, along with the infants of one or both believing parents. Also, those who have legal responsibility for an infant have the right to present the child for Baptism.

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[279] A *lawfully ordained minister* includes EPC Chaplains who are called to serve in a military or civilian organization, have been approved by their Presbytery, and have been endorsed by the General Assembly. Also, a *lawfully ordained minister* in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery (*Acts of Assembly* 94-22 (p. 197) and 14-06 (p. 201). See also **Westminster Confession of Faith** 27-4 (EPC version in Modern English).

[280] The clause regarding sacramental authority for certain global workers was ratified by the 36th General Assembly (2016); see also *Act of Assembly* 16-05 (p. 210) and *Rules for Assembly* X.10-1B.2 (p. 164).

[281] See **Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 27.

[282] See **Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 28.

B. Method of Baptism

In the sacrament of Baptism, water is to be used. Immersion or dipping the person into the water is not essential, and Baptism is ordinarily administered by pouring or sprinkling.

C. Effectiveness of baptism

God's grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to this sacrament. Some who are baptized will be lost, and some not baptized will be saved. Nevertheless, it is a great sin to make light of or to neglect this sacrament. A great benefit is lost when Baptism is neglected, for God promises to bless His people through this sacrament. The effectiveness of Baptism is not tied to the moment it is administered, yet God who keeps His promises confers His grace according to His own will and in His appointed time.

D. Administration of Baptism

The grace received through Baptism does not come from the tradition or form of administration, and since it is not dependent upon the devoutness or the intention of the person administering it, Baptism should be administered only once.

E. Time and place of administration

1. Since Baptism is the act by which a person is solemnly admitted into the visible Church, the regular administration of the sacrament should ordinarily be in the presence of the family of believers. At that time, the benefits and promises should be set forth. The people should be reminded of Baptism as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our engrafting into Christ, and of the need to yield to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life.
2. However, if circumstances justify administering the sacrament at a time and place other than public worship, the Teaching Elder[283] may judge. In any event, at least one Ruling Elder should be present to represent the congregation and to assume on behalf of the congregation the commitment required by that congregation in the baptismal vows. No such private administration should convey the impression of baptismal regeneration or its necessity for salvation, and those present are to be reminded that Baptism is not inseparably connected with God's grace and salvation.
3. Ordinarily, the Session shall authorize and approve Baptisms. In exceptional cases, when it is not possible to convene the Session for approval, a Pastor of the church may perform the Baptism without approval of the Session. If at all possible, a Ruling Elder should be present. That Pastor shall report the Baptism to the Session.
4. All Baptisms shall be recorded in the permanent record of the Session.

F. Baptism for Adults

When a person who was not baptized as an infant desires to profess faith in Christ and be engrafted into His Body, being admitted into the visible Church, the sacrament of Baptism shall be received.

1. Proper instruction

   Those persons desiring to be baptized shall receive necessary instruction concerning the meaning of the sacrament, the obligations of Church membership, the need to live by faith, to walk in holiness and righteousness, and to act in brotherly love toward those who have been baptized by the same Spirit into the

[283] In the *Book of Worship,* the term "Teaching Elder" is used in contexts where the reference is to those ordained in the EPC. The term "Minister" is broader, designating those ordained in the EPC or in other ecclesiastical traditions. The term "a Pastor" designates any of the EPC Teaching Elders in a church, whether Pastor, Associate, or Assistant.

same Body. The Session shall authorize the Baptism of the petitioner only when it is fully satisfied as to that person's full intention to be obedient to Christ and a profession of faith has been made.

2. Minister's duty

The Minister shall remind those present of the meaning of the sacrament as a sign and seal of engrafting, remission of sin, regeneration by the Spirit, adoption, and resurrection to everlasting life. All should be reminded to be thankful for their own Baptism with its benefits and privileges, to be humble because of sin and walking contrary to the grace given us, and to draw strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we were baptized.

3. Recipient's duty

Prior to Baptism, the recipient shall make an affirmative response in professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, affirming intention to walk in newness of life as one of those who have given their names to Christ. The recipient shall further affirm faithfulness and support of the Church and of the local church.

4. Congregation's role

In receiving a person into its fellowship and in acknowledging that person to be a part of the covenant community, the congregation assumes responsibilities toward that person. As Christ commanded His Church to baptize and teach, the congregation shall affirm its duty and commitment to the recipient publicly. The following or like question shall be proposed to the congregation by the Minister: "Do you, the members of this congregation, and in the name of the visible Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, take responsibility for the continued Christian nurture of_____ , promising to set a godly example by your own life, and to pray for_____in this new life of faith?"

5. The administration of the sacrament

After asking God's blessings to attend the sacrament, the Minister shall then administer Baptism with water, either by pouring, sprinkling, or immersion, and without other ceremony. The Minister shall use the following or like words: "_____ , on your profession of faith and promise of obedience to Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." The sacrament is to be concluded by a prayer.

G. Baptism for children[284]

1. Role of the parents

One or both believing parents, or a believer(s) exercising the authority of a parent(s), are encouraged to present their children, prior to the time when children are able to make their own profession of faith, for the Sacrament of Baptism, which should not be unnecessarily delayed.[285] Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace and, in part, confirm our position with and in Christ and demonstrate to the world the visible difference between it and those who belong to the Church.

2. Role of the Session

It is the duty of the Session and Teaching Elders to offer instruction to the parents concerning the nature and meaning of the sacrament, the obligations assumed,

[284] While traditionally called "infant Baptism," the *Book of Worship* uses "child" or "children" to include both infants and those who are beyond their infancy and eligible for Baptism but not yet of age to give a credible profession of faith.

[285] Genesis 17:11; Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 16:15, 33.

and the role the congregation plays with the parents in the spiritual nurture and growth of the child.

a. Ordinarily, the Session shall authorize and approve the Baptism of infants and children of active members of the local church, except in such cases as the Minister may deem inexpedient. In that case, the Minister shall report the Baptism to the Session. All Baptisms shall be recorded in the permanent record of the Session, and the child's name inscribed on the baptized roll.[286]

b. The Session may authorize those on the inactive roll to present children for Baptism. It may also require evidence of the intent of the petitioner(s) to follow the vows to be taken by meeting the requirements for restoration to the active roll.

c. The Session may grant permission to believers who are not members to present infants for Baptism, provided such persons are members in good standing in a true branch of the visible Church. In such cases, the Church Session shall be careful to notify the governing body of the local church in which those believers hold membership of the Baptism of the infant.

d. It is the continuing obligation of the Session to watch over the children of the congregation, to provide for that spiritual nurture necessary to grow in grace and to provide opportunities, such as a communicants' class, where the children of the congregation may come to profess their faith and be prepared to assume the obligations and privileges of full participation in the life of the congregation.

3. The role of the congregation with the parents

The Baptism of a child requires a two-fold affirmation, one by the parents and one by the covenant community.

a. The parents are to take vows indicating their commitment to bring the child up in the faith and in the loving discipline of the Lord.

b. The congregation commits itself to provide nurture, support, and a godly example in assuming with the parents the spiritual oversight of the child.

c. Parents and congregation together are to encourage growth in grace until the child, having become of age, claims Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

d. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church does not recognize godparents since the members of the local church assume with the parent's responsibility for the spiritual life of the child. However, it is permitted to have persons who might become the responsible parental authority for the child to assume the vows of obligation with the parents. In such a case, the persons participating with the parents should have the same qualifications for membership in the visible Church.

4. Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism

a. The Minister shall remind the congregation:

1) Of the meaning and nature of Baptism, they should be reminded to remember the significance of their Baptism.

2) Of the significance, benefits and privileges of their own Baptism.

3) Of their failures contrary to the grace of Baptism and for God's mercy and forgiveness.

4) To recommitment themselves to their endeavor to live by faith.

[286] **G.**8-3A.

b. The parents or other responsible person shall assume the following or like vows of duty and obligation:

1) Do you acknowledge_____ 's need for the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?

2) Do you claim God's covenant promises and benefits for _____and by faith do you look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your child as you do your own?

3) Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and do you promise by relying on God's power and grace through the Holy Spirit to live an exemplary life before your child?

4) Do you commit yourself to pray with and for your child, to teach your child the Scriptures and the great articles of our faith in Jesus Christ?

5) Do you promise to use every means provided by God, including faithful participation in the life of the Church, to bring your child up in the loving discipline of the Lord?

c. The congregation acts for the whole family of God and assumes responsibility for the child by answering the following or like questions:

1) Do you, the members of this congregation, acting for yourselves and on behalf of the whole Body of Christ, assume responsibility with these parents for the spiritual nurture of this child?

2) Do you commit yourself to set a godly example before this child, to provide, as far as you are able, all that is necessary to the end that this child may one day confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

d. The Minister shall set apart the water from all common uses to this holy use and mystery and pray for a blessing upon the Sacrament. Then the Minister shall use the following or like formula without adding any other ceremony and shall baptize the child with water, saying:
" _____ , child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."
The Sacrament is to be concluded by a prayer.

3-3 The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus on the night of His betrayal. It is to be celebrated until the end of the world as a perpetual remembrance of what He did for mankind on the cross. The Lord's Supper is a seal of all those benefits of Calvary for believers and signifies their spiritual growth and nourishment. It is a bond and pledge of the communion of believers with Jesus Christ and with each other as parts of the Church.

A. Nature of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is in no way a re-offering of Christ nor a sacrifice. It commemorates Christ's once for all offering of Himself, and in celebrating the sacrament, the people offer praise to God for what has already been done.

B. Nature of the elements

While sometimes called by the name of what they represent, the body and blood of Christ, yet they retain the essential nature of bread and wine. While the elements are to be set apart for the use ordained by Christ, this sacramental use gives no special quality to

the physical elements. In the Lord's Supper, Christ is uniquely and spiritually present and is discerned by the faith of the believer.[287]

C. Different names for the Lord's Supper.

Historically, Christians have used different names to describe the Lord's Supper. However, these names all signify the same sacrament. In addition to being called the Lord's Supper, it is called the Breaking of the Bread, Holy Communion, and the Eucharist (Thanksgiving).

D. The significance of the Lord's Supper

Those who receive the Lord's Supper spiritually feed upon Christ as the true bread, remembering and, by God's grace, renewing the covenantal benefits of Christ's death on their behalf.[288] In that sense, the sacrament conveys what it signifies when it is received by faith. Those who unworthily receive the sacrament do not receive what is signified. Rather, they are guilty of the body and blood of Jesus and condemn themselves. For this reason, the Session should be careful to refuse the Lord's Supper to those who are ignorant of its meaning or who are known to be ungodly.[289]

E. The frequency of the Lord's Supper

The Session is responsible for determining the frequency of celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is proper to observe it as often as each Lord's Day, but it should be observed at least quarterly. The Session should exercise care that the sacrament be not neglected.

F. The place of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a part of the worship of God's people. For that reason, it should be celebrated ordinarily as a part of a regular service of worship. The observance of the sacrament should always be in conjunction with the reading and preaching of the Word, with the prayers of the people accompanied by hymns of praise.

G. Special times of celebration:

1. With those who are ill.

   The Session may authorize the Lord's Supper to be celebrated with those who are ill. At least one member of the Session should be present on such occasions. The Minister shall be careful to give some brief explanation of the meaning of the sacrament.

2. Times and places other than worship on the Lord's Day

   The Session may authorize the celebration of the sacrament at a time and place other than the ordinary place of worship on the Lord's Day, provided that the Session is represented.

3. Courts of the Church

   The Presbytery and General Assembly may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper at a meeting of the court or at some service or worship under the authority of the court.

H. Preparation for the Lord's Supper

The Session should give at least one week's notice prior to the celebration of the sacrament. It is always appropriate for the Session to provide instruction on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and to solemnly warn those who are not spiritually prepared. The people are to prepare themselves by the examination of their inner spiritual

[287] **Westminster Confession of Faith** 29-7.
[288] Genesis 17:7; Galatians 3:16-17.
[289] 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 27-31.

life, of their present relationship to Christ, to confess and repent of known sins, to forgive those who have offended them, to pray earnestly for the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, and to draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith.[290]

I. Invitation to partake

The Minister shall invite all true believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including those from other congregations that are a part of the true Church, to partake in the Lord's Supper. All should be reminded of the need to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, to repent of sin, and to covenant once more to live as followers of Jesus. Those who are ignorant in their knowledge of Christ or who are living ungodly and unrepentant lives should be warned of the serious consequences for those who unworthily partake.

J. Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership.[291]

K. The elements

Adequate preparation should be made of the elements to be served. It is appropriate for a large piece of bread to be made ready for breaking by the Minister and a cup with pouring vessel for the pouring of the wine/juice during the commemoration. The bread and wine/juice may be placed on a table and covered with a fine white cloth, or they may be brought forward and placed on the table when the time of celebration comes.

L. Administration of the Lord's Supper:

1. The words of institution shall be read, either from the Gospels or from 1 Corinthians 11.
2. The bread and wine/juice shall be blessed and be set apart from ordinary use to this holy use and mystery.
3. The bread shall be broken before the people as a visible demonstration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

M. Distributing the elements

It is proper for the people to gather at the table, but ordinarily, the Ruling Elders (or others appointed by the Session) shall distribute the elements to the worshipers. A court of the Church may appoint godly people to distribute the elements when there are no Ruling Elders available.

N. The conclusion of the Lord's Supper

Following a time for private prayer and self-examination, the service may conclude with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and the people dismissed with a benediction. Following the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as an act of gratitude to God and renewed love for others, it is always appropriate to receive a special offering for the poor or some other worthy cause. Such offerings should be ordered only by the Session.

[290] 1 Corinthians 11:17-32.

[291] For additional background, see *The Pastoral Letter on Children and the Lord's Supper,* available at www.epc.org/about/beliefs.

— 4 —
THE WORSHIP OF GOD AT OTHER TIMES

4-1 Time of worship

The principal time of worship for the people of God is the Sabbath, or the Lord's Day,[292] when the resurrection of Christ is celebrated and commemorated.[293] However, the Session has the right and duty to assemble the people for worship on other days and at other times. The Session may order such assemblies at regular times or for the celebration of special events. At such special times of worship, the ordinary parts of worship[294] will normally be observed, although the Session may call for special emphasis on matters of particular concern.

4-2 Days of prayer and fasting

The Lord Jesus Christ set the example for God's people in a time of fasting. Throughout the New Testament, there is frequent indication that Christians in the early Church practiced fasting. Therefore, the Church will do well in its spiritual life if it follows this example. The Session should be diligent and sensitive to those times when such a special day is called for and should be eager to order such an event. Christians, individually and particularly families, should observe special days when fasting is practiced.

A. When called by the Session

When the Session calls a day of prayer and fasting, the purpose of the occasion should be announced, and adequate time given in order that members may prepare themselves. It is appropriate on such occasions for services of public worship to be conducted during the day set aside. All the members under the authority of the Session should make diligent effort to conscientiously participate in the day set aside.

B. Private or family observance of a day of prayer and fasting

It is entirely proper for individuals or, in particular, families, to enter into a day of prayer and fasting. Christians should exercise such an option with some regularity as an offering to God and as a reminder of total dependency upon God for all one has and is.

C. When called by a higher court

It is proper and right for a Presbytery or for the General Assembly to call a day of prayer and fasting on behalf of some occasion it deems proper. In such event, the court shall call all the people within its jurisdiction to join in the special time of prayer and fasting.

4-3 Days of thanksgiving

A joyful and grateful heart is pleasing to the Lord and brings glory to Him. Because of God's infinite love, His providential care, and His continued work in the affairs of His people, it is appropriate to observe special times of praise and thanksgiving. During such times, there shall be special services of worship, times of prayer, and the lifting of the hearts to God by all His people. Such occasions shall be ordered by the Session, by another court of the Church for those under its jurisdiction, and by individuals or families who have been especially blessed.

4-4 Individual worship

It is incumbent upon each Christian to develop the practice of daily worship of God. Such a time should include prayer, reading of the Scriptures, examination of one's inner spiritual life, and

[292] See **Westminster Confession of Faith** 21-7.
[293] See **W.**2-2.
[294] See **W.**2-1.

serious meditation. The individual Christian should strive to improve knowledge of faith and of the Church by reading and studying the documents of the faith of the Church, by learning its government and worship, as well as its history.

4-5 Family Worship

Each individual family should worship together. Such times, done regularly and faithfully, should include the reading together of God's Word, times of prayer, times of sharing with one another God's working in individual hearts, and times of doing together the things of the Lord. It is always appropriate for a family to sing together in praise of God's goodness and mercy. Families ordinarily should worship together in the public worship of God in the local church.

— 5 —
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

5-1 Marriage ordained by God

While marriage is not a sacrament of the Church, it is ordained by God and intended to last as long as the couple shall live.[295] God has designed marriage to be between a man and a woman for the mutual help of husband and wife for the development of their moral and spiritual character and for the propagation of children who are to be reared in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

5-2 Who should marry?

A man and a woman who are able to give their consent may marry unless their blood relationship is forbidden by Scripture.[296] The husband and wife should share a common Christian faith and a common intention to build a Christian home. Christians would be wise to seek as a husband or a wife those who share a common faith and heritage.

5-3 The remarriage of divorced persons

It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by the death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows, yet only in cases of extreme, unrepentant, and irremediable unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the church in keeping with the redemptive gospel of Jesus Christ when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident and a firm posture of an endeavor after Christian marriage is manifested. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried since one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union. If the Minister has any questions about the readiness of divorced persons to remarry according to these principles, the Session should be consulted, and its concurrence sought.[297]

5-4 The church's role in Christian marriage

Marriage ordinarily should be performed in the place of common worship by an ordained Minister of the Church and with the family of faith present. In approving the marriage, the Church affirms the divine institution of marriage and invokes God's blessings upon those who enter the relationship according to God's Word. As the Church hears the vows a couple makes to one another, it should assure the couple of God's grace within their new relationship.

5-5 The Minister's role in Christian marriage

A. It is the duty of the Minister to consult with the man and the woman contemplating marriage. They should be given godly advice concerning the establishment of a Christian home, as well as instruction in the meaning of marriage in God's sight and the biblical teachings of the roles, duties, and relationships within the home.[298] The Minister should give such other counsel which seems needful, wise, and helpful that the couple may be well prepared for their new estate in marriage.

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[295] Matthew 19:4-6.
[296] Leviticus 18:6-24.
[297] See also **Westminster Confession** chapter 24 and EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality.
[298] Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21.

B. Should the Minister be convinced that genuine faith is absent, that full responsibility for one another is missing, or that the blessings of God are not likely to rest upon such a relationship, the marriage ceremony should not be performed.

C. It is the duty of the Minister to meet all civil requirements in performing and properly registering the marriage. In addition, the Minister shall report the marriage to the Session, which shall record it in its permanent records. It is wise for a Minister to keep a personal record of marriages, which includes the names, the dates, the place, and the civil body issuing the authority to marry.

5-6 The service of Christian marriage

A. The marriage service is an act of worship. For that reason, it is under the direction of the Minister only and shall always be characterized by reverence throughout.

B. Music should be appropriate to the occasion, and the Session or the Minister may determine what music is acceptable. Appropriate hymns sung by all are always proper.

C. The decorations and all appointments should not be ostentatious or call attention to themselves so as to distract the worshipers from their duty to God on such a solemn occasion.

D. The service itself should be conducted with dignity and reverence, beginning with prayers for the new home being established and for the members of the new family.

E. Vows shall be exchanged, appropriate Scriptures read, and a charge may be given which sets forth both the duties and privileges of marriage.

F. The Minister shall conclude the ceremony by publicly declaring that the couple is now husband and wife, and the benediction shall be pronounced.

5-7 The consecration of a civil marriage

Persons who have been married by a civil authority may desire to have that marriage consecrated by a service in the Church performed by a Minister. It is proper to perform such services, provided all the conditions for a man and woman preparing for marriage are observed.
A marriage should never be sanctioned that does not meet the criteria laid down herein.

— 6 —
CHRISTIAN BURIAL OF THE DEAD

6-1 The body of a believer after death.

It is permissible for Christians to dispose of bodies by burial, cremation, or donation for scientific purposes.[299]

6-2 The funeral service.

A. In a funeral service, the remains of the deceased are present. It is a worship service that focuses upon God, who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and gives believers genuine hope of their own resurrection.[300] It is a time for the reaffirmation of the Church's faith and a time for expressing joy in the assurance of eternal life.

B. Ostentatious decorations and display of flowers should be avoided.

C. The casket of the deceased should not be open during the service.

D. Ordinarily, a funeral or memorial service should be conducted in the place of common worship. As this is the place for Baptism and marriage, it is also the place where witness to faith in the resurrection is made.

E. A Christian funeral service is entirely under the control of the Minister. It should include:

1. The reading of appropriate passages of Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments.
2. An exposition of some passage of Scripture by the Minister.
3. Prayers of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased and prayers of intercession for the bereaved.
4. The singing of appropriate songs.
5. A reminder to all of death for every person's judgment to come, along with a solemn reminder that each must repent and turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to gain eternal life.

F. It is not appropriate to include a civic or fraternal rite in this service. If such is desired, it should be conducted at another time and place.

6-3 The memorial service

The memorial service should contain all the elements of a funeral service, but the remains of the deceased are not present.

6-4 Graveside service

A graveside service is an abbreviated funeral service at the place of burial, followed by a committal either immediately or at a later time.

6-5 The committal

Ordinarily, the committal should be reserved for the immediate family and close friends. It may be performed either before or after the worship service. It should consist of a few selected passages of Scripture, a brief prayer of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased, a committing of the body to its place of rest, and a committing of the soul to God, concluding all with a benediction.

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[299] See **Westminster Confession of Faith**, chapter 32.
[300] 1 Corinthians 15:19; 2 Corinthians 1:22.

— 7 —
SERVICE TO GOD

7-1 Service as Worship

Our worship of God is not complete unless it is extended in loving service to others. Such ministries of compassion and concern for the wellbeing of others are not in themselves the gospel, they are the fruit of the gospel and may embody and convey the gospel in a real way. It is to be remembered that good deeds done for others that do not include the sharing of what God has done in Jesus Christ are inadequate and incomplete. However, to share the Good News and fail to show concern and compassion for others' needs is to present an incomplete gospel and may cause people to call into question the Good News itself. Faith and works are inseparably linked and are incomplete without one another.[301]

7-2 The Service of Evangelism

The primary mission of the Church is to share the gospel of salvation with all the nations of the world.[302] This is the mission of every Christian, every local church, and the whole Church. Each court of the Church should encourage, train, and lead those under its jurisdiction in the service of evangelism.

7-3 The Service of Discipleship

Jesus commanded that Christians go into the world to make disciples,[303] which involves teaching and training. This responsibility belongs to the home and each court of the Church. The basic study material is always the Bible, along with the confessional documents of the Church.

A. Discipleship in the home

It is the obligation of Christian parents to bring their children up in the nurture and instruction in the Lord.[304] When parents present children for Baptism, they take a vow to that end.[305] Diligence should be exercised in fulfilling this obligation.

B. Discipleship in the local church

It is the obligation of a Session to offer a program of education and nurture to the believers. This includes adequate educational facilities, properly trained teachers, and materials that reflect the history, heritage, faith, and practice of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Such teachers should be active members of the congregation and approved by the Session. The Session may secure personnel to oversee the educational program under the supervision of the Pastor. Each Session should seek opportunities to establish discipleship ministries in places that are destitute of the gospel and training in the faith.

C. Discipleship and Other Courts

The Presbytery and General Assembly are obligated to support and assist the Session in every way possible. This may include offering training for teachers, producing materials and educational aids, and other support functions that ensure more effective nurture.

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[301] Matthew 25:40; Romans 10:14-15; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 3:16-19.
[302] See **G.**4-3.
[303] Matthew 28:18-20.
[304] Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4.
[305] See **W.**3-2G.

D. Discipleship and Formal Education

Teaching the things of God may include education within the context of the Christian faith. All the courts of the Church should examine ways in which this may be accomplished, including Christian schools, colleges, or seminaries.

7-4 The Service of Giving

The giving of God's people is an acknowledgment that He is the author of every good and perfect gift and that they are but stewards of His grace. God's people are reminded that they are held accountable not only for a proper stewardship of God's gifts in terms of tithes and offerings but for the proper use of all they have and are. The service of giving finds expression in giving of self, of tithes and gifts, and of service to others.[306]

A. The giving of self

The Christian is one who offers his heart and life totally to God. This self-giving is never complete, for each person must continue to offer self to re-surrender and recommitment.

B. The giving of tithes and gifts

Nowhere does the Bible mention less than a tithe as a proper stewardship for the Christian. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church believes in the tithe and teaches it as the minimum requirement for the believer. Gifts to the Lord are those contributions made over and above the tithe. Such giving should be done generously, regularly, systematically, and proportionally.[307]

C. The giving of service to others

The teaching of Christ is that in service and ministry to others, God's people are honoring and serving Him.[308] Therefore, it is incumbent upon believers to serve others and to minister to their needs.

1. The individual believer
    a. Scriptures teach that God calls every person to some vocation, and whatever that task, the individual is to serve as unto the Lord.[309] For that reason, each Christian in daily tasks is to seek to serve God as a good steward. In work, leisure time, with family, friends, and neighbors, the Christian is to seek to show love and compassion and to exhibit before the world what it means to belong to Jesus Christ.
    b. The Christian should also seek places for service in the local church,[310] in agencies and ministries of the community or church that minister to the needs of people and in the ministries of the higher courts of the Church.
2. The local church

    The local church is to serve others as a witness to the world of God's love for all people. Each Session must judge how best to exemplify this love to its own community and situation.[311]
3. The Presbytery and General Assembly

    The higher courts should seek ways to give expression to the loving concern of God for the conditions of people. Thus, these courts are to give opportunities for

[306] See **W.**2-9.
[307] Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8-9.
[308] Matthew 25:40.
[309] 1 Corinthians 15:58.
[310] 1 Corinthians 12:7.
[311] For other responsibilities of the Session, see **G.**18-3.

those under their jurisdiction to express God's love in ways the courts deem fitting and beneficial. In expressing such concerns, these courts shall be careful that they do not subvert or make secondary the primary mission of the Church to evangelize the world.[312]

7-5 The Service of Compassion

The New Testament describes the concern and compassion of Christ for the conditions of people. The Church shall emulate its Head by showing special concern for the sick, the sorrowing, the hungry, and the poor.

[312] See **G.**19-4A.5.

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RULES FOR ASSEMBLY

As amended through the 45th General Assembly
(June 2025)

I. Date and Place of Meeting

1-1 The General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall meet annually on the date and at the place fixed by the preceding General Assembly between May 1 and June 30. In the event of a natural disaster, epidemic, or restrictions mandated by the federal, state, or local government affecting the host church, virtual participation of commissioners may take place; the National Leadership Team will determine whether virtual participation is permitted no less than 30 days prior to the first day of registration for an upcoming General Assembly.

1-2 The place of meeting for physically present commissioners shall be rotated among the various areas of the church as much as practical. Any Presbytery or church of Presbytery that desires to entertain the General Assembly shall forward an invitation to the Stated Clerk no later than three years before the preceding Assembly. If two or more Presbyteries or churches submit invitations to host the General Assembly for the same year, the National Leadership Team will submit a recommendation to the General Assembly naming the host church or Presbytery. The National Leadership Team will make its recommendation based on the following criteria:

A. Capability to host, i.e., availability of housing, costs, travel arrangements, committee meeting rooms, availability of food service for breaks and meals, space for exhibitors and General Assembly staff, and local transportation.

B. Priority will be given to the Presbytery or church that has never hosted a General Assembly or which hosted General Assembly the greatest number of years ago.

II. Organization of a General Assembly's Meetings

2-1 The General Assembly shall be called to order at the designated time by the Moderator and shall begin with a worship service, which shall include a prayer for the President of the United States, all United States military personnel (including their families), especially those serving in harm's way, the Governor of the State in which the General Assembly takes place, and the United States of America. Also, this public prayer should be communicated in writing by the Moderator to the President and the Governor.

2-2 The Stated Clerk shall present a report on the enrollment and declare if a quorum is physically and virtually present (if virtual presence is necessary). If such is present, the Assembly shall be declared to be properly constituted. At this time, the Stated Clerk may also recommend that Ministers or Ruling Elders in good standing in other parts of the Church be seated as corresponding members of the Assembly, having the privilege of the floor but without vote.

2-3 The first order of business shall ordinarily be the election of a Moderator. Though the Moderator-elect will normally be the presumptive nominee, the Committee on Nominations must make such nomination. The floor shall be opened for additional nominations.

2-4 A Moderator-elect shall be elected according to the same procedure as the election of the Moderator.

2-5 Election shall be by ballot, on ballots provided by the Stated Clerk. Tellers appointed by the Stated Clerk shall gather, count, and report the ballot tabulation to the Stated Clerk. Election shall be by majority. Should no majority exist among a plurality of nominees, a second ballot shall be called for the two highest nominees. The Moderator shall declare the election. If there is only one nominee, a motion for a voice vote to elect by

acclamation shall be in order.

2-6 The Moderator and Moderator-elect shall assume their respective duties immediately upon being declared elected.

III. The Moderator

3-1 The Moderator shall preside at all sessions of the Assembly except for those times when the Moderator may temporarily invite another Commissioner to act as the presiding officer.

3-2 The Moderator shall call the succeeding Assembly to order and preside until a successor has been elected. An address from the retiring Moderator is appropriate. If the Moderator is unable to act, the most immediate past Moderator present, or in the absence of any, the Stated Clerk shall call the Assembly to order and preside over its session until a Moderator has been elected.

IV. Moderator-elect

4-1 The Moderator-elect is an officer of the General Assembly and shall ordinarily be the presumptive nominee for Moderator at the succeeding Assembly. The duties of the Moderator-elect shall be to assist the Moderator in the performance of the Moderator's duties as requested by the Moderator.

V. The Stated Clerk

5-1 The date and time of the election of the Stated Clerk at the Assembly shall be determined by the Moderator. A new Stated Clerk shall assume office at the end of the Assembly or at such time thereafter as designated by the General Assembly. (*Cf. Acts 82-09*)

5-2 The Stated Clerk shall perform the duties assigned by the **Book of Government** and by the ***Rules for Assembly,*** and such other duties as are assigned by action of the Assembly.

5-3 The Stated Clerk shall assemble the items of business to come before the Assembly and prepare a daily docket for the receiving of committee reports and consideration of all appropriate business to come before the Assembly.

5-4 The Stated Clerk shall keep the Minutes of the General Assembly. He shall publish them annually with statistical reports of the Church and reports of the committees of the Assembly.

5-5 The Stated Clerk shall have the privilege of the floor in all matters pertaining to his office and at such times when the Moderator, chairmen of Standing Committees, or any Commissioner requests clarification of Assembly business.

5-6 The Stated Clerk, or a person designated by the Stated Clerk, shall be the parliamentarian of the General Assembly.

5-7 The Stated Clerk shall have surveillance over denominational archives and historical documents on behalf of the General Assembly and shall be responsible for the right of access to such documents.

VI. The Assembly Arrangements

6-1 The Stated Clerk, or a person designated by the Stated Clerk, shall plan the periods of worship at the meeting of the Assembly, including the celebration of the Lord's Supper and public services. A brief worship service shall be included at the beginning of each day's session.

6-2 The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated by the General Assembly. The retiring Moderator shall preside on this occasion and shall preach a sermon or deliver an appropriate address. The newly elected Moderator shall assist in this service.

6-3 The first order of the day, except the opening day, at the beginning of the business session shall be the presentation of a docket listing the business which is to be considered that day. Revision of the docket may be necessary during the day.

6-4 The Stated Clerk shall oversee all arrangements for the meeting and housing of the General Assembly in conjunction with the host Presbytery and/or host church.

VII. Communications; Overtures; and Proposed Amendments

7-1 A communication to the General Assembly is formal correspondence received by the Stated Clerk from other churches, inter-church agencies, and from other organized bodies outside the church proper having business with the Assembly.

7-2 The Stated Clerk shall recommend to the Assembly reference for all communications.

7-3 An overture is the request of a Presbytery for action by the General Assembly upon a specific matter. Since overtures to the General Assembly are the communication of the lower court, the higher court is responsible for the public dissemination of all overtures properly filed. The Stated Clerk shall provide for the public posting of any properly filed overture so that the overture is made accessible to the whole church ordinarily within five (5) days of original receipt.

7-4 All overtures proposing amendments to the *Book of Order* or these *Rules for Assembly* shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk at least sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly (**G.**21.3D.2a). All other overtures shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk at least thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly. No overtures received after the applicable filing date shall be considered by its Assembly convening in that year.

7-5 Except to the extent otherwise authorized by *Rules for Assembly* 7-6 and 7-7, no amendment to the *Book of Order* or these *Rules for Assembly* will be considered by the General Assembly unless it has first been presented to a presbytery in the form of an overture. When approved by a presbytery, an overture will be presented to the Assembly. A rejected overture may be presented to the Assembly, provided that:

1. The Ruling Elder commissioner to Presbytery, Teaching Elder, or Session who originally requested the rejected overture has provided written notification within 30 days to the Stated Clerk of that Presbytery of their desire for the rejected overture to be presented to the Assembly as provided for by the Rules for Assembly 7-5; and

2. The Stated Clerk of that Presbytery has submitted to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, within 10 days, (a) the rejected overture as it was originally proposed and (b) a relevant extract, certified by the Stated Clerk of that Presbytery, from the minutes of the meeting at which that Presbytery rejected the overture. Extracts from provisional minutes are permitted. No such rejected overture may be received for consideration absent a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly.

7-6 Permanent committees and ad-interim committees established by the General Assembly may propose amendments to the *Book of Order* or these *Rules for Assembly*; provided, however, that each such proposed amendment must be delivered to the Stated Clerk at least sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly (G.21-3D.2a). No such proposed amendment received after the applicable filing date shall be considered by the Assembly convening in that year.

7-7 Nothing in this *Rule VII* will be deemed to prohibit a standing committee of the Assembly from taking action to approve, modify, or not approve any proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* or these *Rules for Assembly* that was referred to it (*Rule for Assembly* 9-5) or to prevent the Assembly from acting upon the report of a standing

committee.

VIII. Reports to the General Assembly

8-1 The Moderator, Stated Clerk, permanent committees, and special committees shall make annual reports. Such reports shall be transmitted to the Stated Clerk by May 1. These reports shall be referred to the Commissioners by the Clerk by June 1.

8-2 All ad interim committees shall make full reports in writing with the rationale for all recommendations included therein, and such reports shall be mailed to all Commissioners at least two weeks prior to the convening of the Assembly.

IX. Standing Committees

9-1 All business shall ordinarily come to the floor of the Assembly for final action through Standing Committees, except reports of ad interim committees, which shall report directly to the Assembly. The following committees shall handle the matters indicated:

A. Administration, concerning administrative matters.

B. Disaster Relief, concerning international natural disasters

C. Fraternal Relations, concerning other denominations and agencies.

D. Memorials and Appreciation, concerning appreciation.

E. Ministerial Vocation, concerning preparation and care of ministers.

F. Next Generation, concerning children's, youth, and college ministries.

G. Overtures and Resolutions, concerning communications and matters that do not fall within the purview of other Standing Committees.

H. Theology, concerning theological matters under study.

I. World Outreach, concerning world missions.

9-2 The Stated Clerk, in consultation with the Moderator, will appoint chairmen and recording clerks of each Standing Committee. Representation on each committee shall be Presbyterial. The Nominating Committee will elect Standing Committee personnel from Commissioners' registrations and Ruling Elder certifications received no later than May 31. The committee membership ratio should be as close as possible to the ratio of Ruling and Teaching Elders registered and certified as Commissioners.

9-3 The committees may be scheduled to meet prior to the opening session of the Assembly to handle business referred by the Stated Clerk.

9-4 The Standing Committees shall proceed as follows:

A. At the assigned time, each committee shall assemble in its assigned place, review material in hand, and begin its work.

B. Each committee shall be available to reconvene to consider additional matters referred from the Assembly floor.

C. A quorum is considered to be a simple majority.

9-5 The Standing Committee's report shall be brief and concise. It shall include the following:

A. A list of all items referred to and considered by the committee.

B. A statement of all issues discussed.

C. A report of all recommendations contained in reports, communications, and overtures referred. Action taken by the Standing Committees to approve, modify, or not approve those items referred shall be reported back to the Assembly with reasons.

9-6 If a Standing Committee believes that any of its recommendations will receive consensus

support of the Assembly, it may, by majority vote, designate in its report that such items are to be included in an omnibus consent motion, which will contain all such items from all Standing Committees. The omnibus consent motion itself may be divided only by a majority vote. Constitutional amendments and recommendations regarding budgets may not be designated for inclusion in an omnibus consent motion.

9-7 Minutes of the corresponding permanent committee shall be submitted to the Standing Committee for review.

9-8 Informational presentation of special aspects of work reported by a particular Standing Committee shall be limited to five (5) minutes. The Moderator may extend this time up to an additional ten (10) minutes.

9-9 Any recommendation affecting the budget of the Assembly shall be referred to the National Leadership Team for review before presentation to the Assembly.

9-10 The completed report of a Standing Committee shall contain the full text of the report and be handled as follows:

A. Proofed and signed by the chairman of the committee and thereafter given to the Stated Clerk for a permanent record;

B. Presented to the Assembly during docketed time by the chairman or designate.

9-11 No partial report of a Standing Committee shall be presented without consent of the Assembly.

9-12 Presbytery Minutes

A. Presbytery Minutes shall be examined for conformity to:

1. The constitutional standards of the church as to the substance of the action recorded;
2. Appropriate standards as to the use of the English language.

B. Each set of Presbytery Minutes must be read by at least two members of the Presbytery Review Committee.

C. The findings of the Committee with respect to the Minutes of each Presbytery shall be reported under the following categories as appropriate:

1. Notations: Typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation, non-prejudicial statements of facts, and other variations in form may be reported here. Also, failure to provide sufficient or proper information or identification, misstatement of facts, etc., may be included here.
2. Notations requiring response: Insufficient information in the Minutes to determine if an action is constitutional. Such notations are not read to the General Assembly but require a response of the presbytery to the Presbytery Review Committee.
3. Exceptions: Violations of constitutional standards of actions that, in substance, appear not to conform to EPC standards should be reported here.

D. The Committee should prepare a report concerning the Minutes of each Presbytery. After action by the Assembly, two copies shall be given to the Stated Clerk, one for his permanent file and one to be mailed to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

E. Notations and exceptions in the Committee's report shall be handled as follows:

1. Notations shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery without being read to the Assembly or recorded in its Minutes.
2. Exceptions shall be read before the Assembly, recorded in its Minutes,

and disposed of as the Assembly determines.

F. The Presbyteries shall take note in their Minutes of exceptions and notations conveyed from the Assembly and of the disposition they have made of such.

G. Guidelines for Presbytery Minutes

1. Date, time, and place of meeting; Presbytery must meet at least three (3) times a year. (**G.**19-5A). Presbytery review year shall be the calendar year. Presbyteries shall submit signed copies of their approved minutes for the completed calendar year to the General Assembly no later than March 1 of the following year. Minutes should reflect the names of Ruling and Teaching Elders present, visitors present, and include excused and unexcused absences. Minutes should reflect the number of the stated meeting.
2. Meeting opened and closed with prayer.
3. Declaration of quorum (**G.**19-5C).
4. Accurate record of motions passed and actions taken (**G.**19-5D).
5. Minutes should be typed with complete sentences, correct spelling, and bound in hardcover.
6. Minutes should be signed by the Stated Clerk and Moderator.
7. Minutes should reflect an accurate record of candidates received and dismissed, including proper examination procedures leading to ordination and/or installation.
8. Record of approved pastoral calls and any changes in calls and the granting of permission to labor outside the bounds of Presbytery (**G.**19-4B.3).
9. Minutes must reflect an annual review of sessional records.
10. Minutes must reflect the establishing, dissolving, dividing, uniting, receiving, and dismissing of churches (**G.**19-4A.3).
11. Minutes must reflect observations of and carrying out of General Assembly injunctions and instructions.
12. Overtures to the General Assembly must be recorded.
13. Minutes will reflect any judicial cases before the Presbytery and the disposition thereof in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.
14. Minutes will include all actions of Presbytery appointed commissions.
15. Minutes should include the annual approved Presbytery budget and related financial reports.

9-13 The minutes of each day will not be read at the beginning of each day of the Assembly but will be proofread by a committee of three Commissioners in consultation with the recording clerks of the Assembly. The committee of three shall be nominated by the convening Moderator, and the minutes shall be posted in a public place where they can be read by interested Commissioners.

X. Permanent Committees and the Permanent Judicial Commission

10-1 The ministries of the Assembly shall be conducted primarily through permanent committees and the Permanent Judicial Commission, to wit:

A. National Leadership Team

1. Chaired by the immediate past Moderator.
2. Committee Membership: Moderator, Moderator-elect, Stated Clerk, immediate past Moderator, and twelve elected members.

3. Functions in the following ways subject to General Assembly review, approval, and the *Book of Order:*
   a. Mission, Vision, and Strategy
      1) Primary responsibility is to seek the mind of Christ for our denomination and to express this in a mission statement that states who God has called the EPC to be.
      2) Development of vision and strategies that express what God is calling the EPC to do to carry out the mission statement.
      3) Assess the execution of the mission, vision, and strategies on behalf of the General Assembly.
      4) Encourage EPC Presbyteries and local churches to participate in implementing the mission, vision, and strategies.
   b. Administrative oversight
      1) Oversight and coordination of the National Leadership Team with World Outreach, Ministerial Vocation, and Next Generation Ministries Council.
      2) Responds to emergency and disaster situations.
      3) Serve as Directors of the corporation for the purposes of compliance with the laws of the state in which the EPC is incorporated and in accord with EPC by-laws.
   c. Denominational Development
      1) General Assembly planning.
      2) Promotion/public relations.
      3) Personnel administration (staff hiring, staff accountability).
      4) Budget development: receive projections from all committees and submit to General Assembly a proposed budget.
      5) All legal and corporate matters.
      6) Property and liability insurance.
   d. All other business of ecclesiastical matters not specifically assigned to any other committees.
4. Explanatory Statement

   The National Leadership Team is not a court of the denomination, nor a commission of the General Assembly, but a committee of the denomination, with authority derived from the Book of Order. The NLT is, therefore, responsible to the General Assembly and carries out its work under the authority of the General Assembly by proactively making recommendations to the General Assembly and exercising authority to carry out those recommendations as approved by the General Assembly.

B. Committee on World Outreach

1. The Committee on World Outreach shall be comprised of nine members on a three-year, three-class system, with the Moderator and Stated Clerk serving as ex-officio members with voice and vote. A quorum of the committee shall be five, excluding ex-officio members. The Committee's membership shall include three Teaching Elders and at least four Ruling Elders. The two remaining positions may be filled by non-ordained,

active members of EPC churches with particular expertise or experience in world missions. Committee members may serve all or part of two consecutive terms and then may not be reelected for at least one year. The Committee on World Outreach shall meet at least twice a year, including the week of the General Assembly.

2. The Committee on World Outreach, in consultation with the Ministerial Vocation Committee, shall be responsible for providing a course of instruction for those global workers to be commissioned by the General Assembly with authority to administer sacraments on the mission field (**W.**3-1, **G.**20-4A.5). All such workers shall sustain a written examination developed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee, be recommended to the General Assembly by the World Outreach Committee and sustain an oral examination by the World Outreach Committee.

C. Committee on Ministerial Vocation

1. Membership to be six members; chairman elected by committee.
2. Monitors and aids ministerial committees of local presbyteries.
3. Assists in the placement of pastors and helps churches to find pastors.
4. Provides information on colleges and seminaries.
5. Interviews Candidates for seminary equivalent educational programs
6. Oversees the four national written examinations
7. Exercises authority over all standardized national forms for the Ordination Process

D. Next Generation Ministries Council

1. To be comprised of nine members, five of whom may be non-elders qualified in children's, youth, or college ministries and who are active members of EPC churches. Chairman is to be elected by committee.
2. Duties:
   a. To encourage and support Next Generation ministry workers (paid and/or volunteer) by promoting and providing training events, resources, mentoring, and networking opportunities. The Committee will also coordinate the allocation of scholarship funds to provide financial assistance to individuals wishing to participate in relevant conferences and events.

E. Committee on Theology

1. Membership shall be comprised of six individuals, one-half of whom shall be Teaching Elders and one-half of whom shall be Ruling Elders, to be in three rotating classes of two each.
2. Duties: to receive and study such theological matters as may be referred to it by the General Assembly and to return to the General Assembly its opinions and requested papers or documents.

F. Committee on Fraternal Relations

1. Membership to consist of nine members, plus the Moderator and the Stated Clerk as members ex-officio. The chairman is to be selected by the committee.
2. Duties: to assist the General Assembly and the Office of the Stated Clerk in identifying, developing, and implementing relationships with other bodies of Christians, including denominations in the Reformed tradition, ecumenical agencies (evangelical or Reformed in character), and other

groups working to advance the Kingdom of God through evangelism, nurture, and service. The committee shall receive, study, and pursue only such fraternal matters as may be referred to it by the General Assembly and shall report annually to the General Assembly on all matters referred and the development of existing fraternal relationships.

G. Permanent Judicial Commission

"The Permanent Judicial Commission: The General Assembly shall establish a PJC. The Commission shall consist of a minimum of nine persons in three classes of three each, and of which at least two-thirds must be Ruling Elders. The Assembly shall determine their eligibility to succession. Efforts shall be made to give fair representation to the various Presbyteries. During service on this Commission, no member may hold office or employment in the court. Its quorum shall be two-thirds of its membership. It shall elect its own moderator and a clerk from among its members, and an accurate record shall be kept of its deliberations and actions, with a permanent record of these Minutes filed with the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly." Duties of the PJC described in the *Book of Government,* 21-3

H. Committee on Presbytery Review

1. Membership: Committee to consist of nine members, including at least one former Stated Clerk.
2. Duties: To provide structure, order, and continuity in reviewing the minutes of the Presbyteries.

I. Committee on Chaplains Work and Care

1. Membership: The Committee shall consist of nine members, including at least five members with experience as Chaplains and at least three Ruling Elders, as nominations allow. Whenever possible, one position on the Committee will be filled by a currently serving military chaplain, normally the EPC's most senior in rank. The Chairman shall be elected by the Committee and be responsible for coordinating the work and business of the Committee in consultation with the Office of the Stated Clerk and the Chaplain Endorser.
2. Responsibilities: The Committee will be responsible to:
    a. Oversee and conduct the chaplain endorsement process,
    b. Develop and implement policies and procedures for EPC chaplain ministry,
    c. Provide pastoral care for endorsed chaplains and their families.
3. Chaplain Endorser: The Moderator shall nominate to the General Assembly a Teaching Elder to serve as the denomination's Chaplain Endorser for a three-year term, which is renewable. The Endorser will be operationally accountable to the Office of the Stated Clerk.
    a. The nominee should be a well-qualified, retired military chaplain unless there is not one available.
    b. The Endorser is an ex-officio member of the Chaplains Work and Care Committee with voice and vote, and together, recruit, endorse, and support all EPC Chaplains.
    c. The Endorser is the denomination's designated signatory for chaplain endorsements and the official representative of the denomination regarding chaplaincy matters to government agencies, institutional chaplain certification agencies, and chaplain-endorsing conferences and associations with which the

denomination has affiliation.

d. The Endorser is the denominational representative for pastoral visits to chaplains at their place of service.

e. Should the Endorser resign or become unable to serve, the Stated Clerk or the Clerk's designee shall serve in that position until a new Endorser is nominated and elected.

J. Committee on Disaster Relief

1. Membership is comprised of nine members on a three-year, three-class system, including three Teaching Elders, three Ruling Elders, and three who need not be elders. Non-elders should be qualified in areas of emergency management, disaster relief mobilization, or other areas essential to the duties below. The Committee will be divided into three classes, each with three-year terms. The Committee may utilize input from EPC sources outside the continental United States when considering disaster relief plans for The Bahamas or Puerto Rico.

2. Duties

a. To develop a plan to implement an emergency response to disasters in cooperation with local EPC congregations, appropriate governmental agencies, and other relief organizations.

b. To produce and distribute a guide to requesting disaster help to all Sessions, Presbyteries, and other EPC agencies, which would include emergency aid contacts to use in the event of a disaster situation.

10-2 The power and authority of the permanent committees shall be those set forth in these Rules or by direction of the General Assembly.

10-3 Each committee shall be constituted on a three-year, three-class structure. All members shall be Teaching Elders or Ruling Elders except as noted. Insofar as practicable, the ratio of two Ruling Elders to one Teaching Elder shall be maintained.

10-4 In the event of a vacancy on a permanent committee of the General Assembly, when such vacancies seriously affect the work of the committee, and upon the request of the chairman of that committee, the National Leadership Team is authorized to appoint a person to fill the vacancy of that committee. Such appointees shall serve until the following General Assembly, at which time the person shall be presented to the General Assembly by the Nominating Committee for approval. Upon approval of the General Assembly, the nominees shall then be approved for the terms and the classes according to the vacancies being filled.

10-5 A majority of a permanent committee shall constitute a quorum.

10-6 Each permanent committee shall elect its chairman for the forthcoming assembly year before the Assembly that initiates that assembly year. Persons not yet elected to the forthcoming year shall not be eligible.

XI. Committee on Nominations

11-1 The membership shall consist of one Teaching or Ruling Elder from each Presbytery and shall be organized into three classes with numbers as close to equal as possible. Ordinarily, there should be at least two more Ruling Elder than Teaching Elder members. A member may serve all or part of one three-year term and then be eligible for re-election for an additional three-year term. The Stated Clerk, or a person designated by the Clerk, shall work with the committee to ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Rules for Assembly.*

11-2 The chairman shall be named from the next outgoing class by the outgoing Moderator of the Assembly. The chairman shall take office at the close of the Assembly.

11-3 Each year at the Assembly, the outgoing Moderator shall nominate the appropriate number of persons to the Assembly for membership on this committee. At that time, the floor will be opened for other nominations. However, all nominations must meet the requirements for Presbytery representation and for the Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder distribution. The Stated Clerk shall rule if a nomination from the floor is valid, and if it is valid, the Stated Clerk shall determine which of the Moderator's three nominees the nominee from the floor will run against. Those elected shall take office at the close of the Assembly.

11-4 Duties:

A. Nominees for Moderator-elect: The committee shall advise each Presbytery following the meeting of the Assembly of the privilege of that Presbytery to recommend to the committee a person for Moderator-elect of the General Assembly. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to the committee no later than February 28 of that year. After February 28, the committee shall evaluate the recommendations of the Presbyteries, as well as other recommendations it may receive, and at the next meeting of the Assembly shall recommend no more than two persons as its nominees for Moderator-elect. At that time, nominations may also be made from the floor. Election shall be by a majority vote of the Assembly. Nominees of the committee shall be advised of their pending nomination, ordinarily no less than thirty days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly.

B. Nominees for Moderator: Ordinarily, the Committee shall nominate the Moderator-elect for Moderator of the succeeding Assembly. However, if the Moderator-elect is unable or declines such nomination or the Committee deems it unwise to do so, it shall nominate at least one but not more than two candidates for Moderator utilizing the same procedures as for Moderator-elect.

C. To nominate to the Assembly persons for vacancies of all Assembly permanent committees. Recommendations from Sessions or Presbyteries shall be forwarded to the Committee no later than February 28 of that year. The Endorsement for Nomination form shall be used and shall reflect official action of the Session or the Presbytery.

D. To name from the Commissioners to the Assembly those who will serve on the various standing committees of the Assembly.

E. The Committee shall meet in March each year to select nominee(s) for Moderator-elect or Moderator of the General Assembly as the case may be and for permanent committees.

F. In the event that a vacancy on the Committee occurs, the Moderator of the Assembly may appoint another person from that Presbytery to fill the position and serve the term of the person who vacated their membership.

G. In the event that a member is not able to attend the meeting of the Committee, the Moderator may appoint another person from that Presbytery to serve in the place of the absent member for that meeting.

XII. Benefit Resources, Inc., (BRI) Board of Directors

12-1 The BRI Board of Directors shall oversee the administration of the denominational Retirement Plan and the Group Insurance Plan.

A. Membership to consist of nine persons, in three classes of three each. At least one of the members must be a Teaching Elder, and at least two must be Ruling Elders. The other members shall be active members of EPC congregations with

the expertise needed for the Board to carry out its responsibilities. Members may serve all or part of two consecutive terms and are eligible to be reelected for additional terms after an interim of one year. The members of the Board shall be nominated to the Assembly by the Nominating Committee, with the chairman to be nominated at the Assembly by the outgoing Moderator.

B. Duties: to serve as trustees under the Retirement Plan adopted by the Assembly; to administer the Group Insurance Plan; to administer the proceeds of the "Gratitude Gift;" and to make an annual report of its proceedings to the Assembly.

XIII. New Business

13-1 Any matter presented in any form that has not been received by the Stated Clerk prior to the opening of the General Assembly shall be treated as new business.

13-2 New business must be presented to the Assembly by noon of the second day of business, and each proposed item of new business that was not previously presented as an overture to a presbytery must include an explanation of why it was not so presented.

13-3 If an item of new business is received by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall refer the item to an appropriate standing committee and, in the case of any new business with a potential budget impact, to the National Leadership Team. Parties to whom an item is referred (e.g., standing committees and the National Leadership Team) shall receive and consider such reference, deliberate, and report to the Assembly as these Rules require. The National Leadership Team may assist the Stated Clerk in referring new business.

13-4 Amendments to the Constitution or to these *Rules for Assembly* shall not be received as new business under any circumstance.

XIV. Parliamentary Procedure

14-1 Except as otherwise specifically provided in these *Rules*, "Robert's Rules of Order" shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure.

14-2 In presenting the report of a committee, the chairman shall lead the Assembly in a brief prayer before making the report. The entire report shall be read before any comment. The Assembly may waive the reading of any particular report by a majority vote of commissioners present. When a minority of a committee wishes to present a minority report, the member reporting for the minority shall have the privilege of presenting the minority report and moving it as a substitute for the portion of the majority report affected.

14-3 Each recommendation in each report must be read, considered, and acted on separately unless otherwise recommended by the chair and approved by a majority vote of the Assembly.

A. The chairman moves the adoption.

B. The Moderator asks, "Is there objection or question?"

C. Hearing no objection or question, the Moderator states, "It is adopted." (Procedure known as "Short Form of Voting.")

14-4 Procedure for debating a question:

A. The committee chairman may answer questions concerning the report addressed through the Moderator.

B. The chairman shall have the opportunity to make the final statement in debate.

C. No Commissioner may speak on the same question more than once until all desiring to speak have done so.

D. Debate on the main motion shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes unless extended. A simple majority may extend debate in additional five (5) minute increments. No Commissioner may speak longer than three (3) minutes at one time.

E. Debate shall be free, open, and responsible, with equal time being given to proponents insofar as is possible.

14-5 All motions shall be presented in writing and read before the vote.

XV. Amendment or Suspension of Rules

15-1 The *Rules* of the General Assembly may be amended or suspended only by a three-quarter (3/4) vote of the Commissioners present and voting. A motion to amend is debatable. A motion to suspend is not debatable.

ACTS OF ASSEMBLY

As amended through the 45th General Assembly
(June 2025)

Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Office of the General Assembly

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DIGEST OF THE ACTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1981–2025

"An act of the General Assembly represents the expressed will of the Assembly and provides definitive guidelines for the life and mission of the church until repealed or superseded by the action of a subsequent Assembly."
(Stated Clerk, 1985)

Italicized and grayscale print indicates an act that has been repealed or superseded.
References to Minutes are to section numbers, not page numbers.

BOARD OF BENEFITS

81-04 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the terms of call for any minister of member churches shall provide for participation in the denominational hospitalization and disability programs. **(Minutes 1-32)**

81-05 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the terms of call for any minister shall provide a minimum of 18% benefit to provide for group hospitalization, disability, and pension. The pension factor shall be not less than 10%. This benefit shall be computed on the gross effective salary base, i.e., salary and housing/utilities allowance. **(Minutes 1-32)**

81-06 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the denominational group insurance plan providing health, disability, and life coverage shall be mandatory for all ministers within member churches. **(Minutes 1-36)**

82-10 The 2nd General Assembly APPROVES the concept of self-funding insurance and instructs its Committee on Administration to execute a plan in trust as appropriate. Individual churches are urged to assume the deductible portion of the health insurance program and the cost of co-insurance as part of a minister's compensation. **(Minutes 2-52,** Appendix I-8).

83-18 The 3rd General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Ministerial Vocation Committee to continue to solicit bids for a standard health insurance plan with better benefits than current coverage and authorizes the Committee on Administration to approve such a plan between Assemblies. **(Minutes 3-37)**

83-19 The 3rd General Assembly ADOPTS a policy that, effective January 1, 1984, expenses for health, life, and disability insurance be allocated based on a set percentage of the salaries of all participants. **(Minutes 3-37)**

84-08 The 4th General Assembly ADOPTS the self-funding group insurance plan offered by The Travelers and gives authority to the permanent Committee on Administration to approve and establish all details relative to the establishment of proposed plan.

The General Assembly requires pastors and employees of all member congregations, all presbyteries, and the Assembly who meet minimum requirements to enroll in the program.

This major medical program shall be reviewed annually, and a full report made to the General Assembly. **(Minutes 4-37)**

86-18 The 6th General Assembly AMENDS the denominational group insurance plan by increasing the cap for long-term disability insurance from $25,000 to a $40,000 maximum insurable salary. **(Minutes 6-75)**

86-19 The 6th General Assembly AMENDS the denominational group insurance plan to make retired persons eligible by defining "retiree" as follows: "A retiree is one who has reached the 60th birthday and has served at least five (5) years in his or her EPC church. Such persons may continue to participate in the medical portion of the EPC plan indefinitely by contributing the appropriate monthly premium." **(Minutes 6-75)**

87-12 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of an employer-sponsored tax-sheltered annuity program for the required minimum (10%) of gross effective salary for retirement for each minister and missionary, and urges each congregation to participate in such a program. **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-14 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES an annual 'Gratitude Gift' offering in connection with the Christmas season. Monies received are to be used by the Pension Committee to supplement the income of our retired ministers and missionaries who participate in the denominational program. **(Minutes 7-53)**

The 36th General Assembly (2016) placed authority to oversee disbursal of Gratitude Gift monies to the Committee on Administration ***(Minutes 36-37)****; Act 16-11.*

87-15 The 7th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that persons otherwise required to be covered by the denominational group insurance plan may be exempted from such mandatory coverage when they have coverage under the Civilian Health and Medical Programs of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS). **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-16 The 7th General Assembly ELIMINATES the restriction of a 6-month waiting period for pre-existing conditions for an employee coming in from another denominational insurance plan. The 12-month waiting period for coverage of pre-existing conditions of dependents of those employees is also eliminated. **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-17 The 7th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to exclude coverage for radial keratotomy, a new procedure to correct nearsightedness, except when the physician (including second surgical opinion) verifies that myopia cannot be corrected by either glasses or contact lenses. **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-19 The 7th General Assembly CHANCES the Group Insurance Plan for health and life coverage from The Travelers to the Provident Life and Accident Insurance Company. Disability insurance coverage remains with The Travelers. **(Minutes 7-54)**

88-08 The 8th General Assembly AMENDS participatory requirements for group health insurance plans by requiring participation of all ministers on the rolls of presbyteries with the exception of:

1. Missionaries laboring in cooperative agreements with mission agencies;
2. Ministers laboring in institutional agencies providing their own group insurance plan;
3. Ministers afforded group insurance coverage as part of retirement benefits from a previous employer;
4. Ministers without call, and ministers laboring less than 20 hours in a place of ministry. **(Minutes 8-24)**

88-09 The 8th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that non-ordained eligible employees of EPC churches shall be expected to participate in the denominational group insurance plan on a contributory basis, with the exception of employees whose spouses carry certifiable medical insurance able to cover all eligible dependents, and employees offered group insurance coverage as a part of retirement benefits from a previous employer. **(Minutes 8-24)**

88-10 The 8th General Assembly REQUESTS that churches to move conscientiously toward (or maintain) at least 80% of non-ordained eligible employees participating in the plan to preserve the integrity and continuance of the Plan. **(Minutes 8-24)**

89-02 The 9th General Assembly ADOPTS the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Pension Plan and Adoption Agreement as presented, with an amendment allowing the Board of Pension and Benefits to work with special cases, giving them the authority to make decisions for the General Assembly. **(Minutes 9-22)**

The 13th General Assembly (1993) adopted a restated Pension Plan ***(Minutes 13-12)****; Act 93-01.*

89-03 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the recommendation that members of the Board of Pension and Benefits be subject to removal from office in the same manner as set forth in Chapter 6 *(Book of Discipline),* with the Permanent Judicial Commission acting in the place of session or presbytery. **(Minutes 9-22)**

89-04 The 9th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Board of Pension and Benefits to accept Adoption Agreements from churches for a period of three years from and after January 1, 1990, or three years after a church is established as a particular Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whichever is later. An Adoption Agreement from a judicatory shall be accepted within three years from and after January 1, 1990, or within three years from and after the date of employment of its first employee, whichever is later. **(Minutes 9-22)**

89-06 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the formation of a Board of Reference to provide information and advice to the Board of Pension and Benefits. The Board of Reference should be appointed by the Board of Pension and Benefits from the broad constituency of the denomination to advise it concerning the acceptance, operation, and effectiveness of the Plan. **(Minutes 9-22)**

The 15th General Assembly (1995) rescinded this action to establish a Board of Reference ***(Minutes 15-22)****; Act 95-07.*

89-14 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES a three-tier system based on regions (ZIP codes) to determine premium costs for the medical portion of the Group Insurance Plan**. (Minutes 9-33)**

89-15 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a General Assembly benevolence fund for medical care costs, concentrating its benevolence health care efforts on ministers without call, mission church pastors, and retired ministers and their families. **(Minutes 9-33)**

90-08 The 10th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Group Insurance Plan shall be placed under the Board of Pension and Benefits no later than the summer of 1991. **(Minutes 10-28)**

90-15 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to reduce the yearly deductibles from $250 per year to $150 per individual, and from $500 to $300 per family. The maximum yearly coverage for outpatient treatment of mental and nervous conditions, substance abuse, and biofeedback was reduced from $2000 to $1500. Substance abuse treatment was added to the category of nervous, emotional, or mental disorders for which a lifetime cap of $50,000 exists. **(Minutes 10-39)**

90-16 The 10th General Assembly conceptually ENDORSES the Medical Benevolence Fund Trust with the understanding that the actual Fund Trust Agreement would be presented to the 1lth Assembly. Approval to begin promotion of the Fund Trust is given. **(Minutes 10-39)**

Reference Act 92-29 for supplemental action.

90-17 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to make ministers of fraternal bodies laboring within EPC congregations as missionary-in-residence or graduate school student-in-residence, eligible for participation if such are understood as full-time staff in the life of the church, if no other plan for coverage exists. **(Minutes 10-39)**

90-22 The 10th General Assembly ADOPTS a restated pension plan and adoption agreement. **(Minutes 10-22)**

91-01 The 11th General Assembly ASSIGNS administration of the Group Insurance Plan to the Board of Pension and Benefits, effective upon adjournment of the 1lth General Assembly. **(Minutes 11-14)**

Reference Act 90-08.

91-02 The 11th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan so that the definition for retired employees shall be "A Retired Employee is one who has reached the 60th birthday and has served at least five (5) years in an EPC presbytery-approved ministry." **(Minutes 11-25)**

92-19 The 12th General Assembly EXTENDS the initial period of enrollment and submission of EPC Pension Adoption Agreements for churches of record as of January 1, 1990, from December 31, 1992, to December 31, 1993. **(Minutes 12-46)**

92-24 The 12th General Assembly AMENDS the Pension Plan to provide that normal retirement age shall be 59½, rather than age 60. **(Minutes 12-13)**

92-25 The 12th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to provide coverage for transplants of the following human organs only: cornea, kidney, liver, heart, lung, and bone marrow. The total dollar amount payable for all charges related to organ transplants is limited to $500,000 per person per lifetime. **(Minutes 12-13)**

The 15th General Assembly (1995) added pancreas to the list of organs for which transplant expenses will be covered. ***(Minutes 15-22)*** *Act 95-05.*

92-26 The 12th General Assembly ELIMINATES the requirement for a second surgical opinion, and establishes that the Group Insurance Medical Plan will cover only up to 80% of second surgical opinions obtained. Additionally, all surgical procedures covered by the Plan are covered at 80%. Plan shall continue to pay 100% for pre-admission tests. **(Minutes 12-13)**

92-27 The 12th General Assembly EXTENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan's normal co-pay of 80% to the following procedures: clinical breast examination between the ages of 20 and 40, and every year after age 40; mammography every year after age 50; sigmoidoscopy every three years after age 50; prostatic specific antigen test every year after age 50. **(Minutes 12-13)**

92-28 The 12th General Assembly CREATES an additional class of employees, "Disabled Employees," and defines them under the Group Insurance Medical Plan as follows: "A disabled employee is one who has been determined to be totally disabled. To be totally disabled, the employee must be unable to perform all of the normal duties of his or her regular occupation or employment for pay or profit. This must be due to the disability. Such a person may continue to participate in the medical portion of the EPC Plan indefinitely by contributing the appropriate monthly premium." **(Minutes 12-13)**

92-29 The 12th General Assembly ADOPTS the Medical Benevolence Fund document. **(Minutes 12-13)**

93-01 The 13th General Assembly ADOPTS a restated Pension Plan. **(Minutes 13-12)**

Reference Act 89-02.

93-02 The 13th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Board of Pension and Benefits to extend health insurance coverage for EPC employees up to three months following the month of termination, with a prepaid premium increase of 5% to cover administrative costs and a $.50 per participant per month charge for the privilege of conversion. **(Minutes 13-12)**

93-13 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the World Outreach missionaries in cooperative agreements may choose insurance coverage with either the EPC or their sending agency. In unique situations, other alternative coverage approved by the World Outreach Committee may be appropriate. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-14 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that national pastors under appointment by World Outreach are not required to participate in the EPC Pension Plan. **(Minutes 13-28)**

93-18 The 13th General Assembly ADDS infertility treatment (but not testing) for up to four months to the Medical Plan. **(Minutes 13-12)**

94-06 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Board of Pension and Benefits to investigate and determine the actual cost of medical coverage for persons on the Plan not covered by Medicare at the time of retirement. **(Minutes 14-22)**

94-07 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Group Insurance Medical Plan shall provide benefits for adopted children at the time effective custody takes place. **(Minutes 14-22)**

94-08 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Group Insurance Medical Plan shall provide medical coverage to dependents of retired and disabled employees. **(Minutes 14-22)**

94-09 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Board of Pension and Benefits may review and enroll churches of record on December 31, 1993, that wish to participate in the Pension Plan but who, because of extenuating circumstances, did not enroll during the period of eligibility. **(Minutes 14-22)**

95-02 The 15th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to exclude persons who have opted out of the Social Security System and who are not otherwise eligible or entitled to Social Security or Medicare coverage, upon retirement or attainment of age 65 (whichever occurs later). Coverage, however, may be continued upon participation in the Medicare Voluntary Enrollment Plan, Parts A and B, and upon payment of the required monthly premium to both the Medicare Voluntary Enrollment Plan and the EPC Medical Benefits Plans. **(Minutes 15-22)**

95-03 The 15th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to add a section under "Preventative Care" to cover 80% of eligible expenses after the deductible is met, for immunizations for eligible dependent children to age 16. **(Minutes 15-22)**

95-04 The 15th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to omit the current conversion option for medical care benefits. As of January 1, 1995, conversion charges increased by 400% for major medical coverage, 300% for comprehensive coverage, and 100% for hospital and surgical coverage. **(Minutes 15-22)**

95-05 The 15th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to include pancreatic transplants on the list of organ transplants covered. **(Minutes 15-22)**

Reference Act 92-25 for the list as originally adopted.

95-06 The 15th General Assembly APPROVES a revised premium structure for the Group Insurance Medical Plan effective August 1, 1995, so that four categories ("employee only," "employee/spouse," "employee/children," and "employee/spouse/children") replace the former "single" and "family" categories. **(Minutes 15-22)**

95-07 The 15th General Assembly RESCINDS the 1989 Act *(Act 89-06)* establishing a Board of Reference. **(Minutes 15-22)**

96-01 The 16th General Assembly GRANTS the COA authorization to select vendors for various benefit and pension plans on recommendation from the Board of Pension and Benefits. **(Minutes 16-19)**

96-02 The 16th General Assembly CHANGES the vendor for plan administration from Healthsource/Provident to a third-party administrator, Benefit Services, Inc., for medical benefits, long-term disability insurance, and life insurance, effective January 1, 1997. **(Minutes 16-19)**

96-03 The 16th General Assembly APPROVES changing vendors for long-term disability insurance and life insurance from Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to UNUM Life Insurance Company for long-term disability insurance, and Healthsource/Provident to The Lafayette Life Insurance Company for life insurance. **(Minutes 16-19)**

96-17 The 16th General Assembly APPROVES designating up to 100% of a minister's early and normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1996 and 1997 as housing allowance for United States income tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home. **(Minutes 16-36)**

97-02 The 17th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Medical Insurance Plan to provide one routine mammogram per year, paid at 80% for women forty (40) years of age or older. **(Minutes 17-20)**

97-03 The 17th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to double the current life insurance cap provided to EPC pastors and employees from $25,000 to $50,000 for an additional premium. **(Minutes 17-20)**

97-07 The 17th General Assembly INCREASES financial eligibility for the Medical Benevolence Fund from $20,000 to $25,000. **(Minutes 17-25)**

Reference Act 01-05 for supplemental action.

98-01 The 18th General Assembly APPROVES the provision of a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) for the medical portion of the Group Insurance Plan. **(Minutes 18-19)**

99-01 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan to require that claims be submitted within twelve months of the date of service. Claims submitted after twelve months of the date of service will not be paid. **(Minutes 19-20)**

99-02 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan by adding sleep disorders and biofeedback to the list of exclusions. **(Minutes 19-20)**

99-03 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS coverage for prescription in the Group Insurance Medical Plan to:

- 80% of the cost of generic drugs;
- 50% for name-brand drugs unless a suitable generic is not available; Subject to deductibles and co-insurance. **(Minutes 19-20)**

99-04 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Medical Plan by increasing the deductible to $250 per employee, $500 per employee and spouse, and $750 per family for PPO network providers. The Assembly also amends the Group Insurance Medical Plan by increasing the deductible to $300 per person, $600 per employee and spouse, and $900 per family for non-network (PPO) providers. **(Minutes 19-20)**

99-05 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS the Skilled Nursing Facilities Benefits in the Group Insurance Medical Plan to cover 90% of reasonable and customary charges in the PPO network and 80% out of network. Confinement in a skilled nursing facility is limited to 60 days per calendar year with a *per diem* limit of $150, provided that a physician determines that the covered person requires skilled nursing care and prior authorization from the Plan has been obtained. **(Minutes 19-20)**

00-02 The 20th General Assembly AMENDS the Medical Plan to include:

1. Home health care services provided within 7 days following discharge from the hospital for a cause related to the cause of hospital confinement.
2. Prescription coverage for Viagra and birth control pills. **(Minutes 20-25)**

00-03 The 20th General Assembly AMENDS the Medical Plan to specifically exclude:

1. Charges in connection with weekend hospital admissions unless medically necessary;
2. Charges made in connection with surrogate parenting arrangements;
3. Charges for completing a claim form;
4. Charges made for professional services of a resident physician or intern;
5. Surgery for sex reassignment or complications from such procedure;
6. Services or supplies rendered while not under continuing care of a physician. **(Minutes 20-25)**

01-01 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to offer two plan options. One has basic coverage benefits and is less costly; the other has a richer benefits design with a corresponding higher premium rate. Both plan rates may also take into consideration rating differences for age and geographic location. **(Minutes 21-29, 30)**

01-02 The 21st General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Board of Pension and Benefits to explore the redesign of the Group Insurance Plan and to retain professional expertise to assist in the ongoing

management of the Plan. **(Minutes 21-29)** The Committee on Administration is authorized to approve changes in benefits proposed by the Board of Pension and Benefits. The Board shall report the changes annually to the Assembly. **(Minutes 21-29, 30)**

01-03 The 21st General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Board of Pension and Benefits to develop an ongoing and thorough two-way communication plan designed to better interact with the churches and plan participants regarding the goals, benefits, costs, and overall administration of the Group Insurance Plan. **(Minutes 21-29, 30)**

01-04 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Pension Plan to allow all active ministers to participate in the Pension Plan. **(Minutes 21-30)**

01-05 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Medical Benevolence Fund to raise the household eligibility cap from $25,000 to $35,000. **(Minutes 21-30)**

Reference Act 97-07.

01-06 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to cover speech therapy when medically prescribed following a stroke, accident, or congenital and developmental problems. **(Minutes 21-30)**

01-07 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to cover the treatment of Keratoconus with contact lenses to a maximum of $500 annually. **(Minutes 21-30)**

02-10 The 22nd General Assembly ADOPTS the restated Pension Plan, precipitated by the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001. Changes facilitate Plan administration, bring the Plan into required conformity with statutory changes, and take maximum advantage of increased allowances resulting from statutory changes. **(Minutes 22-23)**

06-01 The 26th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to make any substantive changes to the EPC Defined Contribution Retirement Plan upon recommendation of the Board of Benefits and authorizes the Board of Benefits to amend the Plan document when necessary to conform to legislative requirements and administrative needs. **(Minutes 26-24)**

06-02 The 26th General Assembly RAISES the income eligibility limit for Medical Benevolence assistance to a minimum of $35,000 total annual household income and a maximum of $50,000 for singles and couples, and $40,000-$55,000 for couples or individuals with dependents, assistance to be paid in proportion within these income limits. **(Minutes 26-24)**

06-03 The 26th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Board of Benefits to adjust the income limits of Medical Benevolence eligibility based on cost-of-living increases and funds utilization, reporting such changes to the General Assembly. **(Minutes 26-24)**

*The 36th General Assembly (2016) authorized the Committee on Administration to adjust the income limits of the Medical Benevolence eligibility **(Minutes 36-37)**; Act 16-10.*

13-06 The 33rd General Assembly APPOINTS the Committee on Administration as an Administrative Commission (**G.**16-26.B/new *Book of Government* 21-1C) from July 1, 2013 until the convening of the 35th General Assembly (June 2015) with the power to determine whether the EPC Medical Benefits Plan should be retained, revised, outsourced, or terminated and to take such actions as may be needed as a result of that determination. **(Minutes 33-53)**

16-10 The 36th General Assembly authorizes the Committee on Administration (known as National Leadership Team beginning in July 2016) to adjust the income limits of Medical Benevolence eligibility based on cost-of-living increases and funds utilization, reporting such changes to the General Assembly. **(Minutes 36-37)**

16-11 The 36th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration (known as National Leadership Team beginning July 2016) to approve disbursal of monies received in the "Gratitude Gift" fund to supplement the income of retired ministers and missionaries who participate in the denominational program. **(Minutes 36-37)**

16-18 The 36th General Assembly RATIFIES the actions taken on December 4, 2015, and April 12, 2016, by the EPC Board of Directors (Committee on Administration) to establish the corporate formalities, including the Benefits Resources Inc. (BRI) bylaws. The Assembly also amends Article 10 of these bylaws to read, "The power to amend or repeal these Bylaws, or to adopt new Bylaws, is reserved exclusively to the Shareholders' Representative." **(Minutes 36-59**)

21-07 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 41-29)**

22-01 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 42-32)**

23-05 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income from housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 43-33)**

24-03 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 44-17)**

25-19 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 45-43)**

CHURCH PLANTING AND REVITALIZATION

82-03 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES a three-year program (1982-85) called "Mission to the Nation" which shall have as its goal church development and new church planting. The permanent committee is instructed to propose appropriate projects and to develop a church-wide campaign to raise $2.5 million for this program. Congregations are encouraged to place priority on giving to Mission to the Nation. **(Minutes 2-32,** Appendix E)

82-12 The 2nd General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Church Development Committee to establish a procedure for assisting EPC churches with ministry and financial needs, and to develop a procedure that will assist EPC churches in their fundraising for Mission to the Nation. **(Minutes 2-32)**

83-11 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES a loan fund for church site and building development whereby, on a revolving capitalization basis, low-interest monies will be available to mission churches and other churches in need. Special campaigns are to be implemented by the permanent Church Development Committee to raise at least the amount of 1.5 million dollars through means of designated gifts, special church offerings, and short-term loans. **(Minutes 3-54)**

The 6th General Assembly (1986) established a new Church Loan Fund ***(Minutes 6-64); Act 86-12.***

86-12 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES a new Church Loan Fund with an initial target goal of $300,000. Monies would be available at a favorable rate to EPC congregations seeking to acquire land or building facilities. Steps to launch Fund:

1. Promote congregational giving by individual gifts, legacies, endowments, outright gifts, and inclusion in local church budgets;
2. Designate 1986 and 1987 Thanksgiving Offerings to this Fund. **(Minutes 6-64)**

86-23 The 6th General Assembly ADOPTS a "Provisional Master Plan for Church Development." **(Minutes 6-64)**

88-12 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES the concept of an assessment process designed to identify gifted persons called and qualified for church planting. **(Minutes 8-31)**

89-09 The 9th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Church Development Committee to conduct a campaign to encourage members of the EPC to include the Church Loan Fund in their wills. **(Minutes 9-45)**

89-10 The 9th General Assembly DIRECTS the Church Development and Administration Committees to jointly develop detailed administrative guidelines for the management of the Church Loan Fund, and qualifications for churches and presbyteries requesting loans, and of assigning priorities to such requests. No requests for loans may be made until the presbyteries and churches have been advised of the guidelines. **(Minutes 9-48)**

89-11 The 9th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Church Development Committee to begin making loans to established EPC churches and to presbyteries in this Assembly year, with appropriate fees to cover administrative costs and to provide challenge contribution goals from such churches and presbyteries to help build the Fund, enabling them to make more loans to needy congregations. **(Minutes 9-48)**

89-12 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of an Investors Church Development Fund and authorizes the Church Development Committee to prepare a preliminary plan to present to the 10th General Assembly (1990) and to select subcommittee members with expertise in this field as needed. **(Minutes 9-45)**

89-13 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the implementation the Master Plan for Church Development. **(Minutes 9-45)**

89-22 The 9th General Assembly ADOPTS a position description for a Director of Outreach. **(Minutes 9-45)**

90-10 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the Church Loan Fund policies to include the following:

> "A presbytery shall contractually guarantee timely repayment of principal and fees upon the recommendation of its Church Development Committee following its determination that the loan is a sound financial venture." **(Minutes 10-36)**

92-15 The 12th General Assembly ADOPTS a resolution encouraging each local church to (a) redirect 10% of its non-denominational benevolence budgets to the EPC, designated for World Outreach and/or new church development; and (b) increase its support for all missions by 10%. **(Minutes 12-43)**

92-21 The 12th General Assembly ADOPTS a policy that financial solicitations of any type for support of an EPC church planting project be limited to the organizing context for the project, viz., daughter church project to its mother church, presbytery plant to its presbytery, Assembly-supported plants to Assembly-approved National Outreach Committee (formerly called Church Development Committee) benevolence projects. **(Minutes 12-46)**

92-22 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES the division of the Department of Outreach into the National Outreach Department and the World Outreach Department. **(Minutes 12-46)**

96-07 The 16th General Assembly RESOLVES, in light of recent actions by the Disney Corporation that are contrary to Scripture and detrimental to the family and in view of the major role the Disney Corporation plays in shaping our culture, to make every sacrifice it can to plant more churches in the metro Los Angeles and metro Orlando areas, one goal of which will be to win as many employees of Disney Corporation to salvation in our glorious savior, Jesus Christ, as Providence allows. Thus, we intend to change our culture by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. **(Minutes 16-31)**

96-11 The 16th General Assembly ADOPTS the National Outreach "Mission Statement and Values." **(Minutes 16-35)**

96-12 The 16th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the National Outreach Committee to review the 1989 Church Development Master Plan prior to the 17th (1997) Assembly, and every five years thereafter, revising as necessary. **(Minutes 16-35)**

96-13 The 16th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the National Outreach Committee to identify key cities for future church planting, along with a rationale for their selection, and to report findings to the 17th (1997) General Assembly. **(Minutes 16-35)**

96-14 The 16th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the National Outreach Committee to study and detail a strategy for increasing the funding for the Key Cities Program before the 17th (1997) General Assembly. **(Minutes 16-34)**

97-23 The 17th General Assembly ADOPTS the Key Cities Plan describing potential church development. **(Minutes 17-44)**

97-24 The 17th General Assembly APPROVES the Bartlett L. Hess Award, an annual honor for the church that has demonstrated the most innovative approach to church growth or revitalization during that year. **(Minutes 17-44)**

97-25 The 17th General Assembly APPROVES combining the Church Development Plans of 1989 and 1995, using the newly approved *Mission Statement and Core Values* of the National Outreach Committee into a *1997 Master Plan for Church Development.* **(Minutes 17-44)**

97-26 The 17th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the National Outreach Committee to provide training and resources for the leadership in our churches on how to share their faith in Christ, individually and in group settings, with those in their communities who have not yet come to Christ. **(Minutes 17-44)**

98-10 The 18th General Assembly ASSIGNS oversight of ethnic ministries to the World Outreach Committee, while oversight of urban ministries is assigned to the National Outreach Committee. **(Minutes 18-39)**

> *The 28th General Assembly (2008) assigned oversight of ethnic ministries to National Outreach* ***(Minutes 28-41);*** *Act 08-02.*

98-11 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS the 1998 National Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 18-41)**

98-12 The 18th General Assembly ENDORSES the Alpha program as a resource for evangelism. **(Minutes 18-41)**

00-04 The 20th General Assembly ADDS home missions as a new strategic area to the National Outreach Master Plan: "In partnership, cooperation with, and/or at the request of Presbytery, we will enable workers to present the love of Christ to English-speaking people groups in the USA, unreached by the established church." **(Minutes 20-28)**

00-05 The 20th General Assembly ADOPTS a plan to fund church planting through a 3-year campaign to raise $750,000. Two-thirds of the fund will be used for church/presbytery/National Outreach partner projects. One-third of the fund will be used for Key City projects. **(Minutes 20-28)**

01-08 The 21st General Assembly ADOPTS the National Outreach Home Missions Manual. Further changes to the Manual may be made by the National Outreach Committee upon approval of the Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 21-31)**

01-09 The 21st General Assembly AUTHORIZES the National Outreach Committee to further amend the Home Missions Manual, upon approval of the Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 21-31)**

03-06 The 23rd General Assembly AMENDS the Church Loan Fund Criteria as follows:

#6a Change $50,000 to $75,000;

#9 Evidence of efforts to obtain loans from other sources (Churches which are having difficulty finding loans from other sources may receive preferential consideration.).

A statement is added to the Church Loan Fund application form: "With the submission of this request, the mission and vision of the church and how this loan would assist in accomplishing the mission of the church would be required." **(Minutes 23-37)**

08-02 The 28th General Assembly ASSIGNS ethnic ministries under the oversight of National Outreach and asks World Outreach and National Outreach to collaborate in the area of Muslim ministry in the United States. **(Minutes 28-41)**

08-06 The 28th General Assembly ADOPTS a Cooperative Agency Agreement with Trinity Christian Community (New Orleans, Louisiana). **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-07 The 28th General Assembly APPROVES revisions to Church Loan Fund documents. **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-08 The 28th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to approve changes to the Church Loan Fund, Home Missionary Manual, and supporting materials, and World Outreach Cooperative agreements. **(Minutes 28-46)**

12-16 The 32nd General Assembly AMENDS Article 2 of the Foundation Board Bylaws to explicitly state the Board's work in reviewing EPC Church Loan Fund applications. **(Minutes 32-56)**

CONFESSIONAL MATTERS

81-01 The 1st General Assembly ADOPTS the **Essentials of Our Faith**. Its purpose shall be to give a clear, concise statement of the fundamentals of Christian faith as embodied in the **Westminster Confession** and professed by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 1-12, 1-17,** Appendix III)

Act 93-17 further clarifies the purpose of The Essentials.

84-01 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall print the Summertown edition of the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (published by Attic Press) with introduction and appropriate table of contents, appendices #1 and #2, and shall exclude the Declaratory Statement. **(Minutes 4-23)**

85-15 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (EPC edition) shall include as a prefatory statement the **Essentials of Our Faith**. **(Minutes 5-28)**

87-03 The Assembly endorses the addition of the **Westminster Confession of Faith,** the **Essentials of Our Faith**, and the Shorter Catechism to separate sections in the loose-leaf **Book of Order**. **(Minutes 7-36)**

*The 28th Assembly (2008) authorized publication of constitutional documents in a 2-volume spiral bound format **(Minutes 28-46)**; Act 08-03.*

88-19 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" as a resource for its congregations. **(Minutes 8-56**)

88-20 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES *The Children's Catechism: A New Modern Version* for distribution to its churches, published by Summertown Texts, Signal Mountain, Tennessee (1988). **(Minutes 8-55)**

88-29 The 8th General Assembly CONCURS with the Committee on Theology, which was given the task of studying the relationship between **The Essentials of Our Faith** and the **Westminster Confession of Faith.** This referral came out of a motion to the 7th General Assembly to make **The Essentials of Our Faith** a part of our Constitution. The Committee concurs with the Stated Clerk

that **The Essentials of Our Faith** should not be made a part of our Constitution and given that authority. This document now carries the authority of an Act of the Assembly (Ref. Act 81-01).

In order to further understand the relationship between **The Essentials of Our Faith** and the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, it is important to remember our historical context. As Presbyterians, we hold the **Westminster Confession of Faith** to be our standard of doctrine as it is found in Scripture. This standard is held not only in the intellect but also in the heart. The **Westminster Confession of Faith** is a positive statement of what we believe Scripture teaches.

The Essentials of Our Faith is a distillation of the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and is helpful in stating what we believe. The two are not in contradiction but are in harmony with one another as an expression of Reformed doctrine.

Courts of the EPC should encourage their members to continue studying our Confession in the light of the Word of God so that we may grow theologically and spiritually together unto the stature of the fullness of Christ. **(Minutes 8-60)**

The 22nd General Assembly adopted the Essentials of Our Faith into the EPC's constitution ***(Minutes 22-09); Act 02-11.***

89-01 The 9th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that baptisms at some court of the church other than the session shall be done only by a Pastor and at least one Ruling Elder from the same particular church (*Book of Worship* 3-2E) and shall conform to the stipulations of the *Book of Worship* on baptism. As members of the EPC, members of the court may participate in the responses to the questions proposed to a congregation. Further, it may not be done unless:

1. One of the parents is a member in good standing of a particular church, which is a true branch of the visible Church and to which notification of the baptism is made in accordance with **W.**3-2G.l.
2. Or, if the only presenting parent is a member of the presbytery and therefore does not belong to a particular church, that person shall stipulate prior to the baptism in what particular church the baptized person shall be enrolled. It is not within the jurisdiction of a presbytery or the General Assembly to authorize baptisms since that is a duty of a Session. However, a baptism may be performed at such a court, provided the above considerations are met. **(Minutes 9-52)**

92-06 The 12th General Assembly ENCOURAGES the use of the **Westminster Confession of Faith** *Commentary* (Summertown Texts) in EPC churches. **(Minutes 12-27)**

93-08 The 13th General Assembly ADOPTS the "Pastoral Letter on Children and the Lord's Supper" as guidance to the churches on the subject of young children and their participation in the sacrament of communion, and that Roger Beckwith's article *(Westminster Theological Journal 38:2,* Fall 1975) "Age of Admission to the Lord's Supper," should accompany this letter. **(Minutes 13-26)** The conclusion of the Pastoral Letter reads:

Though a local Session is not required to admit young children to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it may permit them if the following criteria are met:

1. The child has been administered the sacrament of Christian baptism.
2. The child presents a credible profession of faith as determined initially by his or her parents and determined ultimately by the Session of the church.
3. The child is able to evidence to the Session a basic understanding of the nature of the sacrament as it is set forth in the Scriptures and in the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

The Session must continue to exercise diligence in its covenant responsibilities toward those children who are admitted to the Lord's Supper. The Session may or may not choose to admit the child into active membership at that time.

93-17 The 13th General Assembly SUSTAINS the opinion of the Permanent Judicial Commission concerning the purpose of the **Essentials of Our Faith:**

The purpose of the **Essentials of Our Faith** is to provide an explicit and concise expression of the essentials of the Christian faith but also leave room for Christians to disagree on non-essentials. It is never to be used as an explicit standard for a minimal core of beliefs for candidates, ordination, or ministerial exams. It is not to duplicate the **Westminster Confession of Faith** or to be construed as a substitute for the WCF. Because it is not part of the Constitution, it is never to be used as such. Theoretically, a person could affirm the **Essentials of Our Faith,** as all knowledgeable Christians would do, but disagree with the WCF. Such a person would be unacceptable as a Teaching or Ruling Elder in the EPC, being out of accord with its Constitution. On the other hand, a person cannot affirm the WCF and disbelieve any part of the **Essentials of Our Faith.** The **Essentials of Our Faith** are to be subscribed to in addition to the full WCF (**G.**13-2A.4). (**Minutes 13-38**)

The 16th General Assembly (1996) voted to delete the last sentence ***(Minutes 16-26); Act 96-19.***

96-19 The 16th General Assembly DELETS the last sentence from the statement in Act 93-17. **(Minutes 16-26)**

97-11 The 17th General Assembly ADOPTS the ruling of the Permanent Judicial Commission that the current form of the fourth ordination vow is the result of an unauthorized typographical alteration and that the words "essentials of the faith" should be printed in small case and plain letters. Future editions of the *Book of Government* are to be printed to conform to this correction. **(Minutes 17-26)**

97-12 The 17th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the permanent Committee on Theology to undertake a comprehensive study of the relationship that now exists and that should exist between the **Essentials of Our Faith** and the **Westminster Confession of Faith** to include, but not be limited to, an examination of the relevance of each to the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the vows of ordination for pastors and elders, relations with other denominations and the teaching and edification of lay persons. **(Minutes 17-29)**

98-02 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS a report entitled, "Response of the Permanent Theology Committee to the 17th General Assembly Instructions Regarding 'The Essentials' and the **Westminster Confession**." **(Minutes 18-26)**

99-07 The 19th General Assembly strongly EXHORTS churches to diligently train officers and ordain in the essential tenets of the Reformed faith and recommends that sessions and presbyteries familiarize themselves with the "Response of the Permanent Theology Committee to the 17th General Assembly Instructions Regarding 'The Essentials' and the **Westminster Confession**" and use such works as R.C. Sproul's *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Tyndale House, 1998 paper). **(Minutes 19-27)**

02-01 The 22nd General Assembly ADOPTS a "Pastoral Letter on Open Theism" (the openness of God). **(Minutes 22-28)**

02-02 The 22nd General Assembly COMMENDS the paper, "What It Means to Receive and Adopt the **Westminster Confession of Faith**" by S. Donald Fortson III, for use in the churches as a resource in understanding this subject. **(Minutes 22-28)**

02-11 The 22nd General Assembly RATIFIES changes to the Book of Government and ADOPTS the **Essentials of Our Faith** into the EPC's constitution with an accompanying explanatory statement. **(Minutes 22-09)**

06-07 The 26th General Assembly APPROVES the response of the permanent Theology Committee to a request for a review of the theology and practice of paedo communion. **(Minutes 26-37;** Documents section)

07-06 The 27th General Assembly RECEIVES the "Comparison of the Three Forms of Unity and the **Westminster** Standards" report of the Theology Committee. **(Minutes 27-42)**

12-08 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS the opinion of the Stated Clerk regarding "contempt" and/or "immorality" as defined in *Book of Discipline* **1-8** and **1-10** and the use of social media to promote opposition to church leadership and encourages churches and presbyteries to adopt a similar policy. **(Minutes 32-56)**

14-02 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES a statement in response to a perceived contradiction between the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the *Book of Worship* regarding serving Communion to those not present at the public worship service:

"The contradiction between **Westminster Confession of Faith** 29-3 and *Book of Worship* 3-3G is a perceived one only. **WCF** 29-3 rejects the practice of the Roman Catholic Church and the practice of 'private communion' by the aristocracy. These were significant problems facing the English church in the mid-seventeenth century. **W.**3-3, written in the twentieth century, does not address these seventeenth-century problems. It speaks to the provision of the sacrament to those who, due to illness, are not able to participate in the church's celebration of the sacrament. **W.**3-3 enables the Church Session to provide this ministry with appropriate oversight." (**Minutes 34-40**)

14-07 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES a statement regarding the *New City Catechism,* saying that with an exception and some concerns, the New City Catechism is generally consistent with the system of doctrine taught in the **Westminster Confession of Faith**." **(Minutes 34-56)**

15-03 The 35th General Assembly AUTHORIZES editorial correction of typographical errors in *Book of Government* 24-3, which mistakenly refers to non-existent subsections of G.24-2, and that these corrections should appear in the 2015-16 Edition of the **Book of Order**. **(Minutes 35-34)**

15-13 The 35th General Assembly ADOPTS the finding of the Permanent Theology Committee: When a Presbytery grants an exception to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** 21-8 (Sabbath observance), it is acting well within the bounds of the EPC Book of Worship 2-2. Such an exception is consistent with our *Book of Worship* and does not make it difficult for Teaching Elders to take a vow to submit to the government and discipline of the EPC with integrity. **(Minutes 35-55)**

16-24 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES an editorial correction of an inadvertent omission of the word "to" in **G.**14-3B.1b. **(Minutes 36-61)**

18-01 The 38th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality.

24-01 The 44th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope.

FISCAL MATTERS

81-09 The 1st General Assembly ADOPTS the suggested guideline of $5 "per member" contribution by EPC congregations. **(Minutes 1-24)**

82-08 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the fiscal year of the Assembly shall be a calendar year. **(Minutes 2-50)**

The 35th General Assembly (2015) approved changing the fiscal year to July-June, effective July 1, 2017 ***(Minutes 35-55)****; Act 15-11.*

83-08 The 3rd General Assembly APPROVES the following Fiscal Policy: Unified Budget Proposal

The administration and operation of the General Assembly ought to be supported entirely by per-member giving.

Aside from Assembly operations, the programs and activities of the Assembly in such areas as world missions, new church development, etc., are to be supported by the benevolence offerings of the various congregations as follows:

1. Each committee shall make a request to the Assembly through the Administration

Committee for specific project funding in the succeeding year.

2. Upon the Assembly's approval, this shall become the Benevolence Askings of the denomination.
3. Local congregations may give to this objective in the following manner:
   A. Undesignated giving to all objectives which gifts shall be applied according to the percentage of the budget for each program.
   B. Designated giving to a specific program. All designated giving shall go to the program for which it was given. However, when the full budget of a program is reached, while designated giving shall continue to go to that program, undesignated giving shall then be distributed to other programs proportionately until 100% of budget for each program is reached. Once each program has reached 100% of benevolence, undesignated gifts shall then be distributed according to the percentage of budget as was done previously.

The Administration Committee shall present to the Assembly a recommended calendar of all events for the coming year. Such calendar shall include specific seasons, times of emphasis, times for prayer, and education of the congregations for the various benevolence objectives of the General Assembly. The asking of special offerings shall be left to the discretion of local sessions.

To move toward the support of the administration and operation of the Office of the General Assembly entirely by per member giving, for 1984 the per member giving shall be set at $8 and based on the current membership as of December 31, and in 1985, with the approval of the General Assembly, shall be set at a figure to cover that cost.

As staff is added to boards, agencies, and other offices of the Assembly, such staff shall be funded out of the General Assembly Administration Budget. The purpose of this policy is to unify staff operations and equipment use as much as possible and to maintain parity of salaries and benefits.

As soon as practical, through the Administration Committee, the budget for the following year and a preliminary budget for the year after that shall be presented to the General Assembly each year.

All financial appeals by any committee, agency, or persons must be submitted to the Administration Committee for prior approval. **(Minutes 3-53)**

*The 37th General Assembly (2017) amended the Unified Budget Proposal **(Minutes 37-34)**; Act 17-07.*

83-11 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES a loan fund for church site and building development whereby, on a revolving capitalization basis, low-interest monies will be available to mission churches and other churches in need. **(Minutes 3-54)**

84-15 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES the Ministerial Endowment Fund to meet specific, extraordinary financial needs of Ministers of the Word, missionaries, and other full-time Christian workers who are members of or working under the auspices of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The Stated Clerk and chairmen of the World Outreach and Ministerial Vocation Committees are appointed administrators of the Fund, responsible for making specific grants from the income of the Fund. **(Minutes 4-23)**

85-07 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall set aside its fiscal policy (Unified Budget #5) that states, "additional staff be funded out of the General Assembly Administration Budget" for a period of five years during which time new staff development may be funded by benevolence giving. **(Minutes 5-43)**

85-08 The 5th General Assembly ENDORSES a special denominational voluntary Christmas offering to help needy ministers or missionaries and authorized EPC churches to receive such an offering whose funds shall be administered by the permanent Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 5-43)**

86-07 The 6th General Assembly ENDORSES the concept of "2nd Mile Giving" for Women's Ministries to be part of the Benevolence Askings Budget. **(Minutes 6-60)**

> *The 40th General Assembly (2020) approved the deletion of Act 86-06 and all relevant Acts of Assembly.* ***(Minutes 40-24)***; *Act 20-11*

87-20 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES the adoption of a per-member benevolence goal for each congregation, to be determined by the total benevolences approved by the Assembly. The Assembly Office shall provide to each session and congregation information on the approved benevolences, along with the suggested per-member goal by September 1 following the meeting of the General Assembly, along with the suggested per-member contribution for the Assembly's Administration Budget.

Each session and congregation is assured that such a per-member goal is not an assessment but only a suggestion, and that contributions to approved Assembly benevolences be designated for specific causes and that those contributions shall be used only for such designated causes.

The Assembly urges each congregation to notify the Assembly Office no later than February of each year of its intended giving goal for that year to approved Assembly benevolences, with the understanding that the local church's goal is not a pledge but only a goal towards which the church will strive. **(Minutes 7-55)**

89-18 The 9th General Assembly RAISES Per Member Asking from $8 to $10. **(Minutes 9-48)**

90-01 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES a half-time Director of Women's Ministries and granted an exception to its fiscal policy (*Act 83-08)*, permitting the position to be funded for a period not exceeding three years through the Women's "Faith Focus" benevolence asking. **(Minutes 10-24)**

> *The 40th General Assembly (2020) approved the deletion of Act 86-06 and all relevant Acts of Assembly.* ***(Minutes 40-24)***; *Act 20-11*

90-02 The 10th General Assembly approves a half-time Director of Youth Ministries position and granted an exception to its fiscal policy (Act 83-08, p. 219), permitting the position to be funded by benevolence giving for a period not exceeding five years. **(Minutes 10-25)**

> *The 11th General Assembly (1991) approved the establishment of a full-time Director of Youth Ministries* ***(Minutes 11-27);*** *Act 91-04.*

90-10 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the Church Loan Fund policies to include the following: "A presbytery shall contractually guarantee timely repayment of principal and fees upon the recommendation of its Church Development Committee following its determination that the loan is a sound financial venture." **(Minutes 10-36)**

90-12 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES and ENDORSES the following eight principles regarding the propriety of lending money at interest:

1. It is always right and honoring to God that the church makes gifts and/or interest-free loans to mission congregations situated in severely disadvantaged areas, and to congregations in need of special assistance.

2. The Old Testament prohibition of usury had in view Israel as a national entity, a commonwealth, a body politic unique in its position in redemptive history, a prohibition which therefore cannot be directly applied to the New Testament church. Here we take the general position clearly set forth in The **Westminster Confession of Faith** (Chapter XIX, "Of the Law of God" paragraph iv); "To them [i.e., Israel] also as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not

obliging any other, now further than the general equity thereof may require."

3. The prohibition of usury, or the lending of money at interest, though never absolute (for example, interest could be charged when loans were made to non-Israelites) was designed by God for the commonwealth of Israel, and intended to govern its life in the period prior to the coming of Christ and the fulfilling of the law by him (Matthew 5:17-18). The principle of love that underlay that prohibition continues to be relevant to the lives of believers and to the life of the church. We believe, however, that the laws themselves are no longer directly applicable "further than the general equity thereof may require."
4. The preservation of the value of the principal by means of the charging of interest, given administrative costs and the prevalence of inflation, and even some increasing of the principal itself for the good of Christ's Kingdom, cannot be said to be a violation of biblical teaching for the reasons set forth in the preceding statements.
5. Underlying the Old Testament teaching on interest and its New Testament implications is always the great truth that relations among believers in the area of finance, the lending of money, and the charging of interest, as in all others, are to be governed by the requirements of love, equity, and justice.
6. Given the principles enunciated in this paper, we believe that in administering the funds available for loans to congregations, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must take into consideration the diverse nature of those congregations applying for assistance. It is clear, for example, that some congregations are in a much more favorable position to repay loans with interest than is the case with others. What may be applicable in one set of circumstances may not be at all applicable in another.
7. It is clear from the Scriptures (1 Timothy 6:10) and from Christian history that churches, as individuals, are not immune to the temptations of avarice. Those responsible for the administration of funds belonging to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will remember the importance of proceeding with caution in this area and profit from the example of biblical teaching as well as from the broader history of the church.
8. It is our conviction that a loan with interest ought not to be extended to a person, or persons, lacking collateral or the ability to repay the sum borrowed. Further, in our view a clear distinction must be made between a mission or ministry supported by the church through gifts given without any expectation of repayment, and support extended to church extension projects or congregations seeking to purchase property and construct a building. It is entirely proper to grant assistance to new or existing congregations by means of a loan to which interest is attached and which is to be repaid on a mutually agreeable schedule. **(Minutes 10-36)**

90-16 The 10th General Assembly conceptually ENDORSES the Medical Benevolence Trust with the understanding that the actual Trust Agreement would be presented to the 11th Assembly. Approval to begin promotion of the Trust is given. **(Minutes 10-41)**

92-21 The 12th General Assembly ADOPTS a policy that financial solicitations of any type for support of an EPC church planting project be limited to the organizing context for the project, viz., daughter church project to its mother church, presbytery plant to its presbytery, Assembly-supported plants to Assembly-approved National Outreach Committee benevolence projects. **(Minutes 12-46)**

92-23 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES an increase in the per-member asking from $10 to $12. **(Minutes 12-46)**

94-13 The 14th General Assembly AMENDS the Church Loan Fund Criterion #1 to read: "Fee rate: The original rate shall be established at the time the loan is made for a period of one (1) year and renewed on each succeeding anniversary date, and shall be based upon prevailing money market rates." **(Minutes 14-25)**

94-14 The 14th General Assembly APPROVES an increase in the per-member asking from $12 to $15. **(Minutes 14-26)**

95-01 The 15th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Office of the General Assembly to provide information relative to special offerings at least five weeks in advance of the projected date of the offering. **(Minutes 15-20)**

95-08 The 15th General Assembly GRANTS permission to the Christian Education and Publications Committee to design a subscription or funding program for *EPC Reflections,* to begin with the June 1996 issue. **(Minutes 15-23)**

95-11 The 15th General Assembly APPROVES the matching scholarship program offered to EPC students by Erskine College, and a mailing to introduce the program. **(Minutes 15-29)**

97-06 The 17th General Assembly APPROVES an increase in per-member asking from $15 to $18. **(Minutes 17-25)**

97-07 The 17th General Assembly INCREASES financial eligibility for the Medical Benevolence Funds from $20,000 to $25,000. **(Minutes 17-25)**

97-20 The 17th General Assembly DIRECTS the Permanent Committee on Student and Young Adult Ministries to become more focused in its request for benevolence giving and is further directed to send a letter to the clerks of session of EPC congregations encouraging support of the SYAM budget through benevolent giving. **(Minutes 17-37)**

98-09 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS a new monthly fee schedule for administration costs for World Outreach missionaries:

- EPC missionaries (married): $300;
- EPC missionaries (single): $150;
- Cooperative agreement missionaries (married): $200;
- Cooperative (single): $100.

Fees to be deducted from the support account of each WOC missionary unit. Amount will be adjusted annually in accordance with Consumer Price Index. **(Minutes 18-37)**

98-12 The 18th General Assembly ENDORSES the Sowing/Reaping Planned Giving Program and information commending such for distribution to the churches for review and consideration. **(Minutes 18-39)**

00-05 The 20th General Assembly ADOPTS a plan to fund church planting through a 3-year campaign to raise $750,000. Two-thirds of the fund will be used for church/presbytery/National Outreach partner projects. One-third of the fund will be used for Key City projects. **(Minutes 20-28)**

01-14 The 21st General Assembly INCREASES per-member asking from $18 to $22. **(Minutes 21-40)**

03-05 The 23rd General Assembly INCREASES per-member asking from $22 to $23. **(Minutes 23-37)**

03-06 The 23rd General Assembly AMENDS the Church Loan Fund Criteria as follows:

#6a Change $50,000 to $75,000;

#9 Evidence of efforts to obtain loans from other sources (Churches that are having difficulty finding loans from other sources may receive preferential consideration.)

A statement is added to the Church Loan Fund application form: "With the submission of this request, the mission and vision of the church and how this loan would assist in accomplishing the mission of the church would be required." **(Minutes 23-37)**

05-04 The 25th General Assembly REQUIRES the church Finance Committee Chairmen to communicate reasons for falling significantly short of Per Member Asking goals when asked by the Committee on Administration. Those responses will be treated confidentially and taken under

advisement for purposes of planning and communication. **(Minutes 25-37)**

05-05 The 25th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to establish and incorporate, if necessary, an EPC Foundation and act as its governing board until the General Assembly elects a Board of Trustees through the established nominating process. **(Minutes 25-37)**

08-08 The 28th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to approve changes to the Church Loan Fund, Home Missionary Manual and supporting materials, and World Outreach Cooperative agreements. **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-10 The 28th General Assembly INCREASES per-member asking to $25. **(Minutes 28-50)**

09-06 The 29th General Assembly REDUCES per-member asking to $23. **(Minutes 29-33)**

*The 42nd General Assembly (2022) changed the funding support from Per-Member Asking to Percentage of Income **(Minutes 42-40)**; 22-03.*

11-07 The 31st General Assembly APPROVES a revision of the Medical Benevolence Fund policy **(Minutes 31-**38; Documents section)

12-07 The 32nd General Assembly AMENDS the Foundation Board Bylaws to reduce the size of the Board to no less than three persons. **(Minutes 32-56)**

*The 36th General Assembly (2016) amended the bylaws to increase the size of the Board **(Minutes 36-59)**; Act 16-16.*

15-11 The 35th General Assembly APPROVES a fiscal year of July to June, effective July 1, 2017. **(Minutes 35-55)**

17-06 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES increasing action to support efforts in fundraising for the four key areas of interest to EPC. **(Minutes 37-34)**

17-07 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES a change to the Unified Budget Proposal as follows: **(Minutes 37-34)**

The administration and strategic initiatives of the General Assembly ought to be supported by the per member giving of EPC churches. Aside from General Assembly administration and strategic initiatives, additional programs and activities of the Assembly are to be supported by the special project offerings of EPC churches. Aside from General Assembly administration strategic initiatives, additional programs and activities of the Assembly are to be supported by the special project offerings of EPC churches as follows:

1. Each Committee shall make a request to the Assembly through the Administration Committee for specific project funding in the succeeding year.
2. Upon the Assembly's approval, this shall become the Special Project Askings of the denomination.
3. Local congregations may give to this objective in the following manner:
    A. Undesignated giving to all projects which gifts shall be applied according to the percentage of the budget for each program.
    B. Designated giving to a specific project. All designated giving shall go to the project for which it was given. However, when the full budget of a project is reached, while designated giving shall continue to go to that program, undesignated giving shall then be distributed to other programs proportionately until 100% of budget for each program is reached. Once each program has reached 100% of benevolence, undesignated gifts shall then be distributed according to the percentage of budget as was done previously.

The National Leadership Team shall present to the Assembly a recommended calendar of all events for the coming year. Such calendar shall include specific seasons, times of emphasis, times for prayer, and education of the congregations for the various Special Projects of the General Assembly. The asking of special offerings shall be left to the discretion of local sessions.

As staff is added to boards, agencies, and other offices of the Assembly, such staff shall be funded out of the General Assembly Administration Budget. The purpose of this policy is to unify staff operations and equipment use as much as possible and to maintain parity of salaries and benefits.

The budget for the following fiscal year shall be presented to the General Assembly each year by the National Leadership Team.

All financial appeals by any committee, agency, or persons must be submitted to the National Leadership Team for prior approval.

17-12 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES exploring the feasibility of the Foundation working closely with World Outreach, assisting in fundraising for missions, and helping with general financial issues. **(Minutes 37-38)**

19-01 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES the Moderator to appoint an ad interim committee (Giving Culture Study Committee) composed of five ruling or teaching elders from diverse, strongly supporting churches across multiple presbyteries to address how to improve our church's long-term culture of giving to the EPC.

20-09 The 40th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the National Leadership Team to increase the funding of the line items within the budget, with a focus on strategic ministry opportunities, should FY21 revenue exceed the budget. **(Minutes 40-09)**

21-05 The 41st General Assembly DIRECTS the Office of the Stated Clerk to send to all Presbyteries and churches, for study, the proposed change in the funding formula from Per Member Asking (PMA) to Percentage of Budget (POB). **(Minutes 41-45)**

22-03 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES changing the funding support of the General Assembly from Per Member Asking (PMA) to Percentage of Income (POI). **(Minutes 42-40)**

FRATERNAL MATTERS

81-07 The 1st General Assembly DECIDES that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall seek membership in the National Association of Evangelicals. **(Minutes 1-39)**

82-10 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall pursue with the highest ethical conduct, a fraternal relationship with other evangelical Reformed bodies. **(Minutes 2-56,** Appendix K)

83-17 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES and ELECTS a permanent Fraternal Relations Committee, consisting of six members. The Stated Clerk is instructed to draw up a job description for the committee. **(Minutes 3-31)**

84-05 The 4th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Stated Clerk to make a denominational application for membership into the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. **(Minutes 4-26)**

84-06 The 4th General Assembly SEEKS, through its Fraternal Relations Committee, to identify, develop, and implement relationships with other bodies of Christians which will promote the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the unity of His Body, and the strengthening of the Kingdom of God on earth. To this end, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, through its Fraternal Relations Committee, seeks to build relationships with those denominations in the Reformed tradition, ecumenical agencies which are evangelical or Reformed in character and in spirit, and other groups and organizations which are working to advance the Kingdom of God through ministries of evangelism, nurture, and service.

A **fraternal relationship** may include one or more of the following:

1. A formal relationship with the highest representative body of another denomination. Such a relationship is more commonly understood as "being in correspondence with" that body.
2. Less formal relationships, which may include exchange of information, exchange of observers, and shared ministries at different judicatory levels.
3. Memberships in ecumenical agencies that proclaim the Word of God, promote the unity of the Body of Christ, and share resources for effective ministries.
4. Relationships that endorse and support ministries lying outside conventional ecclesiastical structures but are of significance to the Kingdom.

A fraternal relationship may be constituted only by the General Assembly, which shall also approve the terms of such relationships. **(Minutes 4-26)**

*The 32nd General Assembly (2012) modified the definition of fraternal relationships **(Minutes 32-56);** Act 12-10.*

85-10 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES fraternal relations with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and shall send a delegate to its Synod every other year beginning in 1986. **(Minutes 5-47)**

Reference Act 88-14 for the definition of this relationship.

*The 12th General Assembly (1992) approved an annual exchange of delegates **(Minutes 12-21)**; Act 92-02.*

*The 28th General Assembly (2008) returned the exchange of delegates to every other year **(Minutes 28-46)**; Act 08-05.*

85-11 The 5th General Assembly PURSUES fraternal relations with the Presbyterian Church of America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as soon as mutually convenient. **(Minutes 5-47)**

85-25 The Assembly approves in principle the Articles of Agreement between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB) and forms a commission to negotiate and consummate a final agreement. **(Minutes 5-47)**

*The work of the Commission was received and adopted by the 6th General Assembly (1986). **(Minutes 6-40)***

86-16 The 6th General Assembly SEEKS membership in the World Evangelical Fellowship. **(Minutes 6-74)**

87-09 The 7th General Assembly SEEKS membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. **(Minutes 7-51)**

87-10 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES a fraternal relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. **(Minutes 7-51)**

88-14 The 8th General Assembly CLARIFIES that the "fraternal relationship" established by the 5th General Assembly with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church consists of:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies;
2. Occasional pulpit supply;
3. Intercommunion;
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibilities;
5. Communication on major issues of joint concern;
6. Exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity. **(Minutes 8-50)**

88-15 The 8th General Assembly STATES that the official policy of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is, as it has been, not to solicit churches to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) or any other denomination. Further, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall limit itself to responding to churches requesting information about the EPC. **(Minutes 8-50)**

88-16 The 8th General Assembly REQUESTS, in a spirit of brotherly concern, that the Presbyterian Church (USA) reconsider its action relative to the EPC and consider rescinding said action until such time as the EPC receives information from the PC(USA) about the charges leveled against the EPC and these charges can be responded to after investigation. **(Minutes 8-50)**

88-17 The 8th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the EPC will take every measure possible to handle all matters of disputes between her and all others, the just and the unjust irrespectively, before Christian mediators and will eschew civil litigation unless she is named as the defendant. **(Minutes 8-50)**

88-18 The 8th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Stated Clerk to convey to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) a protest on behalf of the 8th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church regarding the action of the 200th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to censure and condemn the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a sister denomination in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, without adequate communication and without an attempt to resolve the alleged problems between our bodies; and further, we request the World Alliance of Reformed Churches assist the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in resolving this dispute between sister denominations in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. **(Minutes 8-50)**

89-19 The 9th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to explore with both the Christian Reformed Church and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church the possibilities of more extensive relationships and/or cooperative ministries. **(Minutes 9-49)**

89-20 The 9th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to explore the desirability and feasibility of establishing fraternal relationships with the Reformed Church in America and with the Presbyterian Church in America. **(Minutes 9-49)**

89-21 The 9th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to continue dialogue with NAPARC concerning our application for membership in the organization; to continue to strengthen our relationship with member denominations in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and to continue to affirm our relationship with the National Association of Evangelicals. **(Minutes 9-49)**

Reference Act 87-09.

91-10 The 11th General Assembly APPROVES a statement of commitment between the EPC and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, authorizing the Interchurch Relations Committees to continue meeting for the purposes of finding areas of mutual commitment, discovering areas of difference, exploring ways of resolving those differences, and exploring new and creative ways of working together. They shall report back to the respective parent bodies each year, until such time as either committee may ask to be discharged from this duty, or until the appointing body may discharge the committee from such duty. **(Minutes 11-26)**

Reference Act 92-01.

92-01 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES *The Geneva Statement,* to be added to the joint statement adopted by the EPC and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 12-21)**

Reference Act 91-10.

The Geneva Statement

Being persuaded from Scripture that all Christians are united together as one body in Christ, we acknowledge our responsibility to God and one another to labor together in the work of Christ

so as to promote the peace, purity, and unity of the church, and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in the world.

We share a common understanding of the Scriptures as expressed in the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms**, for laboring together in ministry. Recognizing that some differences exist between us in our understanding of certain issues concerning God's will for His church, we also recognize that that which we hold in common far outweighs that which differentiates us. It is understood that our common labors shall not compromise the consciences of either church. The integrity of each church concerning its standards and policies must be maintained and respected.

We therefore pledge ourselves to labor together in love to advance the work of Christ in both our common and separate ministries, seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We promise that if ever we should offend one another in our common labors, we shall do everything possible to resolve the matter and to maintain cooperation. We commit ourselves to labor in support of our church courts, faithfully reporting our activities to the appropriate board or agency, and our respective committees concerning interchurch relations.

We further believe that such practical fraternity, apart from any quest for organizational union, will be pleasing to God and promote the advancement of the gospel in the world. For these reasons, we commit ourselves to this Agreement of Cooperation that is to be attached to the joint statement previously adopted by our churches.

92-02 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES an annual exchange of fraternal delegates to the meetings of the EPC and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, rather than the present alternating year exchange. **(Minutes 12-21)**

*The 28th General Assembly (2008) returned the exchange of delegates to an every-other-year basis **(Minutes 28-46)**; Act 08-05.*

92-16 The 12th General Assembly RESPONDS to questions raised by the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) concerning our stance on charismatic gifts by referring them to the Position Paper on the Holy Spirit, along with the following interpretive statements:

1. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church holds that baptism in or with the Holy Spirit is to be identified with regeneration and adoption;
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church views the gifts of the Holy Spirit as these are specified in such passages as 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 as valid for the church at the present time.
3. The Position Paper on the Holy Spirit distinguishes between the Word of God on the one hand and the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of prophecy, on the other. Whatever the exercise the gift of prophecy may involve, it is plain that its exercise is subject to the Holy Scriptures and to the local session.
4. Clearly, the implication of the Position Paper on the Holy Spirit is that because preeminence is ascribed to the Holy Scriptures, one would have to draw a very sharp distinction between the Bible (the Word of God) and any other form of revelation mentioned in the New Testament. **(Minutes 12-44)**

93-03 The 13th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Christian Education Committee to explore with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church the feasibility of a joint family conference to be held at Bonclarken Conference Center. **(Minutes 13-18)**

94-01 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES fraternal relations with the Association of the Charismatic Presbyterian Churches in Puerto Rico as defined in Acts 84-06 and 88-14. **(Minutes 14-18)**

*The 44th General Assembly (2024) withdrew this relationship **(Minutes 44-14)**; 24-08.*

94-03 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to pursue and explore fraternal relations with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to include, but not be limited to, possible world outreach. **(Minutes 14-18)**

94-04 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to continue to pursue membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). **(Minutes 14-18)**

94-05 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to study the membership of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and ascertain if any alternate organizations are available for churches in the Reformed world. **(Minutes 14-18)**

96-04 The 16th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to investigate the possibilities of creating as many mutually beneficial and kingdom-enhancing denominational relationships, even if outside the Reformed family, as seems appropriate. **(Minutes 16-23)**

97-04 The 17th General Assembly SEEKS membership in the World Fellowship of Reformed Churches, a new global network of Presbyterian and Reformed bodies that will meet in conjunction with the World Evangelical Fellowship General Assemblies. **(Minutes 17-22)**

97-05 The 17th General Assembly ENCOURAGES its churches to participate more fully in the National Association of Evangelicals, such as participating more fully in its commissions. **(Minutes 17-22)**

00-01 The 20th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to continue the relationship of the EPC with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB). The relationship will include exchange programs for youth, leadership, and music ministry, theological education programs, joint missionary projects, and church planting. **(Minutes 20-20;** Communication 00-14)

05-10 The 25th General Assembly SUSTAINS a provisional opinion of the Stated Clerk clarifying what constitutes a "denomination from within the Reformed family" (**G.**12-3B). Such denominations 1) legally and/or ecclesiastically share a common government, 2) are theologically, historically, and/or fraternally identified with the Continental or British Reformed traditions, 3) profess one of the historic Reformed confessions and/or other standards whose doctrine is consistent with these in content as well as scope, and 4) could be part of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (REC), or the World Reformed Fellowship. (WRF). **(Minutes 25-53)**

Note: Subsequently, WARC and REC merged to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

08-01 The 28th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Fraternal Relations Committee to write a letter to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, stating and documenting the EPC's commitment to and practice of ethical conduct regarding congregations stating interest in EPC membership and requesting relief from public statements of accusation by the Presbyterian Church (USA). **(Minutes 28-35)**

08-05 The 28th General Assembly CHANGES the exchange of fraternal delegates and guests to an every-other-year basis. **(Minutes 28-46)**

09-03 The 29th General Assembly APPROVES "Articles of Agreement" for 2009-2014 with the St. Andrews Presbytery of Argentina **(Minutes 29-54** and Documents section)

11-02 The 31st General Assembly RECOGNIZES the Association of Reformed Churches of Kazakhstan (ARCK) and establishes fraternal relations with this new body. **(Minutes 31-12)**

12-04 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES joining the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty as an Associate Member, and approves the EPC's Endorser for Chaplains maintaining a membership as an Individual Member **(Minutes 32-41)**

12-09 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS the Fraternal Relations Committee's "Report on Existing Ecumenical Relationships" regarding the National Association of Evangelicals (*Act 81-07)*; the Christian Reformed Church (*Act 87-10)*; the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (*Act 85-10; 88-14; 91-10; 92-01)*; the Presbyterian Church in America (no formal fraternal relationship); St. Andrews Presbytery, Argentina (*Act 87-11; 97-09; 04-05; 09-03)*; the Association of Reformed Churches of Kazakhstan (*Act 01-13; 11-02)*; the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB) (*Act 85-25; 00-01)*; The World Reformed Fellowship (formerly World Fellowship of Reformed Churches, (*Act 97-04)*; and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (formerly World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Act 84-05).* **(Minutes 32-56**)

12-10 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES the following definitions of "fraternal relationship:"

1. A fraternal relationship may include one or more of the following:
    a. A formal relationship with the highest representative body of another denomination. A formal relationship may include any or all of the following:
        1) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
        2) Occasional pulpit supply.
        3) Intercommunion.
        4) Joint action in areas of common responsibilities.
        5) Communication on major issues of joint concern.
        6) Exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
        7) A Fraternal Agreement that is mutually discussed and agreed upon with time specific set goals. These agreements may be revised and renewed.
    b. A less formal relationship, which may include exchange of information, exchange of observers, shared ministries, and fraternal agreements at different judicatory levels.
    c. Memberships in ecumenical agencies that proclaim the Word of God, promote the unity of the Body of Christ, and share resources for effective ministries.
    d. Relationships that endorse and support ministries lying outside conventional ecclesiastical structures but are of significance to the Kingdom.
2. Fraternal relationships may be constituted only by the General Assembly which shall also approve the terms of such relationships **(Minutes 32-56)**

13-01 The 33rd General Assembly APPROVES a fraternal agreement with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Kazakhstan (ERCK). **(Minutes 33-35)**

13-08 The 33rd General Assembly ENDORSES a letter of support for the membership application of A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) in the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). **(Minutes 33-53)**

16-07 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES a fraternal agreement with The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (*Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara* or FJKM) as described in *Act of Assembly* 12-10.1b: "A less formal relationship, which may include exchange of information, exchange of observers, shared ministries, and fraternal agreements at different judicatory levels." **(Minutes 36-35)**

The 45th General Assembly (2025) withdrew this agreement ***(Minutes 45-54)****; Act 25-28.*

16-08 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES entering a fraternal relationship with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM). **(Minutes 36-55)**

17-10 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES the EPC entering into a fraternal relationship with the Evangelical & Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru for the purpose of developing equipping material (theological and practical) and church revitalization materials for leaders in the Peruvian Church. **(Minutes 37-82)**

*The 44th General Assembly (2024) withdrew this relationship **(Minutes 44-14)**; 24-07.*

17-11 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES the Permanent Committee on Fraternal Relations to explore fraternal relations with the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians. **(Minutes 37-82)**

19-03 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES that the EPC maintain its relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) through its membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). **(Minutes 39-49)**

19-04 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES the continuation of its conversation with the leadership of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland about the possibility of a fraternal relationship. **(Minutes 39-49)**

20-08 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES a fraternal agreement between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. **(Minutes 40-23)**

22-05 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES entering a fraternal relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sierra Leone. **(Minutes 42-45)**

23-03 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church withdraw from the World Communion of Reformed Churches effective upon approval of this recommendation. **(Minutes 43-32)**

23-04 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES entering into a fraternal relationship with ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. **(Minutes 43-32)**

24-06 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES entering into a fraternal relationship with the National Union of Protestant Reformed Churches (UNEPREF)

24-07 The 44th General Assembly WITHDRAWS its fraternal relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru. **(Minutes 44-14)**

24-08 The 44th General Assembly WITHDRAWS its fraternal relationship with the Association of Charismatic Presbyterian Churches in Puerto Rico, and establishes that future relationships be through the World Reformed Fellowship. **(Minutes 44-13)**

24-09 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES extending the current Articles of Agreement with the St. Andrew's Presbytery of Argentina through 2025. **(Minutes 44-16)**

25-02 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES establishing full fraternal relations with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. **(Minutes 45-32)**

25-03 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES the preliminary Articles of Agreement with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. **(Minutes 45-32)**

25-04 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES revised Articles of Agreement with St. Andrew's Presbytery, Argentina through 2030. **(Minutes 45-32)**

25-28 The 45th General Assembly WITHDRAWS from the fraternal relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar. **(Minutes 45-54)**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

81-10 The 1st General Assembly ADOPTS the document, Rules for Assembly, governing procedures for carrying out the business of the General Assembly. Rules may be amended as desired by each General Assembly. **(Minutes 1-6)**

81-11 The 1st General Assembly RATIFIES the provisional *Book of Worship*. **(Minutes 1-22)**

81-12 The 1st General Assembly RATIFIES the provisional *Book of Government*. **(Minutes 1-18)**

81-13 The 1st General Assembly ADOPTS the *Book of Discipline* provisionally. **(Minutes 1-29)**

Reference Act 97-01 for adoption of new Book of Discipline.

82-13 The 2nd General Assembly APPROVES criteria to guide the selection of the location of General Assembly meetings. **(Minutes 2-46;** Appendix I)

1. Geographical suitability, including accessibility to long-distance transportation.
2. Capability of accommodating 350 delegates.
3. Facilities for seating a minimum of 750 people for public services.
4. Adequate financial and personnel resources.
5. Adequate support services (housing, transportation, food).

83-02 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that opportunity shall be provided at each General Assembly for pastors seeking a call to meet with churches and ministries seeking to issue a call. **(Minutes 3-37)**

83-09 The 3rd General Assembly endorses a three-fold statement of purpose for General Assembly meetings:

1. To do the business of the Assembly;
2. To be a time of celebration and fellowship;
3. To provide an opportunity for growth in ministry skills. **(Minutes 3-53)**

84-09 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that a Preliminary Position Paper is not intended to be a thorough theological statement nor a complete exegetical biblical study on a particular issue. Rather, such a Paper is intended to set forth in a preliminary way the "mind" of the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on some particular issue or subject. The purpose of such a Preliminary Position Paper is to enable the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to make a statement to itself, the Christian community, or the world in general on some issue or subject so that our general position is quickly made clear while the thorough theological or exegetical study may be done in due time. Such a Preliminary Position Paper may be adopted by one Assembly and modified or changed at any succeeding Assembly.

Ordinarily, such a Preliminary Position Paper shall have an Ad Interim Committee appointed to send the Paper to the presbyteries and congregations for study and comment and for further development theologically and biblically in order that such Paper might be presented to some subsequent Assembly as a "Position Paper." **(Minutes 4-38)**

84-10 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES an Ad Interim Committee on Theology to enable the Assembly to continue the development of its posture on crucial issues facing its church. Preliminary Position Papers shall be initiated by the Committee on Administration,[313] but individuals, sessions, and presbyteries may also develop such papers, which shall be forwarded to the General Assembly through its Administration Committee. **(Minutes 4-38)**

The 8th General Assembly (1988) voted to establish a permanent Committee on Theology

[313] The 36th General Assembly (2016) changed the name of the Committee on Administration to the National Leadership Team. That change is reflected in Rules for Assembly, but references to "Committee on Administration" prior to July 2016 have not been changed in order to maintain historical accuracy.

85-01 The 5th General Assembly DESIGNATES all heads of committees, boards, agencies, or commissions, whether male or female, as "chairman." The Assembly shall refrain from the usage of the term "chairperson." **(Minutes 5-25)**

86-01 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a permanent Committee on Theology, to be comprised of three Teaching Elders and three Ruling Elders. **(Minutes 6-24)**

86-02 The 6th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the permanent Committee on Theology to make known to all Ministers and Clerks of Session the date and place of its meetings and the agenda of items to be deliberated and to welcome input from the constituency regarding said matters. **(Minutes 6-28)**

86-06 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a permanent Committee on Women's Ministries, with one representative from each presbytery (appointed initially by the Moderator) to serve a 3-year term, after which the regular electoral process of rotation of class will be used. **(Minutes 6-52, 6-69)**

The 9th General Assembly (1989) regularized the election process with eligibility being extended to any active church member.

The 40th General Assembly (2020) approved the deletion of Act 86-06 and all relevant Acts of Assembly ***(Minutes 40-24);*** *Act 20-11.*

86-15 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES the formation of an historical foundation, and appoints a committee to oversee its development with instructions to prepare a history of the origins of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The Committee for the Historical Foundation shall be responsible for collecting, cataloging, and preserving historical documents, artifacts, and other items of historical significance in the origins and ongoing life of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 6-75)**

87-05 The 7th General Assembly DECIDES not to do business with hotels and motels promoting pornography for their customers in the cities where future General Assemblies are held and further will encourage its constituents to refrain personally from patronizing such establishments. **(Minutes 7-38)**

87-06 The 7th General Assembly ESTABLISHES a new permanent Committee on Youth Ministries with responsibility for conference ministries, youth curriculum resourcing, youth ministry resources, and other youth-related concerns for grades 7-12. The committee is to have two ministers and four ruling elders. **(Minutes 7-38)**

89-07 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES amending the Articles of Incorporation by adding a section on volunteer directors' liability limitations. **(Minutes 9-48)**

89-08 The 9th General Assembly DIRECTS that future General Assemblies be held during a time in June that does not include the weekend of Father's Day. **(Minutes 9-48)**

90-20 The 10th General Assembly ORDERS the 12th General Assembly to convene from Thursday evening through Monday afternoon on a trial basis, with the subsequent Assemblies to evaluate this time frame. **(Minutes 10-45)**

The 13th General Assembly (1993) approved convening on the Thursday in June following Father's Day through Saturday ***(Minutes 13-28);*** *Act 93-15.*

The 27th Assembly approved convening the week following Father's Day, dates determined by COA ***(Minutes 27-39);*** *Act 07-03.*

90-21 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES a reporting procedure for the Permanent Judicial Commission in reference to overtures and recommendations as follows:

1. The PJC will send a written report to the Assembly relative to any overture or recommendation proposing to change the Constitution.

2. The report will be assigned to a standing committee.
3. The Standing Committee will provide the Assembly with a written copy of the referred matters along with PJC recommendations, after which the committee's recommendations will be presented. **(Minutes 10-46)**

91-09 The 11th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to index and print the Acts of the Assembly for inclusion in the **Book of Order** binder under a new section titled "Rules and Acts of the Assembly" to be updated following each General Assembly. **(Minutes 11-40)**

*The 28th Assembly authorized publication of constitutional documents in a 2-volume spiral-bound format **(Minutes 28-46);** Act 08-03*

93-15 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall meet on Thursday through Saturday to convene on the Thursday in June following Father's Day. **(Minutes 13-28)**

*The 27th General Assembly approved convening the week following Father's Day, dates determined by COA **(Minutes 27-39);** Act 07-03.*

94-15 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Administration to develop a strategic plan to set forth the vision, goals, and programs of the General Assembly for the next several years, to include goals, programs, activities, and priorities for the life of the plan. **(Minutes 14-26)**

94-16 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Administration to investigate alternative formulas for allocating the costs of General Assembly operations among the churches and take appropriate action to implement the agreed-upon alternative. **(Minutes 14-26)**

94-26 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall hold a Newly Ordained Ministers Gathering annually beginning in 1995, and provide a speaker addressing current issues facing new ministers, along with a time of informal sharing. **(Minutes 14-37)**

94-27 The 14th General Assembly APPROVES, in keeping with the *Denominational Goals for Pastoral Care,* holding an annual "growth experience for persons in ministry focusing on spiritual, emotional, marital, family, and church life" beginning with the 15th General Assembly (1995). **(Minutes 14-37)**

97-01 The 17th General Assembly RATIFIES a new *Book of Discipline.* **(Minutes 17-7)**

97-28 The 17th General Assembly ESTABLISHES a permanent Presbytery Review Committee to consist of three members with at least one former stated clerk of presbytery. **(Minutes 17-46)**

The 21st General Assembly amended the Rules for Assembly, X10-1H.1, deleting the words "of presbytery." **(Minutes 21-43)**

00-10 The 20th General Assembly ADOPTS "Forms for Discipline" 1-19 for inclusion in the *Book of Discipline*. **(Minutes 20-43)**

07-03 The 27th General Assembly SETS the convening date of the General Assembly to be during the week following Father's Day, with the specific dates to be determined by the Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 27-39)**

11-01 The 31st General Assembly SUSTAINS the opinion of the Stated Clerk and comment of the Permanent Judicial Commission relative to the rights of new presbyteries to vote on descending overtures. New presbyteries established in the year following the General Assembly meeting at which a descending overture is approved have the right to vote on that descending overture. However, the total/aggregate number of Presbytery votes may not exceed the number of Presbyteries in existence at the time the General Assembly approved the descending overture. **(Minutes 31-9)**

11-13 The 31st General Assembly CREATES a Permanent Committee on Chaplains' Work and Care whose chairman serves as denominational endorser. **(Minutes 31-53)**

14-01 The 34th General Assembly RATIFIES a revised *Book of Government*, effective as the EPC *Book of Government,* on June 21, 2014. **(Minutes 34-37; 34-53)**

14-04 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES a policy regarding filing timelines in the **Book of Order:** "When a filing timeline (e.g., *Book of Discipline* 12-5, 13-4) falls on a weekend or holiday, the timeline shall be extended to midnight of the next business day following that weekend or holiday. This action of the General Assembly shall be referenced by footnote in all applicable sections of the **Book of Order." (Minutes 34-54)**

14-12 The 34th General Assembly RATIFIES a revised *Book of Government.* **(Minutes 34-56)**

15-05 The 35th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to oversee creation of separate legal entities for the World Outreach Ministry and the Benefits Department, to take effect on January 1, 2016, if possible and to establish on a provisional basis the required corporate formalities including bylaws, operating agreements, management and financial structure, and governing bodies that maintain optimal unity and alignment within the EPC, and that such corporate formalities be reported to and adopted as needed by the 2016 General Assembly. Although they would be wholly owned by the EPC, separate structures and finances would be established to minimize organizational risk. **(Minutes 35-36)**

15-14 The 35th General Assembly RATIFIES a revised *Book of Worship.* **(Minutes 35-62)**

17-08 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES providing the EPC Foundation with ten minutes at each General Assembly meeting, where a church can provide a testimonial for the substantial financial value gained by working through the Foundation. **(Minutes 37-37)**

17-09 The 37th General Assembly highly ENCOURAGES each Presbytery to create time on their meeting agenda at least once (or more) per year for EPC Foundation updates, new ideas, plus Q&A. Also, allowing the church leaders attending to schedule and or meet on specific issues with members of the EPCF Board. **(Minutes 37-38)**

21-01 The 41st General Assembly SUSTAINS the Provisional Opinion issued by the Stated Clerk on January 29, 2021, to permit holding a hybrid (including virtual attendance) 41st General Assembly. **(Minutes 41-09)**

23-02 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES the formation of a Permanent Committee on Disaster Relief. **(Minutes 43-30)**

25-01 The 45th General Assembly RATIFIES an amendment to the *Book of Government*. **(Minutes 45-26)**

25-20 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES changes to the *Rules for Assembly* VII section 7-3. **(Minutes 45-44)**

25-21 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES changes to the *Rules for Assembly* VII section 7-5. **(Minutes 45-44)**

25-22 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES changes to the *Rules for Assembly* XIII 13. **(Minutes 45-44)**

JUDICIAL MATTERS

11-05 The 31st General Assembly SUSTAINS the opinion of the Stated Clerk relative to service of summons and indictment upon an accused person (**D.**1-11, 4-5). There must be evidence of constructive service before proceeding. If a second summons is refused, the court proceeds solely with the issue of rebellion and must be cognizant of the accused's right to terminate membership (**D.**1-11, 4-5). **(Minutes 31-31)**

12-17 The 32nd General Assembly SUSTAINS the action of the Permanent Judicial Commission concerning the Complaint filed by Goodwill EPC against the Presbytery of the East, that the Session of Goodwill EPC does not have judicial standing as a party to take this action. **(Minutes 32-59)**

15-08 The 35th General Assembly SUSTAINS the decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission dismissing TE Lamont's complaint against the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. **(Minutes 35-46)**

15-09 The 35th General Assembly SUSTAINS the decisions of the Permanent Judicial Commission dismissing both the Cooke and Belzer complaints (dated April 30, 2014, and May 9, 2014) against the Presbytery of the East relative to the Presbytery's April 26, 2014, action concerning the call of a pastor by Fourth Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 35-46)**

15-10 The 35th General Assembly SUSTAINS a provisional opinion on a reference (**G.**22) from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic concerning a process for re-admitting a Teaching Elder who had renounced jurisdiction. **(Minutes 35-36)**

16-13 The 36th General Assembly SUSTAINS the March 17, 2014, opinion of PJC Moderator Jim Rimmel in response to the alleged disciplinary charges filed against the Presbytery of the East. **(Minutes 36-51)**

20-12 The 40th General Assembly RATIFIES the decision of the PJC dismissing the Complaint dated June 17, 2019, filed by a member of Sunset Presbyterian Church against the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest, as the Complaint did not allege proper grounds for the General Assembly to take the action required. **(Minutes 40-20)**

20-13 The 40th General Assembly RATIFIES the decision of the PJC dismissing the Complaint dated June 30, 2019, filed by former REs of Sunset Presbyterian Church against the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest, as the Complaint did not allege proper grounds for the General Assembly to take the actions requested. **(Minutes 40-20)**

20-14 The 40th General Assembly SUSTAINS the Provisional Opinion issued by the Office of the Stated Clerk on March 11, 2020, due to the exigent pandemic health crisis. **(Minutes 40-20)**

20-15 The 40th General Assembly RATIFIES the decision the decision of the PJC of May 4, 2020, dismissing the appeal of "I.Z." (full name redacted for privacy) on grounds that the appeal is not in order under *Book of Discipline* 13-4 and 13-6 for failure to state adequate factual or constitutional grounds for appealing the decision of the Presbytery of the East, and summarily dismissing I.Z.'s appeal pertaining to his Complaint against members of the pastoral staff at Fourth Presbyterian Church for lack of standing. **(Minutes 40-20)**

20-16 The 40th General Assembly SUSTAINS the Provisional Opinion issued by the Office of the Stated Clerk on April 2, 2020, due to the exigent pandemic health crisis. **(Minutes 40-20)**

20-17 The 40th General Assembly SUSTAINS the Provisional Opinion issued by the Office of the Stated Clerk on June 22, 2020, due to the exigent pandemic health crisis. **(Minutes 40-20)**

21-01 The 41st General Assembly SUSTAINS the Provisional Opinion issued by the Stated Clerk on January 29, 2021, to permit holding a hybrid (including virtual attendance) 41st General Assembly. **(Minutes 41-09)**

25-25 The 45th General Assembly SUSTAINS the Permanent Judicial Committee's Rulings related to Beverly Heights Church. **(Minutes 45-53)**

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

82-01 The 2nd General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of an Office of the General Assembly and authorizes the employment (calling) of an Administrative Coordinator who shall also serve as Stated Clerk and a Director of Church Development who shall be primarily responsible for church planting and congregational development. **(Minutes 2-32,** Appendix E).

82-02 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Administration Committee shall select a

permanent place for the Office of the General Assembly to be approved by the Administrative Commission. **(Minutes 2-32)**

The 12th General Assembly (1992) affirmed locating the permanent Office of the General Assembly in the Detroit metropolitan area ***(Minutes 12-25);*** *Act 92-03.*

The 35th General Assembly (2015) approved the relocation of the Office of the General Assembly to Orlando, Florida ***(Minutes 35-36);*** *Act 15-04*

82-09 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall provide an amount sufficient for salary and housing, insurance, pension, travel, and entertainment to establish a permanent position of Stated Clerk. **(Minutes 2-50,** Appendix I)

85-08 The 5th General Assembly ENDORSES a special denominational voluntary Christmas offering to help needy ministers or missionaries and authorizes EPC churches to receive such an offering, whose funds shall be administered by the permanent Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 5-43)**

Reference Act 87-14 for supplemental Assembly action regarding this offering, later named the "Gratitude Gift."

85-09 The 5th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Christian Education and Publications Committee to develop, for sale to the churches, standardized forms such as certificates for infant baptism, church membership, etc. **(Minutes 5-46)**

86-13 The 6th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the stated clerks of presbyteries to request every congregation to recommend Ruling Elders willing and qualified to serve on specific permanent committees; further, to instruct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to produce a brief description of duties and responsibilities for each permanent committee, along with upcoming vacancies. Clerks of presbyteries are requested to submit a combined list of available Ruling Elders from member congregations, along with their qualifications, experience, and a brief biographical sketch. Copies of pertinent documents are to be transmitted to each member of the Nominating Committee prior to its meeting. **(Minutes 6-70)** See *Rules for Assembly*, section XI, for a description of the permanent Committee on Nominations.

88-01 The 8th General Assembly APPROVES the purchase of a 10-acre parcel of land adjacent to and owned by Trinity Presbyterian Church in Plymouth, Michigan, for future construction of the Office of the General Assembly. **(Minutes 8-64)**

90-01 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES the position of half-time Director of Women's Ministries and grants an exception to its fiscal policy *(Act 83-08),* permitting the position to be funded for a period not exceeding three years through the Women's Ministries Faith Focus benevolence asking. **(Minutes 10-24)**

The 40th General Assembly (2020) approved the deletion of Act 86-06 and all relevant Acts of Assembly. ***(Minutes 40-24)***; *Act 20-11*

90-02 The 10th General Assembly approves a half-time Director of Youth Ministries position and granted an exception to its fiscal policy (Act 83-08, p. 219), permitting the position to be funded by benevolence giving for a period not exceeding five years. **(Minutes 10-25)**

The 11th General Assembly (1991) approved the establishment of a full-time Director of Youth Ministries ***(Minutes 11-27);*** *Act 91-04.*

90-06 The 10th General Assembly AFFIRMS the position of Director of Resource Management (Business Administrator) for the Office of the General Assembly. **(Minutes 10-28)**

90-07 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of an Evaluation Committee for the annual evaluation of the Stated Clerk and to review with the Stated Clerk the evaluation of the General Assembly staff. The committee will report annually to the Administration Committee. The Evaluation Committee shall be enlarged every third year by two persons, coinciding with the

year of election of the Stated Clerk, to provide a more comprehensive evaluation. Evaluation and nomination of the Stated Clerk shall be made to the Assembly by the Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 10-28)**

91-04 The 11th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a full-time Director of Youth Ministries. **(Minutes 11-27)**

The 36th General Assembly (2016) moved all youth and young adult ministries to the Next Generation Council and dissolved all relevant Acts of Assembly ***(Minutes 36-53);*** *Act 16-14.*

92-03 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES the continuation of the Office of the General Assembly in the Detroit, Michigan, area, specifically one of the western suburbs, and to continue monitoring the needs of and services to the particular churches to determine any shifts in location criteria. **(Minutes 12-25)**

The 35th General Assembly (2015) approved the relocation of the Office of the General Assembly to Orlando, Florida ***(Minutes 35-36);*** *Act 15-04.*

92-22 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES the division of the Department of Outreach into two departments: World Outreach and National Outreach. Each is to have its own director. **(Minutes 12-46)**

96-17 The 16th General Assembly APPROVES the designing of a procedure to create a position description for an Assistant Stated Clerk, with financing arrangements, and to report to the 17th (1997) General Assembly. The Assembly desires to have this person in place by the 18th (1998) General Assembly. **(Minutes 16-36)**

97-10 The 17th General Assembly ADOPTS a position description for an Assistant to the Stated Clerk. **(Minutes 17-25)**

98-16 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS the Search Process for Stated Clerk, Position Description, and Timeline for Selection of New Stated Clerk. **(Minutes 18-39)**

01-12 The 21st General Assembly ADOPTS the Vision 21 Strategic Plan, with adjusted dates for implementation. **(Minutes 21-40)**

06-11 The 26th General Assembly APPROVES increasing the position of Women's Ministries Director to full-time. **(Minutes 26-47)**

The 40th General Assembly (2020) approved the deletion of Act 86-06 and all relevant Acts of Assembly. ***(Minutes 40-24)***; *Act 20-11*

07-02 The 27th General Assembly APPROVES changing the title of the Stated Clerk to Executive Pastor/Stated Clerk. **(Minutes 27-34)**

The 28th General Assembly (2008) returned the title to "Stated Clerk" ***(Minutes 28-50);*** *Act 08-12.*

08-12 The 28th General Assembly CHANGES the title of Executive Pastor/Stated Clerk to "Stated Clerk." **(Minutes 28-50)**

11-06 The 31st General Assembly APPROVES hiring a Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the Office of the General Assembly and directs the Committee on Administration to conduct a search for and employ a COO upon finalizing the determination of need and a position description, and when financially feasible. **(Minutes 31-38)**

15-04 The 35th General Assembly APPROVES relocating the Office of the General Assembly to Orlando, Florida, on or before the conclusion of the current lease in Livonia, Michigan, in December 2016. **(Minutes 35-36)**

16-09 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES changing the name of the "Committee on

Administration" to the "National Leadership Team" (*Rules for Assembly* X.10-1A). **(Minutes 36-37)**[314]

21-03 The 41st General Assembly ELECTS Rev. Dr. Jeffrey J. Jeremiah as Stated Clerk Emeritus. **(Minutes 41-39)**

25-23 The 45th General Assembly REQUESTS the Office of the General Assembly explore the feasibility of digital voting at future Assemblies. **(Minutes 45-48)**

25-26 The 45th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Office of the General Assembly to digitize the minutes of the EPC's first 26 General Assemblies. **(Minutes 45-54)**

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

81-04 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the terms of call for any minister of member churches shall provide for participation in the denominational hospitalization and disabilities programs. **(Minutes 1-32)**

81-05 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the terms of call for any minister shall provide a minimum of 18% benefit to provide for group hospitalization, disability, and pension. The pension factor shall be not less than 10%. This benefit shall be computed on the gross effective salary base; i.e., salary and housing/utilities allowance. **(Minutes 1-32)**

81-06 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the denominational group insurance plan providing health, disability, and life coverage shall be mandatory for all ministers within member churches. **(Minutes 1-36)**

82-07 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES the *Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination*

1. Requirements for ordination shall be:
   a. Seminary degree – Master of Divinity or equivalent that shall include Old and New Testament Survey, Old Testament Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Church History (with an emphasis on the Reformation), Apologetics, Leadership, Preaching, Evangelism, Missiology, Discipleship/Disciple-making, Pastoral Care and Counseling, and Ethics.

      In addition:

      1) Three courses in systematic theology (equivalent nine semester-hours). Competency in Reformed theology as expressed in the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms** shall be demonstrated through a standardized ordination exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.
      2) Original languages. The standard for ordination in the EPC is the ability to exegete competently the Scriptures in the original languages. This competency shall be demonstrated by a standardized open-book exegesis exam in either Greek or Hebrew, including a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis, to be submitted within a one-week period. This exam shall be governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.
      3) "EPC specific" courses:
         (a) EPC Polity
   b. Care of the presbytery in accord with **G.**11-2;
   c. Examinations – four written and one oral examination must be sustained;
   d. Valid call;
   e. Other evidence – Assurance those spiritual gifts needed for effective ministry are

[314] References in Acts of Assembly to "National Leadership Team" begin with actions of the 37th General Assembly (2017).

present and being developed.

2. All exceptions to fulfilling standards for ordination (extraordinary circumstances) will be referred to the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for a recommended course of action, including continuing education and reading requirements. The presbytery of jurisdiction shall, in conjunction with the Committee on Ministerial Vocation:
   a. Mail necessary documentation (personal history, etc.) to the permanent committee for its review and counsel, and
   b. Proceed with process of ordination only after receiving recommendations from the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation.
   c. Persons seeking membership within a presbytery may be received as enrolled members only upon evidence of a call endorsed by the presbytery.
   d. Terms of call: The amount of annual vacation time: one month.
   e. Terms of call: The amount of time to be given for study leave: two weeks, cumulative up to six weeks.

Ordained World Outreach career missionaries serving abroad shall be allowed to accumulate their study leave and funding for four years to be used in their fifth year in a program of study under the supervision of the World Outreach Director. Those in domestic service are limited to the standard three years' accumulation. Career missionaries shall be allowed $800 per year for study leave.

The 14th General Assembly (1994) amended these procedures ***(Minutes 14-37);*** *Act 94-25.*

The 19th General Assembly (1999) further amended these procedures ***(Minutes 19-31);*** *Act 99-15.*

The 32nd General Assembly (2012) further amended these procedures ***(Minutes 32-56)****; Act 12-11.*

82-10 The 2nd General Assembly APPROVES the concept of self-funding insurance and INSTRUCTS its Committee on Administration to execute a plan in trust as appropriate. Individual churches are urged to assume the deductible portion of the health insurance program and cost of co-insurance as part of a minister's compensation. **(Minutes 2-52,** Appendix I)

83-01 The 3rd General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Ministerial Vocation to provide the presbyteries a letter encouraging each session to annually review pastoral and staff compensation, taking into account such factors as changes in cost of living, performance, capabilities of the congregation, and economic conditions of the community. Each presbytery shall determine how best to use the letter. **(Minutes 3-37)**

83-02 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that opportunity shall be provided at each General Assembly for pastors seeking a call to meet with churches and other ministries seeking to issue a call. **(Minutes 3-37)**

83-03 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall use the approved standardized "Application – Candidates for Gospel Ministry" for persons seeking to come under care of presbyteries. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-04 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that a session shall use the approved "Session Approval Form" for commending candidates to presbyteries. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-05 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that a standardized "Personal Information Form" shall be provided for ministers seeking admission into the EPC and for EPC ministers seeking a change in call. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-06 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall use the approved "Call for Pastor or Associate Pastor" form for ministerial terms of call. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-07 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the denomination shall provide an approved "Candidates Educational Equivalency Program" (CEEP) for presbyteries preparing candidates for the ministry who have extraordinary circumstances. The program shall be under the general oversight of the Ministerial Vocation Committee. **(Minutes 3-50)**

*The 34th General Assembly (2014) adopted requirements superseding this Act **(Minutes 35-30)**; Act 14-08*

*The 35th General Assembly (2015) added specific course requirements to the CEEP program **(Minutes 35-30);** Act 15-01.*

83-14 The 3rd General Assembly CHARGES its Ministerial Vocation Committee with the responsibility for developing a thorough Continuing Education Program for Ministers. To be included in such a study are the following:

1. The need for pastoral development in study leave;
2. The need for quality content in the study leave;
3. The need for non-pastoral professional staff to be included in professional development time.
4. While encouraging all churches to participate in continuing education programs, the Assembly urges the Ministerial Vocation Committee, in devising such a plan, to preserve the ministers' and local sessions' liberty to choose those quality programs which best meet their needs, whether or not they be denominationally sponsored. **(Minutes 3-30)**

83-15 The 3rd General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Ministerial Vocation Committee to proceed to design a process for the proper maintenance of the military chaplaincy program. **(Minutes 3-37)**

84-02 The 3rd General Assembly sustains the Permanent Judicial Commission's opinion that "It is contrary to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (27-4) and the Constitution of the Church, *Book of Worship* (3-1), to allow persons who are not ordained Ministers of the Word to administer the sacraments." Document entitled "Uniform Procedures on Candidacy, Licensure, and Ordination" (Minutes, 1983) shall be amended accordingly. **(Minutes 4-23)**

*The 14th General Assembly (1994) amended this document by dropping the provision for licensure. **(Minutes 14-37);** Act 94-26.*

84-03 The 4th General Assembly APPROVES printing the proposed *Manual for Candidates for the Gospel Ministry.* **(Minutes 4-23)**

84-07 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that licensed candidates with extraordinary status, having been previously granted sacramental authority for their congregations, may be given special dispensation to continue while diligently pursuing ordination. Only candidates on record as of the 4th General Assembly given such authority may continue. No new candidates may be so treated. **(Minutes 4-36)**

84-08 The 4th General Assembly ADOPTS the self-funding group insurance plan offered by The Travelers and gives authority to the permanent Committee on Administration to approve and establish all details relative to the establishment of the proposed plan. The Assembly requires pastors and employees of all member congregations, all presbyteries, and the Assembly who meet minimum requirements to enroll in the program.

This major medical program shall be reviewed annually, and a full report made to the General Assembly. **(Minutes 4-37)**

84-15 The 4th General Assembly ESTABLISHES the Ministerial Endowment Fund to meet specific, extraordinary financial needs of Ministers of the Word, missionaries, and other full-time Christian workers who are members of or working under the auspices of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 4-23)**

85-05 The 5th General Assembly SUSTAINS the Permanent Judicial Commission's opinion regarding the office of co-pastor as being non-existent. Relationships between Teaching Elders and EPC congregations sanctioned by the *Book of Government* are those of Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Assistant Pastor. **(Minutes 5-40)**

85-06 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that assistant Pastors are full voting members of their presbyteries. **(Minutes 5-40)**

85-08 The 5th General Assembly ENDORSES a special denominational voluntary Christmas offering to help needy ministers or missionaries and authorizes EPC churches to receive such an offering whose funds shall be administered by the permanent Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 5-43)**

86-03 The 6th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation to investigate, evaluate, and develop a plan to assist with the pastoral care of our pastors, their families, and congregations. **(Minutes 6-43)**

87-12 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of an employer-sponsored tax-sheltered annuity program for the required minimum (10%) of gross effective salary for retirement for each minister and missionary, and urges each congregation to participate in such a program. **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-14 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES an annual "Gratitude Gift" offering in connection with the Christmas season. Monies received are to be used by the Pension Committee to supplement the income of our retired ministers and missionaries who participate in the denominational program. **(Minutes 7-53)**

87-22 The 7th General Assembly ENDORSES the document, "Denominational Goals for Pastoral Care." **(Minutes 7-60)**

88-07 The 8th General Assembly ENCOURAGES chaplains to hold membership in the presbytery, allowing the greatest participation and most effective ministry. **(Minutes 8-41)**

88-08 The 8th General Assembly AMENDS participatory requirements for group health insurance plan by requiring participation of all ministers on the rolls of presbyteries with the exception of:

1. Missionaries laboring and most effective ministry. **(Minutes 8-41)**
2. Ministers laboring in institutional agencies providing their own group insurance plan;
3. Ministers afforded group insurance coverage as part of retirement benefits from a previous employer;
4. Ministers without call, and ministers laboring less than 20 hours in a place of minister **(Minutes 8-24)**

89-15 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a General Assembly benevolence fund for medical care costs, concentrating its benevolence health care efforts on ministers without call, mission church pastors, and retired ministers and their families. **(Minutes 9-33)**

89-23 The 9th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that non-ordained persons meeting EPC requirements for ordination shall be eligible to be ordained for the purpose of extended military duty. **(Minutes 9-36)**

89-24 The 9th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that extended active duty military chaplains seeking to transfer from other denominations may be received by presbytery only after a review and report regarding that person's chaplaincy by the Ministerial Vocation Committee. **(Minutes 9-36)**

The 31st General Assembly (2011) moved this responsibility to the Chaplains' Work and Care Committee ***(Minutes 31-53);*** *Act 11-13.*

90-17 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan (medical portion) to make ministers of fraternal bodies laboring within EPC congregations as missionary-in-residence or

graduate school student-in-residence eligible for participation if such are understood as full-time staff in the life of the church and if no other plan for coverage exists**. (Minutes 10-39)**

90-18 The 10th General Assembly ENDORSES the LOGOI/FLET program as an acceptable equivalency program of theological education for candidates pursuing ordination in Argentina. **(Minutes 10-43)**

90-19 The 10th General Assembly GRANTS the Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church (North Carolina) a one-time exception to Act 85-05 so that the present co-pastors of Myrtle Grove may be received when the church and pastors are dismissed to the EPC by virtue of Article 13. **(Minutes 10-43)**

Such an exception shall not be understood as precedent-setting and shall pertain exclusively to this church and these two pastors only. **(Minutes 10-43)**

91-03 The 11th General Assembly AMENDS *The Candidates Care Manual* Section 11, "Ordination Exams," by requiring that in the event an exam is not sustained, it may not be retaken sooner than 30 days thereafter. If an examination is not sustained after three attempts, the fourth examination may not be administered until at least six months have elapsed. **(Minutes 11-33)**

92-07 The 12th General Assembly ENDORSES the Andrew A. Jumper Scholarship Fund for ministerial students at Reformed Theological Seminary and encourages the church sessions to participate in its support. **(Minutes 12-28)**

93-13 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that World Outreach missionaries in cooperative agreements may choose insurance coverage with either the EPC or their sending agency. In unique situations, other alternative coverage approved by World Outreach Committee may be appropriate. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-14 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that national pastors under appointment by World Outreach are not required to participate in the EPC Pension Plan. **(Minutes 13-28)**

93-18 The 13th General Assembly APPROVES the "Recommended Reading List for Ordination Preparation" to be used in the task of preparing candidates approaching ordination examinations, especially in the areas of the Reformed tradition and the Reformed office of the Minister. **(Minutes 13-39)**

94-22 The 14th General Assembly AUTHORIZES that a lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery. **(Minutes 14-36)**

> *The 34th General Assembly (2014) extended this provision to include authorization to administer baptism* ***(Minutes 34-56);*** *Act 14-06.*

94-25 The 14th General Assembly AMENDS the document "Uniform Procedures on Candidacy, Licensure, and Ordination" to delete sections having to do with licensure (paragraphs 1, 4, and 5), and re-designate the remaining sections accordingly. Document is renamed "Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination." *Ref. Act 82-07.* **(Minutes 14-37)**

94-26 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that it shall hold a Newly Ordained Ministers Gathering annually beginning in 1995, and provide a speaker addressing current issues facing new ministers, along with an informal time of sharing. **(Minutes 14-37)**

94-27 The 14th General Assembly APPROVES holding an annual "growth experience for persons in ministry focusing on spiritual, emotional, marital, family, and church life" beginning with the 15th General Assembly (1995), in keeping with the *Denominational Goals for Pastoral Care.* **(Minutes 14-37)**

94-28 The 14th General Assembly AMENDS the Medical Benevolence Fund document in the category "Ministers Without Call" by substituting the term "Total Pastor and Spouse Income" for "Gross Effective Income." **(Minutes 14-26)**

94-29 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Ministerial Vocation Committee to include in its annual report statistical and/or narrative summaries in its five areas of responsibility (*Rules for Assembly,* IX.9-1F)

1. Issues noted in monitoring/aiding Ministerial Committees of presbyteries;
2. Number of churches seeking pastors, number of active PIFs, and issues noted in pastor placement;
3. Number of candidates, number of EPC students at each seminary, status of Jumper Scholarship, special relationships, and developments noted;
4. Number of extraordinary candidates in process and their outlook;
5. Number of candidates tested, and trends noted. **(Minutes 14-37)**

95-02 The 15th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Medical Plan to exclude persons who have opted out of the Social Security System and who are not otherwise eligible or entitled to Social Security or Medicare coverage, upon retirement or attainment of age 65 (whichever occurs later). Coverage, however, may be continued upon participation in the Medicare Voluntary Enrollment Plan, Parts A and B, and upon payment of the required monthly premium to both the Medicare Voluntary Enrollment Plan and the EPC Medical Benefits Plans. **(Minutes 15-22)**

96-17 The 16th General Assembly APPROVES designating up to 100% of a minister's early and normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1996 and 1997 as housing allowance for United States income tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home. **(Minutes 16-36)**

97-03 The 17th General Assembly AMENDS the Group Insurance Plan to double the current life insurance cap provided to EPC pastors and employees from $25,000 to $50,000 for an additional premium. **(Minutes 17-20)**

97-22 The 17th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Ministerial Vocation Committee to evaluate the issue of pastoral vocational pressures from the perspective of identifying warning signs and seeking preventive measures for creating healthier church environments. **(Minutes 17-41)**

98-03 The 18th General Assembly INSTRUCTS all Presbyteries to use the forms included as attachments to the *EPC Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committee* (Third Edition), both as a checklist of proper procedure and as a way of recording that required actions have been taken. **(Minutes 18-29)**

98-15 The 18th General Assembly APPROVES the following addition to the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*:

Presbyteries shall perform a background investigation on all individuals seeking candidacy or membership in their Presbytery. This investigation of public records shall include at least a verification of social security number, criminal history, and motor vehicle driving history. Also, as part of the reception process, references must be checked. **(Minutes 18-41)**

99-09 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS Act of the Assembly 82-07 (Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination) in #5 "Terms of Call," by adding the following:

Ordained World Outreach career missionaries serving abroad shall be allowed to accumulate their study leave and funding for four years to be used in their fifth year in a program of study under the supervision of the World Outreach Director. Those in domestic service are limited to the standard three-year accumulation. Career missionaries shall be allowed $800 per year for study leave.

The Assembly also amends the World Outreach Manual so that the same provision applies to non-ordained World Outreach missionaries serving overseas. **(Minutes 19-31)**

99-10 The 19th General Assembly SUSTAINS an opinion of the Permanent Judicial Commission regarding the status of ministers who are missionaries serving totally under the auspices of the

EPC and ministers serving in an administrative capacity in one of the courts of the church (**G.**10-3/new *Book of Government* 9-5D). Ministers serving in such capacities should be classified as ministers with calls, not as ministers serving out-of-bounds. **(Minutes 19-40)**

99-11 The 19th General Assembly ADOPTS guidelines regarding the possibilities of legal liabilities of ministers serving out of bounds:

1. They cannot act as an agent of the EPC in the legal sense;
2. They will not be subject to the supervision of the EPC with respect to time, place or manner of ministry. Accountability to the EPC relates solely to spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Eligibility to claim any tax benefits or privileges may be jeopardized if any of the following apply:
   a. The calling agency did not arrange with the EPC for the minister's services;
   b. The minister performs services for the calling agency that other employees of the calling agency who are not ministers are performing;
   c. The minister performs the same services before and after obtaining permission from the EPC to labor out of bounds. **(Minutes 19-45)**

99-12 The 19th General Assembly ADOPTS guidelines for EPC military chaplains leading worship with other faith groups:

"While our chaplains are encouraged to exercise their ministry in the Armed Forces with the maximum of collegiality in cooperation with persons of varying beliefs, the EPC does not approve joint leadership of a worship service with persons representing faith groups outside the historic Christian tradition, as defined by the Apostles' Creed. **(Minutes 19-45)**

01-04 The 21st General Assembly AMENDS the Pension Plan to allow all active ministers to participate in the Pension Plan. **(Minutes 21-30)**

01-10 The 21st General Assembly APPROVES the document "Guidelines for Intentional Interim Pastoral Ministry" for inclusion in the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees.*" **(Minutes 21-33)**

01-11 The 21st General Assembly APPROVES a revised "Advisory Paper on Performance Review" for inclusion in the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees.* **(Minutes 21-33)**

02-07 The Assembly adopts a Permanent Judicial Commission ruling that a presbytery must evaluate the transferee's educational credentials, including the requirements pertaining to biblical languages and either 1) require "appropriate courses in the original languages" and an exegesis paper assigned by the presbytery; or 2) exempt the transferee from such requirement by a two-thirds vote. **(Minutes 22-24)**

03-07 The 23rd General Assembly APPROVES the addition of a new section 1 under "Temporary Pastoral Offices" to the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* (p. 14, Fourth Edition):

1. Calling a Minister who has served in a temporary pastoral relationship

   A minister should not be serving in a temporary pastoral relationship with the intent of becoming the pastor of the church. To do so diminishes the minister's ability to accomplish the tasks necessary in the interim period as defined by the Assembly's "Guidelines for Intentional Interim Pastoral Ministry" (p. 23). The **Book of Order** (**G.**10-7) prohibits any minister being called as pastor of the church while actively serving in a temporary relationship. If the church desires to consider calling the minister as pastor, the temporary relationship should be ended, and an appropriate length of time be allowed for serious consideration of the call (normally a minimum of two months). **(Minutes 23-39)**

   The 24th Assembly ratified an amendment to G11-8 (reference to pre-2014 Book of Government) stipulating a procedure by which a pastor who has served in a temporary

capacity may be considered as pastor of that church, a provision continued in Book of Government 10-7B (current edition).

03-08 The 23rd General Assembly APPROVES the addition of a new section 15 under **"**Process of Candidacy and Ordination" to the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* (p. 30, Fourth Edition):

15. Reinstatement of Candidacy

    A person's candidacy may be reinstated through the following procedure:

    1. If the person seeking reinstatement is a member of an EPC church other than the original sponsoring church, the person should be a member for a time sufficient for the Session to give a credible endorsement. The person's previous EPC membership may be considered adequate to fulfill the requirements of **G.**11-2A by the Presbytery for purposes of reinstatement.
    2. The Session of the church at which the former candidate is currently a member, having satisfied itself that the potential candidate shows evidence of a call to ministry and a commitment to pursue that call, endorses the member according to the procedures outlined above.
    3. The Ministerial/Candidates Committee proceeds according to the procedures outlined above, requiring updated forms as necessary, and may recommend the candidate's reinstatement to the presbytery.
    4. The potential candidate is examined by the presbytery according to the provisions of **G.**12-2.

16. Preparation for Ordination… **(Minutes 23-39)**

03-09 The 23rd General Assembly APPROVES the addition of a new section **15.b.4** under "Preparation for Ordination" to the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* (p. 33, Fourth Edition).

4. Written statement of any exceptions to the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms**

   G.13-6. The candidate or transferring Teaching Elder shall provide a written statement of any exceptions to the **Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms** of this Church, and the Presbytery must act to allow or disallow the exceptions. The Presbytery shall not allow any exception to "Essentials of Our Faith." If the Teaching Elder develops exceptions to the **Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms** after ordination, he or she must report those exceptions to the Presbytery and the Presbytery must act to allow or disallow these exceptions. *(Current edition reference is **G.**12-4*)

   While the written statement of exceptions to the **Westminster** Standards shall be reviewed and allowed or disallowed by the presbytery, the statement itself should **not** appear in the minutes of presbytery. However, minutes should reflect that the statement was received and allowed or disallowed. The statement of exceptions shall be retained in the minister's personnel file.

5. Allowable Exceptions to Mandatory Requirements… **(Minutes 23-39)**

03-10 The 23rd General Assembly ADVISES congregations to adhere to new legislation regarding clergy housing allowances and to seek skilled professional guidance in this matter. **(Minutes 23-39)**

04-01 The 24th General Assembly DIRECTS the Ministerial Vocation Committee to re-title the written Theology and Sacraments examination as *Theology, Sacraments, and Reformed Tradition*, and to structure the examination so as to adequately measure the candidate's knowledge of all three areas. **(Minutes 24-26)**

11-08 The 31st General Assembly AFFIRMS the guidance of the Office of the Stated Clerk as the authoritative interpretation of the General Assembly to be practiced by the presbyteries regarding approving and recording ministers' terms of call. **(Minutes 31-39)**

1. That the terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and presbyteries, using the forms found in the **Book of Order** and Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees, and entered into the journal of each presbytery's minutes.
2. That changes in terms of call must be publicly noted and voted upon by presbyteries and entered into the journal of each presbytery's minutes. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or a percentage amount, with only the change, not the new total, noted.
3. If a congregation or presbytery wishes to alter this requirement, the only legal process would be a constitutional amendment.

*The 32nd General Assembly modified the way terms of call may be recorded in the minutes **(Minutes 32-56);** Act 12-11.*

12-04 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES joining the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty as an Associate Member and approves the EPC's Endorser for Chaplains maintaining a membership as an Individual Member. **(Minutes 32-41)**

12-11 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS a policy regarding approval and recording of ministers' terms of call, superseding the actions of the 18th and 31st General Assemblies (*Acts 98-04 and 11-08*). **(Minutes 32-56)**

1. The initial terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and presbyteries, using the forms found in the **Book of Order** and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*.
2. Changes in terms of call must be noted and voted upon by presbyteries on recommendation from the Ministerial Committee. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or a percentage amount, with only the change, not the new total, noted.
3. Background or supporting material regarding terms of call shall be made available to the Presbytery Review Committee through the Stated Clerk upon the Committee's request.

12-12 The 32nd General Assembly modifies section 1(c) of the *Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination*, adopted by the 2nd General Assembly *(Act 82-07)*, to read:

1. Requirements for ordination shall be:
   a. Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university;
   b. Seminary degree: M.Div. or equivalent including Koine Greek and Hebrew;
   c. Care of the presbytery in accord with **G.**11-2;
   d. Examinations: four written and one oral examination must be sustained;
   e. Valid call;
   f. Other evidence: Assurance those spiritual gifts needed for effective ministry are present and being developed. **(Minutes 32-56)**

12-13 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES the *Chaplains' Work and Care Committee Handbook* as the Committee's procedure manual. **(Minutes 32-56)**

12-14 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES the response of the Chaplains' Work and Care Committee to the referral from the 30th General Assembly regarding the nature of chaplaincy and authorizes its inclusion in the CWCC Handbook. **(Minutes 32-56)**

14-06 The 34th General Assembly EXTENDS the provision of *Act of Assembly* 94-22, "A lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery," to specifically include the Sacrament of Baptism. **(Minutes 34-56)**

14-08 The 34th General Assembly ADOPTS requirements for the "Candidates Educational Equivalency Program," supplementing Act of Assembly 83-07 and giving specification to **G.**11-2I (assigning courses of study to candidates with extraordinary circumstances), namely: 1) Old Testament Survey, 2) New Testament Survey, 3) Old Testament Exegesis, 4) New Testament Exegesis, 5) Church History (with an emphasis on the Reformation), 6) Apologetics, 7) Leadership, 8) Preaching, 9) Evangelism, 10) Missiology, 11) Discipleship/Disciple-making, 12) Pastoral Care and Counseling and 13) Ethics, 14) three courses in systematic theology (equivalent nine semester-hours), 15) competency in Reformed theology as expressed in the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and Catechisms demonstrated through a standardized ordination exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee, 16) ability to exegete competently the Scriptures in the original languages (demonstrated by a standardized open-book exam (governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee) in either Greek or Hebrew, including a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis, to be submitted within a one-week period, and 17) an EPC Polity course. **(Minutes 35-30)**

15-01 The 35th General Assembly ADOPTS "Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders" for use with Candidates Under Care, and strongly encourages its use in EPC presbyteries and churches. **(Minutes 35-30)**

16-06 The 36th General Assembly RETIFIES an amendment to *Book of Government* 11-2G, making effective an amendment to the "Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination" *(Act 82-07)* approved by the 35th Assembly **(Minutes 35-30),** updating educational requirements for Teaching Elders. New requirements are effective for Candidates received by Presbyteries on or after January 1, 2017. **(Minutes 36-34, 36-37)**

17-02 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES the proposed amendment to **G.**10-7, authorizing the Ministerial Vocation Committee to oversee the training, certification, and ongoing support of Transitional Pastors. **(Minutes 37-19)**

17-13 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 37-43)**

18-02 The 38th General Assembly AMENDS *Book of Government* 9-6A and 10-8B.2a to specify the term of service for an out-of-bounds call to be for a renewable term of up to three years, bringing consistency to the two sections. **(Minutes 38-49)**

18-03 The 38th General Assembly AMENDS *Book of Government* 21-2D.2e and f, expanding areas of ongoing authority that may be given to the Ministerial Committee at the discretion of the Presbytery. **(Minutes 38-49)**

18-04 The 38th General Assembly AMENDS *Book of Government* 10-7, creating and defining the called position of Transitional Pastor. **(Minutes 38-49)**

18-05 The 38th General Assembly AMENDS *Book of Government* 9-5A.1 for consistency within the *Book of Government* 10-7 and to clarify that all calls to Teaching Elders must be approved by the Presbytery. **(Minutes 38-49)**

19-02 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 37-43; affirmed 39-45, 41-29, 42-32)**

20-01 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC (403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 40-22)**

20-02 The 40th General Assembly RATIFIES the amendment to *Book of Government* 11-2C. **(Minutes 40-25)**

20-03 The 40th General Assembly RATIFIES the amendment to *Book of Government* 9-5A.1. **(Minutes 40-25)**

21-07 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 41-29)**

22-01 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 42-32)**

22-06 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES the Chaplains' Work and Care Committee Statement on Chaplain Ministry to Same-Sex Couples and LGBTQ+ Individuals. **(Minutes 42-46)**

23-05 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income from housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 43-33)**

23-07 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES the creation of a Moderator-appointed, Ad-interim committee for the purpose of reviewing our ordination standards and process, and recommending any potential changes to the 45th General Assembly. **(Minutes 43-41)**

24-03 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES that ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 44-17)**

24-05 The 44th General Assembly DIRECTS the moderator to appoint a nine-member *Ad-Interim* committee to study the Scriptures, the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, and Catechisms to bring clarity to our witness regarding:

1. Theological anthropology, with respect to human sexuality as it pertains to contemporary usage of the sexual self-conception and how such language comports with Scripture and the Westminster standards;
2. Progressive Sanctification and how it informs the Reformed understanding of the mortification of sin and the doctrine of repentance;
3. Concupiscence as it relates to a Reformed conception of the Christian's new nature in Christ and when homosexual temptation, like other temptations disqualifies one from ordained office;
4. The Christian hope for those who experience and flee sexual temptation, especially homosexual temptation;
5. How the answers to these questions might inform standards for officers who have struggled in these areas but have mortified such temptation and desire.

The Committee is further charged to review our Position Papers, Pastoral Letters, and the *Book of Order* and to recommend potential changes that will clarify, align, and strengthen our witness to the larger world.

The Committee shall make an interim report to the 45th General Assembly, and a final report and recommendations to the 46th General Assembly.

The General Assembly COMMITS to fund this committee's work. The National Leadership Team shall review and approve any necessary expenses.

Be it further resolved that it is the opinion and wish of the 44th General Assembly that no presbytery take action on petitions or matters before them that might touch on these areas of inquiry and exploration until the final report is received and acted upon by the 46th General Assembly. **(Minutes 44-43)**

25-05 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES amendments to the *Book of Government* 11-2. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-06 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES amendments to the *Book of Government* 18-3E. **(Minutes 25-40)**

25-07 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES amendments to the *Book of Government* 19-4B. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-08 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES amendments to the *Book of Government* 21-2D.1. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-09 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES to the Rules for Assembly X.C.5, eliminating "extraordinary" language and replacing it with CEEP, and X.C.7 to clarify MVC's authority over all standardized forms in the ordination process. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-10 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES amendments to Act 82-07 to clarify that all written exams are governed by the MVC and eliminate language of "extraordinary circumstances." **(Minutes 45-40)**

Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination

1. Requirements for ordination shall be:
    a. Seminary degree – Master of Divinity or equivalent that shall include Old and New Testament Survey, Old Testament Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Church History (with an emphasis on the Reformation), Apologetics, Leadership, Preaching, Evangelism, Missiology, Discipleship/Disciple-making, Pastoral Care and Counseling, and Ethics.

        In addition:

        1) Three courses in systematic theology (equivalent nine semester-hours). Competency in Reformed theology as expressed in the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms** shall be demonstrated through a standardized ordination exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.

        2) Original languages. The standard for ordination in the EPC is the ability to exegete competently the Scriptures in the original languages. This competency shall be demonstrated by a standardized open-book exegesis exam in either Greek or Hebrew, including a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis, to be submitted within a one-week period. This exam shall be governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.

        3) "EPC specific" courses:

            (a) EPC Polity

    b. Care of the presbytery in accord with **G.**11-2;

c. Examinations – four written and one oral examination must be sustained;

1) The written exams shall be under the authority of the Ministerial Vocation Committee

d. Valid call;

e. Other evidence – Assurance those spiritual gifts needed for effective ministry are present and being developed.

2. All exceptions to fulfilling standards for ordination will be referred to the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for a recommended course of action, including continuing education and reading requirements. The presbytery of jurisdiction shall, in conjunction with the Committee on Ministerial Vocation:

a. Mail necessary documentation (personal history, etc.) to the permanent committee for its review and counsel, and

b. Proceed with process of ordination only after receiving recommendations from the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation.

c. Persons seeking membership within a presbytery may be received as enrolled members only upon evidence of a call endorsed by the presbytery.

d. Terms of call: The amount of annual vacation time: one month.

e. Terms of call: The amount of time to be given for study leave: two weeks, cumulative up to six weeks.

Ordained World Outreach career missionaries serving abroad shall be allowed to accumulate their study leave and funding for four years to be used in their fifth year in a program of study under the supervision of the World Outreach Director. Those in domestic service are limited to the standard three years' accumulation. Career missionaries shall be allowed $800 per year for study leave.

25-11 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES a new Act of Assembly to supersede Act of Assembly 12-12, eliminating the requirement for a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-12 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES requiring a candidate's criminal background checks be within a 3-year window, submitted to the Session prior to endorsing an individual for Candidacy. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-13 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES requiring all candidates to undergo a standardized National Background Check conducted through the Office of the General Assembly and paid for by the Candidate's Presbytery prior to being approved for ordination. **(Minutes 25-40)**

25-14 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES requiring individuals seeking to be taken under care as Candidates to submit forms "Application for Candidacy" and "Preliminary Questionnaire" available on the EPC website. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-15 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES requiring all candidates under care to have a current physical exam and a psychological exam (which includes the most current version of the MMPI), including a personal assessment with the psychologist administering the exam. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-16 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES requiring all candidates, prior to final examination by the Presbytery, to submit a completed and current Personal Information Form. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-19 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES that approves ordained ministers drawing retirement income from the EPC 403(b)(9) Defined Contribution Retirement Plan be allowed to designate up to 100% of their retirement income for housing allowance as permitted by applicable regulations adopted pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code. **(Minutes 45-43)**

25-24 The 45th General Assembly ADOPTS a policy regarding approval and recording of ministers' terms of call, superseding the actions of the 18th and the 31st General Assemblies *(Acts 98-04, p. 185 and 11-08, p. 200)*. **(Minutes 45-50)**

1. The initial terms of call shall be approved in public by the calling congregation and by either the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery per G. 21-2D.1.f. using the forms found in the Book of Order and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees.*
2. Changes in terms of call for all active TEs must be approved by the Ministerial Committee unless requested by the Presbytery itself. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or a percentage amount, with only the change noted.
3. Terms of Call and background or supporting material regarding terms of call shall be made available to both members of the Presbytery and the Presbytery Review Committee through the Presbytery Stated Clerk upon request.

PRESBYTERIES

81-02 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall meet at least twice during the year and a third time during the General Assembly. **(Minutes 1-24)**

The 8th General Assembly modified to require a minimum of three annual meetings, not during the General Assembly ***(Minutes 8-64);*** *Act 88-02.*

81-03 The 1st General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall have as goals for their meetings the following:

1. To develop fellowship and support for pastors and elders;
2. To share resources with other churches;
3. To encourage church planting strategies. **(Minutes 1-24)**

81-08 The 1st General Assembly CONSTITUTES the first two presbyteries: The Presbytery of the Midwest and the Presbytery of the West. The boundaries are as follows:

1. The Presbytery of the Midwest consists of the states of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri.
2. The Presbytery of the West consists of Colorado and the states north, south, and west of Colorado. **(Minutes 1-24)**

82-04 The 2nd General Assembly CONSTITUTES the Presbytery of the East, which shall include the states of Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. **(Minutes 2-32,** Appendix E)

82-05 The 2nd General Assembly CONSTITUTES the Presbytery of the South, which shall include the states of Virginia, West Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. **(Minutes 2-32,** Appendix E)

82-06 The 2nd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that churches in Texas and southern Illinois shall be given their choice as to which contiguous presbytery each respective church belongs. **(Minutes 2-32)**

83-03 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall use the approved standardized "Application—Candidates for Gospel Ministry" for persons seeking to come under the care of presbyteries. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-04 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that sessions shall use the approved "Session Approval Form" for commending candidates to presbyteries. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-06 The 3rd General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall use the approved "Call for Pastor or Associate Pastor" form for ministerial terms of call. **(Minutes 3-48)**

83-10 The 3rd General Assembly CONSTITUTES the Presbytery of the Far West, which shall include the states of California and Arizona. **(Minutes 3-54)**

83-12 The 3rd General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the South into two Presbyteries: The Presbytery of the Southeast and the Presbytery of the Central South. Southeast shall include the states of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, plus eastern portions of Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Central South shall include states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, plus western portions of Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee. **(Minutes 3-54)**

84-11 The 4th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the East to include those churches that fall within the bounds of the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and the Fairfax County, Arlington County, and Alexandria areas of Virginia. **(Minutes 4-40)**

84-12 The 4th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the East to include those churches in eastern Ohio that lie east of Interstate 77. **(Minutes 4-40)**

85-02 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall annually forward to each presbytery the names of persons from that presbytery who are members of General Assembly permanent committees. **(Minutes 5-25)**

85-03 The 5th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Central South to include the state of Missouri. **(Minutes 5-29)**

85-04 The 5th General Assembly ADDS the counties of Loudon and Prince William (Virginia) to the Presbytery of the East. (**Minutes 5-29)**

85-14 The 5th General Assembly ESTABLISHES all presbyteries to develop presbytery councils consisting at least of its clerk, moderator, and immediate past moderator. Council shall be responsible for planning arrangements for presbytery meetings, including the service of worship. **(Minutes 5-25)**

86-04 The 6th General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the East into two presbyteries: East and Allegheny. The Presbytery of the Allegheny shall have as its eastern boundary a line running from and including Rochester, New York, to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and 1-81. The southern boundary shall include the state of West Virginia, except for the eastern panhandle. Western boundary shall include eastern Ohio from 1-77 eastward, including the city of Cleveland.

The Presbytery of the East shall include the rest of New York, the eastern part of Pennsylvania, the New England states, all of New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware. Also, the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan areas of Virginia that include the counties of Loudoun, Prince William, Arlington, Fairfax, and the cities of Alexandria and Fairfax. **(Minutes 6-51)**

86-05 The 6th General Assembly PLACES First EPC, Anna, Illinois, within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Central South. Boundaries of the presbytery would then include all of the state of Illinois south of I-70. **(Minutes 6-51)**

86-13 The 6th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the stated clerks of presbyteries to request every congregation to recommend Ruling Elders willing and qualified to serve on specific permanent committees. Further, to instruct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to produce a brief description of duties and responsibilities for each permanent committee, along with upcoming vacancies. Clerks of presbyteries are requested to submit a combined list of available Ruling Elders from member congregations, along with their qualifications, experience, and a brief biographical sketch. Copies of pertinent documents are to be transmitted to each member of the Nominating Committee prior to its meeting. **(Minutes 6-70)**

87-07 The 7th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the West to include the states of Washington and Idaho. **(Minutes 7-44)**

87-08 The 7th General Assembly PLACES the metropolitan area of Kansas City and contiguous counties of that city within the state of Kansas (West Presbytery), totally within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Central South. **(Minutes 7-44)**

87-11 The 7th General Assembly RECEIVES the Presbytery of *Iglesia Presbiteriana San Andres*, formed in Buenos Aires, Argentina, consisting of five particular churches. **(Minutes 7-51)**

88-02 The 8th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that presbyteries shall meet at least three times per year. **(Minutes 8-64)**

88-03 The 8th General Assembly PLACES the entire state of Florida within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Southeast. **(Minutes 8-31)**

88-04 The 8th General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the Southeast into two smaller presbyteries: The Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and the Presbytery of the Southeast. Mid-Atlantic shall include the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and the portions of Virginia previously included in the Southeast Presbytery. Southeast shall include the states of Florida, Georgia, and the eastern portions of Tennessee and Kentucky. **(Minutes 8-31)**

88-05 The 8th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Central South to include that section of Kansas that lies east of Highway 81, to include all of the city of Wichita. The western portion of Kansas remains with the Presbytery of the West. **(Minutes 8-31)**

88-06 The 8th General Assembly APPROVES the concept of presbyteries covenanting with colleges and other educational institutions, but disapproves of the General Assembly entering into such agreements. **(Minutes 8-55)**

90-09 The 10th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries for the Presbytery of St. Andrews to include the province of Buenos Aires. **(Minutes 10-36)**

90-11 The 10th General Assembly ESTABLISHES the Presbytery of Florida, encompassing the state of Florida. The boundaries of the Presbytery of the Southeast are adjusted accordingly. **(Minutes 10-36)**

91-05 The 11th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that a commission can be created only by an appointing court to serve as a commission for a limited time as specified by a presbytery. No committee of presbytery shall have continuing authority to serve as a commission except as specifically authorized by **G.**21-2D.2e, **G.**21-2D.2f, and **G.**21-3. No committee has the authority to create commissions. The rationale is that a committee is not a court of the church. **(Minutes 11-35)**

91-06 The 11th General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the Central South into two presbyteries:

1. Central South: Northern boundary extends from 1-65 at (but excluding) Louisville, along the Ohio River to the confluence of the Wabash and Ohio Rivers, westward along Highway 13 to Murphysboro, Illinois, then due west to the Mississippi River. Then is extended from the Mississippi River due west of Murphysboro south to the Arkansas state line. Across the northern state line of Arkansas westward to the western state line. South on the Arkansas state line to the junction of the present boundary at the Texas state line. Boundaries of the continuing Presbytery of the Central South would remain as presently established.

2. Mid-America: Southern boundary follows 1-40 from and including Oklahoma City to the Arkansas state line. Northward on the Arkansas state line to the junction of the Missouri-Arkansas state line, then eastward to the Mississippi River. North along the Mississippi River to the point due west of Murphysboro, Illinois, and due east to Murphysboro along

Highway 13 to the confluence of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers. Northward along the eastern boundary of Illinois and westward across the northern state line of Illinois to the Iowa state line. Northward on the eastern state line of Iowa and westward on the northern Iowa state line to the western state line. Southward on the western Iowa state line to the present junction of the Kansas state line. Westward to US 81 and southward along US 81 (1-135, 1-35) to and including Oklahoma City.
(Minutes 11-37)

92-08 The 12th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Central South and Southeast so that the Nashville metropolitan area is included in its entirety in the Presbytery of the Central South.

The boundaries of Central South shall be as follows: From the Kentucky-Tennessee state line at I-65 east to the Sumner-Macon County, Tennessee, line; south on the Sumner-Macon county line to the intersection of Wilson County; south on the Wilson-Trousedale, Wilson-Smith, and Wilson-DeKalb county lines to the Wilson-Rutherford county line; west on the Wilson-Rutherford county line to the intersection of US 231; south on US 231 to the Tennessee-Alabama state line; east on the Tennessee-Alabama state line to the intersection of the Alabama-Georgia state line. **(Minutes 12-29)**

92-09 The 12th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbyteries of Mid-America and Central South so that the Arkansas counties of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Boone, and Madison are included in the Presbytery of Mid-America. **(Minutes 12-29)**

92-10 The 12th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Allegheny to exclude the city of Bluefield, West Virginia, and its county, assigning the designated area to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. **(Minutes 12-29)**

92-11 The 12th General Assembly ENCOURAGES presbyteries to establish World Outreach Committees to accelerate the foreign missions endeavor throughout the denomination. **(Minutes 12-42)**

93-05 The 13th General Assembly ADOPTS the "Position Statement on Presbytery Development":

Position Statement on Presbytery Development

The purpose of this position statement is to be a guide to the General Assembly in making decisions concerning the establishment of new presbyteries or the realignment of current boundaries.

The church as the body of Christ is composed of all those persons who profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior, together with their children. The church on earth is not limited to particular forms of government or denominational structures; nevertheless, the government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form. Such is government by Elders meeting in church courts in regular gradation. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church believes the perfecting of the visible church is best established where the scriptural doctrine of government by Elders gathered in church courts is practiced.

The courts of the church shall be the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly. Presbytery shall be composed of all Ministers belonging to it, and two Ruling Elders for each Minister drawn from the particular churches within its bounds. The Presbytery has jurisdiction over all that belongs to the worship and ministry of a group of churches within the designated bounds. In its spiritual oversight, the mission of the Presbytery shall be:

1. The nurture and care of persons called to the office of Minister and oversight of all transactions pursuant to call.
2. The provision of spiritual discipline according to the *Book of Discipline*.
3. The oversight of church Sessions through annual review.

4. The maintenance of peace and unity within the congregations.
5. The establishment and development of churches.
6. The encouragement of evangelism, renewal, and ministries of compassion within the congregations and Presbytery.
7. The active participation in the life of the General Assembly.
8. The organization of the Presbytery for maximum advancement of the gospel and the Kingdom.
9. The provision of resources to member congregations promoting effective evangelism, education, stewardship, officer training, and the like.

In pursuit of its mission, the question naturally arises as to what constitutes a viable Presbytery. Viability may be defined as "the ability with maximum efficiency to achieve a stated mission." The basic components of a viable Presbytery within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be understood as the following:

1. LEADERSHIP: A Presbytery must have adequate personnel resources to support the local church as well as the Presbytery's committees and commissions.
2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES: Sufficient resources must be available to support the mission and life of a Presbytery. A minimum budget of $100,000 (1993-dollar basis) per year is necessary.
3. COMMITMENT: Leadership and resources are of little value if the solid commitment of Teaching and Ruling Elders of each church to the connectional form of government is absent.
4. DEMOGRAPHICS: The minimum requirements for a Presbytery need to be: a large church (1000+ members); twelve organized churches; a composite membership base of 2500.
5. OFFICE OF THE STATED CLERK: The Stated Clerk shall be provided with office equipment and necessary support staff to carry out the duties of the office as defined in the Presbytery bylaws.
6. GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY: Presbytery boundaries should be established to keep travel distances between churches to a reasonable minimum. **(Minutes 13-25)**

   The 32nd General Assembly (2012) adopted a new Position Statement on Presbytery Development ***(Minutes 32-44);*** *Act 12-05.*

93-06 The 13th General Assembly DISSOLVES the Presbytery of the Allegheny, realigning the state of West Virginia with the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, the states of New York and Pennsylvania to the Presbytery of the East, and the state of Ohio to the Presbytery of the Midwest. **(Minutes 13-25)**

93-07 The 13th General Assembly DISSOLVES the Presbytery of the Far West, realigning the states of California and Arizona with the Presbytery of the West. **(Minutes 13-25)**

93-16 The 13th General Assembly ENCOURAGES presbyteries to consider having a Women's Ministries Committee and to devise an effective means of coordinating the input of that committee with the other committees of the Presbytery. **(Minutes 13-35)**

94-12 The 14th General Assembly APPROVES redrawing the boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Mid-America and Central South so as to move the extreme southeastern portion of Missouri (including

the "boot heel" counties of Cape Girardeau, Bollinger, Wayne, Carter, and Oregon) from the Presbytery of Mid-America to the Presbytery of the Central South. **(Minutes 14-25)**

94-22 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that a lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery. (**Minutes 14-36)**

The 34th General Assembly (2014) extended this provision to include authorization to administer baptism ***(Minutes 34-56);*** *Act 14-06.*

94-23 The 14th General Assembly ENCOURAGES Sessions in the spirit of church unity to receive information from a Presbytery committee resulting from a committee inquiry, though the Session cannot be forced to hear information from a Presbytery committee. (**Minutes 14-36)**

94-24 The 14th General Assembly AUTHORIZES, in cases where a Session has been deposed, an Administrative Commission of Presbytery to provide pastoral assistance to the congregation, but shall not otherwise act, even temporarily, with sessional powers defined in **G.**18-3, with the following exceptions:

1. To call and conduct a congregational meeting (Book of Government chapter 7) within 30 days.
2. To train, if necessary, those elected as required in G.11-3.
3. To examine those elected, as required by G.12-6, 12-7.
4. To promptly and in a manner consistent with Book of Government chapters 12 and 13 install those favorably examined.

Every effort shall be made to preserve the church's right to elect its own officers. (**Minutes 14-36)**

94-28 The 14th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that Presbytery minutes shall be maintained in English in addition to any other language the court wishes to maintain, and that this edition shall be rendered in a timely fashion. **(Minutes 14-38)**

The 15th General Assembly (1995) reaffirmed this action. **(Minutes 15-39)**

95-10 The 15th General Assembly REALIGNS the Boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast to move five churches formerly in the Mid-Atlantic into the Southeast. These churches are Community Bible Church (Highlands, N.C.), Plumtree (Plumtree, N.C.), Grace and Cornerstone (both of Franklin, N.C.), and Harvest Church (Asheville, N.C.). **(Minutes 15-28)**

COA clarified geographic boundaries encompassing the above to be that portion of North Carolina west of State Routes 221 and 194.

97-08 The 17th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of St. Andrews Presbytery (Argentina) to include the Entre Rios and Santa Fe provinces. **(Minutes 17-25)**

97-09 The 17th General Assembly RATIFIES the Proposed Partnership Agreement between the St. Andrews Presbytery and the General Assembly (October 28-29, 1996). **(Minutes 17-25)**

98-03 The 18th General Assembly INSTRUCTS all Presbyteries to use the forms included as attachments to the *EPC Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committee* (Third Edition), both as a checklist of proper procedure and as a convenient way of recording that required actions have been taken. **(Minutes 18-30)**

98-04 The 18th General Assembly INSTRUCTS all Presbyteries to review the style of their minutes to ensure that a basic understanding of the actions taken by the Presbytery can be obtained from the body of the Minutes *per se,* without reference to any attachments. **(Minutes 18-30)**

The 32nd General Assembly (2012) modified the way terms of call may be recorded in the

Minutes ***(Minutes 32-56);*** *Act 12-11.*

98-05 The 18th General Assembly INSTRUCTS all Presbyteries to supply the Presbytery Review Committee with certified copies of the pages of their Minutes, subject to review as they appear in the official minute books of the Presbytery, at least five weeks before the meeting date of the next General Assembly. **(Minutes 18-30)**

99-15 The 19th General Assembly APPROVES the following addition to the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*:

Presbyteries shall perform a background investigation on all individuals seeking candidacy or membership in their Presbytery. This investigation of public records shall include at least a verification of social security number, criminal history, and motor vehicle driving history. Also, as part of the reception process, references must be checked. **(Minutes 18-41)**

99-13 The 19th General Assembly REDRAWS the common boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Mid-America and Midwest so that the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin are moved from the Midwest to Mid-America. **(Minutes 19-46)**

00-11 The 20th General Assembly ADOPTS additional guidelines for Presbytery Minutes:

1. Standardization of numbering sections and subsections;
2. Standardization of attendance reporting;
3. Checklists to be used by Presbyteries to ensure required actions have been taken and properly reported;
4. Standardization of reporting corrections to minutes made in response to exceptions issued by the General Assembly. (Minutes 20-46)

02-03 The 22nd General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the West to include Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nevada, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii. **(Minutes 22-27)**

02-04 The 22nd General Assembly FORWARDS the following advice and observations to the Presbyteries:

1. Commissions are representative of the Presbytery and give an opportunity for particular churches to appreciate the fact that they are part of a larger church. Even though the constitutional minimum for commissions is five people from two churches, presbyteries should give due consideration in forming commissions to make them more broadly representative.
2. Most presbyteries are struggling with poor attendance, especially of Ruling Elders. Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders alike are urged to more diligently exercise their ordination vows and be active in the larger church family.
3. In a number of cases, housing allowances approved in terms of call seem to be far above the accepted IRS standard cap of fair rental value (furnished) plus utilities. Pastors, Sessions, and presbyteries are urged to be diligent in conforming to established regulations.
4. Presbyteries are urged to be diligent to ensure that constitutional requirements are met in terms of call for Assistant and Associate Pastors. In particular, **G.**10-5 and **G.**10-6 require that terms of call stipulate the particular areas of responsibilities for Assistant and Associate Pastors and a definite period of time for a term of service for Assistants.
5. In exercising their discretionary authority (e.g., waiving the ordinary requirement of one year under care for a candidate), presbyteries should indicate the grounds for doing so in their minutes.
6. Presbyteries are reminded that a change in call from Assistant to Associate Pastor is a significant change. It is the congregation that calls, not the Session. An installation

service is required and appropriate when such a change occurs.

7. The *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* contains a number of checklists and templates for minutes to ensure that constitutional steps are followed and reported. Presbyteries are strongly urged to utilize those resources. **(Minutes 22-27)**

02-05 The 22nd General Assembly ADOPTS a Permanent Judicial Commission ruling that the term "governing body," when used in the **Book of Order** to refer to bodies within the EPC, is always intended to refer to 1) a court of the church or 2) a commission or evangelist duly authorized to act on the Court's behalf. **(Minutes 22-27)**

02-06 The 22nd General Assembly INSTRUCTS each Presbytery World Outreach Committee to review the World Outreach Master Plan and consider setting policy/goals in accordance with it and with Vision 21. **(Minutes 22-27)**

02-07 The 22nd General Assembly ADOPTS a Permanent Judicial Commission ruling that a presbytery must evaluate the transferee's educational credentials, including the requirements pertaining to biblical languages, and either 1) require "appropriate courses in the original languages" and an exegesis paper assigned by the presbytery; or 2) exempt the transferee from such requirement by a two-thirds vote. **(Minutes 22-24)**

03-04 The 23rd General Assembly ADVISES to all presbyteries:

1. When a minister or candidate states no exceptions to the **Westminster** standards, presbytery minutes must state that fact so that the record reflects that the presbytery has fulfilled its constitutional responsibility.
2. It appears in many cases, presbytery moderators may be making motions of a routine nature or making motions arising from presbytery council reports. Presbyteries should be advised that the moderator should yield the chair in order to make a motion or should entertain a motion from the floor.
3. In general, the number of notations to presbytery minutes would be reduced, and the quality of minutes would be improved by adopting the practice of using readers to review provisional minutes before Stated Clerks submit them to the presbytery.
4. Presbyteries should take note of those visiting teaching and ruling elders from other presbyteries or General Assembly and enroll them as corresponding members with the privilege of the floor. **(Minutes 23-26)**

04-05 The 24th General Assembly DISMISSES the St. Andrews Presbytery and GRANTS it recognition as a national Reformed and Presbyterian body according to the Articles of Dismissal and Agreement. **(Minutes 24-29**)

*The 29th Assembly (2009) approved a subsequent 5-year "Articles of Agreement" **(Minutes 29-54);** Act 09-03.*

04-08 The 24th General Assembly ADJUSTS the shared boundary between Presbyteries of the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast so that the Asheville, N.C. area counties of Buncombe, Henderson, and McDowell are included in the bounds of Mid-Atlantic. **(Minutes 24-39)**

05-08 The 25th General Assembly ADVISES all presbyteries:

1. To fulfill their responsibility to commend members to another congregation when dissolving a church (**G.**5-9).
2. To be clear in their use of terminology in Minutes when receiving and dismissing ministers. Presbyteries dismiss to and receive from other presbyteries or ecclesiastical bodies. "Transfer" is the term for the completed transaction. If one party has not completed the transaction, then the Minutes should reflect that the action is pending, and subsequent minutes reflect that the action has been completed.

3. That ratio correction is a constitutional requirement (**G.1**9-2A.4b) and should be spread in the Minutes.
4. Minutes submitted for review should be copied from the numbered pages of the presbytery's bound book (*Act 98-05*).
5. That presbyteries have authority to approve out-of-bounds calls (**G.**10-8B.2, last paragraph) but not to determine terms of call for those situations. Presbyteries are reminded to use the "Call to a Validated Ministry Outside the Bounds of Presbytery" form.
6. To reserve the term "laying on of hands" for the service of ordination.
7. To review clarity of terminology regarding ministerial status (**G.**19-2). There are three presbytery rolls: active, inactive, and retired. Within the active roll, there are some who have the status of "without call." There is no "without call" roll. Within the retired roll, there are those who have an inactive status. **(Minutes 25-44)**

06-08 The 26th General Assembly INSTRUCTS all presbyteries to:

1. Evaluate their practice of appointing advisors for candidates to see that the provision of (**G.**11-2E) is being followed, namely, that a candidate's advisor should ordinarily not be the candidate's pastor.
2. Remember that their first priority is to encourage evangelism and renewal within their bounds (**G.**4-3; 19-4A.1) and to reflect in their Minutes how this priority is being realized.
3. Work toward full compliance with Acts of Assembly 81-04 (p. 193, 231), 81-06 (p. 193, 231), and 88-08 (p. 196, 232) regarding mandatory participation of EPC ministers in the denominational Medical Plan.
4. To exercise caution when a church desires to call a person as pastor before candidacy requirements have been met, especially when installing the person almost immediately as a ruling elder, remembering the Scriptural admonition not to be hasty in the laying on of hands. (1 Timothy 5:22) **(Minutes 26-40)**

06-09 The 26th General Assembly APPROVES financial reporting guidelines for presbytery minutes. **(Minutes 26-40**).

06-10 The 26th General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Central South and Mid-America so that the entire state of Arkansas is included in the boundaries of the Central South. **(Minutes 26-47)**

07-01 The 27th General Assembly APPROVES a five-year structure for receiving churches and pastors transitionally. **(Minutes 27-26)**

The 31st General Assembly (2011) extended the specific provision for receiving churches and pastors transitionally in geographic presbyteries until Dec. 31, 2013 ***(Minutes 31-42);*** *Act 11-09.*

The 33rd General Assembly (2013) extended the provision to Dec. 31, 2014 ***(Minutes 33-53);*** *Act 13-07.*

The 34th General Assembly (2014) extended the provision to Dec. 31, 2019 ***(Minutes 14-44);*** *Act 14-13.*

07-08 The 27th General Assembly ADVISES all presbyteries:

1. The requirement for minutes to "reflect an annual review of sessional records" (*Rules for Assembly* IX.9-12 **G.**9) is best served when Minutes clearly note the names of churches whose sessions' minutes have been reviewed.

2. Presbyteries are reminded that the *Book of Government* provides for no office of "Senior Pastor." While particular churches commonly use that title, official documents of church courts should use the constitutional term "pastor."

3. When recording their vote on descending overtures, minutes should include a brief summary of the overtures for the sake of the historical record. Normally, such a summary is provided in the official ballot from the General Assembly.

4. Presbyteries are reminded that financial reporting guidelines, developed in consultation with presbytery clerks, were approved by the 26th General Assembly (2006). The Presbytery Review Committee will look for those guidelines being implemented beginning with the fall 2007 presbytery meetings.

5. Other than commissions related to celebratory activities (e.g., ordination and installation), presbytery Stated Clerks should not be part of commissions but rather be a resource to those commissions. **(Minutes 27-47)**

08-13 The 28th General Assembly ADVISES all presbyteries:

1. To follow (**G.**11-2E), normally appointing an advisor other than the candidate's pastor.

2. That Moderators and/or Stated Clerks should not be appointed to commissions other than those with ceremonial functions.

3. To clarify who moderates a church Session following the dissolution of a pastoral relationship or in other situations when the pastor is unable to moderate (**G.**18-2A)

4. To include a section on "Correspondence" in their minutes with dates on which official correspondence is received and sent. **(Minutes 28-51)**

09-05 The 29th General Assembly ADVISES all presbyteries:

1. When receiving churches and ministers, presbytery minutes should indicate the dismissing body.

2. Presbytery minutes should reflect the requirements of (**G.**21-1A.2), namely, that minutes of commissions are not approved by the presbytery. Commissions report their actions, and their actions are recorded in the presbytery minutes. Minutes of Commissions should be kept separately. **(Minutes 29-60)**

10-01 The 30th General Assembly ADOPTS the opinion of the Stated Clerk concerning presbyteries providing in their minutes anonymity to an accused party in a disciplinary case. **(Minutes 30-39)**

10-02 The 30th General Assembly ADOPTS the opinion of the Stated Clerk regarding standards for Bylaws of representative bodies to establish a quorum and conduct business in a meeting with both real and virtual presence of commissioners. **(Minutes 30-39)**

10-03 The 20th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of Florida to include the Bahamas. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-11 The 30th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration, acting as an Administrative Commission, to divide the Presbytery of the Mid-America to create a Presbytery of Rivers and Lakes, encompassing the current territory in the states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and a continuing Presbytery of the Mid-America, encompassing the current territory in Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma, effective January 29, 2011. **(Minutes 30-13)**

11-03 The 31st General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbyteries of the Midwest, East, and Mid-Atlantic and creates the Presbytery of the Alleghenies with the following boundaries:

The western portion of the State of New York, from the Monroe and Wayne county line on Lake Ontario, going south following county lines until the Allegany and Steuben county line at the

Pennsylvania border,

The western portion of the State of Pennsylvania, starting from the Potter and Tioga county lines on the New York border, going south following county lines until the Bedford and Fulton county lines at the Maryland state border,

The western two counties of the State of Maryland, Garrett and Allegany,

In the State of West Virginia, all counties north of and including the following: Cabell, Putnam, Jackson, Roane, Calhoun, Braxton, Lewis, Upshur, Barbour, Tucker, Grant, Hardy, and Hampshire.

The eastern portion of the State of Ohio following a line north along county lines from the Adams and Scioto county line on the Ohio River to the Sandusky and Erie county line on Lake Erie. **(Minutes 31-27)**

11-04 The 31st General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the West and creates the Presbytery of the Pacific, consisting of the states of California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, and Nevada, and the portion of Idaho west of US Highway 93. **(Minutes 31-27)**

11-09 The 31st General Assembly APPROVES extending the 2007 provision for receiving churches and pastors transitionally in geographic EPC presbyteries until Dec. 31, 2013.

1. Transitional membership allows existing presbyteries and transitional member churches and pastors the time and opportunity to fully assess the mutual expectations doctrinally, missionally, legislatively, and financially before committing to full membership.
2. All churches and pastors entering EPC presbyteries as transitional members must:
   a. Acknowledge the **Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms** to be their sole subordinate confessional standard;
   b. Affirm the EPC "*Essentials of Our Faith*" without exception;
   c. Submit to the EPC **Book of Order**.
3. All transitional church ministers and staff members shall be regarded as eligible for EPC benefits programs, subject to the limitations and exclusions of the retirement and medical plan documents.
4. All transitional member congregations will be asked to participate in the Per Member Asking to the best of their ability.
5. Because the particular church has ownership of its own property in the EPC, no judicatory of the EPC assumes any liability or responsibility for the resolution of local property disputes arising from efforts to be dismissed from other bodies.
6. When received from transitional to full membership, teaching and ruling elders must meet existing requirements for subscription to the **Westminster Confession** and Catechisms. Examinations in such cases will be based on views and beliefs as provided for in **G.**12-6, 12-7. It may be helpful to note that ministers with current Reformed credentials are examined similarly to transfers – on views and beliefs – and re-ordination is not required. Ministers and elders of transitional member churches will have existing presbytery members and resources made available to them to assist in preparation for meeting these subscription standards.
7. As transitional members of the presbytery, pastors and ruling elder commissioners to the presbytery will have a voice without a vote. **(Minutes 31-42)**

11-10 The 31st General Assembly EXTENDS the 2007 provision for ministers to be received transitionally to members of the New Wineskins EPC Transitional Presbytery who are without call on June 19, 2012. They may be received as transitional members without call in EPC

presbyteries in which they reside. Upon receiving a call, they will be examined and received according to the normal process of G.12-3B). Pastors may remain in this status for no longer than 12 months. **(Minutes 31-43)**

12-05 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS a new "Position Statement on Presbytery Development," superseding the statement of the 13th General Assembly (*Act 93-05)*. **(Minutes 32-44**)

Position Statement on Presbytery Development

The purpose of this position statement is to guide the General Assembly and presbyteries in making decisions concerning the establishment of new presbyteries or the realignment of existing boundaries.

The church as the body of Christ is composed of all those persons who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, together with their children. The church on earth is not limited to particular forms of government or denominations; nevertheless, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church believes the perfecting of the visible church is best achieved through the scriptural doctrine of government by a plurality of Elders constituting church courts of regular gradation.

The purpose of the Church is to bring glory to God in obedience to the will of Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, by faithfully ruling over all of whom He has made it overseer and by faithfully extending His rule to as many and as far as His Spirit enables it. As a regional manifestation of the visible Church, a Presbytery must be earnestly committed to the reign of Christ through both biblical mission and biblical governance.

As stewards of the Kingdom of God, church courts must neither "bury the talents" of what has been entrusted to them by not fulfilling its mandate (Matthew 25:18) nor fail to exercise the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19) by sacrificing governance for mission. Christ's will both to extend and govern his kingdom is one and the same. While sometimes coming in tension with one another, the church's mission and its governance are not in conflict but complementary.

A Presbytery is to organize itself as it prayerfully deems best to fulfill this purpose, subject to the Scriptures and the Constitution of the church. The specific duties included in this are described in *Book of Government* 19-4. In full recognition that the Spirit moves according to God's good pleasure, a Presbytery should provide ways to recognize and encourage, not impede, the active work of God the Spirit. Therefore, a Presbytery should encourage, promote, and facilitate the formation of ministry networks within, throughout, and across its boundaries. The particular way in which a Presbytery organizes itself is to take special care not to hinder the mission of God but rather to foster cooperation with and faithfulness to it.

The mission of a Presbytery is to organize itself as it deems best for the propagation of the Gospel, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the edification of the people by fulfilling its duties according to *Book of Government* 19-4.

In order to be faithful to and effective in its mission, a Presbytery must be self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-perpetuating.

In order to be faithful to its mission, a Presbytery must be viable. It must have sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its work. The extent of the resources needed will vary, depending on the geographic scale of its boundaries, the experience and gifts of its members, and the level of commitment of its churches. Factors to be considered:

1. Total church membership.
2. Total financial resources of churches within its bounds.
3. Financial support for or pledges of support for its work.
4. Geographic scale and cost and mode of travel within its bounds.
5. Presence of experienced and capable potential leadership.

6. Other clear indications of commitment by churches within its bounds.
7. While the presence of one or more large churches may be desirable, sufficient commitment by medium-sized and small churches can provide a sufficiently strong foundation for an effective Presbytery.

The Assembly must satisfy itself regarding the viability of proposed or existing presbyteries, including through the means of the Committee on Administration, the Presbytery Review Committee, and any other committees or commissions formed for this purpose.

Changes in presbytery boundaries may be initiated by the presbyteries or the Committee on Administration. Proposed changes in presbytery boundaries must include an assessment of the impact of such a change on the presbyteries affected.

A recommendation to create a new presbytery must include a viability assessment of the resulting presbyteries in terms of the criteria described above, including proposed officers Pro Tempore.

12-11 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS a policy regarding approval and recording of ministers' terms of call, superseding the actions of the 18th and 31st General Assemblies (*Acts 98-04 and 11-09*). **(Minutes 32-56)**

1. The initial terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and presbyteries, using the forms found in the **Book of Order** and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*.
2. Changes in terms of call must be noted and voted upon by presbyteries on recommendation from the Ministerial Committee. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or a percentage amount, with only the change, not the new total, noted.
3. Background or supporting material regarding terms of call shall be made available to the Presbytery Review Committee through the Stated Clerk upon the Committee's request.

13-03 The 33rd General Assembly AMENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Pacific and the Presbytery of the West to include in the Presbytery of the Pacific that portion of Idaho west of US Highway 93 and all of the city of Twin Falls and all of Jerome County. **(Minutes 33-42)**

13-04 The 33rd General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbyteries of the West and Mid-America and creates the Presbytery of the Great Plains, effective as of the convening of its first meeting after January 1, 2014, with the geographic boundaries defined as follows:

- Northern border: The U.S./Canada border.
- Western border: From the northwestern corner of Bottineau County, North Dakota, south along the county line to state highway 5, then east to the junction of US 83, then US 83 south to the Texas border, then following the Texas/Oklahoma border.
- Southern border: The southern Oklahoma state line.
- Eastern border: The eastern state lines of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. **(Minutes 13-42)**

13-07 The 33rd General Assembly EXTENDS the provision adopted by the 27th General Assembly for presbyteries to receive ministers and churches as transitional members to December 31, 2014. **(Minutes 33-53)**

14-05 The 34th General Assembly ESTABLISHES the Presbytery of the Gulf South, effective October 24. 2014, with the boundary line between the Presbytery of the Central South and Gulf South to be as follows: beginning at the northeastern most corner of Texas at its border with Arkansas

(near Texarkana), thence proceeding along the northern boundaries of Miller, Lafayette, Columbia, and Union Counties, Arkansas; thence southwardly along the eastern boundary of Union County, Arkansas to the Arkansas, and Louisiana boundary; thence eastwardly along the Arkansas-Louisiana border (approximating the 33rd parallel) and the projection thereof to the boundary line between Mississippi and Alabama; thence southwardly along the Mississippi-Alabama border to its point of intersection with the northern boundary of Mobile County, Alabama; thence eastwardly along the northern boundary lines of Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama; thence southwardly along the eastern boundary of Baldwin County, Alabama, to the Gulf of Mexico; also, that the westernmost boundary of Presbytery of the Gulf South within the State of Texas (which has not heretofore been established by action of the General Assembly) be the meridian 100° west of Greenwich (being the same meridian which divides the Texas panhandle from Oklahoma);

Any retired ministers and ministers laboring out of bounds included in the geographic boundaries indicated shall be included in the membership of this Presbytery, subject to the any exceptions provided for in the *Book of Government* 11-12 (3rd paragraph). **(Minutes 34-56)**

14-06 The 34th General Assembly extends the provision of *Act 94-22*, "A lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery, "to specifically include the Sacrament of Baptism. **(Minutes 34-56)**

14-13 The 34th General Assembly extends the provision adopted by the 27th General Assembly for presbyteries to receive ministers and churches as transitional members to December 31, 2019. **(Minutes 14-44)**

15-06 The 35th General Assembly EXTENDS the boundaries of the Presbytery of Florida to include Puerto Rico. **(Minutes 35-38)**

16-23 The 36th General Assembly issues the following advisory to all presbyteries:

1. All presbyteries should take note of **G.**10-8B.2a, which requires that a definite period of time be set for Teaching Elders with out-of-bounds calls. If an out-of-bounds call is approved (discretionary), it must be approved for a definite period of time (mandatory).

2. All presbyteries should take note of **G.**13-1A, which requires the Court to approve the date and time of installations. The Presbytery Review Committee observed many instances where the date was left open and never approved by the Court. Arrangements for installation, including selecting members of the Commission, should be part of the preparation process for examination and approving a call with the names of Commission members presented to the Presbytery for approval. **(Minutes 36-61)**

16-25 The 36th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that, in addition to items required by action of the 20th General Assembly (*Act 00-11* and **Minutes 20-46**):

1. Presbytery Minutes shall record the roll of Associate Members and their attendance at meetings.

2. Presbytery Minutes pages shall be consecutively numbered in their permanent record. **(Minutes 36-61)**

17-03 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES the adjustment to the common boundary between the Presbytery of the Pacific and the Presbytery of the West as the 144º W meridian of longitude between the southern border of Canada and the northern border of Mexico. **(Minutes 37-29)**

17-04 The 37th General Assembly DIVIDES the Presbytery of the Pacific into two presbyteries, the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest and the Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest, according to the

boundaries stated in Overture 17-B. **(Minutes 37-29)**

17-05 The 37th General Assembly AMENDS the name of the Presbytery of Florida to the Presbytery of Florida and the Caribbean. **(Minutes 37-29)**

21-06 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES the creation of three Presbyteries from the current Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. **(Minutes 41-46)**

21-08 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES the referral of the Presbytery Review Committee's findings regarding the failure of at least 12% of EPC churches to provide any engagement with their Presbytery during 2020 by either TEs or RE Commissioners to the Ministerial Vocation Committee for further study and action. **(Minutes 41-48)**

22-10 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES increasing the membership of the Presbytery Review Committee from six to nine.

24-05 The 44th General Assembly DIRECTS the moderator to appoint a nine-member *Ad-Interim* committee to study the Scriptures, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms to bring clarity to our witness regarding:

1. Theological anthropology, with respect to human sexuality as it pertains to contemporary usage of the sexual self-conception and how such language comports with Scripture and the Westminster standards;
2. Progressive Sanctification and how it informs the Reformed understanding of the mortification of sin and the doctrine of repentance;
3. Concupiscence as it relates to a Reformed conception of the Christian's new nature in Christ and when homosexual temptation, like other temptations, disqualifies one from ordained office;
4. The Christian hope for those who experience and flee sexual temptation, especially homosexual temptation;
5. How the answers to these questions might inform standards for officers who have struggled in these areas but have mortified such temptation and desire.

The Committee is further charged to review our Position Papers, Pastoral Letters, and the *Book of Order* and to recommend potential changes that will clarify, align, and strengthen our witness to the larger world. **(Minutes 44-43)**

24-10 The 44th General Assembly REALIGNS the boundaries of the Presbyteries of the Southeast, Central Carolinas, and New River as follows:

Within the state of North Carolina, the eastern boundary of Southeast Presbytery will run along the eastern boundary of Haywood County and the western boundary of Transylvania County.

The Northern boundary of Central Carolinas Presbytery will run from the North Carolina-Tennessee border along the eastern boundary of Avery County, the western Boundary of Caldwell County, until it joins US 321 South to I-40 East. It will continue east on I-40 through Iredell County to the SW corner of Davie County. It will then follow the western boundary of Davie County and part of the western boundary of Davidson County to where it intersects I-85 North. It will continue along I-85 North to where it intersects the northern boundary of Randolph County. From there, it will follow the northern boundaries of Randolph and Chatham Counties to the western Boundary of Coastal Mid-Atlantic Presbytery. **(Minutes 44-18)**

PROGRAM MATTERS

84-14 The 4th General Assembly ADOPTS a Preliminary Position Papers on Homosexuality, The Value of and Respect for Human Life, Capital Punishment, Abortion, and The Ordination of Women. **(Minutes 4-38)**

The 6th General Assembly (1986) adopted Position Papers on Abortion, Homosexuality,

and the Ordination of Women ***(Minutes 6-35, 6-36, 6-37)****; Act 86-20*

The 15th General Assembly (1995) rescinded its Preliminary Position Paper on Capital Punishment ***(Minutes 15-31)****; Act 95-12.*

The 32nd General Assembly (2012) revised the Position Paper on Abortion ***(Minutes 32-40)****; Act 12-01 and The Value of and Respect for Human Life* ***(Minutes 32-40)****; Act 12-02)*

86-08 The 6th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Task Force on Aging to continue its work to implement the following recommendations adopted by the Assembly:

Short Range Goals:

1. To encourage each presbytery to assign the study of a ministry to older adults to an appropriate committee.
2. Produce and distribute resource material for the local church's use in developing ministries for older adults.
3. Provide consultation to Lifestyle Committees.
4. Conduct workshops on aging to be held at General Assembly and presbytery meetings.
5. Publish a quarterly newsletter.

Long Range Goals:

1. Promote awareness of the unique emotional, social, and spiritual needs of older persons.
2. Promote appreciation for the contributions older persons may make to the church body and fellowship through leadership, teaching, and outreach.
3. Encourage collecting information and sharing about effective ministries with older adults within the EPC as well as other denominations.
4. Provide information about current state and federal legislation as well as national public policy.
5. Emphasize the importance of individual Christians modifying their lifestyles to improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. **(Minutes 6-60)**

86-09 The Youth Ministry concept for summer youth conference is adopted. **(Minutes 6-60)**

86-20 The 6th General Assembly ADOPTS Position Papers on Abortion, Homosexuality, and the Ordination of Women. **(Minutes 6-35, 6-36, and 6-37**, respectively)

The 32nd General Assembly (2012) revised the Position Paper on Abortion ***(Minutes 32-40)****; Act 12-01.*

86-21 The 6th General Assembly ADOPTS the Position Paper on the Holy Spirit. **(Minutes 6-33)**

87-04 The 7th General Assembly APPROVES the development of an officer training program for the purposes of 1) continued resourcing of current officers and 2) resourcing new officers. **(Minutes 7-38)**

87-05 The 7th General Assembly DECIDES not to do business with hotels and motels promoting pornography for their customers in the cities where future General Assemblies are held, and further will encourage its constituents to refrain personally from patronizing such establishments**. (Minutes 7-38)**

87-21 The 7th General Assembly ADOPTS the Position Paper on The Value of and Respect for Human Life. **(Minutes 7-36)**

The 32nd General Assembly revised the Position Paper on The Value of and Respect for Human Life ***(Minutes 32-40)****; Act 12-02.*

88-06 The 8th General Assembly APPROVES the concept of presbyteries covenanting with colleges and other educational institutions, but disapproves of the General Assembly entering into such agreements. **(Minutes 8-55)**

88-19 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" as a resource for its congregations. **(Minutes 8-56**)

88-20 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES *The Children's Catechism: A New Modern Version* for distribution to its churches, published by Summertown Texts, Signal Mountain, Tennessee (1988). **(Minutes 8-55)**

88-21 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES the work and ministry of Lay Renewal Ministries as an excellent resource for EPC churches to use. **(Minutes 8-31)**

88-22 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS the concept of endorsing curriculum publishers consistent with our theology and beliefs, and the subsequent marketing of such materials. **(Minutes 8-55)**

88-23 The 8th General Assembly APPROVES holding a biannual conference for all ministers with less than five years' experience in pastoral ministry. **(Minutes 8-41)**

88-24 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES for its churches two booklets: *What is the Reformed Faith* by John R. de Witt, and *Baptism* by Francis Schaeffer. **(Minutes 8-60)**

88-25 The 8th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a Youth Speakers Bureau for the purpose of providing quality speakers for both local church and presbytery functions. **(Minutes 8-54)**

88-26 The 8th General Assembly ENDORSES the Sonlife Strategy for Youth Discipleship as a biblical, practical, uniform model for youth ministry in the local church. **(Minutes 8-54)**

88-27 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS a Preliminary Position Paper on Pornography to be sent to the presbyteries for further theological and biblical reflection so that a position paper may be adopted. **(Minutes 8-60)**

88-28 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS a proposed "Constitution for Women's Ministries," and the churches are encouraged to work toward implementation of such a constitution. **(Minutes 8-42)**

89-16 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES Bethany Christian Services as an agency for ministry to unmarried mothers and the unborn, providing alternatives to abortion, including adoption services. Bethany is commended as deserving of the prayers of our people, as well as worthy of financial support from those of our people who feel so led. **(Minutes 9-39)**

*The 41st General Assembly (2021) withdrew this approval **(Minutes 41-39)**; Act 21-04.*

89-17 The 9th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment by the Christian Education and Publications Committee of a Christian Education Resource Network utilizing qualified regional (3 regions) people who will serve as 1) interpreters of the committees' goals for presbyteries in the region, and 2) phone resources for churches in the presbytery needing consultations, and 3) assistance for presbyteries in workshop development. **(Minutes 9-39)**

89-26 The 9th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the permanent Christian Education and Publications Committee to establish a task force on homelessness. **(Minutes 9-38)**

90-04 The 10th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Christian Education to make every effort to inform churches of available curriculum that is distinctly Reformed, such as Great Commission Publications and Christian Reformed Church materials. **(Minutes 10-26)**

90-05 The 10th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Christian Education to develop a curriculum for prospective new church members, one for youth and one for adults, which shall include Presbyterian history, doctrine, and polity. **(Minutes 10-26)**

92-04 The 12th General Assembly REQUESTS the Youth Ministries Committee to research the establishment of a denominational retreat and camping facility, using Montreat and Young Life as models for this ministry. **(Minutes 12-26)**

*The 14th General Assembly (1994) tabled this instruction **(Minutes 14-24)**; Act 94-10.*

92-05 The 12th General Assembly COMMENDS the *Officers Training Manual* by Dr. Andrew Jumper for use in EPC churches and recommends printing it in a spiral-bound format. **(Minutes 12-27)**

92-06 The 12th General Assembly ENCOURAGES the use of the new **Westminster Confession of Faith** *Commentary* (Summertown Texts) in EPC churches. **(Minutes 12-27)**

92-17 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES a pilot project for a regional pastor to be sponsored jointly by the General Assembly and the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. **(Minutes 12-45)**

92-20 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of two subcommittees:

1. Evangelism, a subcommittee of National Outreach;
2. Caring, a subcommittee of Ministerial Vocation. **(Minutes 12-46)**

93-03 The 13th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Christian Education and Publications Committee to explore with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church the feasibility of a joint family conference to be held at Bonclarken Conference Center. **(Minutes 13-18)**

93-04 The 13th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Christian Education and Publications Committee to develop resources for utilizing the **Westminster Catechism**, and for teaching Reformed distinctives to children and youth in local churches. **(Minutes 13-23)**

93-10 The 13th General Assembly ENCOURAGES presbyteries to consider having a Women's Ministries Committee, and to devise an effective means of coordinating the input of that committee with the other committees of the presbytery. **(Minutes 13-35)**

93-18 The 13th General Assembly APPROVES the Recommended Reading List for Ordination Preparation, to be used in the task of preparing candidates approaching ordination examinations, especially in the areas of the Reformed tradition and the Reformed office of the Minister. **(Minutes 13-39)**

93-19 The 13th General Assembly COMMENDS the *Study Guide for the* **Westminster Confession** *and* **Book of Order**, by Rev. William Hyer, for use in the churches. **(Minutes 13-39)**

94-10 The 14th General Assembly TABLES the instruction to research the establishment of a denominational camp and retreat facility until such time as resources or facilities are available (Ref. *Act 92-04)*. **(Minutes 14-24)**

94-11 The 14th General Assembly ENCOURAGES its churches to establish procedures whereby those who work with children may be screened for any felony or child abuse incidents, and to have policies and guidelines concerning these areas. **(Minutes 14-24)**

94-20 The 14th General Assembly REPLACES the Position Papers on AIDS/HIV and Homosexuality with new editions on these subjects. **(Minutes 14-35)**

*The 25th General Assembly (2005) adopted revisions to the Position Paper on AIDS/HIV and changed its status to "Pastoral Letter" **(Minutes 25-40)**; Act 05-06.*

94-21 The 14th General Assembly ADOPTS a Preliminary Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage and sends it to the churches for study, and the Assembly instructs the Theology Committee to include a more thorough study in this paper on the following subjects:

1. A definition that affirms the covenantal aspects of marriage.

2. A strong statement relating reconciliation to covenant faithfulness in relationships.

3. A strong statement regarding pre-divorce reconciliation to complement the existing

statement of post-divorce reconciliation.

4. Expand statements on "hardness of heart" as related to divorce and/or reconciliation.
5. Expand the discussion of forgiveness and restoration as it relates to service and leadership in the Church by divorced or remarried persons.
6. A review of 1 Timothy 5:8 for possible inclusion as it relates to the issues of desertion and covenant unfaithfulness.
7. A discussion of remaining unmarried in the context of the section entitled, "What About Remarriage?" **(Minutes 14-35)**

95-01 The 15th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Office of the General Assembly to provide information relative to special offerings at least five weeks in advance of the projected date of the offering. (**Minutes 15-20**)

95-08 The 15th General Assembly GRANTS permission to the Christian Education and Publications Committee to design a subscription or funding program for *EPC Reflections,* to begin with the June 1996 issue. **(Minutes 15-23)**

95-09 The 15th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Christian Education and Publications Committee to form a task force composed of Christian educators and theologians to review and evaluate various curricula and make evaluations based on EPC standards, making this evaluation available to the churches in a simplified form. **(Minutes 15-23)**

The 16th General Assembly (1996) reaffirmed this instruction and further requested the task force to complete a one-page simplified evaluation form on materials.
(Minutes 16-24)

95-12 The 15th General Assembly RESCINDS its Preliminary Position Paper on Capital Punishment (*Act 84-14).* **(Minutes 15-31)**

95-13 The 15th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on Criteria for Evaluating Membership in Secret Fraternal Organizations. **(Minutes 15-31)**

95-14 The 15th General Assembly ADOPTS the Position Paper on Problems of Suffering, Death, and Dying. **(Minutes 15-31)**

95-20 The 15th General Assembly ENCOURAGES men in the local churches to become involved in Promise Keepers since the EPC does not have an organized men's ministry. **(Minutes 15-23)**

96-05 The 16th General Assembly ENCOURAGES commissioners to send the following overture on the value of and sanctity of human life to their congressional senators and representatives, in addition to the President, Vice-President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Majority Leader of the Senate:

The 16th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church goes on record as opposing, in the strongest possible terms, the President's veto of the "Partial Birth Abortion Ban," and urges Congress to override his veto. Furthermore, that our denomination should communicate its stand on this issue to the President, Vice-President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate. **(Minutes 16-31)**

96-06 The 16th General Assembly ACKNOWLEDGES that the Disney Company has openly promoted a morally destructive agenda which is hostile to traditional family values, and calls on its members to recognize and grieve over these developments at the Disney Company and lead them to take whatever action the Holy Spirit leads them to do in response. **(Minutes 16-30)**

96-08 The 16th General Assembly CHALLENGES the Committee on Student and Young Adult Ministries (formerly Youth Ministries Committee) to determine direction in the following areas:

1. To establish student curriculum guidelines to assist churches in the Christian nurture of

their children;

2. To establish a strategy for targeting more resources to establish student and young adult ministry as a top priority within the church. **(Minutes 16-31)**

96-09 The 16th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on Civil Disobedience, and instructs the Committee on Theology to develop a purpose statement regarding this letter, and also to define the term "Pastoral Letter." **(Minutes 16-33)**

96-10 The 16th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on Organ Donation and Transplantation. **(Minutes 16-33)**

96-15 The 16th General Assembly CHANGES the name of the Committee on Youth Ministries to Committee on Student and Young Adult Ministries. **(Minutes 16-36)**

97-13 The 17th General Assembly ADOPTS a new introductory section for the Pastoral Letter on Civil Disobedience that was adopted by the 16th General Assembly. That section reads as follows:

This Pastoral Letter sets forth biblically sound theological principles that should be applied to the questions we face as Christians and churches in evaluating and responding to the moral issue of civil disobedience.

A Pastoral Letter is intended to shine the light of God's word broadly on a general area of concern to the Church. Requiring the approval of only one General Assembly, it is not as definitive as a Position Paper that requires the approval of two General Assemblies, including a minimum of one-year circulation among the presbyteries. The primary purpose of a Pastoral Letter is to guide churches within the EPC rather than to identify our positions to the world. **(Minutes 17-30)**

97-14 The 17th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the permanent Committee on Theology to study the broad issue of the church's engagement with culture, including but not limited to the following issues:

As a denomination, the EPC desires to be a body of believers that stands for our country, to work as agents of salt and light in its transformation. Through engagement with our society, we seek to make a visible difference in the quality of its life – spiritually, socially, culturally, and economically.

We do not want to be a denomination that merely stands against our society, to denounce and scorn it. That is a fortress mentality that only condemns and castigates our society for its wickedness. Instead, we want to interact with our society as servants, peacemakers, and healers.

We do not want to be a denomination of our society, only reflecting and confirming its practices and thought forms. Through a proactive proclamation of the saving grace of the gospel and a practical demonstration of the wholesome and holy lifestyle to which God calls His people, we confront thought forms and lifestyles that stand contrary to God's revealed Word.

We do not want to be a denomination that simply stands above our society, only using it for our own personal gain, then escaping it by retreating to our Sunday holy huddles. Rather, we desire to be a people in the world but not of it. **(Minutes 17-30)**

97-16 The 17th General Assembly RECOMMENDS to all church sessions that an oral or written report be regularly received from a representative of that church's women's ministry. The rationale for this is two-fold:

1. So that there is a session record of the activities of the women's ministry;
2. So that communication and accountability are enhanced. **(Minutes 17-32)**

97-17 The 17th General Assembly REQUESTS that the formation of a men's ministry be considered by the appropriate committee (CE&P), including the possible funding of a part-time director, and to report back to the 18th General Assembly. **(Minutes 17-33)**

97-18 The 18th General Assembly EXCUSES the Christian Education and Publications Committee from further research on the LiFE curriculum beyond the assessment already completed on this series in 1994, as reported in the *Curriculum Evaluation Packet for Children*. **(Minutes 17-33)**

97-19 The 17th General Assembly ENDORSES a relationship with Pioneer Clubs as understood and defined in the working agreement. **(Minutes 17-33)**

97-20 The 17th General Assembly DIRECTS the Permanent Committee on Student and Young Adult Ministries to become more focused in its request for benevolence giving, and further directs the committee to send a letter to the Clerks of Session of EPC congregations encouraging support of the SYAM budget through benevolent giving. **(Minutes 17-37)**

97-21 The 17th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Permanent Committee on Student and Young Adult Ministries to investigate the formation of a new committee to work specifically on a Single Adult Ministry by the year 2000. **(Minutes 17-38)**

98-12 The 18th General Assembly ENDORSES the Alpha program as a resource for evangelism. **(Minutes 18-41)**

98-13 The 18th General Assembly ENDORSES the Sowing/Reaping Planned Giving Program and information commending such for distribution to the churches for review and consideration. **(Minutes 18-39)**

98-14 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS the following set of guidelines for Presbytery Women's Ministries:

Guidelines

- Each Presbytery Women's Ministry Committee shall be made up of 6 or more women who represent the spectrum of presbytery churches.
- Pastors' wives shall be represented on the committee if possible.
- Women shall serve a 3-year term. A second 3-year term is allowed, but a woman may not serve more than two consecutive terms.
- Nominations for the committee may be submitted to the Presbytery Nominating Committee in two ways:
  1. The Session of each individual church may submit names.
  2. The current committee may submit names.
- Prior to a woman's name being submitted to the Nominating Committee, her pastor and/or Session shall be contacted for approval. Following this approval, she may be asked if she is willing to serve.
- The Presbytery Women's Ministry Committee members shall elect a chairman, who shall attend the General Council of the Presbytery. (She may or may not have a vote depending on the presbytery, but will be able to keep the council abreast of Women's Ministries' concerns, and vice versa.) **(Minutes 18-42, 40-24)**

00-07 The 20th General Assembly ENDORSES children's catechism lessons from Children's Ministries International as resources for use in EPC churches. **(Minutes 20-38)**

00-08 The 20th General Assembly ENDORSES the book *Infant Baptism* by John Sartelle for use alongside Francis Schaeffer's booklet, *Baptism*. **(Minutes 20-38)**

00-09 The 20th General Assembly ENDORSES a Youth Curriculum as a working draft for use in church membership programs. **(Minutes 20-39)**

01-12 The 21st General Assembly ADOPTS the Vision 21 Plan with adjusted dates for implementation. **(Minutes 21-40)**

02-08 The 22nd General Assembly ADOPTS an "Endorsement Policy" to evaluate approved resource organizations and committee-endorsed resources. **(Minutes 22-46)**

02-09 The 22nd General Assembly APPROVES the "Specialized Ministry Form" and commends it to the churches for use in filling non-ordained professional staff positions. **(Minutes 22-44)**

04-06 The 24th General Assembly APPROVES the formation of a permanent Committee on College Ministry made up of two Ruling Elders, two Teaching Elders, and two non-ordained church members involved with college ministry beginning at the 25th General Assembly (2005). **(Minutes 24-32)**

04-07 The 24th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement with The National Leadership Foundation/His Life Campus Ministry. **(Minutes 24-32)**

04-09 The 24th General Assembly adopts the Position Paper on the Sanctity of Marriage. **(Minutes 24-45)**

04-10 The 24th General Assembly COMMENDS the contemporary English edition of the **Westminster** Larger Catechism and approves its publication with the **Book of Order**. **(Minutes 24-45)**

The 28th General Assembly (2008) authorized the publication of constitutional documents in a 2-volume spiral-bound format ***(Minutes 28-46)****; Act 08-03.*

05-01 The 25th General Assembly COMMENDS *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility* from the National Association of Evangelicals for study and discussion by church sessions. **(Minutes 25-29)**

05-02 The 25th General Assembly APPROVES a *Youth Membership Curriculum* for use by EPC congregations. **(Minutes 25-33)**

05-03 The 25th General Assembly ADOPTS a definition (below) for what constitutes a position paper and directs that a description be distributed with position papers using less technical language:

A Position Paper is intended to set forth the mind of the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on a subject of compelling interest because of developments in the church or the culture at large. A Position Paper is intended to enable the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to make a definitive statement to itself, the Christian community, and the world. It is not intended to be an exhaustive theological statement nor a complete exegetical biblical study on a particular issue. A Position Paper must be adopted by one Assembly as a Preliminary Paper, subject to revision and discussion, and must be adopted or withdrawn by the act of another Assembly. While stating the definitive position of the mind of the General Assembly, a Position Paper does not have the status of a Constitutional document nor is it to be regarded as binding on the conscience of churches or individuals. **(Minutes 25-37)**

05-06 The 25th General Assembly ADOPTS revisions to the "Position Paper on AIDS/HIV" and changes its status to that of a Pastoral Letter. (*Act 94-20)* **(Minutes 25-40)**

05-07 The 25th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on the Use of Catechisms in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 25-40)**

06-12 The 26th General Assembly RECEIVES the *EPC Officer Training Manual* (2006 Edition) as a resource and commends it for use in EPC congregations. **(Minutes 26-52)**

07-04 The 27th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement with the Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO). **(Minutes 27-39)**

07-09 The 27th General Assembly DECLARES its support for the proposed Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. **(Minutes 27-48)**

07-10 The 27th General Assembly ADOPTS a Pastoral Letter on Domestic Abuse. **(Minutes 27-42)**

08-03 The 28th General Assembly AUTHORIZES publishing a two-volume EPC Constitution, volume one containing the **Book of Order** *(Rules for Assembly*, *Acts of Assembly,* and *Forms for*

Discipline); and volume two consisting of the EPC version of the **Westminster Confession and Catechisms;** and a separate publication of *The Documents of the General Assembly,* all in 8-1/2 x 11 spiral-bound format. **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-04 The 28th General Assembly DELEGATES future publication decisions related to the Constitution and governing documents to the Christian Education and Publications Committee, reporting those decisions to the Administration Committee and Assembly. **(Minutes 28-46)**

09-01 The 29th General Assembly ADOPTS a definition of "Missional Church" and "Missional Denomination":

Our denomination wants to clarify for its member churches who we are and what we do as the United States and many other nations become mission fields that are larger, more spiritually diverse, and more antagonistic to the gospel than ever before. The term "missional" has become common and, therefore, highly nuanced. We desire to define missional in a simple and specific way so that each EPC church can commit to a unified, obedient pursuit of the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

1. A missional church grasps that God is a missionary God and that "it is not so much that God has a mission for His church in the world, but that God has a Church for His mission in the world."*
2. A missional church believes that the mission of God is rooted unalterably in the Bible, God's infallible Word. Therefore, a missional church believes that the essence of God's mission is to extend the reign of God and is summed up in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. A missional church is a visible community of authentic disciples of Jesus Christ who gather for celebration, prayer, and teaching and then disperse locally and globally as His missionaries to love and serve people. In so doing, a missional church both pursues and welcomes sinners as they are drawn into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The greater purpose in all of this is that the earth will be filled with the worship of God.
4. A missional church believes that it is more than just a collection of individuals, but that it is a community called together by God both to love Him and serve Him.
5. A missional church is concerned with more than maintaining programs for existing members; it is called to mobilize its people both individually and as a community to daily self-sacrifice for the hurting world around them. A missional church is both inwardly strong and outwardly focused.
6. A missional church perceives that the essence of these things is the essence of its existence. Therefore, a missional church will constantly seek to reevaluate itself as to whether or not its emphasis, organization, and activity effectively position the church to partner with God in His mission.
7. A missional denomination:
   A. Believes ministry begins with the local church
   B. Is made up of local congregations committed to being missional
   C. Believes that the Presbyteries and General Assembly, being expressions of the larger church, have an important role to play in identifying, equipping and supporting leaders and churches. They are a key link in the principle of mutual accountability toward missional ministry and biblical standards.
   D. Constantly examines whether its polity, structures and programs are supporting or inhibiting that missional commitment. **(Minutes 29-32)**

* J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), pp 23-37.

09-02 The 29th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Committee on Administration to direct the process of becoming a missional denomination. **(Minutes 29-54)**

10-04 The 30th General Assembly AUTHORIZES a Synopsis of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church statements on Scripture as an addition to the materials distributed for churches interested in joining the EPC. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-05 The 30th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Theology Committee to review and update the Position Papers on Sanctity of Life and Abortion without any intention of changing the fundamental conclusions. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-06 The 30th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Stated Clerk to distribute a bibliography on bioethics to the churches, commending their use for the education, faith, and practice of their officers and members. **(Minutes 30-48)**

The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity. www.cbhd.org.

Kilner, John Frederic, ed. *Cutting Edge Bioethics: A Christian Exploration of Technologies and Trends*. Horizon in Bioethics Series Book. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002 (214 pp).

Meilander, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. (126 pp).

Orr, Robert D. *Medical Ethics and the Faith Factor: A Handbook for Clergy and Health-Care Professionals*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

VanDrunen, David. *Bioethics and the Christian Life: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions*.

Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009 (256 pp).

11-11 The 31st General Assembly APPROVES Families Alive® as an Approved Resource Agency. **(Minutes 31-53)**

11-12 The 31st General Assembly APPROVES the policy statement, "Ministry Policy for EPC Chaplains for Dealing with Persons Who Practice Homosexual Behavior and Claim Homosexual Identity." **(Minutes 31-53)**

12-01 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS revisions to the *Position Paper on Abortion (Act 86-20).* **(Minutes 32-40)**

12-02 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS revisions to the *Position Paper on the Value of and Respect for Human Life (Act 87-21, p. 222).* **(Minutes 32-40;** Documents section)

12-03 The 32nd General Assembly ADOPTS a position regarding Federal Health Care Mandates, stating that some provisions of the Mandates conflict with Christian conscience, and instructs that the position statement be distributed to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the President of the United States, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, each member of the House of Representatives, the Vice President as President of the U.S. Senate, each member of the Senate, the Surgeon General of the United States, denominations, to media outlets as the Stated Clerk of the EPC deems appropriate, and to each EPC congregation to communicate to its members. **(Minutes 32-41)**

12-06 The 32nd General Assembly COMMENDS Waterstone Foundation (www.waterstone.org), National Christian Foundation (www.nationalchristian.com), Kingdom Advisors (www.kingdomadvisors.org), Hope Christian Community Foundation (www.hopememphis.com), and Elgin Foundation (www.elginfoundation.org) for the use of EPC churches and members. **(Minutes 32-56)**

13-02 The 33rd General Assembly ADOPTS a revised Position Paper on Abortion (originally adopted by the 6th General Assembly and revised by the 32nd General Assembly). **(Minutes 33-37)**

14-07 The 34th General Assembly ADOPTS revisions to the Position Paper on Homosexuality. **(Minutes 34-56)**

15-07 The 35th General Assembly DIRECTS the Moderator to appoint a Special Committee to:

1. Review the Position Paper on Homosexuality;
2. Review the Position Paper on the Sanctity of Marriage;
3. Draft an expansion of the Position Paper on the Sanctity of Marriage to include revisions of the Position Paper on Homosexuality, a section on biblical singleness and other appropriate topics; and
4. Report back to the 2016 General Assembly. **(Minutes 35-45)**

15-12 The 35th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Christian Education and Communications and Theology Committees to work jointly to reformat, enhance, and update the EPC Leadership Training Guide. **(Minutes 35-55)**

16-01 The 36th General Assembly ADOPTS a Preliminary Position Paper on Human Sexuality. **(Minutes 36-28)**

16-02 The 36th General Assembly INSTRUCTS the Moderator to appoint an Ad-Interim Committee to draft a pastoral statement on "Ministering to the Church and the World on Issues Pertaining to Human Sexuality." **(Minutes 36-28)**

16-03 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES the distribution of "A Select Bibliography on Human Sexuality" to all EPC churches. **(Minutes 36-28)**

16-04 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES removing the Position Papers on the Sanctity of Marriage and on Homosexuality from the EPC website, to be made available upon request. **(Minutes 36-31)**

16-12 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES establishing "The Well: Women's Resources," overseen by the Women's Resource Council *(Rules for Assembly* X.10-1E), with the purpose of connecting women within and across Presbyteries and to share ministry resources through social media, video, print, and people. The resources will focus on the EPC initiatives of global movement, church transformation, multiplication of churches, and effective biblical leadership. **(Minutes 36-33)**

16-14 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES combining the Student and College Ministries Committee with the Christian Education portion of the Christian Education and Communications Committee as a permanent committee titled "Next Generation Ministries Council," to take effect July 1, 2017. The Assembly instructs the two current committees, in consultation with the Committee on Administration, to develop appropriate vision, mission, strategy, and structures aligned with the strategic initiatives of the General Assembly and make any necessary implementing recommendations to the 37th General Assembly (2017). These recommendations shall also include how the communications function of the current Christian Education and Communications committee will be handled following July 1, 2017. **(Minutes 36-53)**

16-16 The 36th General Assembly AMENDS the EPC Foundation Board bylaws to increase the size of the Board to no less than three persons and no more than six, superseding *Act* 12-07. **(Minutes 36-59)**

16-19 The 36th General Assembly ENCOURAGES Presbyteries, Pastors, Elders, and their congregations to invite the EPC Foundation Board to come alongside their Presbytery and/or church with the tools and education to assist them in their work of building the Kingdom through Transformational Generosity. **(Minutes 36-59)**

16-20 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES Reformed Youth Ministries (RYM) as an Approved Resource Organization. **(Minutes 36-59)**

17-01 The 37th General Assembly APPROVES the Preliminary Position Paper on Human Sexuality. **(Minutes 37-17)**

20-10 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES the revision to the EPC Endorsement Policy. **(Minutes 40-10)**

20-11 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES the closure of the Women's Resource Council and deletion of all relevant sections of *Rules for Assembly;* and having Presbyteries facilitate women's ministry for local churches. **(Minutes 40-24)**

21-02 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES the extension of the Revelation 7:9 Task Force from June 2022 to June 2023. **(Minutes 41-18)**

21-04 The 41st General Assembly APPROVES withdrawing approval from Bethany Christian Services as an approved agency of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. **(Minutes 41-39)**

22-02 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES the formation of a Moderator-appointed Ad-Interim Committee to write a Pastoral Letter of Racial Lament and Hope. **(Minutes 42-20)**

22-07 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES Pastor-in-Residence Ministries as an Approved Agency of the General Assembly. **(Minutes 42-46)**

22-10 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES increasing the membership of the Presbytery Review Committee from six to nine. **(Minutes 42-28)**

22-11 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES increasing the membership of the Fraternal Relations Committee from six to nine. **(Minutes 42-48)**

23-01 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES a Moderator-appointed, Ad-interim committee to revise the Pastoral Letter on Domestic Abuse. **(Minutes 43-30)**

23-06 The 43rd General Assembly APPROVES a Moderator-appointed task force to consult with experts inside and outside of the EPC as needed and complete a thorough review of our Book of Discipline and associated forms, and to present recommendations to the 44th General Assembly. **(Minutes 43-41)**

24-04 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES the formation of a Moderator-appointed, Ad-interim Committee to draft a Pastoral Letter on Disability and Access, especially regarding the sacraments. **(Minutes 44-50)**

25-17 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES a "third year" for the Ad-Interim Committee on Ordination Standards to review and recommend any changes to ordination standards. **(Minutes 45-40)**

25-18 The 45th General Assembly DIRECTS the Permanent Committee on Theology to review the EPC Position Paper on Marriage and Divorce. **(Minutes 45-40)**

WORLD OUTREACH

82-13 The 2nd General Assembly APPROVES the establishment of a permanent World Outreach Committee. Until such time as the EPC contains 200 member churches, the committee shall consist of six members on a three-year, three-class system, with the Moderator and Stated Clerk to serve as ex-officio members. The committee will elect replacement members from within EPC membership.

Members may serve a maximum of two terms, and then may not be re-elected without at least one year's break. WOC members will include two teaching elders and four ruling elders.

The WOC is to meet at least twice a year, including the General Assembly. When the EPC reaches a membership of 200 churches, an enlarged structure is to be presented at the next General Assembly. **(Minutes 2-41,** Appendix F)

The committee was expanded by three members at the 3rd General Assembly (1983) ***(Minutes 3-53).***

83-13 The 3rd General Assembly ADOPTS *The World Outreach Manual, Part I (Theology and Practice*

of Missions. **(Minutes 3-46)**

83-16 The 3rd General Assembly APPROVES a "Sons and Daughters" program to encourage those who are presently serving as missionaries with EPC roots to become EPC missionaries through World Outreach.

Qualifications:

1. Home church or present membership in an EPC church;
2. Substantial financial support from EPC sources.

Benefits to Missionaries:

1. Greater prayer and care base from entire EPC constituency;
2. EPC initiative in gathering support and other necessary funds;
3. Ministry among EPC churches within a primary region (preferably within a presbytery) to reduce travel time and costs during home service (furlough);
4. Scheduling assistance from the World Outreach office.

Benefits to EPC:

1. Strong sense of missions from within EPC family, leading to ownership from all of EPC;
2. Sons and daughters of one church become adopted by others within a region;
3. Opens a way for maximum but realistic growth rapidly and from within **(Minutes 3-46).**

84-04 The 4th General Assembly ASSIGNS oversight of Ethnic and Urban Ministries in North America to the permanent Committee on World Outreach. **(Minutes 4-24)**

The 18th General Assembly (1998) assigned oversight of urban ministries to the National Outreach Committee ***(Minutes 18-39****); Act 98-10.*

The 28th General Assembly (2008) assigned oversight of ethnic ministries to National Outreach ***(Minutes 28-41);*** *Act 08-02.*

84-15 The 4th General Assembly ADOPTS *World Outreach Manual, Part II (The Handbook for Candidates).* **(Minutes 4-24)**

85-12 The 5th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Missionary Internship. **(Minutes 5-24)**

85-13 The 5th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Overseas Crusade. **(Minutes 5-24)**

86-11 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Wycliffe Bible Translators. **(Minutes 6-67)**

86-14 The 6th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and LOGOI. **(Minutes 6-67)**

86-22 The 6th General Assembly ADOPTS *World Outreach Manual, Part III (Handbook for Missionaries).* **(Minutes 6-67)**

87-01 The 7th General Assembly GRANTS approved mission agency status to the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). **(Minutes 7-30)**

The 11th General Assembly (1991) withdrew approved mission agency status ***(Minutes 11-36)****; Act 91-08.*

87-02 The 7th General Assembly ADOPTS the definition of an approved mission agency as follows:

1. Authentic evangelical confessional identity;

2. Historical integrity and explicit mission statement;
3. Mission objectives compatible with the EPC mission statement;
4. Clarity in ministry goals and objectives;
5. Financial credibility as measured by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) or by comparable standards;
6. Membership in the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) or meet comparable standards. **(Minutes 7-30)**

88-13 The 8th General Assembly ADOPTS the *World Outreach Master Plan.* **(Minutes 8-43)**

90-13 The 10th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and InterServe. **(Minutes 10-37)**

90-14 The 10th General Assembly RATIFIES Trans World Radio as an approved mission agency according to the standards set forth in Act 87-02. **(Minutes 10-37)**

90-18 The 10th General Assembly ENDORSES the LOGOI/FLET program as an acceptable equivalency program of theological education for ministerial candidates pursuing ordination in Argentina. **(Minutes 10-43)**

91-07 The 11th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Frontiers. **(Minutes 11-36)**

91-08 The 11th General Assembly WITHDRAWS the Middle East Reformed Fellowship's approved agency status. **(Minutes 11-36)**

92-11 The 12th General Assembly ENCOURAGES presbyteries to establish World Outreach Committees to accelerate the foreign missions endeavor throughout the denomination. **(Minutes 12-42)**

92-12 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). **(Minutes 12-42)**

92-13 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Arab World Ministries. **(Minutes 12-42)**

92-14 The 12th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Send International. **(Minutes 12-42)**

92-15 The 12th General Assembly ADOPTS a resolution encouraging each local church to (a) redirect 10% of its non-denominational benevolence budgets to EPC, designated for World Outreach and/or new church development; and (b) increase its support for all missions by 10%. **(Minutes 12-43)**

93-09 The 13th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Youth for Christ, USA. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-11 The 13th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and World Impact. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-12 The 13th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and United World Mission. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-13 The 13th General Assembly GRANTS approved mission agency status to Literacy and Evangelism, International. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-14 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that World Outreach missionaries in cooperative agreements may choose insurance coverage with either the EPC or their sending agency. In unique situations, other alternative coverage approved by the World Outreach Committee may be appropriate. **(Minutes 13-27)**

93-15 The 13th General Assembly ESTABLISHES that national pastors under appointment by World

Outreach are not required to participate in the EPC Pension Plan. **(Minutes 13-28)**

94-17 The 14th General Assembly GRANTS the Bible League approved mission agency status. **(Minutes 14-33)**

94-18 The 14th General Assembly AFFIRMS the Argentine Declaration:

Argentine Declaration

Whereas we, the participants in the Argentine Consultation, thank God that in His providence our denomination, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, has become a redemptive instrument for the Presbytery of St. Andrews, whereby an awareness of purpose and mission, within Reformed doctrine, has revitalized the life of its member churches. We further trust that this process in the years ahead will be one of mutual blessing and resound to the glory of God.

The participants of the Consultation make the following declaration:

1. The Argentine Consultation reaffirms the principle of connectionalism as expressed within the EPC. It further reaffirms that the Church is best established where the scriptural doctrine of government by elders gathered in church courts is practiced.
2. The Consultation upholds the necessity to put this principle into practice in every aspect with reference to the St. Andrews Presbytery, emphasizing the principle of reciprocity.
3. The Consultation further states its vision for Argentina as follows:
   A. To develop a self-governing evangelical Presbyterian church;
   B. To establish a church displaying the following characteristics:
      1. Rooted in the Word of God, based on the best Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.
      2. Guided by the Holy Spirit.
      3. Continually growing in sanctification.
      4. Permanently developing missionary activity.
      5. Interdependent, multi-formed, and diverse in its unity. **(Minutes 14-33)**

The 24th General Assembly (2004) dismissed the St. Andrews Presbytery, recognizing it as a national church ***(Minutes 24-29);*** *Act 04-05.*

94-19 The 14th General Assembly INSTRUCTS World Outreach to develop a re-entry plan or procedure for missionaries and their families returning from the field. **(Minutes 14-33)**

95-15 The 15th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Africa Inland Mission. **(Minutes 15-35)**

95-16 The 15th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Middle East Media. **(Minutes 15-35)**

95-17 The 15th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Pioneers. **(Minutes 15-35)**

95-18 The 15th General Assembly RECOGNIZES SERVE (Sending Experienced Retired Volunteers Everywhere) as an approved mission agency. **(Minutes 15-35)**

96-18 The 16th General Assembly ENCOURAGES all particular churches to make copies of the 5-year report and the new World Outreach Master Plan available to their members. **(Minutes 16-37)**

97-15 The 17th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and Overseas Missionary Fellowship. **(Minutes 17-31)**

98-06 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS the Turkish people group as an EPC Muslim field with a focus on the nation of Turkey. **(Minutes 18-38)**

98-07 The 18th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement adopted between the EPC and the English Language Institute/China (ELIC). **(Minutes 18-37)**

98-08 The 18th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement between the EPC and the Jian Hua Foundation. **(Minutes 18-37)**

98-09 The 18th General Assembly ADOPTS a new monthly fee schedule for administration costs for World Outreach missionaries:

- EPC missionaries (married): $300;
- EPC missionaries (single): $150;
- Cooperative agreement missionaries (married): $200;
- Cooperative agreement missionaries (single): $100.

Fees to be deducted from the support account of each WOC missionary unit. Amount will be adjusted annually in accordance with Consumer Price Index. **(Minutes 18-37)**

98-10 The 18th General Assembly ASSIGNS oversight of ethnic ministries to the World Outreach Committee, while oversight of urban ministries is assigned to the National Outreach Committee. **(Minutes 18-39)**

99-09 The 19th General Assembly AMENDS Act of the Assembly 82-07 (Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination) in #5 "Terms of Call," by adding the following:

> Ordained World Outreach career missionaries serving abroad shall be allowed to accumulate their study leave and funding for four years to be used in their fifth year in a program of study under the supervision of the World Outreach Director. Those in domestic service are limited to the standard three-year accumulation. Career missionaries shall be allowed $800 per year for study leave.

The Assembly also amends the World Outreach Manual so that the same provision applies to non-ordained World Outreach missionaries serving overseas. **(Minutes 19-31)**

99-10 The 19th General Assembly SUSTAINS the opinion of the Permanent Judicial Commission regarding the status of ministers who are missionaries serving totally under the auspices of the EPC and ministers serving in an administrative capacity in one of the courts of the church (**G.**10-3/new *Book of Government* 9-5C, D). Ministers serving in such capacities should be classified as ministers with calls, not as ministers serving out-of-bounds. **(Minutes 19-40)**

00-06 The 20th General Assembly ADOPTS an updated World Outreach Master Plan, stating goals and objectives for 2002 and 2005, placing East Asia more substantially in the goals, and adding overseas international church planting as a new field focus. **(Minutes 20-29)**

01-13 The 21st General Assembly APPROVES a plan to partner with the Reformed Partnership of Churches in Kazakhstan to establish a commission with power to examine, ordain, and install teaching elders who have satisfied educational requirements consistent with those outlined in the WOC Missions Manual, and to establish a provisional, indigenous, national presbytery. **(Minutes 21-41)**

02-06 The 22nd General Assembly INSTRUCTS each Presbytery World Outreach Committee to review the World Outreach Master Plan and consider setting policy/goals in accordance with it and with Vision 21. **(Minutes 22-41)**

03-01 The 23rd General Assembly RETAINS authority for any changes to the World Outreach Missions Manual, Part I "Theology and Practice of Missions." Upon recommendation of the World Outreach Committee, the Committee on Administration is authorized to approve substantive changes to the World Outreach Missions Manual, Part II "Handbook for Candidates," Part III "Handbook for Missionaries," and Part IV "Financial Policies." The World Outreach Committee is authorized to make merely formal changes and report those as information to the Committee on Administration. **(Minutes 23-26)**

03-02 The 23rd General Assembly ADOPTS the revised World Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 23-26)**

03-03 The 23rd General Assembly ADOPTS a cooperative agreement with Worldwide Evangelization for Christ (WEC) International. **(Minutes 23-26)**

04-02 The 24th General Assembly AMENDS the World Outreach Missions Manual in section 103.4-J to 1) allow agencies with approved status to represent themselves as such to EPC congregations, 2) limit approved projects to agencies with approved status, and 3) establish a process for review of approved status three years after initial approval and every five years thereafter. **(Minutes 24-27)**

04-03 The 24th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement with Footprints, International. **(Minutes 24-27)**

04-04 The 24th General Assembly GRANTS IN Network status as an approved mission agency. **(Minutes 24-27)**

04-05 The 24th General Assembly DISMISSES the St. Andrews Presbytery and GRANTS it recognition as a national Reformed and Presbyterian body according to the Articles of Dismissal and Agreement. **(Minutes 24-29**)

> *The 29th Assembly (2009) approved a subsequent 5-year "Articles of Agreement" **(Minutes 29-54);** Act 09-03.*

05-09 The 25th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement adopted with Mission to Unreached Peoples. **(Minutes 25-51)**

06-04 The 26th General Assembly APPROVES a revised World Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 26-34)**

07-05 The 27th General Assembly APPROVES a cooperative agreement with Greater Europe Mission. **(Minutes 27-34)**

08-02 The 28th General Assembly ASSIGNS ethnic ministries under the oversight of National Outreach and asks World Outreach and National Outreach to collaborate in the area of Muslim ministry in the United States. **(Minutes 28-41)**

08-08 The 28th General Assembly AUTHORIZES the Committee on Administration to approve changes to the Church Loan Fund, Home Missionary Manual, and supporting materials, and World Outreach Cooperative agreements. **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-09 The 28th General Assembly ADOPTS a new cooperative agreement with OM Ships International. **(Minutes 28-46)**

08-10 The 28th General Assembly ADOPTS a new cooperative agreement with Ministry Essentials International. **(Minutes 28-46)**

09-03 The 29th General Assembly APPROVES "Articles of Agreement" for 2009-2014 with the St. Andrews Presbytery of Argentina. **(Minutes 29-54)**

09-04 The 29th General Assembly APPROVES the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS) as an Approved Resource Organization. **(Minutes 29-54)**

10-07 The 30th General Assembly APPROVES a revised World Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-08 The 30th General Assembly APPROVES Overseas Council (OC) as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-09 The 30th General Assembly APPROVES Women of the Harvest as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 30-48)**

10-10 The 30th General Assembly APPROVES English Language Institute/China (ELIC) as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 30-48)**

12-15 The 32nd General Assembly APPROVES EduNations as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 32-56)**

13-05 The 33rd General Assembly APPROVES a revised World Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 33-43)**

13-09 The 33rd General Assembly APPROVES People International as a Cooperative Mission Agency. **(Minutes 33-53)**

13-10 The 33rd General Assembly APPROVES Christian Friends of Korea as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 33-53)**

13-11 The 33rd General Assembly APPROVES The Antioch Partners as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 33-53)**

14-03 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International (PRMI) as an Approved Resource Organization. **(Minutes 34-45)**

14-09 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES Project Mercy as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 34-56)**

14-10 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES Medical Benevolence Foundation as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 34-56)**

14-11 The 34th General Assembly APPROVES the Caribbean Youth Network as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 34-56)**

16-05 The 36th General Assembly RATIFIES an amendment to **W.**3-1 and **G.**20-4A, making effective a policy approved by the 35th General Assembly for church planting in fields where there is no church **(Minutes 35-28, 36-34):**

1) Whenever possible, church planting teams in fields where there is no church will have a Teaching or Ruling Elder member.
2) If there is no Ruling or Teaching Elder on such a team, World Outreach may recommend that a non-ordained team member be commissioned by the General Assembly with authority to administer sacraments.
3) Prior to commissioning with sacramental authority, those global workers shall take a course on the theology and administration of sacraments developed by the Ministerial Vocation and World Outreach Committees, sustain a written examination developed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee, and sustain an oral examination by the Permanent Committee on World Outreach.

Reference *Rules for Assembly* X.10-1B.2.

16-15 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES revisions to World Outreach's Master Plan. **(Minutes 36-55)**

16-17 The 36th General Assembly RATIFIES the actions taken on December 4, 2015, by the EPC Board of Directors (Committee on Administration) to establish the corporate formalities, including the Essential Services Group (ESG) bylaws. The Assembly also amends Article 10.14 of these bylaws to read: "This Agreement may be amended only in writing signed by the Member's Representative…" **(Minutes 36-59**)

16-21 The 36th General Assembly approves Serge (formerly World Harvest Mission) as a Cooperative Mission Agency. **(Minutes 36-59)**

16-22 The 36th General Assembly APPROVES TeachBeyond as a Cooperative Mission Agency. **(Minutes 36-59)**

19-05 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES SAT-7 as an approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 19-05)**

19-06 The 39th General Assembly APPROVES Third Millennium Ministries as an approved agency. **(Minutes 19-06)**

20-04 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES Outreach Foundation as an approved agency.

(Minutes 40-19)

20-05 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES Pak 7 as an approved agency. **(Minutes 40-19)**

20-06 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES Frontier Fellowship as an approved agency. **(Minutes 40-19)**

20-07 The 40th General Assembly APPROVES Avant Ministries as an approved co-op mission agency. **(Minutes 40-19)**

22-04 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES the World Outreach Master Plan. **(Minutes 42-04)**

22-08 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES Equip International as a Cooperative Agency. **(Minutes 42-48)**

22-09 The 42nd General Assembly APPROVES Reflejo as an Approved Mission Agency. **(Minutes 42-48)**

24-11 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES Paraclete Missions Group as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency. **(Minutes 44-19)**

24-12 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency. **(Minutes 44-20)**

24-13 The 44th General Assembly APPROVES API (Asian Partners International) as an EPC World Outreach Approved Agency. **(Minutes 44-21)**

25-27 The 45th General Assembly APPROVES Crossworld as an EPC World Outreach Cooperative Agency. **(Minutes 45-5)**

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