
Ruling Elder Exam Handbook

A Manual for Ruling Elders Preparing to Enter the EPC

PRESBYTERY
of the ALLEGHENIES



A global movement of
evangelistic presbyterians

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How Do I Get Ready For This Exam?



Preparing to Enter the EPC

PROCESS

For those who are in the beginning stage of considering the EPC as a denominational home, the very first step is to go to www.epconnect.org to explore and read the material under the link titled "Joining the EPC."

For those who have explored the EPC online and are interested in denominational affiliation through elder examination, the process begins with a call to the representative of The Presbytery of the Alleghenies. The current contact person is:

The Reverend Dr. Bob Stauffer
stauffer.ra@gmail.com
(330) 559-7955

The Presbytery Representative will then likely discuss with you the eight-step process developed for receiving churches into the Presbytery of the Alleghenies.

Presbytery of the Alleghenies Process for Receiving Churches

As the Presbytery of the Alleghenies (POA) continues to grow we recognize that much of this growth has come from churches leaving other denominations. As such, we are quite aware that leaving a denomination is difficult logistically, emotionally and financially. We will pray that God provides comfort, clarity and unity in your discernment process.

Accommodating such significant growth has been challenging and we have been making many adjustments in how we process interested churches more efficiently, while remaining thorough and true to becoming the kind of presbytery we envision – missionally-minded, networked in ministry, and intentional in church planting. At the same time, we want to be an encouragement and support for churches desiring to enter the POA.

We have carefully evaluated our practices and procedures and have developed an ***eight-step process*** that we believe provides the best approach for everyone. Below is an outline of the process of joining the EPC and the philosophy behind that process.

Step 1

A congregation enters into a time of discernment and through prayer, discussion and study, a church decides if entry into the EPC is desired. This often begins at the level of a Governing Body (e.g. Session) and then expands to the Congregation. Early in this process you must contact either the Chairperson of the Church Development Committee, the Presbytery Church Development and Support Coordinator, or the Stated Clerk. Should you need a representative of the POA to come to your church to answer questions and share insight into the EPC (either at the Governing Body level or the Congregational level) we will gladly arrange for someone to meet with you. This can be done at any time during the process. Also, you can gain information from the POA website: www.epcalleghenies.org or the EPC website: www.epconnect.org. We also invite your church leadership to join us at Presbytery Meetings to observe our fellowship. Ministers and churches seeking to be received by the POA should allow for up to 12 months for the receiving process. Please know that it is not EPC policy to initiate conversations with non-EPC churches that are considering changing

denominations. We only respond to official invitations from Governing Bodies (e.g. Sessions) seeking a conversation.

There continues to be a significant volume of ministers and churches seeking to enter the EPC from other reformed bodies. As a result, the POA will need more time to process and invest in these ministers and churches adequately (including looking at missional mindset and church vitality). At the same time, the process for churches seeking dismissal from other reformed bodies can vary significantly. In addition, churches seeking dismissal approach the process in a variety of ways. In many cases, the decision of where the church wants to seek to go is not clear to the church leaders until they are well along in the dismissal process. This process can often take up to nine months and is often done in an amicable manner between the church and the dismissing body, but in some cases, the dismissal process creates strife in the relationship between the church and the dismissing body.

Step 2

At some point in the discernment process, churches must call a congregational meeting to vote to seek admission into the EPC. It cannot be just a Governing Body vote. If the vote carries, the church must complete the Petition to be Received (obtained from the POA Stated Clerk) and submit the completed application to the Stated Clerk. This is the official beginning of the reception process. In special circumstances (to be determined by the POA Executive Council), transitional membership may be helpful. The process for transitional membership will be discussed on an as-needed basis.

Step 3

The church Session begins a course of study preparing for the Elder Exam. A curriculum including required reading is given to the church leaders to guide this study and is usually led by your Pastor. This is normally a 12-session study.

The EPC is Presbyterian, Reformed and Confessional. We truly mean this in the EPC; these are not just words. The historical means of achieving this distinctive is the Westminster Confession of Faith. Scripture provides the primary basis of our denomination. The Westminster Confession guides us in our understanding of Scripture. Truthfully, this base is what unifies our denomination. It will not be compromised. The course of study allows Elders to understand our beliefs and it prepares Elders to take the Ordination Vows of the EPC. Almost every church that has completed these times of study has told us that this has been one of the richest times of Christian growth they have ever experienced.

Step 4

A congregation must send at least 50% of the Session of the church to a Church Revitalization Seminar. This is a one day seminar that allows a church to examine

itself, reset its goals and develop a plan of obedience to the Great Commission of the Lord. The POA will conduct these seminars two or three times a year.

The other fundamental of the EPC is that we are a Missional Church. This simply means we seek to share our faith with our communities and our world. This means that we are “outward focused” churches and not “inward focused.” In other words, we want to help churches be healthy and Christ-centered. We have discovered that the process of departing from other denominations can be very painful and requires a church to be very inner focused for a length of time. Our goal is to help churches heal from this process and once again focus on the future. This seminar is the first step to refocus the congregation. Churches have discovered that this can bring great renewal to their congregation.

Step 5

A face-to-face meeting will be held between the church leadership (Pastor(s) and Elders) and representatives of the POA. The purpose of this meeting is to allow the POA to have a more personal contact with your church and have a mutual time of interaction and encouragement. Many churches coming from their former denominations have developed habits of having minimal involvement with their Presbytery. This behavior is unacceptable in the POA. We want to provide active fellowship and support for our churches and their staff. This meeting is part of this process and allows us to review the Elder Training Process and Church Revitalization Seminar. Again, our goal is to help churches transition into the EPC as healthy, growing congregations. The Pastor calls the Chairperson of the Church Development Committee to arrange this meeting when the Elder training is completed or near completion and the Revitalization Seminar has been attended.

Step 6

Active Elders will be examined by a team from the CDC. This is a three to four hour examination and will be scheduled after the time of study. We usually have examination days about two weeks before every Presbytery meeting. A minimum of 75% of the active Elders must participate in this examination.

Step 7

At the successful completion of the reception process, a church is received at a Presbytery Meeting as a full member church. This is a time of great joy and praise! We encourage the church to bring its elders and key leaders to this Presbytery Meeting to share the experience and celebrate this time.

Step 8

The church plans a time for celebration and reception into the EPC. The POA will send a Commission to renew the ordination of all the Elders and Pastor(s) and welcome the congregation into the EPC.

To become part of the EPC is a step a church will take only once and it will take time and diligence but we believe that you will find it a most rewarding, uplifting journey of faith, and a blessing to your congregation.

Ministers will be examined separately, but often concurrently with the church. Ministers will need to contact the Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for additional information.

Getting Ready

After the representative of the Presbytery has been contacted the representative will then provide materials to the session and begin a conversation with the session about affiliation. The representative will also begin conversations with other appropriate presbytery members about the church's interest in denominational affiliation.¹

Study

This manual was developed as a guide for churches in transition. The material enclosed is not meant to supplant existing or developed materials or to create something significantly new. The purpose of the manual is to help Ruling Elders in preparation for examinations. It offers examples, resources, identification, and patterns which others have found helpful and meaningful.

We encourage a study method appropriate for the church. Some churches have used time at regular meetings. Some have set aside meetings around meals to allow discussion and questions of the materials. Some have used web and online availabilities. Use the best means for the people included in the process.

All materials for examination preparation are available in full document formats from the Presbytery representatives. They can be retrieved from the contact person or those assigned to the church for assistance.

The expectation of those conducting elder examinations is that training has been available. At the time of the examination, Ruling Elders should expect a gracious, yet thorough examination to reveal the Elder's maturity of faith and familiarity with the materials. A detailed exposition, as is expected and required of those entering Teaching Elder positions, is not expected of Ruling Elders.

¹For churches which are already in the Presbytery, materials can be used for ongoing training of current or incoming elders. No other process is required than included in the Book of Order.

To this end Ruling Elders must:

- Know the Essentials of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church
 - The Statement of Essentials is on page 26 of this manual or can be downloaded for free at: (<https://epconnect.org/about/beliefs/#essentials>)
- Share their personal testimony
- Have read the POA Elder Exam Handbook
- Have read the Book of Order and have a familiarity with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Polity
 - The Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is available from the office of the General Assembly or can be found at: www.epconnect.org under “resources.”
- Have read the Westminster Confession of Faith in a fashion as to be able to respond to Ordination Questions
 - The Westminster Confession of Faith can be found at (<https://epconnect.org/about/beliefs/#westminster>)
- Have some familiarity with the distinctive of Reformed Theology
- Have read Michael Horton’s *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*

The Examination

When the time arrives for the examination, the examination will be coordinated so as to include 75% of the Elders to sit and speak with assigned representatives from the Church Development Committee, which will consist of at least two Teaching Elders and two Ruling Elders.

Normally exams will be conducted two weeks prior the Presbytery meeting where a church is received. The agreed upon time and date for the exam should be set so as to allow maximum preparation and participation. We strongly encourage an evening that includes a meal or at least dessert and coffee. Name tags are very helpful. The meeting will begin with introductions and prayer.

At the close of the meeting the assigned committee will generate a report to The Presbytery of the Alleghenies, through the Church Development Committee, concerning the examination and including the recording of: all those present, time, place, sample questions asked and responses, and appropriate recommendations regarding preparation and inclusion.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION

Required Source Material

It is important that those preparing for examination read and familiarize themselves with the primary source materials, which include: 1) this Elder Exam Handbook; 2) The Westminster Confession of Faith; 3) The EPC Book of Order, and 4) Michael Horton's *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*. At the time of the examination, the examiners will expect that Ruling Elders will have read and discussed this material prior to the examination. The summaries provided in this book should not be viewed as a substitute for the other primary sources.

Additional Resource Material

Many of the resources for Elder examinations can be found in this manual, on the EPC website (www.epconnect.org) or ordered through the office of the General Assembly (734-742-2020). An additional resource that is recommended but not required is:

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church Leadership Training Guide, available via phone, web or mail from the office of the General Assembly.

Sample Schedule

Please see the Appendix (page 41) for a sample schedule that suggests how a session might study the material in preparation for the examination.

What Is the Gospel?



Understanding the Good News of Jesus Christ

GOSPEL MINISTRY

We are followers of Jesus and leaders of Christ's church because we have encountered and been transformed by the Gospel. The Gospel is central: it is central to our identity as Christians; it is central to our leadership as Elders; it is central to the mission of the EPC, and to the Church of Jesus Christ world-wide. As part of the examination we would like you to be prepared to share with us the message of the Gospel, as you have encountered it in your personal lives and as it is articulated in the scriptures.

Personal Testimonies

During the course of the examination (either formally or informally) the Ruling Elders will have the opportunity to share their personal testimonies and faith

journey with the examination team. Take some time during your time of preparation to reflect on how Christ was introduced to you and how the Gospel of grace changed your life so that you can share that story with the team.

Centering on the Gospel

Below is a summary of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You might find this summary helpful as an aid for internalizing and articulating the key elements of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul told the church in Ephesus that he had been entrusted with the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a ministry in which the church continues to this day (Ephesians 3:7-13). Another term for “gospel” is “good news.” The first verse of the Gospel of Mark says, “This is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.” The business of the church of Jesus Christ is sharing the gospel of the good news with the world that desperately needs to hear and receive it.

It requires the whole of the Old and New Testament to tell the gospel story. There is however a core of truths that comprise the essence of the good news, a core of realities which, when embraced personally and intentionally by faith, serve as the pathway to a rightly restored relationship with God. That restored relationship is the heart of the gospel.

These core realities include:

All men and women are imperfect human beings.

We are flawed by our inability to live holy lives. In other words, all human beings are sinners. The Bible says, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That is, we all “miss the mark” or cannot rise to the standards for living in relationship with the holy Giver of Life, God Himself.

The Bible is full of stories that underscore the sin of human beings since the fall. Our own lives are a testimony to this biblical truth that we are far from perfect individuals.

Sinful people cannot live in intimate relationship with a holy God.

The prophet Isaiah said it best when, in speaking with the voice of God he said, “But your sin has made a separation between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2). Sin causes a gulf between people and God. In fact, separation from God due to the real moral guilt of a person’s sin is God’s punishment for sin. This is vividly portrayed in the Bible in the account of Adam and Eve being driven out of the garden, out from the presence of God. Adam and Eve were told that if they disobeyed God, thereby living lives of unholiness, they would surely die (Genesis 2:17). They disobeyed, lived lives of unholiness, and they died. In short, the Bible says, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

There is an antidote to death and hope in the midst of despair.

Though the gospel story begins with bad news, it is preeminently a story of good news. The good news is that God loves his creation so much that he has provided a way by which the just consequences of our sin can be overturned by his mercy and grace. The Bible says that God “showed his love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

The death of Jesus Christ saves us from the penalty of separation from God (death) both in this life and in the life to come, because in his ultimate act of love, Jesus died in our place. He took upon himself, the punishment that was meant for us. His death on the cross was in our place. It was an “atoning” sacrifice, a sacrifice of himself to secure forgiveness for us and to make us “at one” with God. That is what the Bible means when it says, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This is the good news! This is the gospel! This is the greatest story the world has ever known and the greatest reality that a person can possess.

New life is offered by God but must be received by us.

The Bible says “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). However, a gift does not become a personal possession until it is intentionally received. God offers us this wonderful salvation that includes the forgiveness of sins, restoration to an intimate relationship with himself and real life both now and for eternity. But it does not become ours until we receive it.

And the way we receive the gift of salvation is by receiving the One who made salvation possible, Jesus Christ the Savior. The Bible says “to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1:12).

And in that best-known verse of the Bible the sum of the gospel message is expressed when it says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We accept God’s gift of salvation through the act of believing faith in Jesus Christ as our own Lord and Savior.

A person becomes a Christian, receives God’s gift of salvation and possesses real hope by simply asking Jesus Christ to be his Savior and Lord. That request takes many forms, but at the very least it would include a number of statements, made to God in prayer by faith, like:

Heavenly Father, I know that you are holy and I am not. I know that I am a sinner and cannot live in close relationship to you. I know that because of my sin, I deserve to live apart from you now and for eternity. I know that I deserve death because of my sin.

Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus has died so that I could be forgiven. I believe that He died for me on the cross of Calvary. I accept your gift of forgiveness and life even as I accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Please come into my heart and into my life. Live in me so that I know that I belong to you and our separation is over for good.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for saving me. I thank you for giving me life. I thank you for making me a person of hope. I thank you that even though I may die physically, I will live with you in heaven forever.

Heavenly Father, in gratitude for all that you have done for me, I will dedicate my life to loving you and serving you and obeying you so that you will receive from me the praise that you rightly deserve. Amen.

Becoming a Christian happens immediately but growing as a Christian takes a lifetime.

The moment we receive Jesus into our lives as Savior and Lord, God the Holy Spirit enters our hearts as the sign, seal and guarantee that we no longer live estranged from God, but have been reconciled to Him (Ephesians 1:13,14).

However, this isn't the end of the story but just the beginning. The Holy Spirit begins to change us — to change us in how we think and how we act and what we desire and do in life. Because we are now God's son or daughter by faith we are being changed into the image of Jesus, God's eternal Son (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Additionally, as the children of God we are called by God to dedicate ourselves to living lives that please Him and bring Him honor and praise. We try to live the Christian life, not because we have to in order to be accepted by God — that's already been accomplished through our faith in Jesus. We live the Christian life in gratitude for all that God has done for us already, in Jesus.

This Christian walk is a lifelong walk. It is not always easy; it sometimes meets with defeat, and from time-to-time it's just plain difficult. But at the same time, it is a joy to know that God is pleased by our obedience. It is a joy to serve God who served us so wonderfully in Jesus Christ. And it is a joy to know that someday we'll live with God in heaven, where there will be no end to our fellowship with God, no end to the treasures of heaven given to us, and no end to this glorious life.

What Is the Mission and Vision of Your Church?



Understanding Our Church's Role in God's Mission within the EPC

YOUR CONGREGATIONAL JOURNEY

In preparing to join the EPC you have likely researched and examined the denomination, contacted and spoken with members of the Presbytery or counseled with friends and colleagues within the denomination in order to better know who the EPC is and where they have come from. The Church Development Committee would also like an opportunity to get to know you better as well. To that end the CDC will conduct a Face to Face meeting with the pastor and session (see Step 5 of the POA Process for Receiving Churches) and the examination team at the time of your exam will ask you to share a little about the church you serve and the ministry God has given you as Ruling Elders.

Mission and Vision

Every church has been given a mission and vision because God has a mission and vision. God's mission is redemption in the world through his Son. God's vision is to see all things subject to the authority of his Son Jesus Christ. God partners with the local church in order to accomplish his mission and realize his vision. The mission and vision of God will look and be expressed slightly differently with each unique congregation. During your preparation, take some time to reflect on the mission and vision that God has given you. Ask the question, "Why does our church exist?" As you answer that question you will begin to articulate your mission. Ask the question, "What is the future state of our ministry that we will work toward realizing?" As you answer that question you will begin to articulate your vision.

Your Reasons for Wanting to Join the EPC

We know that there are a number of other Reformed bodies with which your church could realign. The Presbytery of the Alleghenies, the Church Development Committee and the Examination Team are all interested in knowing your reasons for wanting to join the EPC. Take some time to think through those reasons and be prepared to share them during your examination.

What Does it Mean to Be Reformed?



Understanding the Reformed Tradition

REFORMED CATEGORIES

The EPC is a Reformed body which means that it affirms and adheres to the essentials of the Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition is a broad category but for the purposes of this examination the tradition can be encapsulated under the categories of Reformation History, Reformed Theology and Reformed Worship. These categories are examined below.

Reformation History

Traditionally, we trace the inauguration of reformed history to October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, nailed his famous 95 Theses on the door

of the church in Wittenberg (Germany). This was a call for debate, protesting what Luther saw as a degeneration of orthodox Christian theology in the late medieval church. So this was a protest that called for reform: hence the appellation “Protestant Reformation.” There were both earlier and later rumblings of the same themes in Jan Hus, William Farel, and John Calvin—a Frenchman who eventually landed in Geneva, Switzerland.

Originally, the Reformers were really about reform, not schism, but given the extremity of their stance in opposition to the prevailing theology of the Roman Catholic Church this ultimately issued in new branches of the church. So out of the Reformation arose the Lutheran churches (shepherded especially by Luther’s successor, Philipp Melancthon), and then churches whose origins were closer to Calvin and usually referred to as “reformed” churches. Some elements of the Reformation also took hold in England, leading to the emergence of Anglicanism.

Calvin’s vision for Reformed Christianity especially took root in the Netherlands and Scotland, resulting in two distinct but related streams of Reformed theology and practice. Arising out of the Netherlands came a strain of theology most generally described as “Dutch Reformed.” This was also the faith of some of the earliest American settlers who founded New Amsterdam (later to be renamed New York), which is why the Reformed Church in America is the oldest denomination with a continuous ministry in this country.

It is this side of the Reformed tradition that gives us some of the most significant Reformed creeds and confessions including the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Today this side of the tradition would be linked to institutions such as Calvin College and Seminary and, to a lesser extent, the Free University of Amsterdam. And it is the tradition that informs denominations such as the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Reformed Church, a recent offshoot of the Christian Reformed Church

Through the influence of John Knox, Scotland gave birth to another stream of Reformed theology, crystallized by the Westminster divines in the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Westminster Catechisms. It is this Anglo-Scottish stream that would give rise to Puritans like John Owen, Richard Baxter, and, later in the colonies, Jonathan Edwards. This strain of Reformed theology would eventually be articulated in America in Old Princeton (Theological Seminary), and would be associated with figures such as Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen and A. A. Hodge. Today it would be associated with Westminster Theological Seminary (founded by some who left Old Princeton in 1929), Reformed Theological Seminary, and Covenant Seminary. Denominational expressions of this stream would include the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), as well as the “mainline” denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Reformed Theology

Reformed theology is first and foremost theology – it is the study of God and everything else that reformed theology address proceeds from the centrality of God. All of reality begins and must be understood with a view from above, with God first versus a view from below with man first. It is therefore theocentric rather than anthropocentric.

Reformed theology, which begins with a view from above, with God, is informed by our study of scripture, our study of history (historical theology which focuses on theologians and theological traditions) and our study of the natural world (natural or general revelation).

Reformed theology is systematic. It provides a coherent and unified understanding of who God is, what He has done and what he requires of us. It is not a system imposed onto the Scriptures but an interrelatedness of teachings intrinsic to the Scriptures.

Reformed theology is catholic. It has much in common with other communions that are a part of historic Christianity. Reformed Theology must never be held up as the only rule of faith, practice and truth. “Being reformed” does not trump being a loving, loyal and committed follower of Jesus Christ.

Reformed theology is evangelical. Historically, the term evangelical is a broad term applied to many groups that, though different in their denominational affiliation, agree on the historic doctrines of sola scriptura and sola fide.

Reformed theology is covenantal. It sees the primary structure of biblical revelation and the entire history of redemption as that of covenant. Though there are numerous covenants in which God relates to man, the two primary covenants associated with man’s redemption are the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Reformed theology is characterized by, but by no means limited to, its embrace of the Five Solas of the Protestant Reformation and by the well-known acrostic TULIP.

Five Solas²

Sola Scriptura

Scripture alone. When the Reformers used the words Sola Scriptura they were expressing their concern for the Bible's authority. What they meant is that the Bible alone is our ultimate authority — not the Pope, not the Church, not the traditions of the church or church councils, much less, personal intimations or subjective feelings, but Scripture only. Other sources of authority may have an important role to play. Some are even established by God such as the authority of church elders, the authority of the state, or the authority of parents over children. But Scripture alone is truly ultimate. Therefore, if any of these other authorities depart from Bible teaching, they are to be judged by the Bible and rejected.

Solus Christus

Christ alone. The church of the Middle Ages spoke about Christ. A church that failed to do that could hardly claim to be Christian. But the medieval church had added many human achievements to Christ's work, so that it was no longer possible to say that salvation was entirely by Christ and his atonement. This was the most basic of all heresies, as the Reformers rightly perceived. It was the work of God plus our own righteousness. The Reformation motto Solus Christus was formed to repudiate this error. It affirmed that salvation has been accomplished once for all by the mediatorial work of the historical Jesus Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification, and any "gospel" that fails to acknowledge that or denies it is a false gospel that will save no one.

Sola Gratia

Grace alone. The words Sola Gratia mean that human beings have no claim upon God. That is, God owes us nothing except just punishment for our many and very willful sins. Therefore, if he does save sinners, which he does in the case of some but not all, it is only because it pleases him to do it. Indeed, apart from this grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that flows from it, no one would be saved, since in our lost condition, human beings are not capable of winning, seeking out, or even cooperating with God's grace. By insisting on "grace alone" the Reformers were denying that human methods, techniques, or strategies in themselves could ever bring anyone to faith. It is grace alone expressed through the supernatural work of

² Taken from James Montgomery Boice's *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?*

the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ, releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from death to spiritual life.

Sola Fide

Faith alone. The Reformers never tired of saying that “justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.” When put into theological shorthand the doctrine was expressed as “justification by faith alone,” the article by which the church stands or falls, according to Martin Luther. The Reformers called “justification by faith” Christianity’s “material principle,” because it involves the very matter or substance of what a person must understand and believe to be saved. Justification is a declaration of God based on the work of Christ. It flows from God’s grace and it comes to the individual not by anything he or she might do but by “faith alone” (Sola Fide). We may state the full doctrine as: Justification is the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

Soli Deo Gloria

Glory to God alone. Each of the great solas is summed up in the fifth Reformation motto: Soli Deo Gloria, meaning “to God alone be the glory.” It is what the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 11:36 when he wrote, “to Him be the glory forever! Amen.” These words follow naturally from the preceding words, “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (v. 36), since it is because all things really are from God, and to God, that we say, “to God alone be the glory.”

TULIP

Reformed theology is famous for a simple acrostic that has often been dubbed as the Five Points of Calvinism (although these are not Calvin’s words they seek to summarize some of his thinking in a memorable way). It spells TULIP.

T – Total Depravity (sin affects every part of who we are)

U – Unconditional Election (God’s choice of his people is not based on what we do)

L – Limited Atonement (Christ died for all who are his, not all meaning “everyone”)

I – Irresistible Grace (God’s saving grace always achieves its end)

P – Perseverance of the Saints (God perseveres on behalf of his elect to assure one’s salvation)

Total Depravity

Other names: Total inability or Humanity’s Radical Corruption

What it does mean: there is no part of us that has not been affected in some way by the Fall (Adam and Eve's sin). Sin affects my will, my heart, my mind, and my body. Because of this I am unable to seek God on my own. The scripture describes us as dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1-3 and Col. 2:13) – think how responsive a corpse is. Apart from the work of God in our lives the scripture describes us as unable to understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Standing in great contrast to those who think people are basically good, Scripture teaches us that no one is righteous and no one seeks God (Romans 3:10-11 or Mark 10:18).

What this does not mean: that I am as bad as I could be (only that every part of me apart from the work of Christ is affected by sin).

Practical Value: This doctrine serves to magnify God's grace. "If we do not know the seriousness of the diagnosis, we can't appreciate the cure." (Horton) It is also this doctrine that I will refer you to when you object: "that's not fair" – fair is judgment. See Westminster Confession Chapter 9 Section 3.

Unconditional Election

Other names: Sovereign Election or God's Sovereign Choice

What it does mean: Before the foundation of the earth God chose some to be objects of His undeserved favor. His choice of particular sinners for salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected – that is, it was not conditioned on anything that we do.

What it does not mean: It does not mean God is arbitrary (i.e. to do something for no reason). It is not by chance but is rather "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). This is in no way "fate" for fate is impersonal – election is the loving and free choice of a personal God.

Practical Value: This doctrine rescues us from subtle but real pride. The one who denies unconditional election is hard pressed to answer the question: "Why were you saved and not another person?" without eventually having to say that they were more sensitive to the work of God, chose better, were not as foolish or resistant to God... But there can be no pride in the one who embraces this biblical truth.

The scripture often speaks about God's choosing (or election, or predestination of his people) Ephesian 1:4 (before the foundation of the world), 1 Cor. 1:27-29, John 15:16. And that belief itself is a gift of God not some foreseen condition (Acts 13:48, Phil. 1:29).

Limited Atonement

Other names: Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption

What it does mean: It means that Christ's death is sufficient for the whole world but it is only effective (efficacious) for the elect. Part of the issue is whether Christ's death on the cross accomplished something or not – if it did then the sins of all those for whom Christ died are atoned for (so if he died for everyone then everyone would be saved – which we know is not true). The scripture teaches that Christ actually saves (not that he potentially saves) – Matthew 1:21, 1 Tim. 1:15. In John 10:11, 15 Christ died for his sheep; Acts 20:28 for his church; Romans 8:32- 35 for the elect.

What it does not mean: It does not mean that the value of his death on the cross is limited. Christ's death is of infinite value (it could have been sufficient to save everyone) but it was designed to save those who are His.

Problems: This more than any other point is where people feel the most uncomfortable (causing some to call themselves "4 point Calvinists." Keep in mind that texts that describe Christ's saving work in general terms using the words "world" or "all" – are to show that Christ died not just for the Jews but for all people without distinction (Jew and Gentile alike), not all people without exception (not saving everyone).

Practical Value: This doctrine leads to our assurance of salvation – to know that his death actually accomplishes something not just potentially so.

Irresistible Grace

Other names: Effectual Grace, Efficacious Call of the Spirit

What it does mean: God effectively calls His elect unto salvation. "He effectually persuades us and, in changing our will, gives us the desire for him that is entirely contrary to our sinful nature... He overwhelms us with his love and grace, liberating us to freely embrace what he had before just as freely rejected." (Horton)

What it does not mean: It does not mean that people cannot resist the grace of God. Rather irresistible grace is to say that God's saving grace achieves its purpose. Nor does this mean that God brings people into His Kingdom kicking and screaming and excludes those who desperately want to enter – rather what this means is that we will never want to enter into his kingdom without the prior work of God – his inward call on our lives – and his grace to save us is always effective.

Scripture to consider: John 6:37, 44-45, 64-65 – no one can come to Christ unless the Father (through his Spirit) draws them; Acts 16:14 – Lydia was saved (the Lord opened her heart); Romans 8:30 – everyone who God predestines God calls and everyone who he calls he justifies (so obviously this is not a call that can be resisted).

Practical Value: We are called to proclaim the gospel and be fishers of men – but this gives us a sense of confidence in doing this. It is not up to us but God's inward call.

We need to be obedient and faithful but we cannot change hearts – that is God’s work.

Perseverance of the Saints

Other names: Security of Believers, God’s Preservation of the Saints

What it does mean: The popular phrase is accurate: “once saved always saved” – the elect are eternally secure in Christ. Indeed Romans 8:35-39 says forcefully, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. A beautiful picture of this is found in John 10:27-30 in which Jesus refers to his people as his sheep and makes the promise that they will “never perish” because they are in Christ’s hand as well as the Father’s hand.

What it does not mean: This is not based upon our efforts. Paul’s confident statement concerning the Philippian believers (see Phil.1:6) being brought to completion until the day of Christ Jesus was not founded in their efforts but rather that God finishes what he begins.

Practical Value: This brings a great sense of security that leads to peace in Christ (not laziness as some would claim) and keeps us from constantly striving to win God’s favor in fear of losing our salvation.

Reformed Worship

For the believer, indeed, for every creature, worship is job Number One. We have no greater command, no greater responsibility and no greater privilege than to worship God. Worship is what we do and say when we stand before the living God, realizing and extolling the character and actions of the Creator of the universe and glorifying Him as our Redeemer in Jesus Christ.

Worship and the One Who is Worshiped

The ordering of worship should be congruent with the realities of Who is being worshipped and those who are worshipping Him. Worship is about glorifying God for who He is and what He has done and continues to do. Glorifying God is about identifying and declaring the weight of His character and His actions and giving praise and thanksgiving to Him. It is, therefore, more about Who God is than what the worshipper thinks or how the worshipper feels about Him. He who is worshipped is glorious in all He is, all He does, and all He says.

Worship and the Worshiper

The worshipper, for his/her part, is a sinner who has fallen short of the glory of the God who is worshipped. Therefore, a sober humility rightly characterizes the

attitude of him who approaches the presence of God, solely by the divine grace which has called him to worship and provides the redemptive basis upon which such approach to God is possible.

The posture and attitude of the worshipper, therefore, is one of awe, dependence, gratitude, adoration and praise for all that the Creator-God has done in giving life and all that the Redeemer-God has done in giving new life by the Spirit through Jesus Christ.

Worship and Liturgy

Some in the reformed tradition speak of the “regulative principle in worship” by which is meant that only those things specifically prescribed in scripture are allowable. Hence, for some, the use of musical instruments is eliminated as an association with the temple cultus and not prescribed for New Testament public worship. This view is contrasted with the “normative principle in worship” by which all that is not specifically prohibited in scripture is allowable in worship.

The practice of corporate worship in the EPC reflects a variety of styles which include so-called traditional, contemporary and blended services. Each congregation is free to plan and execute worship in a style that best serves its members in coming into the presence of almighty God. Be that as it may, it should be remembered by churches that self-identify as “reformed” that both shape and content play an important role in the ordering and leadership of corporate worship in our reformed tradition.

Worship, therefore, should be carefully and prayerfully ordered to include opportunities through song, prayer, the reading of scripture and other experiences of congregational participation, to give praise to God, confess sin, hear of Christ’s provision for our forgiveness and to confess the faith upon which alone we stand.

Worship and Preaching

Prominent in reformed worship is the place held by the preaching of the Word of God. Through preaching, the Gospel of the living God is declared, explained and applied to the lives of those who have gathered to worship. Preaching is at the heart of worship; it is not distinct or separate from it. God is glorified when His people sit under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word by which faith is invoked, informed, explained and assured. Through preaching the reformed doctrine of sola scriptura is put into the practice by which lives are transformed by the truth which comes from God alone.

Preaching in worship is a means of God’s grace. It is the unmerited favor of God whereby, through no goodness or desert, one is addressed by the living God. The Creator and Redeemer of the universe takes the initiative to speak His truth into the

life and experience of a lost and sinful creature whom He loves and thereby, points the one who would hear to the risen and loving Christ through whom alone one finds life.

Worship and the Sacraments

Preaching in worship is also an instrument of God's grace when it sets the table for the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Numerous reformed confessions and catechisms refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper as both signs and seals of God's covenant of grace with us. They are signs in that they are vivid pictures of the redemption Christ has wrought for us — redemption through going under the water in death with Christ, and redemption through the broken body and shed blood of Christ on the cross. And they are seals by which the Holy Spirit marks us as God's own through His unmerited favor realized in us by believing faith.

By sign and seal the sacraments give vivid testimony to the finished work of Jesus Christ for man's redemption and provide opportunity for communion with the living God which can be enjoyed in no other way. When the sacraments are rightly understood through biblical exposition and regularly ordered in worship the people of God are afforded times of fellowship with God whereby they both give of themselves in praise and adoration, and receive from the Lord that which is needed to grow and serve Him and the advancement of His kingdom.

What is the Role of the Westminster Confession?



Understanding the Confession of Our Faith

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a confessional statement of orthodox Presbyterianism. The Westminster Confession of Faith is our standard of doctrine as found in Scripture. It is a positive statement of the Reformed Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith constitutes a system of biblical truth that an officer of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is required to believe; acknowledging that each individual court has the freedom to allow exceptions which do not infringe upon the system of the doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith. (Note: The study guide for Westminster is available in the Appendix.)

Have You Read the Confession?

As a Ruling Elder in the EPC, the Book of Order requires you to adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as the sole confessional document that contains and describes the system of doctrine found in the Holy Scriptures (*See ordination question number 3 on page 40*). Therefore, at your examination you will be asked if you have read the Westminster Confession of Faith and to interact with some of its major themes. Please make every effort to read through the document. Copies of the confession can be found on the EPC website or ordered through the General Assembly office.

Sole Subordinate Standard of the Faith

Within the EPC, the Westminster Confession is understood to be the sole, subordinate standard of the faith, but what exactly does this phrase mean? Let's break it down:

Sole

In modern Presbyterianism some churches, such as the PC (USA), affirm a plurality of confessions and creeds (compiled in the *Book of Confessions*) rather than affirming a sole confession of faith. This is problematic, on one level, because not all confessions are the same (or equal) and affirming multiple confessions can result in affirming contradictory statements of belief. Another concern is that a plurality of confessions suggests that truth is pluralistic (*many truths*) rather than unique or particular. In order to avoid this confusion, the EPC affirms the Westminster Confession as its *sole* confession of faith that adequately represents both historic Reformed doctrine and the truth of Scripture.

Subordinate

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a subordinate document, which means that the authority of the confession is subordinate to the authority of Holy Scripture. The Reformed tradition affirms that Scripture is Inspired (specially revealed by the Triune God), Inerrant (without error and creating no error) and Infallible (unable to fail in accomplishing God's purposes). The Westminster Confession is an excellent document that summarizes the doctrine of Scripture, but the Confession is not inspired, inerrant or infallible and, therefore, not equivalent to Scripture. As a result, the Westminster Confession of Faith must always be subordinate to Scripture, "the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks."

Standard

The Westminster Confession of Faith is not an alternative or competitive statement of truth that is in tension with Scripture. Rather, it is complementary to Scripture

and an important document to the EPC because it outlines and describes in a systematic way the doctrines contained in Scripture. It also helps to preserve our commitment to the historic orthodoxy of the Reformed Faith. As a result, the Westminster Confession of Faith becomes a standard by which the EPC can examine doctrinal positions and the denomination's fidelity to historic Presbyterianism and the Reformed tradition.

Key Elements

There are several theological themes and subjects described and explored within the Westminster Confession of Faith. However, there are two themes which predominate throughout the Confession which help to summarize the document: the **Sovereignty of God** and the **Authority of Scripture**. Below are some other important elements to the Confession: a brief history of the Confession, the structure of the Confession and a biblical theology of the Confession.

A Brief History of the Westminster Confession

The Westminster Assembly first met in July of 1643 and was composed of 121 Puritan Ministers, 30 lay members of the English Parliament and eight Scottish advisors. Parliament envisioned a national church with a simple liturgy, presbyteries rather than bishops and a Reformed creed.

The first task given to the Assembly by Parliament was to revise the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. It was during this revision when the Civil War broke out. During the Civil War Parliament needed the support of Scotland against King Charles I. The price for Scottish help was that every Member of Parliament had to sign the "Solemn League and Covenant." This document bound England and Scotland together in a unified Presbyterian form of government for the national church.

Oliver Cromwell, a member of the House of Lords and a strong supporter of religious tolerance and congregational independence, objected to the Covenant. Cromwell began to amass a formidable cavalry called the New Model Army and he emerged as the leader of a new political power that sought to right England's wrongs.

In 1646 Parliament tried without success to dissolve the army. The work of the Westminster Assembly was completed in November of 1648. During their five years they had produced the Westminster Confession as well as the Westminster Longer and Shorter Catechism. In 1648 The House of Commons finally accepted the Confession, an affirmation which the House of Lords had previously done.

But in December 1648 Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army seized control of Parliament and in 1649 he had King Charles I beheaded. Though the work of the

Assembly had been accepted, there was no longer any political force left in the Parliament to cause it to be implemented.

After Charles' death, Oliver Cromwell ruled England as "Lord Protector" and had hopes of establishing a republic which championed religious toleration. Cromwell was able to keep order but he was not able to enact reform. After his death in 1658, Cromwell's son Richard was named his successor. Richard lacked his father's ability and quickly resigned his post.

The failure of the Protectorate left one alternative for England, the monarchy. A restored Parliament recalled Charles II to his father's throne. Charles II had hoped to find a place for Presbyterians in the national church, but the post-war Parliament preferred the traditional episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer. Thus England remained Anglican.

Structure of the Westminster Confession

The Westminster Confession is composed of 35 chapters:

- Chapter 1 begins with Scripture, the source from which all other truths are derived.
- Chapters 2-5 declare the sovereignty of God. It speaks of God's decrees, plans and purposes displayed in the creation of the world and in God's providential care of his people.
- Chapters 6-20 generally address the working out of God's purposes in history.
 - Chapters 6-7 specifically describe the fall of humanity into sin and God's covenant to redeem them.
 - In chapter 8 Jesus Christ the mediator of God's covenant is presented as the pinnacle of God's purposeful work on behalf of humanity.
 - Chapters 9 - 10 deal with the Holy Spirit and the Gospel.
 - Chapters 11-20 describe the way of salvation in Christ and how it becomes effective in the lives of believers.
- Chapters 21-26 deal with ethical dimensions of the Christian life and addresses topics such as the law of God, liberty of conscience, church and state, and marriage and divorce.
- Chapters 27-35 deal with the church, the sacraments and the last things.

Biblical Theology of the Westminster Confession³

Scripture: The infallible and inerrant Word of God, the 66 books of the Old and the New Testaments, is the complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks, and requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life.

God: There is one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God works everything to the purpose of His will, for His glory.

Jesus Christ: Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, God's own Son became flesh. Jesus Christ is perfect man and perfect God, united in one person forever. For those whom God has chosen, Jesus died on the cross, offering the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father.

The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Jesus Christ. He convicts us of sin, draws us to the Savior, and applies the saving work of Jesus Christ to our lives. Dwelling within us, the Spirit empowers us to grow in holiness, grace and love, instructs and guides us in all truth, equips us for His service, and seals us for the day of redemption.

Man: Having rebelled against God and been condemned for our sinfulness, our salvation is entirely dependent upon the exercise of God's free grace and choice. God justifies (credits His righteousness to) those who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, put their faith solely in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

The Church: The true Church is composed of all persons who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible expression in local congregations where the Word of God is proclaimed in its purity and truth, the sacraments are properly administered, spiritual discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is encouraged. Elders (pastors and ruling elders) oversee the spiritual life of the local congregation.

Sacraments: There are two sacraments: Baptism, which is available to adult believers and their children, and the Lord's Supper, which is for believers in Jesus

³ Taken from *A Brief Outline of Biblical (Reformed, Calvinist) Theology* by Dr. Jeff Jeremiah, Stated Clerk of the EPC.

Christ. Jesus Christ is spiritually present and offers spiritual nourishment to those who participate in the Supper.

Second Coming of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ will come again to the earth, personally, visibly, and bodily. The dead shall be bodily raised. He will judge the living and the dead, and consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

Great Commission: The Lord Jesus commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations.

Preparing Exceptions

The Westminster Confession of Faith constitutes a system of biblical truth that an officer of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is required to believe. As part of your examination you will be asked if, “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?”

The EPC acknowledges that each individual court has the freedom to allow exceptions which do not infringe upon the system of doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith. One of the most common exceptions cited is WCF 21.8. When you are examined, please prepare to share reasons for any exceptions that you may have to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

What Does it Mean to be a Ruling Elder in the EPC?



Understanding My Role as Elder in the EPC

UNDERSTANDING MY ROLE AS RULING ELDER

To be an elder in the EPC is a high calling. In the EPC the distinction is made between Teaching Elders (pastors, preachers, ministers) and Ruling Elders, those who, with the Teaching Elders are responsible for the congregation. A Ruling Elder is one who loves the church, the people of the congregation, and works with a servant attitude.

A Ruling Elder should have a strong, mature relationship with Jesus Christ, the Savior and Lord of our lives. An elder in the EPC does have power and authority in the church, but this must always be used in love and service to God and to the congregation members.

Elders are not to be elected by the congregation because they are successful in business, have an important career, or are merely popular. It is not a disgrace to be a long-time member of a church and never be an elder.

Elders should believe that they have an internal call from God to the position and an external, confirming call by being nominated and elected by the congregation. Many Elders struggle with the concept of the internal call, wondering if they really have been called since they do not hear God's direct voice calling them. When asked to be an Elder, they should honestly examine their own life and character in accordance with the scriptural requirements for such a position and determine if they meet those requirements and have those characteristics. A meeting with their Pastor or another Elder may be helpful in determining if this is true for them.

- Characteristics of an Elder:
 - Mature Christian
 - Love God, be growing in knowledge of God
 - Attempt to live as Christ would have us live
 - A desire for serving the Church
 - Humble
 - Loving toward others

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:

Scripture especially to be considered by potential and current Elders:

Titus 1:5-9:

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the

trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

I Timothy 3:1-13:

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

I Timothy 5:17-18

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

See also:

Exodus 18:13-27

Moses is advised to select and appoint capable men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate dishonest gain, who are to help Moses in governing the people of Israel.

Acts 6:1-7:

The disciples appoint deacons who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom to attend to the needs of the people.

Acts 20:17-38:

Paul gives advice to the elders of the church at Ephesus to be on guard and remember Paul's message (the Gospel).

EPC Essentials

The Essentials of Our Faith is an irenic statement of historic evangelicalism. Its intent is to define core beliefs of the Christian Faith and must be affirmed by all Ruling

Elders without exception. The *Essentials of Our Faith* express historic Christian beliefs common to all true believers and churches throughout the world. It is not intended to be the exclusive test of orthodoxy for ordination. It is not intended to be used as an explicit standard for minimal core beliefs for candidates, ordination or ministerial examinations. It is not to be construed as a substitute for the Westminster Confession of Faith. (Commentary on the essentials is in italics)

1. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To him be all honor, glory and praise forever!
 - *This is a statement all Christians should be able to affirm. We believe in one God (i.e. we are not polytheists) in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Christian doctrine of the Trinity). My hope would be that nothing in these essentials should shock you – for they are all basic to the Christian faith.*
2. Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
 - *This is a statement about Jesus that he was born of a virgin, incarnate God (God in flesh), that he died as a sacrifice, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. All of this again is basic to the Christian faith reminiscent of the Apostle's Creed.*
3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowering and imparting gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
 - *If essential #2 was a statement about Jesus then this one is concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. Notice the personal pronoun – the Holy Spirit is not our conscience – not akin to the force – but the third person of the triune God. Notice as well the actions attributed to the Spirit (an active part of our lives as believers).*
4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifying them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

- *This is a statement about how we are saved from the condemnation our sins bring us. We are saved wholly by God's free grace.*
5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.
 - *This is a statement about the Church both universal and local (congregations). Notice the marks of the local church: the Word preached, sacraments administered, disciplines practiced, and fellowship maintained.*
 6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth — personally, visibly, and bodily — to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20)
 - *Notice the avoidance of a particular brand of eschatology (study of end times) – they stick to facts here in the essentials that all Christians can affirm on this subject.*
 7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” (Gal. 2:20) He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)
 - *Here is a statement about our marching orders as believers – what is often called “The Great Commission.” Read Matthew 28:18-20. I hope as we come to the conclusion of the essentials you would agree that none of them should be controversial; surely all evangelicals should be able to affirm these truths.*

Ordination Questions

The Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders: The following questions shall be proposed to one being ordained and installed and to one who has been ordained previously in some other denomination and is being installed:

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 Church Session 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?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know in your own heart, to accept the office of Ruling Elder from love of God and 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 to you on that account?
10. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as Ruling Elder, 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?
11. Are you now willing to take responsibility in the life of this congregation as a Ruling Elder 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?

Essential Polity

An Elder in the EPC must be familiar with the Governing Documents of the EPC consisting of the Constitution: Volume 1 of "The Book of Order – EPC." This includes the Books of Government, Discipline, and Worship. That does not mean that an Elder must know from memory all the details in these three books, but must have read them, know, in general, what is included in each, and what they mean in governing the church. It would be improper for an Elder to be ignorant of these books since

they give specific substance to what the church is, how it is to be governed, how discipline is to be administered, and how the church worships God. An Elder is to manage God's household (Titus 1:7) and this cannot be done in ignorance of the polity of the church.

Book of Government

The EPC Book of Government, as an overview, defines the church, its government and power, church membership, the authority of session, the calling, preparation, and definition of the officers of the church, as well as setting forth how officers are to be examined and ordained, and the organizational structure of the church. Clearly, an elder should be knowledgeable in these matters. If all the elders know and understand the Book of Government, they will have a good idea of what the church is and their role in its management.

While the principles in the Book of Government are important and do spell out necessary duties of elders, they do not encompass the totality of what an elder is to do. Proper governance must also include developing a vision for a particular church, giving leadership so that the church is vital and healthy. This is an ongoing process, much like sanctification for an individual.

Book of Discipline

The EPC Book of Discipline defines what discipline means from its Scriptural basis and how discipline is to be conducted in EPC churches. Many sessions of churches coming into the EPC have a weak understanding of church discipline since discipline has, most likely, not been practiced as it should have been in their previous denominations. A general guideline for church discipline is to examine what is required of persons to join a particular church and, if those requirements are not being met by a current church member, church discipline should be considered. It is certainly incorrect to think of discipline in a harsh way, such as, needing to decide right away if a member should be excommunicated from the church. Much of church discipline involves pastoral care and the expression of love and concern toward individual church members. The well-known advice for Christians given in Matthew 18 is to first approach an individual personally to discuss a perceived sin in his/her life and then to go back to the individual with one or two others to discuss the matter. This indicates a process of interaction with the individual, which would lead to a correct understanding of that individual's basis of his/her actions and establish the truth of the matter. If these two steps still lead to unresolved conflict, then the church is to be engaged in the matter, meaning the church session.

The Book of Discipline may seem somewhat sparse on this attitude of reconciliation since it primarily defines the procedures, which must be carefully followed in the exercise of proper official church discipline.

Book of Worship

The EPC Book of Worship orderly describes how Scripture indicates we are to fulfill one of humans' highest calling, the worship of God. Since man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, it is important for elders to understand how public worship of God should be performed in their churches. As people who hold to a Biblical reformed worldview, we know that the worship of God is certainly not limited to public worship of a particular church at a specific worship time, and that every aspect of our lives, even including our bodies, is to be offered as a spiritual sacrifice to God. This is stated in the Book of Worship but most of the content is on how to conduct proper Christian worship of God. The book describes public worship and what elements are rightly included in such worship. These include the use of the Word of God, sound preaching of the Word, music, prayer, and offerings. In this book, the proper administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are described. It also describes the worship of God at other times, Christian marriage, the burial of the dead, and service to God.

Elders in the EPC should be knowledgeable of the contents of the Book of Worship since it is they who are responsible for how worship takes place in the churches. When they make policies regarding worship, the principles and contents of the Book of Worship should inform them.

Appendices



Additional Resources

SAMPLE AGENDA AND QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION

The examiner shall commence the meeting with introductions and prayer. Having appointed a recording secretary from the Committee, noting the time, place, and persons present, the moderator shall proceed to the examination. Below are the categories that the examiner will be working from along with some sample questions

I. Examiner to All (General Questions from Examiners)

- 1 What is the history of your church?
- 2 How did your church get to this point? Share your church's journey.
- 3 What training process have you undertaken in preparation for the exam?

- 4 Share your sense of call to be an elder.
- 5 Please give us your personal testimony.

II. The Essentials

- 1 Do you accept them without exception?

III. On the Westminster Confession

- 1 Do you have any questions or objections to the document?
- 2 Do you understand that you are seeking admission into a denomination that takes this confessional standard seriously?

IV. Reformed Theology

- 1 What is the role of God's Sovereignty in the process of salvation?
- 2 What are the five Solas and TULIP?
- 3 Explain the Sacraments.

V. Polity

- 1 Describe the differences or similarities in the EPC polity from your former church.
- 2 Describe the difference of Ruling Elder and Teaching Elder.

SAMPLE REPORT

Elder Examination

The meeting for the examination of the Elders of _____ Church was called to order at ____ p.m. in room ____ of _____ Church.

The examination team assigned consisted of _____ (TE), _____ (RE), _____(TE), _____ (RE).

Present for the examination were Ruling Elders:

Also present was Rev. _____, Teaching Elder.

The meeting was opened with prayer by _____. Included in the examination were questions such as:

-----include a few questions and summation of responses.

At the conclusion of the examination, the team was satisfied with its conclusion, the team excused themselves for conversation.

The team returned with the following recommendation:

- A. The examination be sustained and recommended at the next Presbytery of the Alleghenies meeting.
- B. The examination be sustained with the attached comments or recommendation.
- C. The examination proved inconclusive at this time and further study is recommended

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

7-Day Seminar Schedule

Terms:

Horton = *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* by Michael Horton

WCF = Westminster Confession of Faith

WLC = Westminster Larger Catechism

WSC = Westminster Shorter Catechism

BOG = Book of Order-Government

BOD = Book of Order-Discipline

BOW = Book of Order-Worship

1. Horton – Foreword, Introduction, Chapter 1: Jumping through Hoops Is for Circus Animals, Chapter 2: Created with Class (Study Questions 1-9)
 - WCF — Preface, Essentials, Explanatory Statement to Essentials, Chapters 1-5
 - WLC — Questions 1-28
 - WSC — Questions 1-16
 - BOG — Chapters 1-6
2. Horton — Chapter 3: Rebels without a Cause (Study Questions 1-8), Chapter 4: Grace before Time (Study Questions 1-5)
 - WCF — Chapters 5-10
 - WLC — Questions 29-56
 - WSC — Questions 17-33
 - BOG — Chapters 7-12
3. Horton — Chapter 5: So What? (Study Questions 1-8), Chapter 6: Climbing Jacob's Ladder (Study Questions 1-7)
 - WCF — Chapters 11-15
 - WLC — Questions 57-84
 - WSC — Questions 34-50
 - BOG — Chapters 13-18

4. Horton — Chapter 7: Mission Accomplished (Study Questions 1-10), Chapter 8: Intoxicating Grace (Study Questions 1-4)
 - WCF — Chapters 16-20
 - WLC — Questions 85-112
 - WSC — Questions 51-67
 - BOD — Chapters 1-7
5. Horton — Chapter 9: Righteous Sinners (Study Questions 1-7), Chapter 10: No Lost Causes (Study Questions 1-5)
 - WCF — Chapters 21-25
 - WLC — Questions 113-140
 - WSC — Questions 68-84
 - BOD — Chapters 8-14
6. Horton — Chapter 11: Two Keys to Spiritual Growth (Study Questions 1-7) Chapter 12: A Kingdom of Priests (Study Questions 1-7)
 - WCF — Chapters 26-30
 - WLC — Questions 141-168
 - WSC — Questions 85-101
 - BOW — Chapters 1-7
7. Horton — Appendix
 - WCF — Chapters 31-35
 - WLC — Questions 169-196
 - WSC — Questions 102-107

Other Material/Questions to Consider

11-Day Seminar Schedule

Terms:

Horton = *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace* by Michael Horton
WC = Westminster Confession of Faith = 3.5 chapters/session
LC = Larger Catechism = 19.6 chapters/session
SC = Shorter Catechism = 10.7 chapters/session
BOO = Book of Order = 15 pages/session
G = Book of Government
D = Book of Discipline
W = Book of Worship

1. Horton – Forward, Introduction, Chapter 1: Jumping Through Hoops Is For Circus Animals, Chapter 2: Created with Class (Study Questions 1-9)
2. Horton — Chapter 3: Rebels without a Cause (Study Questions 1-8)
 - WC — Preface, Essentials of Our Faith, Explanatory Statements to “Essentials of Our Faith,” Proof Texts, Chapters 1-4 = pages 3-12 (4 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 1-20 = pages 71-76 (20 questions)
 - SC — Questions 1-11 = pages 145-146 (11 questions)
 - BOO — Preface, The Essentials, Explanatory Statements to “Essentials of Our Faith”, Chapters 1-7 = pages 1-16 (16 pages)
3. Horton — Chapter 4: Grace before Time (Study Questions 1-5)
 - WC — Chapters 5-7 = pages 13-19 (3 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 21-38 = pages 76-80 (18 questions)
 - SC — Questions 12-20 = pages 146-148 (9 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 8-10 = pages 17-30 (14 pages)
4. Horton — Chapter 5-50 - So What? (Study Questions 1-8)
 - WC — Chapters 8-11 = pages 20-27 (4 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 39-58 = pages 80-85 (20 questions)
 - SC — Questions 21-31 = pages 148-150 (11 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 11-14 = pages 31-48 (18 pages)
5. Horton — Chapter 6: Climbing Jacob’s Ladder (Study Questions 1-7)

- WC — Chapters 12-14 = pages 28-30 (3 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 59-77 = pages 86-91 (19 questions)
 - SC — Questions 32-41 = pages 150-151 (10 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 15-16 = pages 49-70 (22 pages)
6. Horton — Chapter 7: Mission Accomplished (Study Questions 1-10)
- WC — Chapters 15-18 = pages 31-38 (4 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 78-97 = pages 91-97 (20 questions)
 - SC — Questions 42-52 = pages 152-153 (11 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 17-18 concluding Book of Order and beginning Book of Discipline Chapter 1 = pages 71-80 (10 pages)
7. Horton — Chapter 8: Intoxicating Grace (Study Questions 1-4)
- WC — Chapters 19-21 = pages 39-45 (3 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 98-114 = pages 97-107 (17 questions)
 - SC — Questions 53-61 = pages 153-155 (9 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 2-7 in the Book of Discipline = pages 81-94 (14 pages)
8. Horton — Chapter 9 - Righteous Sinners (Study Questions 1-7)
- WC — Chapters 22-25 = pages 46-53 (4 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 115-133 = pages 107-113 (19 questions)
 - SC — Questions 62-72 = pages 155-157 (11 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 8-10 in the Book of Discipline = pages 95-108 (14 pages)
9. Horton — Chapter 10 - No Lost Causes (Study Questions 1-5)
- WC — Chapters 26-29 = pages 54-60 (4 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 134-154 = pages 113-125 (21 questions)
 - SC — Questions 73-85 = pages 157-159 (13 questions)

- BOO — Chapters 11-14 completing the Book of Discipline = pages 109-122 (14 pages)
10. Horton — Chapter 11 - Two Keys to Spiritual Growth (Study Questions 1-7)
- WC — Chapters 30-32 = pages 61-63 (3 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 155-177 = pages 125-134 (23 questions)
 - SC — Questions 86-97 = pages 159-161 (12 questions)
 - BOO — Chapters 1-2 in the Book of Worship = pages 123-132 (10 pages)
11. Horton — Chapter 12 - A Kingdom of Priests (Study Questions 1-7) + Appendix
- WC — Chapters 33-35 = pages 64-68 (3 chapters)
 - LC — Questions 178-196 = pages 134-142 (19 questions)
 - SC — Questions 98-107 = pages 161-163 (10 questions) + Afterword on the Texts
 - BOO — Chapters 3-7 in the Book of Worship = pages 133-152 (20 pages)

STUDY GUIDE FOR *PUTTING AMAZING BACK INTO GRACE* BY MICHAEL HORTON

FORWARD BY J.I. PACKER

- I. Packer points to a time when people knew the most important issue facing them was eternity.
- II. Even though that should still be our greatest concern, the tyranny of the urgent distracts us.
- III. We have come to believe accumulation of wealth and science makes us wiser than the ancients.
- IV. In so doing, “we have become the cleverest fools in history.” (p. 7)
- V. Michael Horton seeks to take us back to look again at the mighty doctrines of grace.
- VI. He hopes a look at what shook the world during the Protestant Reformation can do so again.

INTRODUCTION

Thinking Christians may be weary of the legalism and/or superficiality of the modern church.

- A. Horton senses a renewed interest in the doctrines of grace.
- B. He sees the book as an opportunity to acquaint us with “that robust, down-to-earth faith.” (p.9)
- C. An historical survey of the roots of the Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther.
- D. Luther started a movement that became known as “evangelical.”

Two slogans-cum-doctrine helped bring this growing Reformation into focus:

- A. The Scriptures Alone (Sola Scriptura):
 - 1. The Reformation was the original “Back to the Bible” movement.
 - 2. This doctrine has fallen on hard times once again.
- B. Grace Alone (Sola Gratia)
 - 1. Medieval church worked over about their responsibilities to God, they had to do it.
 - 2. This led to the recovery of other “solas.”
- C. When Soli Deo Gloria came into full force; it produced an era of great ideas and people
 - 1. When God’s greatness is lifted up, somehow, we are lifted up as well.
 - 2. When God’s greatness is replaced by man-centeredness, we go from self-love to -hate.
 - 3. The Reformation brought back a sense of calling, “the priesthood of all believers.”
- D. The Reformation tradition is one that stands strong in the following areas:
 - 1. Catholic – Shares a common love for creeds and church fathers with RC and EO.

2. Biblical – The Scriptures have a central place in the life of the church.
 3. Evangelistic – It recovered the good news and was missionary in focus.
 4. Practical – It cares about both the physical and spiritual welfare of people.
 5. Worshiping – Reverent worship, with great music, a hallmark.
- E. Horton says, “and let’s put the amazing back into grace!”

CHAPTER 1: JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS IS FOR CIRCUS ANIMALS (TOWARD REFORMATION FAITH)

- I. Horton wants a faith that compels the mind as well as the heart.
 - A. Horton grew up in a warm-hearted piety that emphasized works rather than grace.
 - B. Horton discovered the “Romans revolution” (the same one discovered by Martin Luther).
- II. Today, the secular world seems to be more profound (truth-seeking) than the church.
 - A. Horton hears the honest pagans asking the really meaningful questions.
 - B. He sees the church bogged down in trivialities.
- III. Horton suggests the need for recapturing understanding and application of doctrines of grace.
 - A. The Reformation faith set the world on fire because it glorified God and preached grace.
 - B. The message of *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* has changed the world – and can again!

CHAPTER 2: CREATED WITH CLASS (A DOCTRINE OF CREATION TO PRECEDE TOTAL DEPRAVITY)

- I. The subject of redemption needs to begin with creation, not the fall.
 - A. Beginning with the fall gives sense human beings were predisposed to sin from God.
 - B. Creation reminds us God created us in perfection and also helps us to know God.

- II. Creation marks us with God's image.
 - A. What makes human beings so special? We bear the image of God.
 - B. Humanity lost moral creative and religious perfection in the fall, but not capacity.
- III. Creation is universal
 - A. Redemption is limited to the elect, but creation is universal.
 - B. Of course, that means there is no excuse for those who suppress this truth. (Rom. 1)
- IV. Why are we here?
 - A. Science has promised more than it can deliver, which has led to postmodern cynicism.
 - B. What does the Bible tell us about the purpose of our existence?
 - C. Jesus scandalized the Pharisees with his view of sin.
 - D. "When we consider the purpose of our creation, it is essential that we appreciate its God-centered justification." (p. 34)
- V. The Doctrine of Creation has its benefits
 - A. There are several practical benefits of this doctrine.
 - 1. We have "incredibly weighty existence" (p. 34) that causes us to respect God and others.
 - 2. It frees us to enjoy work and to recover the "Protestant work ethic." (p. 35)
 - 3. It shows us God is not interested only in religion, but in the natural world as well.
 - B. There are several God-glorifying revelations in the doctrine of creation:
 - 1. God is in control – we cannot see it because of our subjectivity until we step back.
 - 2. One Intelligence is responsible for the universe – there is no randomness to it.

3. The doctrine of creation leaves us without excuse – there is a God and eternity.
4. We are significant because we are the creation of a holy, eternal God who has created us to reflect his glory.

CHAPTER 3: REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE (TOTAL DEPRAVITY)

- I. As a consequence of Adam's fall, we believe we are the center of the universe and can save ourselves.
 - A. God does not help those who help themselves, only those he makes acceptable in Christ.
 - B. There is a sin problem before God and we do ourselves no favors by pretending there is not.
- II. Fallen stars.
 - A. It began with Satan's enticing Eve not to believe God's promise of punishment for sin.
 - B. Then Satan invited Eve to believe his sin, "You will be like God." (Gen 3:5)
 - C. Eve bought the sales pitch, sold Adam on it, and immediately they both felt shame.
 - D. They covered their shame in leaves, as we often cover shame in religious respectability.
- III. Declaration of Independence.
 - A. Much of the spirit of our age is that all restraints are intrinsically evil.
 - B. What we fail to see are the consequences of the fall against the glory of Creation.
 - C. We have the image of God in us, and we have let sin disfigure it completely (9/11 2001)
 - D. Just because we declared independence does not mean we are free. We need a Savior.
- IV. Someone to Blame.
 - A. Adam to God: It's woman's fault. Eve to God: The devil made me do it.

B. We always want to place influence of sin outside of ourselves, but it comes from within.

C. The fall not only makes us victims of sin, but victimizers as well.

V. A Lethal Injection.

A. When Adam and Eve sinned; they took a lethal injection in the veins of the whole human race.

B. We are all guilty in God's courtroom.

C. We are born in sin the moment we appear. There is no "age of accountability."

VI. "I Can Quit Whenever I Want To"

A. We start this life as enemies of God; there is no neutral position.

B. We are in bondage to sin; it is what we want to do even when we try to refrain from it.

C. It will be entirely God's mercy if we are going to be made alive again in Jesus Christ.

VII. What Can We Do?

A. There is nothing we can do for us: "Salvation comes from the Lord." (Jonah 2:9)

B. "God helps those who help themselves," is not from the Bible but Poor Richard's Almanac.

C. We are so disabled by sin and guilt we must depend on God alone to revive us.

VIII. God Doesn't Grade on the Curve!

A. There are many benevolent non-Christians, but they are still alienated from God by sin.

B. God must bestow on us his righteousness if we are to have any merit at all before him.

C. There is nothing in the universe to require God to save us. If he does so, it is his initiative.

IX. Conclusion

- A. This doctrine has practical benefits – such as James Madison drafting the US Constitution.
- B. Churches need to get hold of this to bring accountability to the pulpit and pew.
- C. We will never become what Adam was without Christ's righteousness covering us.
- D. Foreshadowing of that was God covering Adam and his paltry fig leaves with the skin of a lamb.
- E. We must surrender our fig leaves and take real account of our sin and shame and let God magnify his grace through us.

CHAPTER 4: GRACE BEFORE TIME (UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION)

- I. The doctrine of sin is not a big seller, but there is another chapter beyond it – election of grace.
 - A. Just as Satan thought he had destroyed God's plan for humanity, God has other ideas.
 - B. God is in charge! He knew the human would rebel and had chosen his redeemed in Christ.
 - C. This is doctrine of unconditional election by grace, biblical yet divisive on several fronts.
- II. Free Will
 - A. The argument that election denies free will does not take into account some things.
 - B. Sometimes we do not have a choice in life.
 - 1. Like a prisoner awaiting a governor's pardon.
 - 2. A prisoner could choose what put him in prison; after that, his will is restricted.
 - C. Once Adam used his free will to choose sin, he put the human race in bondage to sin.
 - 1. Humans still have plenty of choices: house, career, spouse, etc.
 - 2. Choices are preferences of personal will-and personal will is bond-slave to sin.

- D. So, ultimately, our sin-bound will cannot choose that which is contrary to sin-binding.
 - 1. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father’s desire.” (John 8:43-44)
- E. No gimmicky evangelism program can make someone decide to convert.
- F. God invites whosoever will to come – but only because the Holy Spirit is at work to convict.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit softens the heart, makes enemies friends and makes the dead alive again.
 - 2. If it is God “effectually calling” by Word and Spirit, it is no gimmick and will not fail.

III. Determinism

- A. If election is predetermined, isn’t it an act of fate rather than love?
- B. If there is any order in the universe then determinism is at work already.
- C. Fortunately for us, the universe has been determined by a good and loving God who calls.
- D. Because a holy-loving God has determined salvation, it is NOT blind fate.
- E. The image of person and work of Christ is at center of election-his face makes it tender.

IV. Fairness

- A. Isn’t election inherently unfair?
- B. It is unfair IF we have not all been found fallen in Adam.
- C. But all have fallen short of God’s glory and so *no one deserves to be elected*.
- D. But by his grace, God saves some, and so Paul calls it an “election of grace.” (Rom. 11:5)
- E. Our problem in fairness is twofold:
 - 1. We think we’re equal business partners with a holy God!

2. We do not take into account the gravity of our sin and its cost to our “freedom.”

F. Election is, from first to a last, a gift of grace from a holy and loving God.

V. Foreknowledge

- A. Isn't election conditional in that he chooses the elect because he sees they would be elected?
- B. Everyone who is serious about Scriptures knows that it is the truth of God's Word.
- C. Question is: Is it completely election of grace or of foreseen works?
- D. If it is grace, or “unmerited favor,” then it cannot be even because of our response.
- E. If God could create us out of nothing, he can elect us even if we have done nothing for it.
- F. To God, foreknowledge is more than passively knowing information.
- G. He foreknew our salvation because he authored it in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” (1 Peter 1:20) He knew who would be elected beforehand because he decreed them so.

CHAPTER 5: SO WHAT?

I. How does this troublesome doctrine of election apply to real life where we live it today?

- A. The problem with election is the problem with God being God without our help.
- B. Properly understood (with love) the doctrine should produce humility and not pride.
- C. Election must be understood as it is applied, and is more understood as it is applied.

II. Humility

- A. No other doctrine quite comforts the lowly and humbles the mighty like this one.
 1. “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise ...” (I Cor. 1:27)

- 2. Christ is the captain of the “foolish” team on the playground of election.
- B. Knowing that God has chosen us reminds us of his love, even when we’re unlovely.
- C. Many evangelicals who say they are saved by grace, still insist they must say, “yes.”
- D. Emphasis should be that Christ said yes to us.
- E. He is not a co-pilot. He is sovereign. He is Lord. Humble yourselves and receive grace.

III. Appreciation of God’s Grace

- A. Election is important in doctrine of grace, but how about where the rubber meets the road?
- B. We’re thieves who try to steal God’s love when he knew all long and loved us still.
- C. One of the church’s greatest problems is it takes God’s grace for granted. (cheap grace)
- D. Grace is not something we can pay for like a commodity, but a precious gift of God.

IV. Worship

- A. Election keeps us focused on maintaining a proper worship of God. (Luther)
- B. Where God is not rightly known he cannot be rightly worshipped.
- C. When Paul finishes this doctrine in Romans 11, he bursts into worship right on the page.
- D. When worship centers on us rather than God, it becomes entertainment.
- E. This is not a call for cold orthodoxy but warm and grateful; one based on trust in the savior God.

V. Holiness and Service

- A. Only knowing God alone saves (not us with his help) do we find holiness and service.

- B. Wesley saw election as undermining the motivation for holiness, which is according to Wesley: fear of punishment/hope of reward.
- C. Holiness as God sees it is not anchored in punishment/reward but adoption to sonship.
- D. Election at its core must reorient our thinking about what holiness is — adoption!
- E. He has called us because he loves us and equipped us to do works which please him.
- F. Our view of holiness and service change when it is election-focused.

VI. Evangelism and Missions

- A. Election doesn't kill evangelism; it changes it on three levels: message, method, motivation
 - 1. Message changes from man-centered, self-help to being reconciled to an offended God.
 - 2. Method changes from slickly-packaged technique to God's message for people.
 - 3. Motivation changes from us doing the saving, to God doing the saving and us preaching saving.
- B. God has elected his own and evangelism is the method by which he calls them to himself.

VII. Blessed Assurance

- A. Election gives us assurance that we are in Christ, now and forever.
- B. Election is only threatening to those who reject the gospel.

VIII. Prayer with Power

- A. Election reminds who is Boss and who is sole receiver of our petitions and praise.
- B. Election does not hinder prayer for others, it enhances it.
 - 1. If we are saved by free will, God has turned over power to overrule hearts to us.

- 2. If he elects then he has power to overrule hearts and to answer our prayers to do so.
- C. If he is an electing God then he is the right person to pray to for he is the only one who can do it.

IX. Election and the Bible

- A. Election is a biblical doctrine so clear that it drives us back to the Bible as the source of truth.
- B. Election is so pervasive in Scripture it is taken for granted as true by all characters.
- C. Election can be dangerous when we speak beyond what the Bible says of it.

X. Knowledge of One's Election

- A. We are told both "to make our calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) and how to do it.
- B. Paul says in 1 Thess. 1:4, we are chosen "because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction ...You became imitators of us and of the Lord."
- C. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me." (John 10:27)
- D. Paul said "and those he predestined, he also called." (Romans 8:30)
- E. Come to Jesus and you will make your calling and election sure.

CHAPTER 6: CLIMBING JACOB'S LADDER (GOD WITH US)

- I. The world is trying to climb the ladder of merit from very early on in life — even in church.
 - A. Jacob's ladder is not a ladder we are to climb to get to heaven.
 - B. Jacob's ladder is the coming of Jesus Christ the Lord as a human to earth.
 - C. This puts amazing back into grace, that it is God's descending to us, not us to him.
 - D. Election is one step in process of salvation; incarnation is the next step, God to us.

II. The Veiled God

- A. Where is God in tragedy? Theologians often refer to a “veiled God” — transcendent.
- B. But he was not too far away to hear our cries and come to us — especially as Christ.
- C. Best way to reconcile holy Word and human flesh is for Word to become flesh...

III. The Living Word

- A. The same Word who created us came down in time, space and history as one of us.
- B. Electing God has come as Chosen One of God to secure salvation of the elect of God.
- C. Jesus was and is fully human as well as fully divine, to identify with us totally.
- D. He shared in Adam’s humanity without sharing in Adam’s corruption.

IV. God with Us

- A. Jesus had to be God to tell us the truth of the Father, but human so we could understand him.
- B. God understands our human crises, because he is both a Son, and a Father of a Son.
- C. Because he was like us, Jesus can plead our case for us before the throne of grace.
- D. We do not have a God who is isolated from us, but is Emmanuel, “God with us!”

CHAPTER 7: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED (LIMITED OR DEFINITE [HORTON’S TERM] ATONEMENT)

- I. God’s plan is to save the world by taking people from every nation and forming new humanity.
 - A. All people will be saved-but not as in universalism.
 - B. God does not see us as a collection of saved individuals but a community of humanity.

- C. John 3:17-18 show the universal to individual aspects of this idea.
 - 1. 17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to save the world, but to save the world through him." Jesus focuses here on the world as unit and humanity as race
 - 2. 18: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already ..." Jesus here focuses on individual status before him.
- D. God has determined sin will be removed from creation and redemption of individuals.
- E. Israel was to be the messenger of universal gospel but would not do it until Christ came.

II. Savior of the Body

- A. The gospel has universal implication s even if not everyone in the world will accept it.
- B. It is the elect remnant of Israel and each nation that will form the new creation.
- C. Human family will continue its lineage through a new spiritual race: kingdom of God.
- D. Yet that new humanity will be made up of saved individuals which make up his body.

III. For Whom Did Christ Die?

- A. Every orthodox Christian places limits on the atoning work of Christ.
 - 1. If Jesus died for every person but not every person is saved, he didn't save anybody.
 - 2. If he died for the elect, then that atonement is limited in its scope or purpose.
- B. Some choose to say then, that Christ's death did not save, but made men savable upon their choice to be saved. The power is no longer in the blood but in the creature's will.
- C. Horton prefers to call limited atonement definite as it accomplished mission to elect.

- D. Christ came with a mission from the Father and he accomplished it at Calvary.
 - 1. He came to “save his people from their sins.” (Mt. 1:21)
 - 2. “He has accomplished redemption for his people.” (Luke 1:68)
- E. The Father elects and designs the program; the Son executes it by securing the elect; the Spirit regenerates and unites people through faith to Christ.
- F. The Son has come to execute a plan to be “slain from the creation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8)

IV. What Was the Father’s Purpose?

- A. Just as the OT sacrificial system was not for those outside the covenant, neither was Christ’s.
- B. Christ was the all-sufficient sacrifice for the new covenant community of the elect.
- C. This new community is a large number saved from out of all of humanity.
- D. Those who are not elect cannot lay charge at the feet of the elect as it is God who chooses.
- E. Are you one of the elect? Do you trust in Christ? Then you are not condemned! Rejoice!

V. What Was the Son’s Purpose?

- A. The Son’s purpose was to fulfill the Father’s purpose: To die for the elect.
- B. In his high priestly prayer (John 17) Christ did not pray for the whole world, but those given to him from out of it.
- C. Christ therefore chose to focus his atonement on the covenant community of the elect.

VI. What Was the Holy Spirit’s Purpose?

- A. Those God predestined he called by the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Though everyone is invited, only “all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”
- C. Christ could not buy back more than the Holy Spirit intends to bring back.

VII. But Doesn't God Love Everyone?

- A. Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.
- B. God does not love everybody the same way just as we don't love everybody the same way (or our marriage is in jeopardy!)
- C. God has providential care for the whole world, but a special, saving love for his elect.

VIII. A Useful Distinction

- A. Christ died to actually save people, not just make the salvation of everyone possible.
- B. The work of Christ is not deficient, it can save everyone, and it does save those who trust in it.
- C. To tell everyone we meet, "Christ died for you," is not correct until that person believes.

I. Satisfaction Guaranteed

- A. Jesus died to justify the just demands of a holy God.
- B. The whole human race was at odds with God.
- C. But why should it be if Christ died for everybody to satisfy God's wrath?
 - 1. If Christ's atonement is universal then two choices:
 - a) Either it was limited in effect, that is, it only made salvation possible.
 - b) Or, it did what Scripture said it did, even for the unrepentant non-believer.
 - 2. Many when faced with definite, but effectual, atonement or these choices still cannot admit definite atonement.
 - 3. Charles Finney accepted an atonement that was limited in nature so that believer must still strive for personal holiness, (works righteousness) even if Scripture argues for a definite atonement.
- D. Better to believe that Christ accomplished real redemption for some than weak one for some undetermined number. The work of Christ on the cross is effective in and of itself.

II. The Meaning of Atonement.

- A. Redemption means “to buy back” and he has those whom he intended to buy back.
- B. Propitiation means Christ has removed God’s wrath from those who he propitiates.
- C. Reconciliation is not just potential for everyone but accomplished for the saved.
- D. Substitution means Christ suffered vicariously for the condemned sinner and saved him.

III. Sacrifice and Satisfaction

- A. Did Jesus satisfy God’s justice on the cross — or do we satisfy it by believing?
 - 1. If the answer is “Jesus” then real forgiveness occurred for those for whom he died.
 - 2. If it is “our belief” then who is the real savior, as we cannot satisfy our own sin?
- B. We either accept Christ’s real satisfaction or manufacture our own, fail, and satisfy God’s wrath by the sacrifice of spending an eternity in hell.
- C. To those who claim it is unfair that Christ died for one and not another — that is grace.
- D. If you believe in Jesus you will be saved, if not you shall be lost.

CHAPTER 8: INTOXICATING GRACE (IRRESISTIBLE GRACE)

- I. God’s grace is not irresistible because it overpowers us like a bully, but intoxicates us with joy.
 - A. Like a drunk who’s under the influence of booze but still at fault in behavior, sin intoxicates us.
 - B. We need an intoxication of God’s Spirit to turn us from the intoxication of sin to grace.
- II. Redemption Applied
 - A. God’s grace works! It worked at the cross and it works when the Holy Spirit transforms us.

- B. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus when the Holy Spirit moves.
- C. God has taken steps in securing our adoption into his family.

III. Resurrection

- A. Because we are dead in transgression and sin we have to be given new life from outside.
- B. We need to be born again, or more literally, “from above.”
- C. In our first birth, we came into the family of fallen Adam.
- D. In our second birth, we are raised from the dead without our help into the family of God’s grace.

IV. Our Calling Decreed

- A. We do not cast the deciding ballot between God and Satan for fate of our souls.
- B. God has decreed the number that will be saved, and he will make sure of their salvation.

V. Our Calling Secured

- A. The work of our savior was the payment of our ransom from judgment and condemnation.
- B. Being born again is the beginning of the experience of that freedom secured in him.
- C. Everything we lost in the fall has been purchased back for us by the death of Christ.
- D. By being bought with a price, however, we now are property of the buyer, Jesus Christ.

VI. Called to Glory

- A. When we humble ourselves by dependence on Christ, he exalts us to glory.
- B. Glorification is our ultimate destination, just as Jesus died, rose, and ascended on high.

- C. God is holy, and on our own we cannot come into glory, but we can through Christ.

VII. The Holy Spirit and Human Response

- A. God does not drag people kicking and screaming into heaven — he changes their will.
- B. Just as we reject Christ due to our sinful will, when he changes it, we accept him freely.
- C. So our choice is not the determining factor in our salvation, but, again, God's grace.
- D. Regeneration is irresistible only because regenerating God is irresistible.

VIII. God's Part and Our Part

- A. Not only is God's grace a gift of God to our salvation, our faith is also a gift of God.
- B. If we contribute anything to salvation, it is the sin for which Christ had to atone!

IX. The Role of Faith

- A. We are saved first and foremost by the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.
- B. We are declared righteous because of what Christ has done, not our acceptance of what Christ has done.

X. The Whosoever Wills

- A. God makes the invitation universal so that the Holy Spirit may also get the message to the elect.
- B. Also, it can be said that the unbeliever is without excuse because the offer was presented.
- C. Those who go to hell have no one to blame but themselves; those who go to heaven have no one to praise but Jesus Christ. God's love has captured us and our lives will never be same.

CHAPTER 9: RIGHTEOUS SINNERS (THROUGH CHRIST, WE ARE JUSTIFIED, YET SINNERS STILL)

- I. The Medieval church taught justification happened at the end of a person's life — last rites.

- A. Grace was seen as an “energy boost” that helped us to do better than what we could do ourselves.
- B. Reformers using Scriptures showed grace was actually God’s attitude toward us.
- C. Even while sinners, through the gift of grace through faith, we can know Christ died for us.
- D. The Medieval church talked of grace imparted; Reformers talked of grace imputed.

II. Original Sin

- A. Our view of grace is rooted in our understanding of sin.
- B. Before conversion, Luther hated God because he demanded holiness Luther couldn’t do.
- C. He knew Anselm’s words: “You have not yet considered how great your sin is.”
- D. Those who believe they can keep from sin on their own actually have a “low” view of sin.
- E. We have original sin, that is, “we sin because we are sinners.” Imparted grace won’t do.

III. Justification by Faith Alone

- A. Rome believed in grace-empowered works, not the biblical idea of grace as God’s best for us.
- B. The Biblical idea is an “alien righteousness” from God placed in account of our lives.
- C. We not only have a pile of unpaid “sin” bills, we owe God a surplus of holiness we can’t pay.
- D. Disobedience of one man made us sinners; obedience of one man will make us righteous.

IV. Sin and the Christian Life

- A. Despite how Christ’s imputed righteousness covers us, there is still a sinner underneath.

- B. Even believers like King David knew he was still a sinner, though saved by grace.
- C. Paul is speaking to believers in Rom. 7 as “I do what I hate and don’t do what I should.”
- D. A Biblically realistic view of sanctification takes seriously Christian’s internal war with sin.

V. Union with Christ

- A. If we’re still going to be sinners after receiving justification, why pursue goodness?
- B. When we are justified we are made one with Christ and he would work through us.
- C. Guilt imputed to us through Adam was charged to Christ, and righteousness of Christ imputed to us.
- D. Once we are united with Christ by imputation, then he imparts to us fruit of righteousness.

VI. Christ Alone

- A. Ephesians puts union with Christ in a nutshell: chosen, predestined, adopted, etc, in him.
- B. Often, we use Christ to get blessings, rather than rest in Christ as our blessing, the one necessary blessing in our lives.
- C. We should shout with the Reformers “solus Christus” (Christ alone) — for the Holy Spirit points to him.
- D. Today, many seek an experience with God apart from Christ the Mediator.
- E. We become obsessed with faith as a subjective act rather than an object of faith: Jesus Christ.

VII. Savior but Not Lord?

- A. A lordship-salvation debate is raging and there are dangers on both sides.
- B. Some say we can embrace Christ as savior without making him Lord of our lives.
- C. Others say that is a “devil’s faith,” real faith is not just deliverance from but commitment to.

- D. Christ is Savior and Lord whether we want to make him both or neither.
 - 1. To Savior-only camp: God's goal in saving is to bring us in union with the sovereign Christ.
 - 2. To lordship camp: Faith is knowledge, assent and trust. Obedience is a fruit of grace.
- E. To those who possess true, saving faith, the fruit of obedience will inevitably follow.

VIII. Piety versus Pietism

- A. The term "piety" has fallen on hard times in public understanding, but it is a biblical idea.
- B. During post-Reformation lull in zeal, a Pietistic movement rose to restore thirst for holiness.
- C. In reaction to what it saw as "dead orthodoxy" it tended to promote "simple faith."
- D. In doing so it became "legalistic, moralistic and at times cultic" by low view of grace.
- E. Pietism is different than true, biblical piety, or godliness, which is "a fruit of the Spirit."
- F. Biblical piety is engaged with the world because it is in imitation of the God who "did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

IX. Let Go and Let God?

- A. Election is not an excuse for fatalism-for "letting go and letting God."
- B. True regeneration by grace of God working in us makes us truly active in producing fruit.
- C. So, we do not cooperate in our regeneration, but we do in our Christian growth.

X. The Victorious Christian Life

- A. Pietists such as Wesley believed in "second blessing" leading to "perfect sanctification."

- B. Two stage view of Christian life causes increasing confusion between grace and works.
- C. Terms such as “surrender, yield, lay all at the altar” grew popular, words that denote something a believer has to “do” to be truly godly.
- D. This view does not deal seriously with pervasiveness of sin even in mature believers.
- E. It also does not deal with the strict demands of the Law of God or complete trust in Christ’s work to fulfill it for us. Salvation is of him, not of us.

XI. Christian Liberty

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter 1

Holy Scripture

1. Natural revelation so displays God’s goodness so that there is no excuse for not believing in him. Yet, God has revealed himself to human beings in spoken revelation which he then committed to writing in Holy Scripture. It is the truth of God to establish and comfort his church.
2. The 66 Books of the Hebrew Old Testament (39 Books: Genesis to Malachi) and Greek New Testament (27 Books: Matthew to Revelation) comprise the Holy Scripture.
3. The Apocrypha is not divinely inspired and is to be considered no more than human writing.
4. God is the author of Scripture, the Word of God, and as such it is truth to be believed and obeyed.
5. So many things commend Scripture to us from its subject matter, to its teachability, to its majestic style, to its remarkable cohesiveness, to its aim to give glory to God, to its saving revelation, and its perfection. What assures us that it is God’s infallibly true and authoritative Word is the Holy Spirit, who speaks by and with the Word in our hearts.
6. The Scripture lays out God’s glorious purpose and will for us either explicitly or by logical deduction. Nothing new can be added to it. This does not negate the work of the Holy Spirit, which gives us saving understanding of God’s written revelation. Church government and worship should conform to general

rules of God's Word, though these items may not be explicitly spelled out in the Word.

7. The Scripture reveals the plan of salvation so clearly that everyone can grasp it, although some points of doctrine may be more obscure to some than to others.
8. The Scripture in its original languages of Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament were directly inspired by God and are uncontaminated by special providence of God. (This is a form of the doctrine of inerrancy.) God's people of every tongue have a right and duty to read and know God's Word, so translations are necessary to edify the people of God.
9. The infallible standard for interpretation of the Bible is the Bible itself.
10. The Holy Spirit speaking in the Bible is the supreme judge in all religious controversies, councils, opinions of the ancients, human teaching and private opinion. He will judge and we must submit to him.

Chapter 2

God and the Holy Trinity

1. There is only one true God, completely holy, completely absolute, completely loving and completely true. He is a just judge who nevertheless is forgiving and merciful to those who diligently seek him.
2. God is the only all-sufficient source of all life. He needs nothing from his creation, but his creation needs everything from him and any worship, service or obedience God requires from his creation is due him.
3. The Godhead is a unity of three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, one in substance, power and eternity. The Father exists from all eternity, without generation. The Son is eternally generated from the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally comes from the Father and the Son.

Chapter 3

God's Eternal Decrees

1. God has eternally ordained all that has happened by the completely wise and holy purpose of his will. He is nevertheless not the author of sin, nor does he repress the will of his created beings or take away the contingency of secondary causes. Rather, he is the Author of the created beings' will and contingency of secondary causes.
2. God is omniscient and knows whatsoever will come to pass without having to respond to foreseen circumstances.

3. God has predestined some men and angels to everlasting life and foreordained others to everlasting death, to manifest his glory.
4. God has predestined the precise number to each group and this will not change.
5. God has predestined those who would be in Christ and share in his life and everlasting glory. This is solely an act of sovereign grace and not because of some foreseen faith on their part.
6. God has predestined the means of election, effectual calling, adoption, sanctification and salvation unto eternal glory of those predestined to be in Christ.
7. God has called the rest of humankind to suffer his wrath for their sin, to hidden purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious justice.
8. This doctrine should be treated with discretion so that it may be a source of encouragement for those who are humble and diligent in following the gospel, that they might find an assurance of their effectual calling.

Chapter 4 Creation

1. The Triune God, in the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, created the world, and everything in it, out of nothing, in six days, and pronounced it very good.
2. God created man, male and female, as the last work of creation. They had immortal souls, and were endowed with his image. He wrote his law in their hearts and gave them free will to either obey or disobey it. They were commanded not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and as long as they obeyed they had happy fellowship with God and dominion over the other creatures.

Chapter 5 Providence

1. God the creator is also God the sustainer. He directs regulates and governs everything by his wise and holy providence. This is perfectly consistent with his sovereign will.
2. God is the first cause and orders things to happen from secondary causes, some things inevitably, some things possibly others provisionally depending on other conditions.
3. God uses ordinary means to work out his providence, but he is free to choose whatsoever means he wills.

4. God's providence is so all-encompassing, it extends even to the fall and the sins of his creatures, which he manages without the sin being approved of or proceeding from him.
5. God's providence allows even the temptation of his own children, so they may be chastised, and to reveal their weaknesses so they may be humbled. But this is used of God to draw us closer to him and more aware of the subtle power of sin.
6. God's providence also allows the wicked and ungodly to sin so that they may become even more hardened of heart.
7. God's providence is especially present for his church to its good.

Chapter 6

The Fall of Man, Sin and the Punishment for Sin

1. Satan led our first parents astray. God allowed this to happen to reveal his glory.
2. This sin caused them to fall completely from their righteousness and God's fellowship, both in body and soul.
3. Because Adam and Eve are the "root of all mankind" all humanity inherits the same consequences of their sin completely.
4. This original sin keeps us from doing any good and actually pushes us to sin.
5. Even those made alive in Christ, still carry this corrupt nature in them until death.
6. Every sin, from original to present, violates God's law and brings guilt, the wrath of God and the curse of the law on the sinner unto misery and death.

Chapter 7

God's Covenant with Man

1. God condescends to his creation man, to bless him by means of covenants.
2. The first covenant with man was a covenant of "works" in which Adam was promised life upon condition of perfect, personal obedience.
3. Adam fell and could no longer uphold the covenant, so God made a covenant of grace through Jesus Christ. Those whom God calls to faith in Christ will receive life and salvation, which he will grant through the giving of the Holy Spirit.

4. This covenant of grace is called in Scripture a testament of the crucified Christ, through whom our everlasting inheritance is secured.
5. The covenant of grace was first administered under the law, or Old Testament, through prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the Passover lamb and other signs given to the Jewish people. It was a foreshadow of the coming Messiah, and by the Spirit God was able to tutor the elect to put their faith in that coming one.
6. Under the gospel, or New Testament, Christ himself appeared as the substance of God's grace. The covenant of grace is administered in these times as: preaching and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Though fewer in number and more simple in form, they are more universal, to both Jew and Gentile and more fully developed as sign of the covenant of grace. Both administrations, though different in dispensation, are the same covenant of grace.

Chapter 8

Christ the Mediator

1. God chose Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be mediator of the covenant between God and man.
2. Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. He came to man as a man, with every frailty of man except sin. He came into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Virgin Mary. He held the two distinct natures of God and man together without alteration, disunity or jumbling. Truly God and truly man, one Christ and the only mediator.
3. Jesus was anointed with the full power of the Holy Spirit, sanctified and indwelt with all the fullness of God. As such, he was completely equipped to fulfill the office of mediator which he was called to undertake by the Father in all power and judgment.
4. The Lord Jesus took on this office voluntarily, perfectly fulfilling the law, being crucified, dying and being buried. He was under death's power for three days, not seeing decay, but arising from the dead, ascending to heaven and sitting on the right hand of God interceding for believers and one day returning to judge all in his same body in which he suffered and died.
5. Through his perfect obedience and sacrifice, the Lord Jesus was the final atonement for the believer, purchasing both reconciliation and eternal life with God.
6. Though this redemptive work was not done until his incarnation, Christ was the lamb slain from the beginning of the world, the protoevangelion whom bruise the serpent's head, the same yesterday, today and forever.

7. Each nature of Christ did the work which was proper to it, though Scripture, seeing the unity of the person sometimes accords the work of one to the other.
8. Christ makes sure that everyone who is to benefit from his redemptive work actually does benefit from it, by the power of his Word and Spirit working in their hearts.

Chapter 9

Free Will

1. God has given man a will which is neither forced nor inclined to good or evil.
2. Before the fall, man had freedom to do what pleases God. God made him so that he could lose that freedom.
3. By his disobedience man has fallen into sin and cannot do what is spiritually good.
4. When God brings a sinner into a state of saving grace, he frees him from the bondage to sin and by his grace enables him to once again do what is good. However, since the old nature still remains, man cannot do good consistently or perfectly.
5. Man will enter into perfect goodness only in the state of glory.

Chapter 10

Effectual Calling

1. It is God who effectually calls those whom he has predestined to life at the right time appointed by him. Though he calls them to Christ and makes them willing by his grace, it is they who voluntarily come.
2. This is a free act of God's grace, not dependent on anything he foresaw in the person he calls. He does this by calling each person by the power of his Holy Spirit.
3. Any of the elect, infant or adult, who die before hearing the Word, will be regenerated and saved by Christ if they are to be in him.
4. Those who are not the elect, cannot be saved, though they may manifest some of the same work of the Spirit shown in the elect. This is true whether they are in the church, or in another religion. It is especially harmful to say they can be saved through another faith.

Chapter 11

Justification

1. Those whom God has effectually called to believe in God through Jesus Christ will be justified by God and be seen as righteous in his sight. This is not from any action that the person can take, not from God infusing righteousness into the person, but from the imputed righteousness of Christ being received by faith given the person as a gift from God.
2. The person who is justified has been so by faith alone. Yet, this faith is not an empty faith, but one full of grace made evident in works of love.
3. Christ by his obedient death, fully paid the debt of sin owed by the justified to the just Father. Because God gave Jesus to pay the debt of the sinner, it is an act of free grace which displays the glory of God in the justified sinner.
4. Christ died and rose again to justify the elect. Though the elect were marked by God to receive this justification from all eternity, it does not take effect until the Holy Spirit applies Christ in them.
5. The just can never lose their justification, but they can so displease the Father that they will need to humble themselves, confess, repent and be renewed in their faith.
6. This same justification that was in the New Testament was at work in the Old Testament.

Chapter 12

Adoption

1. Those whom God calls and justifies, he adopts as his children, with all the liberties, privileges, access to God's throne, protection, providence and discipline as any child of a father, never to be forsaken and heirs of the promise of everlasting salvation.

Chapter 13

Sanctification

1. Those who, once effectually called and justified, will find themselves growing in their person by the power of Christ's death and resurrection, through his Word and Spirit dwelling in him. They will find the grip of sin destroyed, their besetting lusts weakening and the grace which makes us holy strengthening that they might see God on the last day.
2. Though this sanctification is thorough, yet it is imperfect in this life with the flesh and Spirit contending with each other throughout the believer's life.

3. Though this war will continue between flesh and Spirit, the Spirit of Christ will advance and prevail, helping the believer mature in holiness by God's grace.

Chapter 14 Saving Faith

1. Saving faith, which is a gift of grace to the elect, is delivered by means of the ministry of the Word (preaching), the sacraments and prayer. These means do not only deliver saving grace, they strengthen it in the elect as well.
2. By this saving faith, the believer accepts the truth of God's Word, acts upon it in accordance with what each part of it communicates, and especially the complete work of Christ unto eternal life in the covenant of grace.
3. This faith is sometimes weak, other times strong in the life of the believer, but will win the victory in Christ, for he is the Author and finisher of our faith.

Chapter 15 Repentance Leading to Life

1. Repentance unto life is a part of grace to be preached just as is faith in Christ.
2. By this grace of repentance, a sinner comes to hate his sin as an affront to a holy God, turn from it, receive God's mercy in Christ and commit to walk in the way of God's commandments.
3. Though repentance is not saving grace in itself, it is a necessary step to receiving that saving grace in Christ.
4. No sin is too small to escape damnation, and no sin is too large to be forgiven in the truly penitent.
5. Every sinner has a duty to be specific in the sins from which he repents.
6. Though a sinner may find God's forgiveness in private confession to him, he should also seek reconciliation with those he has offended by his sins, whether it is private or public.

Chapter 16 Good Works

1. Good works are those works ordained by God in his Word.
2. These good works are the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith, when done in obedience to God's commandments. Believers, through them, show their thankfulness, strengthen assurance of salvation, edify their brothers,

become ornaments of gospel, silence the enemies of the gospel and glorify God by showing they are God's workmanship in Jesus Christ.

3. Believers are empowered to do good works only by the Spirit of Christ. Yet, they must not be passive or lazy in awaiting instructions, but diligent to seek them out.
4. Even those believers who do their best to obey God fall short in this life.
5. Even our best works, by themselves, cannot save us. There is a great gulf between our best and God's glory.
6. If we are accepted by God through Jesus Christ, our works will be accepted as well. Even imperfect. God looks at them in his Son.
7. True faith before good works; even well done good works.

Chapter 17

The Perseverance of the Saints

1. Those truly saved cannot completely fall away from God's grace.
2. This endurance of saints does not come from saints themselves but from God's decree of election, the intercession of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
3. Nevertheless, believers can seriously sin for a time and displease God and bring temporal judgment on themselves.

Chapter 18

The Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, honestly love him and try to walk in good conscience before him, may be assured with certainty they are in a state of grace.
2. This certainty is not based on fallible presumptions but on divine faith, divine promises (Scripture), inward witness of the Spirit which is our pledge of salvation.
3. This infallible assurance is not so essential that a believer may not have doubts about their faith and need to grow into it. But they can grow into it without any unusual revelation. In fact, the believer, by ordinary Christian living may secure it.

4. This assurance can be shaken because of neglect of spiritual things, sinfulness, temptation, or God withdrawing the sense of his presence. But they are never without it even in a bare form.

Chapter 19

The Law of God

1. God gave Adam a law as covenant of works. Life for keeping it, death for disobeying.
2. After the fall, law continued to perfect. It was given by God on Mount Sinai in the Ten Commandments on two tablets. The first four are obligations to God, the remaining six are obligations to human beings.
3. God also gave moral laws and ceremonial laws. Many ceremonial laws foreshadow Christ. The ceremonial laws are now nullified under the New Testament.
4. God also gave Israelites, as a political body, judicial laws. They expired with biblical Israel.
5. The moral law is still in effect, and the gospel of Christ in fact strengthens it.
6. True believers are not justified or condemned by law, but it is useful to them and others: As a tutor of God's holiness, as a revealer of their sinful nature, the punishment for it, and the need to restrain it, and as a reminder of their need for a Savior.
7. None of these uses of the law are contrary to the grace of the gospel, but instead comply with it, as Christ's Spirit enables us to do by faith through grace, what we are otherwise incapable of doing.

Chapter 20

Christian Freedom and Freedom of Conscience

1. Christ has won for believers, freedom from the guilt of sin and the condemning wrath of God and the curse of the moral law. In Christ, believers have free access to God.
2. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines which are contrary to his Word. Requiring men to do what is contrary to God's Word destroys this freedom.
3. Nourishing sin under freedom of conscience destroys concept of Christian freedom.
4. Christian freedom and civil authority should work hand-in-hand.

Chapter 21

Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

1. God has given us in our natural understanding the capacity to know of him and his attributes. Such a God should be worshiped, and he has revealed in Scripture the proper way to worship him. No other way of worshiping is acceptable.
2. Worship is due to the triune God alone and not to any of his created order. All worship since the fall of Adam must involve a mediator and the one true mediator is Christ alone.
3. Grateful prayer is one part of true worship and is actually required by God from everyone. Acceptable prayer is in the name of Jesus, by help of the Spirit, according to God's will, with a balance of understanding, reverence, humility, fervor, faith, love and perseverance. If spoken, it should be in an understandable language.
4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things, for those who are alive or in the process. Prayer is not to be made for the dead or those who committed the unpardonable sin.
5. Ordinary worship includes: Reading and preaching of Scripture, obedient listening to it with faith, singing of psalms with grace in the heart, and the proper administration of the sacraments Christ instituted. Religious oaths and vows, fasting, and thanksgiving on special occasions can be included at appropriate times and in the proper manner.
6. Under the gospel, there is no place to worship that is considered more holy than any other. God is to be worshiped in Spirit and in truth everywhere: As families or individuals in daily, private gatherings, or in regular public gatherings, which we are called to join and not neglect.
7. Appropriate time should be set apart for the worship of God. This is why God commanded that man keep a Sabbath. From creation to Christ's resurrection, the Sabbath was Saturday (the last day of the week). Since Christ's resurrection it is now Sunday (aka the Lord's Day) and is to be kept until the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.
8. The Sabbath is kept holy by preparing our hearts, arranging our schedule around it, and resting from the fever of life for that day. That day should be set aside for acts of worship and mercy.

Chapter 22

Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. Lawful oaths are part of worship, and may on proper occasions be made as a witness by God that what they are saying is true and to judge them accordingly.
2. The name of God is the only name by which men should swear. That name is to be used reverently, not vainly or rashly. The legitimate civil authorities may require a lawful oath on occasion and a believer may take it.
3. Oaths are not to be taken lightly and must be sworn only to what is true. No one may bind himself to an oath that he knows is not true and cannot keep. It is a sin to refuse to swear an oath to anything that is good and true when required by lawful authority.
4. An oath must say what it means and mean what it says in plain manner and without mental gymnastics. It cannot obligate one to sin, but if the oath does not include what is sinful, must be performed even to one's harm and not broken, even if made to the ungodly.
5. A vow is similar to an oath that promises something and performed with similar care.
6. A vow is made to no one but God, and is to be made voluntarily as a thanksgiving for something received or a petition for something wanted. A vow binds us more strictly to what is promised for the term of the vow.
7. No one may vow to do what God's Word forbids, including duties commanded in God's Word, or what is not in our power to do anyway and is not warranted by God to do. An example is monastic vows of celibacy, poverty and consistent obedience.

Chapter 23

Civil Authorities

1. God has ordained civil authority for his own glory and the public good. Civil authority is given martial power to defend and encourage good and punish wrongdoers.
2. Christians, when called by God, accept and perform in civil office. They are to support "true religion, justice and peace according to the beneficial laws of each government" and may engage in just wars as proscribed in the New Testament.
3. Civil authorities are not to become the church or interfere with it, but are to protect the church, regardless of denomination, so the believer may function in freedom. Civil law may not abridge church government, making sure that each

person is treated equally under the law, whether a believer or not. Civil authority is to guarantee the peaceful assembly of believers.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for the civil authorities, to honor them, pay taxes, obey lawful commands and be subject to them “for conscience’s sake.” Civil authority must be obeyed, even if it is totally secular or under a different religious belief. Even the clergy must obey it. Papal power does not trump civil authority anywhere for any reason.

Chapter 24

Marriage and Divorce

1. Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, designed of God to last as long as they both shall live.
2. Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife, in developing their moral and spiritual character and for producing and raising children in the way of the Lord.
3. All people who are willing and able to may marry (except for those blood relationships prohibited in Scripture) and such marriages will be counted as valid before God by the church. No marriage can be truly Christian “in spirit and purpose” unless both partners are committed to a common evangelical Christian faith. So, committed, evangelical Christians should seek each other out as partners in marriage.
4. Christian marriage has religious as well as civil significance. When the church performs the marriage it displays the divine institution of it, including the invoking of God’s blessing upon the couple according to God’s word, to hear the vows being made, and to assure the married partners of God’s grace in their new estate.
5. God intends for the married couple to remain united throughout their lives, separated only by death. However, human weakness “may lead to gross or persistent denial of the marriage vows.” Yet, only in extreme, unrepentant and irreparable physical or spiritual unfaithfulness should separation or divorce be considered. Such separation may be permissible because of failure of one or both partners but does not lessen the divine intention for permanent union.
6. Remarriage of divorced persons may be permitted by the church as a sign of “the redemptive gospel of Christ” when attendant penitence for sin and failure is present, and a firm commitment to Christian marriage is shown.
7. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to see if God’s purpose for them is best served by remaining unmarried, since failure of marriage may be a sign that God is closing that door for them.

Chapter 25

The Church

1. The universal church is invisible and “consists of all the elect who have been, are, or ever will be gathered into one under Christ, the head.” The church is his body, his bride, the repository of God’s fullness, “who fills all in all.”
2. The visible church is also universal in that it is multi-ethnic and national, rather than just one nation under Moses’ Law. It consists of everyone who professes true faith and their children. The visible church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, and the ordinary human agent of salvation.
3. Christ has equipped the visible Church with the ministry of Word and Sacrament “in order to gather and perfect the saints in this life until the end of the world,” and “by his own presence and Spirit” enables the church to do this as he promised.
4. The universal Church has sometimes been more, sometimes less, visible, and each particular church in it has been “also more or less pure” dependent on the reception and teaching of the gospel, the administration of the Sacraments and performance of worship.
5. Even the purest churches contain impurity and error. Some churches have so degenerated that they are now “synagogues of Satan.” Yet, there will still be a church on earth that worships God “according to his will.”
6. “There is no other head of the church than the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Chapter 26

The Fellowship of the Saints

1. Jesus Christ as head of the Church, unites all believers by his Spirit and faith, and so “have fellowship with him in his grace, suffering, death resurrection and glory.” So also believers are united to each other in love and have fellowship “in each other’s gifts and grace” and are bound to perform those duties “which nourish their mutual good, both spiritually and physically.”
2. Professing Christians are bound to maintaining a “holy fellowship and communion with each other,” in worship, in edification, in temporal help “according to their different abilities and needs.” This fellowship should be pervasive as God gives it the opportunity.
3. Though believers are in communion with Christ in this fellowship, they are not equal with him. Though they are in communion with each other, believers do not have to hold their goods and property communally.

Chapter 27

The Sacraments

1. "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." They were instituted by God along with the covenant as a representation of Christ and his benefits, as a confirmation of them to us, as demonstration of those who are of his Church and those who are not, and to be a solemn sign to "engage believers in the service of God in Christ according to his word."
2. "In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified." And so they are mutually attributable.
3. The grace of the sacrament does not derive from any power in the elements of them, or the piety of the one who administers them, but in the work of the Spirit according to God's Word.
4. There are only two sacraments which Christ ordained in the gospel: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Ordinarily, they may be administered only by a "lawfully ordained minister of the word."
5. The Old Testament sacraments (*i.e.* circumcision and Passover) signify the same things as their New Testament counterparts.

Chapter 28

Baptism

1. Baptism is a New Testament sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ. baptism is the admitting ordinance into the visible Church, the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of the believer's ingrafting into Christ, of rebirth, remission of sins and of "the believer's yielding to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life."
2. Water is to be used in the sacrament of baptism and the person is to be baptized in the Triune name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, ordinarily by a minister of the gospel.
3. Dipping the person in water is not necessary; pouring or sprinkling is sufficient.
4. Not only professing believers are to be baptized in obedience to Christ, but the infants of a believing parent as well.
5. "Although it is a great sin to condemn or neglect this sacrament," baptism is not the same as God's saving grace. One can be saved without baptism, and one can be baptized without being saved.

6. Baptism's effectiveness "is not tied to that moment in which it is administered." However, used correctly, it's promised grace is not only offered but actually conferred by the Holy Spirit to everyone (adult or infant) to whom it is given, subject to "the purpose of God's own will and in his appointed time."
7. "The sacrament of baptism should be administered only once to each person."

Chapter 29

The Lord's Supper

1. The sacrament of Christ's body and blood was instituted on the night he was betrayed and is to be observed in his church until the end of the world. It is "a perpetual remembrance of his sacrifice in death and as the seal of all the benefits of that sacrifice for true believers." It also is a sign for believers of growth and obedience to Jesus as well as union with him and "each other as members of his mystical body."
2. This is not an ongoing sacrifice of Christ, but commemorates his once-and-for-all self-offering on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, and so is also a praise for that sacrifice. Therefore, Roman Catholic notions of perpetual sacrifice of the Mass "does detestable injustice" to the sole-sufficient, soul-saving sacrifice of Christ.
3. Jesus directed his ministers to administer the Supper by declaring his words of institution, to pray, to bless the bread and wine, by which they are set apart from ordinary use. His ministers are to take both bread and cup and give both to the communicants present in the congregation, but not to anyone thereafter privately.
4. Private masses, denying the cup to the congregation and worshipping bread and wine by elevating them in adoration or other inappropriate use of them are contrary to Christ's intent for this sacrament.
5. The substances used are still properly bread and wine, even though they so signify the sacrifice of Christ they may be truly called his body and his blood.
6. Transubstantiation (the doctrine that bread and wine become actual body and blood of Christ) by consecration of priest or any other means "is objectionable not only to Scripture but even to common sense and reason." It overturns the nature of the sacrament and leads to idolatry and superstition.
7. "Worthy receivers" by faith "spiritually receive and feed on Christ crucified and on all the benefits of his death." The body and blood of Christ are not physically present with the elements, but "spiritually present to the faith of believers" in the sacrament, just as bread and wine are present to them.

8. Though the wicked and ignorant may take the Supper, they do not receive what is signified by them, and actually bring down judgment on themselves. If they are allowed to partake of it, they commit “a great sin against Christ.”

Chapter 30

Condemnation by the Church

1. Jesus Christ, king and head of the Church, has established church government through church officers, as distinct from civil authority.
2. These officers are given “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” by which they may free or bind people to the guilt of their sin, to condemn the unrepentant or open it to the repentant by the ministry of the gospel and removal of condemnation.
3. “Condemnation by the church is necessary in order to reclaim and regain spiritual brothers who have committed some serious offense,” as a deterrent to others, to “purge the leaven which might contaminate the whole lump,” to uphold the honor of Christ and his gospel, and to avoid God’s wrath, which may fall on the church for allowing “obstinate offenders” to offend “his covenant and sacraments.”
4. The officers of the church accomplish these purposes best by acting appropriately to the offense and guilt of the offender by warning, exclusion from the Supper or ultimately excommunication from the church.

Chapter 31

Synods and Councils

1. Church assemblies should be held “for the better government and continuing improvement of the church.” The officers of each particular church, by the power Christ has given them in their office, “should arrange for such assemblies and meet together in them as often as is judged necessary for the good of the church.”
2. Synods and councils bear the responsibility to settle controversies of faith in matters of conscience, set down rules and directions for better administration of worship and government, and judge complaints about maladministration. “If these decisions conform to the word of God, they are to be accepted reverently and submissively” because they not only conform to the word but are given by authority of his word.
3. All councils may err, “and many have.” Synods and councils are therefore not the final authority on faith and life, but aids to both.

4. Synods and councils should consider and settle only ecclesiastical questions and are not to meddle in civil affairs, except in the case of modest petitions or advisement when requested by civil authorities.

Chapter 32

The Condition of Man after Death and the Resurrection of the Dead

1. The physical body decomposes and returns to dust, but the soul is immortal and returns to God. The righteous are received into heaven in perfect holiness to see the face of God and wait for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are thrown into hell, in torment, until the Day of Judgment. Only heaven and hell are recognized in Scripture as places of residence for souls separated from their bodies.
2. Those alive on the last day will not die but will be changed. At that time all the dead will be raised in their same bodies, though with different characteristics, to be united to them forever.
3. "By the power of Christ" the unjust will be raised in their bodies to dishonor, but "by his Spirit" the just will be raised in bodies of honor that reflect "the pattern of his own glorious body."

Chapter 33

The Last Judgment

1. "God the Father has ordained a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom he has given all power and judgment." This judgment will be not only of angels but every person who has ever lived, to give account of every thought, word or action done in their body, "whether good or evil."
2. God's purpose is to show forth "the glory of his mercy" in salvation to the elect and "the glory of his justice" in damnation to the reprobate. The righteous will go to everlasting life in the presence of the Lord, but the wicked will go to eternal torment and punishment away from the presence of the Lord.
3. "Christ wants us to be completely convinced that there is going to be a day of judgment" to deter us from sin and a "consolation for the godly in their suffering." He has hidden the day, so we may not become too comfortable in the world, but alert to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."

Chapter 34

The Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity, proceeds from, is of the same substance and equal in power and glory, and is to be trusted, loved, obeyed and worshipped forever together with the Father and the Son.

2. "He is the Lord and giver of life," omnipresent, and the source of every good thought, pure desire and holy counsel in us. He moved prophets to speak God's word, and writers of Scripture to infallibly record God's word. The spread of the gospel is especially entrusted to him as he prepares the way for it, accompanies it with persuasive power, urges it upon our reason and conscience, so that those who reject it have no excuse and are actually guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit, who is given by God to any who ask him, is the efficacious agent in redemption. He regenerates believers by his grace, convicting of sin, moving to repent, and persuading and making able to embrace Christ by faith. He unites believers to Christ, dwells in them giving comfort and making them holy, gives them the spirit of adoption and prayer, and performs all these things by which the believer is therefore sealed "unto the day of redemption."
4. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit unites us both to Christ our head, and to each other in the Church his body. He calls and anoints ministers, qualifies other officers for their special work, and gives gifts and graces to the church's members. He makes the word of the gospel go forth and preserves and purifies the church to be in God's presence.

Chapter 35

The Gospel of the Love of God and Missions

1. God, in his perfect love, in the covenant of grace, through the mediator Christ, as "a way of life and salvation, sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man, freely offers this salvation to all men in the gospel."
2. God declares his love for the world and desires that all men should be saved, reveals clearly the only way of salvation, promises eternal life in Christ to the truly repentant, invites and commands all to embrace his offered mercy, and by his Spirit in the word actually "pleads with men to accept his gracious invitation" in the gospel.
3. "It is the duty and privilege of everyone who hears the gospel immediately to accept its merciful provisions" and those who continue in unbelief just aggravate their perishing situation.
4. "Since there is no other way of salvation than that revealed in the gospel," which comes by grace through faith in hearing God's word, the agent of the gospel, his church, is commissioned "to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." All believers are called "to contribute by their prayers, gifts and personal efforts to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth" including where they are established.

EPC BOOK OF ORDER COMPARED WITH THE PC(USA)

There are many similarities between the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Book of Order (EPC) and the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order (PCUSA). After all, they both came from the same roots in the Reformation at Geneva, Switzerland of the 16th Century that was founded by John Calvin and then spread to Scotland and Northern Ireland through one of Calvin's disciples, John Knox.

Nevertheless, in the last several years, especially, the EPC and PC(USA) Books of Order have some differences that are reflections of the different paths they have chosen to take as organizations and fellowships of faith. The differences might be categorized briefly as: 1) Terminology, 2) Emphasis and 3) Procedure.

TERMINOLOGY

Terminology may seem to some a minor matter: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. However, what we name something does have an effect on how we view it. The EPC draws heavily on the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) terminology throughout, beginning with Chapter One of the Book of Government, when it talks of the visible and invisible churches. Unlike the PCUSA, which intimates that every person in the church who professes faith in the Lord Jesus is a believer (G-4. 0100), the EPC is much more realistic about the human heart and people's motives for being in the church.

Some are true believers and some are there for other reasons, and it uses WCF to say so. The PCUSA begins by lifting up the Reformed Confessions it holds as part of its constitution, and then largely ignores them throughout the rest of the document.

The EPC also uses the terms Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder throughout. Like the PCUSA, it also uses Ministers and Pastors to refer to clergy, but the PCUSA only refers to those terms once in a parenthetical statement and uses instead Minister of the Word and Elder. The EPC seems to want to emphasize the similarities in office and responsibility and joint duties of both rather than their differences and the authority of the one over the other. The same can be said of the use of the term "court of the church" for Session, Presbytery and General Assembly. Again, the PCUSA refers to the term once, opting for governing body as its usual term, while the EPC uses "court" constantly, reminding the reader of the duties of the governing body to deliberate decisions.

EMPHASIS

As to emphasis: it is clear from early on in the EPC, that the primary task of the church, after worshipping God regularly, is evangelism. It is said in BOG Chapters 4-3 (duties of a particular church), 16-10.B (duties of a Session), 16-16.F (duties of a Presbytery), 16-22.F (duties of a General Assembly) of the Book of Government,

Chapter 2-1 of the Book of Discipline and Chapter 7-2 of the Book of Worship. The PCUSA enumerates it as one of the duties of Session in Chapter 10 (G-10.0102a) of its Book of Government, and in its list of services in Chapter 7 (W-7.2000) of the Directory for Worship.

As the above use of terminology suggests, there is a greater emphasis on Ruling Elders' participation in the life of the church in the EPC than the PCUSA. Ruling Elders are to be involved in a two-to-one ratio to Teaching Elders in governing bodies in EPC, rather than one-to-one in PCUSA.

The terminology "court" reminds those who read the EPC, that the Ruling and Teaching elders are to exercise discipline for the good of the church and the glory of God. Both BOOs have a Book of Discipline, but the PCUSA is a much more technical document, seemingly written by lawyers, for lawyers, with an eye toward protecting governing bodies against civil lawsuits, while the EPC understands it is a moral and spiritual court. The PCUSA speaks of two types of judicial cases: remedial and discipline. The EPC makes those distinctions as well, but enumerates the three types of disciplinary cases, Heresy, Immorality and Contempt for the Court, while the PCUSA is more vague, leaving the charge in the hands of "the harmed."

PROCEDURE

This is where Terminology and Emphasis "grow legs." The terminology of the WCF, Visible and Invisible Church, Teaching and Ruling Elders and Court, the emphasis on Evangelism, Scriptural Discipline and the Integrity of the office of Ruling Elder lead to certain actions being laid out for EPC churches.

First is the matter of the relationship of the denomination to its particular churches in issues of conscience, property and finances. Both the EPC and PCUSA would argue for "review and control" responsibilities of higher governing bodies or courts to lower ones. The PCUSA claims from WCF the "God alone is Lord of the conscience," in GJ.030J but would bind that conscience in electing officers according to quotas in secular "Equal Employment Opportunity" guidelines that put another layer of expectations over and above seeking and doing the Lord's will in calling and/or hiring officers in the Church. The "hook" that can enforce this extra burden on courts of the church is in the "Trustee Clause" (G-B.020J) which says all property held by churches and courts of the church "are held in trust... for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)." This same item makes it increasingly harder for particular churches and their Sessions to give to expenses and benevolences they deem important without increasing "oversight" from the PC(USA).

The EPC, by contrast, has placed in its Book of Government of the Book of Order "Limitations in Perpetuity" (BOG 17-5) which makes it clear that the Church may make no laws that bind the conscience with respect to interpretation of Scripture, or reject persons for membership or ordination unless what they believe has been declared a heresy by the Church or obstructs constitutional governance of the

Church. The Church may not infringe upon particular churches' right to elect their own officers, own and control their own property or determine their own budget and benevolences as long as it does not violate the constitution of the Church. None of these limits may be overturned.

Second is the regular oversight of the church rolls. Rather than a mild admonition to review the rolls annually in the PCUSA (G-5.0502), the EPC charges churches to review them annually, especially early in the year (February) as in BOG 9-8. It also charges the churches with being very intentional about finding out why people are not attending worship and placing people on the appropriate rolls accordingly.

Third is Baptism. Both the EPC and PCUSA have guidelines for who may be baptized, which are remarkably similar. The difference may be that where the PCUSA comes extremely close to baptismal regeneration (W-2.3001- 007), EPC makes clear "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." (BOW 3-2. C.) Both would encourage children of believers to be baptized, but EPC would emphasize evangelizing baptized children in a way that PCUSA does not.

Fourth is Lord's Supper. Both EPC and PCUSA invite baptized believers to come to the Table of the Lord and be in communion with him and with each other. Both invite baptized children of believers who are receiving instruction to come to the Table as well.

The PCUSA is much more vague about the mechanism for doing this, allowing that children's "understanding of participation will vary according to maturity," (W2.4011b) and instructing Session to "take note of this and provide an occasion for recognition and welcome." (W-4.2002) The EPC is much more directive: "Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's table provided they have appeared before the Church Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Church Session. At its discretion, the Church Session may admit such persons to full membership." (BOW 3-3.1)

Fifth is the authority of the Pastor in governing and worship. It is clear from much of the EPC material in contrast to the PCUSA, the Ruling Elder is to have at least an equal footing in governance with the Pastor in Session and high courts. The PCUSA would say this is true for its governance as well, but the ratio of Ruling Elder to Teaching Elder is much more favorable to the Ruling Elder in EPC versus PCUSA courts.

However, in matters of worship, the EPC Pastor has a little more authority. In EPC, the Pastor (although encouraged to consult with Session) "has the duty and responsibility to determine order, sequence, elements and proportion of the service that each shall have in public worship." (BOW 2-4.A) In PCUSA, Session has clear oversight of order, sequence and elements, except the Pastor is responsible for

Scripture read, sermon preached, prayers, music to be sung, use of drama and other art forms. (W-4.1005)

There are undoubtedly more differences, but these are ones that come to the forefront immediately in terms of affecting terminology, emphasis and, by extension, procedure.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF ORDER⁴

THE BOOK OF ORDER OF THE EPC

PART ONE - THE BOOK OF GOVERNMENT

Chapter 1

The Church Defined

The universal Church is defined by two terms: visible and invisible. The invisible Church is all true believers in Jesus Christ, past, present and future. This is also known as the Church victorious when Jesus returns to establish his Kingdom forever.

The visible Church is the church on earth which is established for gathering and perfecting Jesus' saints. This Church includes all those who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior, and their children. This is also known as the church militant, because it struggles within itself as well as against the kingdom of darkness. It is not limited to one form of government or denomination, but exists wherever scriptural discipline is practiced, the Word is rightly proclaimed, the sacraments properly observed and loving fellowship is maintained.

Chapter 2

The Government of the Church

The form of EPC government shall be Presbyterian, of Teaching and Ruling Elders meeting in courts in regular gradation. This form is not essential to the existence of the true Church, but the EPC believes it is the best form to perfecting the order of the Church according to the Scripture.

⁴ Please note that this summary is not yet complete and will require further updates as the as the Book of Order undergoes future revisions.

The scriptural officers of the church are: Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders and Deacons.

The courts of the church shall be: The Session, The Presbytery, The General Assembly.

The proportion of representation to the Session: The Teaching Elders and the active Ruling Elders of a particular church.

The proportion of representation to the Presbytery: The Teaching Elders which belong to it and a ratio of two Ruling Elders for each Teaching Elder. For those Teaching Elders that serve a particular church, that church shall send two Ruling Elders for each Teaching Elder. For other Teaching Elders, churches shall share in rotation sending Ruling Elders to keep the ration two Ruling Elders for every one Teaching Elder.

General Assembly shall be the same representation as each Presbytery.

Deacons are not a court of the church, but a service ministry under oversight of Session.

Chapter 3

The Power of the Church

Power in the church is given by Christ and is moral and spiritual, not temporal as in civil government. These powers are exercised through church courts, not individuals. They are to proclaim, and minister and enforce the laws of Christ and must conform with Scripture.

There are two types of Power in the Church:

The Power of Order: Each ordained officer is given this power as an under-shepherd and is to bear the fruit of the Spirit in proclamation and service to those in need.

The Power of Jurisdiction: This is the power to rule in the courts of the church. As with the power of order, this power is given to lift up Christ to the world and edify his people.

Chapter 4

The Church Particular

The visible Church is not only a universal phenomenon; it is especially seen in the particular church or congregation. This particular church is composed of professing

Christians and their children, in order to live, worship, witness and serve the Lord in faith, agreeing to abide by its government and discipline.

The primary duty of the Church is to worship God in order to discover her duty.

The first duty of the church is to evangelize both at home and abroad, providing nurture in the faith which is professed. This includes the children of the members, promoting true religion in the home. Thus the church must provide nurture and training for its children and help the home to promote it as well. The church must encourage its children, when the time is right, to confess Christ as Savior and Lord and become an active member of the church.

The members must also be nurtured in their faith to share in the sacraments, to observe special days and to further life together.

The Session, Pastor and Ruling Elders together, are responsible for this oversight as the ruling body of the Church. A Board of Deacons may also be present to offer sympathy and service for members and others. The church Session should perform this duty if there are no Deacons.

Chapter 5

The Organization, Dissolution, Reception or Dismissal of a Particular Church

The Presbytery has exclusive right to organize, dissolve, dismiss or receive from some other body a particular church. Church Sessions can establish a mission church, but should always work with Presbytery, as only Presbytery has the right to organize that mission church into a particular church. There are specific rules to govern these matters.

Chapter 6

Membership of a Particular Church

Confirmed Members: Those who have been baptized and publicly professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and been admitted by Session into active membership of the church may participate in its governance and vote in its meetings.

Baptized Members: Those whose parents are confirmed members may be baptized into the covenant life of the church and nurtured until they profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Affiliate Members: Those separated geographically from their home church may be received as an affiliate member for one year, with affiliation to be renewable annually. They may participate in the life of the church except holding office and voting.

Chapter 7

Rights Reserved to a Particular Church

These rights and privileges are irrevocably reserved to each church and its members:

Electing its own officers.

Determining whether or not it will have a Board of Deacons.

The ownership of its own property. Care should be exercised to uphold the Church's good name.

To call its own pastor(s), with concurrence of Presbytery by receiving that pastor into its membership.

To withdraw from the EPC with its property, providing conditions for dismissal are met.

Electing Trustees from within its membership, provided they do not infringe on Session.

Chapter 8

Meetings of a Particular Church

Calling a Meeting: Session may call one when deemed necessary, when one-fifth (1/5) of the congregation requests one in writing, or when instructed by Presbytery.

Notice of Meeting: At least two Sundays notice. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.

Agenda of Meeting: Only those items stated in the call may be presented and handled.

Moderator of Meeting: Ordinarily, the Pastor. If not deemed practical by Session and the Pastor, one of the Session members shall moderate. If there is no Pastor, or there is a judicial process, or the Pastor refuses to concur, the Presbytery may appoint a Minister to moderate.

Quorum: Less than 100 members, one-fifth (1/5) of active membership. Over 100, one-tenth (1/10), but not less than 20.

Clerk of Meeting: Ordinarily, the Clerk of Session. If he/she is not present, the Moderator may appoint a Clerk. The Clerk shall keep a record of the meeting to be transmitted to Session and to be inserted in the minutes of that body.

Eligibility to Vote: Active members who are present at the meeting. The Moderator may not vote.

Tie Votes: If a vote results in a tie, it shall be put to a vote a second time. If it ties again, it is considered to be defeated.

Chapter 9

The Authority of the Session over Church Membership

The Session shall have authority over Church Rolls: Active, Baptized, Affiliate and Inactive.

Reception of persons into active membership: by transfer, by profession, by reaffirmation, by Baptism.

Care of persons on baptized roll should include explaining their rights and duties under the covenant of grace.

The reception of Affiliate Members: Received from another church without losing membership in that church. All rights and privileges except officership and voting. Effective for one year and renewable.

Care of Inactive Roll: If a member is absent from participation for one year; change of residence outside practical distance from church; restoration to active roll upon resuming active participation and requesting restoration from Session; remains on inactive roll for one year, may be removed from membership. An Elder or Deacon placed on inactive roll shall have officership dissolved and is to be reported to congregation and Session.

Limitations of Session over members: Any member in good standing who requests a transfer to a true church must be honored; letters are to be written to another church's governing body; members who request restoration to active role when active participation is again taken up to the Session's satisfaction; when an inactive member asks for a transfer, but that inactive status shall be noted; the request for a certificate of active membership to establish an affiliate membership in a true church.

When an active member is ordained to Ministry that person shall be removed from active role.

The rolls shall be examined every year, ordinarily in February.

Chapter 10

Officers of the Church

Three offices Christ gave to church: Ministers of the Word, also known as Teaching Elders or Pastors; Ruling Elders; Deacons.

Minister is historically considered first office in the church and has biblical requirements.

Varieties of Ministerial Calling: pastor, teacher, evangelist, administrator, chaplain, Pastor Emeritus. Any of these which are considered outside the courts of the church may be granted as laboring outside the bounds of the Presbytery by the Presbytery.

Ruling Elders are to watch over the congregation that ordains them, but may also serve in other courts of the church, sharing authority with Teaching Elders. There are biblical requirements for the type of person to be a Ruling Elder.

Ruling Elder and the Power of Order: A student of the Word, an undershepherd, seeing to the development of the children of the congregation, diligent in watching for moral failures of the congregation.

Ruling Elders may be temporarily authorized as Commissioned Pastors by Presbytery under certain guidelines.

Deacons serve an office of compassion and there are biblical requirements for this office.

Chapter 11

Calling to Office

It is God through the Holy Spirit who calls persons to office in the church. Three confirmations of this call:

1. Inward call on the individual.
2. A confirming call from a particular church, court or appropriate agency.
3. The approval of that call by an appropriate court of the Church.

No calling agency may have the right of calling taken away or conditioned for non-Scriptural reasons (*i.e.* EEO). This right can never be taken away.

However, the appropriate court may never have taken away its right not to confirm a call for proper and Scriptural reasons.

Calling must always be to a specific task: Ruling Elders and Deacons to congregational office, Ministers to a specific agency or task approved by Presbytery.

When a particular church calls a Pastor, the procedure shall be:

- Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a Search Committee. Session can nominate a Search Committee, but the congregation must be allowed the floor to nominate others, to set the number to serve on the Committee and to select them.
- The Search Committee shall be in regular consultation with the Presbytery Ministerial Committee.
- Upon agreeing to a candidate, the Search Committee shall secure the consent of the Ministerial Committee. Should the Ministerial Committee decline consent, the Search Committee may persist, recognizing the Presbytery has the right to reject the call.
- The Search Committee shall notify the church Session in writing and the church Session shall call a congregational meeting.

At the congregational meeting, the Search Committee shall make a report and recommendations to call a Pastor. This shall include a detailed financial package (Terms of Call). A counted vote shall be conducted as the body deems appropriate. A majority is needed to elect. The exact count shall be recorded in minutes and the candidate apprised of the count. The congregation shall appoint representatives to advocate the call at Presbytery.

The procedure is the same for an Associate Pastor except the Associate's duties shall be expressly stipulated by the congregation. Ordinarily, an Associate cannot succeed the Pastor, except the Search Committee seek a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of the Session and three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of Ministerial Committee to proceed.

Assistant Pastors may be called by Session in consultation with the Ministerial Committee. The Terms of Call shall be laid out as with other Pastors and duties laid out as with Associates. The call will be for a definite period of time and be renewable. An Assistant's call may be terminated before the end of the contract only with the Presbytery's approval. An Assistant cannot succeed the Pastor on the same staff in which he serves as Assistant. A Session can recommend an Assistant to be an Associate to a congregation without going through a Search Committee by a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote and approval by the Ministerial Committee.

Temporary Pastoral Relationships: A Session may invite a Minister to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, and perform needed pastoral duties. An invitation needs to be approved by the Presbytery on recommendation by the Ministerial Committee unless otherwise stipulated. No temporary Pastor may

become Pastor of the church he is serving. If the Search Committee wants to consider any person who has served as a temporary they need three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) approval by Session and three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) approval by the Ministerial Committee for the Search Committee to proceed. Various temporary Pastors:

- Stated Supply: Invited to serve no less than a month, no more than a year. May be appointed by Presbytery to Moderate Session while serving that church.
- Interim Supply: Invited to serve during pastoral vacancy. May be appointed by Presbytery to moderate Session while serving that church.
- Occasional Supply: Invited to serve on specific days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.

A call can be issued to a Minister only by the Presbytery to which he is called. If the Presbytery approves the person and the person accepts the call, Presbytery shall inform the Minister of its approval and place the call in his hands. The calling Presbytery shall appoint a Commission to ordain and/or install.

The calling Presbytery shall be in appropriate contact with the body which is dismissing the Minister, whether to another Presbytery or agency, to certify both the call and the credentials of the Minister.

If the Minister is being called to another court or agency other than a Presbytery, the terms of call shall be the same as a church, but the Commission to install shall be omitted.

A Minister seeking to serve outside the structures of the church, must request Presbytery approval, and the Presbytery must ascertain if it is appropriate to ministry. If approved, it will be for a definite period of time and further approval must be sought after the expiration of that time.

If the outside-the-bounds ministry is in the geographic bounds of another Presbytery, the Minister must seek approval of both Presbyteries.

A Minister accepting a disapproved call will be placed on inactive status of that Presbytery.

Calling of Ruling Elders and Deacons:

- The congregation may elect Ruling Elders and Deacons by any procedure it seeks to establish. Should it decide to use a Nominating Committee, it shall include two active Ruling Elders, one of whom will be chair. The Session shall call a congregational meeting for this purpose.
- The congregation shall decide how many officers it will have, whether they will rotate, and, if rotating, the length of term.

Chapter 12

Preparation for Office

Calling to office in the EPC places certain obligations on the ordained: Commitment to faith, to order, and to a good testimony of Jesus Christ. Certain preparations are therefore required.

Preparation for Ministry, as first office in the church:

- A person desiring ordination as Minister shall become a candidate under care of the Presbytery where his church is a member. He must be endorsed by his Session, after belonging there at least six months. Then that person may apply to the Presbytery Committee.
- The appropriate Presbytery Committee shall make necessary examination of the Candidate seeking Presbytery approval of his candidacy.
- Presbytery shall publicly examine the Candidate for Christian experience and growth, motive for seeking ordination and statement of call to ministry. If Presbytery approves, it shall publicly ask the Candidate three questions put by the Moderator of the Presbytery:
 1. Do you continue to affirm God's call to Gospel Ministry?
 2. Do you submit yourself to care and supervision of the Presbytery during this task?
 3. Do you renew your commitment as a Christian in reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit to live as a follower of Jesus Christ? The Candidate shall kneel and the Moderator or appointed person shall pray for the Candidate.
- A charge shall be given by someone appointed by the Moderator, the person declared a candidate, and person's name placed on the Presbytery Candidate's Roll. Afterward, the right hand of fellowship shall be extended by the Presbytery.
- A Minister, not the Candidate's, shall be assigned as advisor to the Candidate. The advisor and the Candidate's Pastor shall regularly report the Candidate's progress to the Presbytery Committee. The Candidate's home church should have a service of recognition.
- The Presbytery shall have some committee which shall have oversight of the Candidates and their training, giving annual reports of their progress to the Presbytery.

- After one year, the Candidate may request a transfer to another Presbytery. Ordinarily a Candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year before ordination.
- A Candidate shall pursue a four-year degree from a college and a degree from a Seminary approved by the Presbytery. The Candidate shall study original languages of Scripture and complete an exegesis in a passage assigned by the Presbytery.
- In extraordinary circumstances, the Presbytery may waive educational requirements for ordination, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Presbytery.
- Preparation for Ruling Elders and Deacons: The Church Session shall confer with each person elected to office in the particular church if they feel called to office and will serve faithfully.
- The church Session shall make provision for courses of instruction in the following matters: Church Government, Sacraments, Faith of Church, Worship of Church, Discipline of Church, History of Church and understanding of the office to which a person is elected.

Chapter 13

Examination for Ordination and/or Installation

It is important for an ordaining court to assure itself of competency of the one being ordained.

Examining of Candidate for Ministry: Competency in original languages of Scripture; Christian experience in the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and in spiritual growth; Theology and Sacraments; English Bible; Book of Order; Reformed Tradition and the nature of the office of Minister. The Candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery as assigned to demonstrate his/her ability to expound on the Word effectively.

If a Candidate was previously waived from education and language requirement, that person shall still be examined on every other part stipulated and must be approved by two-thirds (2/3) majority of Presbytery.

An ordained Minister transferring to Presbytery shall be examined on views of items listed for the Candidate to be examined and shall share about his/her experience of saving grace and progress in spiritual growth. An ordained Minister transferring from another denomination in the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by the Candidates and then follow procedure of those transferring. A person coming from any other tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a Candidate.

Presbytery shall not receive a Minister while discipline, inquiry or charges are pending against him/her. After careful review of the case Presbytery may deem them not sufficient for refusal of membership.

An exception of any part of the Westminster Confessional documents shall be stated in writing. The Presbytery may allow or disallow those exceptions. No exceptions are allowed to the "Essentials of our Faith." If a Teaching Elder develops exceptions to WCF after ordination/reception, he/she must report these exceptions so the Presbytery may allow or disallow them.

A person from another Reformed denomination with lapsed credentials shall be examined as one seeking ordination. Upon being approved by Presbytery, he shall be immediately eligible for ordination and to receive a call by Presbytery.

Candidates for Ruling Elder shall be examined on personal faith and progress in spiritual growth and subjects for study listed in Chapter 12 of the EPC Book of Order. Previously elected Ruling Elders from the EPC shall be examined on views of subjects. Previously elected Ruling Elders from other Reformed bodies shall be examined as those to be ordained except they will be installed instead of ordained.

Chapter 14

The Ordination and/or Installation of Officers

A Commission shall be appointed, and as approved by ordaining court, a worship service shall be conducted with suitable actions including 11 constitutional questions to the Candidate and four to the congregation. Candidates shall then kneel for prayer, ordinands shall have hands laid on them and shall receive prayer for them. They shall receive the right hand of fellowship and be declared Ministers of the EPC in the Presbytery that is ordaining/installing them. A Charge shall be given to the Pastor and congregation, and the officers of the church shall come and extend the right hand of fellowship to the Pastor.

Previously ordained pastors in the EPC shall answer four questions and be installed without laying on of hands. Multiple field services may be held at each church or in a joint service. Similar procedures will be observed for those who are undertaking non-pastoral work, except for questions 14-1.A-11 and 14-1.B-1 which will be replaced with similar questions appropriate to the work.

Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons that are being ordained or installed from a previous denomination shall be asked one question and the congregation shall be asked one. Ordinands shall kneel and receive laying on of hands and prayer. The right hand of fellowship will be extended, and the person declared an officer in the EPC and by that Session. A previously ordained Ruling Elder shall answer five questions.

A Commissioned Pastor shall answer four questions.

Chapter 15

The Dissolution of an Officer's Relationship

An officer of the church remains ordained to the office and remains obligated to fulfill the vows of ordination. An officer may be removed under certain conditions such as those set forth in Book of Discipline, divested without censure, and assigned to Inactive Status.

Dissolution of pastoral relationship: May be dissolved only by Presbytery. A Minister or Session shall consult with the Ministerial Committee before making a request to the congregation to dissolve the relationship. Once called, a congregation will be requested to concur with the Pastor in request to dissolution. If the congregation declines to concur, it will appoint representatives to the Presbytery to explain its actions. The Presbytery shall be the sole judge on whether to dissolve it or not. If the Pastor declines to concur after the congregation votes to dissolve the relationship, the congregation will appoint representatives to the Presbytery to explain its actions. Presbytery will be the sole judge on whether to dissolve it or not. Presbytery may appoint a Commission with authority to dissolve pastoral relationships.

Dissolution by reason of age: When a Minister reaches 70, that relationship shall be terminated. A Minister must notify Presbytery six months before 70. A Minister may be elected yearly to the same relationship with approval of Session and Presbytery. No Teaching Elder having reached the age of 70 is eligible for any other call but the one currently served. Presbytery may set aside this limitation by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. The yearly reappointment rules then apply. A Minister at 70 may be eligible to serve as Stated Supply, Interim Supply or Occasional Supply for up to one year as approved by Presbytery. Presbytery may appoint an appropriate committee to establish such relationships.

When a Presbytery shall divest a Minister of his office, without censure, he shall be assigned to some particular church, subject to approval of that church.

Dissolution of a Ruling Elder or Deacon relationship: A Ruling Elder or Deacon may have valid reasons for requesting that active service be dissolved. Should Session concur, it may dissolve the relationship and report it to the congregation. Other reasons include:

- When placed on inactive roll.
- When joining another EPC or non-EPC congregation.
- When membership or jurisdiction in a particular church is renounced.

- When a Ruling Elder or Deacon is elected Emeritus, due to disability, age or other sufficient cause, Session shall nominate such a person to Emeritus. This is a high honor and should not be bestowed lightly.
- When divested of office by the process laid out in the Book of Discipline.
- When Presbytery deems it advisable for the welfare of the church.

Terms of Service of Ruling Elders and Deacons: A Congregation may decide to limit terms of service. No less than three year terms, except to initiate system or fill vacancies. There must be at least three classes, limit of two full terms, then one year ineligibility.

Service of inactive Ruling Elders: Inactive Ruling Elders may be elected by Session to Presbytery or the General Assembly. They must make diligent report to Session. A person ordained by another EPC congregation or Reformed church may be empowered to serve duties open to inactive elders. They still must be elected by a congregation to serve on Session, and are not eligible if they are removed from a previous place because of church discipline.

Removal of Minister to inactive status: A Minister may ask to be placed on inactive status for valid reasons. If Presbytery concurs, he shall be placed on inactive status, rights and privileges of ordination suspended, including vote and voice at Presbytery. The name of the Minister shall be carried on inactive roll of Presbytery. After at least one year he/she can request to be restored to active status. Presbytery may do so, provided the Minister has a valid call that Presbytery approves, or is being transferred to another Presbytery of call.

A Minister who is without call for a period of one year shall confer with the Ministerial Committee to ascertain sense of person's call. The Ministerial Committee will recommend whether to keep the Minister on active status or put on inactive status. If it is involuntary, it will require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Presbytery.

There shall be a five-year limit on those on inactive status roll of Presbytery, then Presbytery may remove that person from the roles.

A Minister may request to be placed on retirement roll due to age, infirmity or other debilitating condition. If done, a Service of Recognition should be held at Presbytery or the church served. A commission shall be appointed to conduct this service and it will be placed in Presbytery minutes. Presbytery shall make annual review of retired members to be sure of their welfare, and the findings reported to Presbytery and placed in the minutes.

Retired Ministers remain full members of Presbytery, but their membership may be transferred to another Presbytery. They must participate in at least one Stated Meeting during a calendar year to remain on active status, or placed on inactive

status at the discretion of Presbytery. After at least one year, they may request to be returned to active status. Retired Ministers on inactive status may not be removed from Presbytery rolls for that cause.

Renunciation of Jurisdiction: Shall have the effect of removing an officer from an ordained office of the EPC. Written notice to the Clerk of the appropriate court will be effective upon reception. Oral renunciation will bring a request for written confirmation by registered letter. If there is no response after ten days, the renunciation will be deemed final.

Chapter 16

The Organizational Structure of the Church

Church governing bodies distinct from civil government. Jurisdiction is spiritual and moral with no civil penalties. The church government is established for spiritual discipline and church order. One unchanging limitation of jurisdiction: Scripture is the ultimate rule of faith and practice, and no laws may be enacted that bind conscience.

Four organizational units of the Church: Deacon, Session, Presbytery, General Assembly; the last three are also called Courts. Gradation is from Session to Presbytery to General Assembly.

Review and Control: Each unit shall submit its minutes to be reviewed by the unit above, Session to Presbytery and Presbytery to General Assembly annually; Deacons to Session semi-annually. This is done to ensure the lower bodies are faithful and diligent in carrying out the duties of that court. They may be required to reconsider, check omissions, or require amendment of actions taken out of conformity with constitution, proper review and control.

Judicial proceedings against courts shall be the same as for individuals as far as applicable.

Powers of the courts and their officers:

- Each court of church and its officers shall have certain powers for efficient dispatch of business and exercise of its duties.
- The Moderator of a court keeps order, expedites business, convenes, recesses and adjourns meetings in conformity with the rules of that court. He has emergency powers to change particulars of a meeting in consultation with the clerk of the court and due notification to the members. The Moderator will make sure meetings open and close with prayer.

A court:

- Has the authority to bear witness against error or doctrine contrary to Christian faith, both in and out of the church.
- Can establish its own rules in conformity with Scripture and EPC constitution.
- May apply discipline to its members in keeping with the Book of Discipline.
- May issue calls to persons to serve in that court or agency for up to three years.
- Has authority to organize itself as it deems appropriate for its duties.

Jurisdiction of the organizational units of the church:

- Each unit has definite spheres of action. The following definitions of those spheres shall apply:
 - Board of Deacons:
 - Designated by the Book of Order or assigned by church Session over a portion of worship and ministry of a congregation.
 - Church Session: All that belongs to worship and ministry of a particular church.
 - Presbytery: All that belongs to worship and ministry of a group of churches.
 - General Assembly: All that belongs to the worship and ministry of the whole EPC.

Jurisdictional relationships of organizational units: Because each court of the Church has a mutual relationship, an act of each church is an act of the whole Church. This mutuality and relationship is expressed in right of review and control of in regular gradation of courts, as well as right of appeal to higher courts.

- Board of Deacons:
 - Each congregation shall have a Board of Deacons unless in a duly called congregational meeting it shall vote not to have such a board. In that event, the duties of a Board of Deacons shall fall to the church Session.
- Ordinary Duties of a Board of Deacons:
 - Oversee a ministry of compassion to the sick, friendless, bereaved, and distressed.
 - Ushering, offerings, preparing facilities for people's use.

- Session may assign duties such as stewardship development, property maintenance, disbursement of funds according to budget, and related matters.
- Other Board of Deacons duties:
 - Session may relegate above duties to itself and assign other duties.
- Officers of Board of Deacons:
 - The Board of Deacons may elect a Moderator for a term of one year or appoint a Pastor to serve. A Recording Clerk will be elected for the same term as a Moderator. Other officers may be elected.
- Treasurer:
 - Where a particular church gives financial responsibility to the Board of Deacons it shall appoint a Treasurer to handle the congregation's financial matters. When Session assumes responsibility for finances, the Treasurer shall report to the appointing body at each meeting. The appointing body shall be responsible for an annual audit of finances.
- Meetings:
 - The Board of Deacons shall meet at least quarterly, unless directed otherwise by Session. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or by order of Session. When requested by one-fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$) of the Board of Deacons, the Chairman shall call a meeting, with business clearly stated and specifically dealt with.
- Minutes:
 - Kept carefully by the Recording Clerk, approved by the Board of Deacons, signed by the Moderator, and reviewed by Session at least every six months. Session has the right to rescind any action or return it for further consideration.
- Board of Deacons and Pastor(s):
 - Pastor non-voting advisory member, entitled to give advice.
- Quorum:
 - To be set by the Board of Deacons, but not less than one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of membership.
- Assistants to the Board of Deacons:

- Session may appoint by the Board of Deacon's request or its own discretion, godly members of congregation to assist the Board of Deacons in various duties assigned to it.
- The Church Session:
 - The entire life of a particular church is under oversight and supervision of Session. Session is composed of a called Pastor of the Church and all the Ruling Elders on active service.
- Officers of Church Session:
 - The Pastor shall be the Moderator, unless the Pastor requests and Session consents to let the Associate Pastor be the Moderator. If there is no Pastor, Session may elect one of its own members to serve or Presbytery may appoint a Minister of Presbytery to be the Moderator. The Ministerial Committee may be authorized with concurrence of the church Session, to appoint an Interim Moderator of Session until Presbytery can act in the matter. The Pastor is a full member of Session and may vote. If the Pastor wishes to make motions or participate in a debate, another member of Session should serve as Moderator pro-tem. Each church Session shall elect a Clerk.
- Duties:
 - The Session has the following duties and powers in maintaining spiritual supervision of its particular church: To monitor spiritual conduct of members, and to take action when appropriate according to the Book of Discipline.
 - To initiate ministry of evangelism as first business of the Church; to lead persons to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - To remind parents of responsibility to baptize children and provide instruction.
 - To receive members per sections 9-2.A, B & C.
 - To keep rolls per 9-1.
 - To dismiss, restore, grant affiliation, or remove members per 9-4. 5, 6 & 7.
 - To determine budget and benevolent objectives of church.
 - To oversee educational program of church and determine its literature.

- To oversee the Board of Deacons and call joint meetings at least semi-annually.
- To fulfill obligations of those elected to Ruling Elder or Deacon per 12-3,13-8,9 & 10.
- To oversee worship of congregation per the Book of Worship without infringing on the Pastor's duties.
- To determine policies of building and property use.
- When there is no Pastor, to provide for worship of congregation.
- To organize itself for ministry and mission.
- To overture Presbytery on matters it believes vital to the whole Church and to carry out injunctions and instructions of higher courts. Session shall elect representatives to Presbytery and hear subsequent reports on that court. To order special offerings, days of prayer, fasting and worship and other matters that benefit the spiritual life of the people. To do whatever is necessary for spreading of the Gospel, edification of members, well-being of the church, advancement of the Kingdom and growth in grace of all.
- Meetings:
 - Session shall meet at least quarterly, at the call of the Moderator, or Presbytery. When one-fourth (1/4) of members make a written request, the Moderator shall immediately convene a meeting and it must be for that specific business only. In the absence of a Pastor, Session may not meet except in emergency, in which case it must be convened by two Ruling Elders and no other business may be conducted except the emergency itself
- Quorum:
 - The Pastor and not less than two Ruling Elders if there are more than five Ruling Elders on Session. If no Pastor then three Ruling Elders. If there are less than five Ruling Elders on Session then Pastor and one Ruling Elder, or if no Pastor then two Ruling Elders. Session may set a higher quorum.
- Minutes:
 - The Clerk shall keep a careful record of Session proceedings. When approved, they must be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. They

must be submitted to Presbytery annually. The Clerk shall carefully record all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to inactive roll, dismissals, and other required records regarding members.

- Presbytery:
 - Presbytery has oversight of the life of a number of churches within a designated area. It is composed of all Ministers of Presbytery and at least two Ruling Elders elected from each church Session. There shall be two additional Ruling Elders elected for each additional Pastor, whether Associate or Assistant. A particular church shall have no fewer than two Ruling Elders for each 500 members or major portion thereof.
 - When a disproportionate ratio of Ruling Elders to Teaching Elders occurs in a Presbytery, the Presbytery shall move to correct the ratio by suggesting an alphabetical rotation of churches that they appoint an additional Ruling Elder to Presbytery. This shall be done until the disparity is corrected.
- Officers of Presbytery:
 - The Moderator may be a Teaching Elder or a Ruling Elder, elected by that court for either the length of that meeting or, if Presbytery wishes, one year. The person elected must be a member of the court, but once elected, will remain a member of the court for the length of the elected term. In case of the death or disability of an elected Moderator, the most recent former Moderator shall serve until a new Moderator is elected. If no former Moderator is present, the Minister with the most senior ordination date shall convene the court until a Moderator is elected. The court shall elect a Stated Clerk for a specified period of time, and the person must be eligible for membership in that court. Upon election, the Stated Clerk shall be a full member of court.
- Duties:
 - Presbytery has the following duties and powers: to examine Ministers and Candidates; to receive and dismiss Ministers and Candidates, and to retire, place on inactive status or discipline member Ministers. It shall have power to ordain and install, dissolve pastoral relationships, approve calls, and grant permission to labor outside the bounds of Presbytery in accord with the Book of Government.
 - To decide judicial cases brought before it in accord with the Book of Discipline.

- To review and control church Sessions through annual review of the minutes, remanding what is contrary to EPC constitution, and see lawful injunctions followed.
- To oversee peace and unity within particular congregations, to inquire into effectiveness of ministry and, when necessary, dissolve Ruling Elder and Deacon relationships as well as pastoral relationships, according to proper procedures.
- To establish, dissolve, divide, unite, receive and dismiss churches, including location or relocation of churches, and supervise churches without Pastors.
- To encourage evangelism and renewal within its bounds as first priority.
- To encourage churches in ministry of compassion and broader service to Presbytery.
- To work with other Presbyteries and the General Assembly to create agencies for education, orphaned, aged and other suitable agencies. To overture the General Assembly on matters it believes vital to the whole Church and to carry out injunctions and instructions of the higher court. To organize itself for propagation of the Gospel, advancement of the Kingdom and edification of the people. It shall have a Ministerial Committee per 16-27.A.
- To provide services to its particular churches, and to offer encouragement, training and other helps in conjunction with the General Assembly, that particular churches may have effective Christian life and ministry.
- To establish a Ministerial Obligation record to which all Ministers must subscribe before being received into membership. This includes the ordination vows as well as a subscription to uphold those vows signed by the Minister.
- Meetings:
 - Presbytery shall hold meetings at least three times a year. The Moderator or the General Assembly may call a meeting of the Presbytery. Two Ministers and four Ruling Elders from at least two congregations may petition the Moderator to convene a court. If the Moderator is unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall call a meeting. Any called meeting must have ten days notice and shall state the purpose of the meeting. No other business may be conducted by Presbytery at that called meeting.

- Quorum:
 - Two Ministers and four Ruling Elders from at least two congregations shall constitute a quorum. Presbytery may fix a higher number.
- Minutes:
 - A careful record of proceedings shall be kept by the Stated Clerk, who shall bear responsibility for certified extracts when necessary. The Clerk and Moderator shall sign the approved minutes, and the clerk shall send them to the General Assembly annually.
- General Assembly:
 - The General Assembly is composed of all courts and particular churches of the EPC. It has responsibility for overseeing the total work of the church. It is composed of all Ministers of Presbyteries and at least two Ruling Elders elected from Church Sessions. There shall be two Ruling Elders for each additional Pastor from each Church and no fewer than two Ruling Elders for each 500 members or major part thereof.
- Officers of GA:
 - The General Assembly shall have a Moderator, Moderator-elect and Stated Clerk.
- Moderator and Moderator-elect:
 - Shall be elected at each stated meeting, and may be a Teaching Elder or a Ruling Elder. Persons must be members of the court and not eligible to succession to the respective office. They shall continue to be members of the court until election of successors. In case of death or disability, the most immediate past Moderator shall be Moderator until election. The Moderator-elect shall normally be a nominee for Moderator of a succeeding General Assembly.
- Stated Clerk:
 - The General Assembly shall elect a Stated Clerk who shall serve for a period of three years, with eligibility for two additional terms. There may be more if the General Assembly sets aside limitations for each additional term by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. Clerks must be eligible to be member of the court. Past Ruling Elder Moderators will continue to be members of the court as long as they are still active members of a church in the EPC. Past Ruling Elder Moderators who are unable to maintain EPC membership for non-disciplinary reasons may continue membership in

the General Assembly if approved by Presbytery in whose geographic boundaries they reside.

- Duties of General Assembly:
 - To assume review and control of Presbyteries through annual review of minutes; to remand what may be contrary to EPC constitution, and see lawful injunctions followed.
 - To make final decisions on judicial cases brought before it according to the Book of Discipline.
 - To establish, unite, divide, or dissolve Presbyteries.
 - To separately or in conjunction with Presbyteries create agencies for education or other purposes which would enhance the life and ministry of the whole Church. To establish boards or agencies necessary to serve the whole Church. This would include a disability and retirement program for Ministers and other full-time personnel. To make evangelism, lay renewal, church extension and world missions its priorities and support agencies for that purpose.
 - To approve and recommend to Presbyteries such changes in constitutional documents as it deems wise, fit and helpful. Such changes approved by the General Assembly through its Permanent Judicial Commission shall be referred to Presbyteries to be approved by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of Presbyteries and then a succeeding General Assembly shall be enacted.
 - To organize itself for propagation of the Gospel, advancement of the Kingdom and edification of the whole Church.
 - To provide services to Presbyteries and particular churches, to offer encouragement, training and other helps in conjunction with Presbyteries that the whole Church may be effective in ministry.
 - To oversee affairs of the whole Church, including correspondence and cooperation with other denominations.
 - To recommend measures for ministry to various churches under its supervision.
 - To maintain a central agency for aiding churches in securing Pastors and for assisting Ministers of the Word in relocation. Such agency shall always work through the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery.

- To provide guidance for theological preparation of candidates in mission fields outside North America where Presbyteries do not yet exist, and to arrange for ordination, where appropriate, of those prepared for Minister, Ruling Elder or Deacon.
- Meetings:
 - The General Assembly shall meet annually. It shall meet in called session when 10% of both Ruling and Teaching Elder Commissioners sign a written petition for such a meeting. It shall meet only for the purpose stated in the call. If there is no Moderator or past Moderator to act, the Clerk shall convene a court until the election of a Moderator. In such called meetings, only commissioners or alternates to previous stated meetings are eligible to vote. The Presbytery shall give to each Commissioner to the General Assembly a certificate of election.
- Quorum:
 - Shall consist of at least five Ministers and five Ruling Elders representing at least three Presbyteries. The General Assembly may fix a higher quorum.
- Minutes:
 - A careful record of proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Stated Clerk. Minutes shall be approved prior to adjournment. These, along with a statistical record of churches, shall be printed and distributed without cost to Commissioners, each Minister and the Session of the EPC.
- Committees and Commissions:
 - A committee is appointed by the court to study matters and make recommendations back to the appointing body or carry out decisions already made. It shall make written reports to the court that created it.
 - A commission is appointed to act for an appointing court. The court shall state specifically powers and duration given to the commission. The commission shall make written report of its actions, which shall be inserted into the minutes and be regarded as an action of the court itself. Commissions of Session, Presbytery or the General Assembly may be either administrative or judicial.
- Judicial Commission:
 - Shall handle cases per the Book of Discipline.

- Administrative Commission:
 - Shall perform special functions as, but not limited to: Ordain and install Ministers where appropriate; organize, dissolve, dismiss or receive a particular church, or to constitute a mission church.
 - Serve as a temporary session of a mission church.
 - Visit particular churches having difficulties or appearing to be failing in their mission, to inquire into and resolve their difficulties therein.
 - Those Administrative Commissions appointed by Presbytery or the General Assembly shall be composed as near to two Ruling Elders for every Teaching Elder as possible, for the General Assembly not fewer than three Presbyteries represented, and for Presbytery not fewer than five members, not representing fewer than two member churches.
 - Commission quorums shall be a minimum of one-half its membership.
- Required Committees and Commissions:
 - Ministerial Committee:
 - Each Presbytery shall have a Ministerial Committee consisting only of Ministers and Ruling Elders. At least six with the difference of numbers between Ruling Elder and Teaching Elder being no more than one. A quorum shall be a simple majority with at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder. Eligibility to succeed will be determined by the appointing court.
 - Its duties:
 - Oversee work of Pastors enrolled in Presbytery. Work with particular churches in securing Pastors. Calls shall be placed in hands of this committee which shall make recommendations to Presbytery. Review each request for dissolution of pastoral relationship and make recommendations to Presbytery. Counsel with congregations seeking a Pastor, including moderator and pulpit supply.
 - Oversight of Candidates to Gospel Ministry unless assigned to another committee.
 - Examine Candidates and Pastors seeking to become members of Presbytery.

- Regulate the call of a church to a Pastor before the church can issue it.
- Annual review of terms of call.
- Consult with particular churches receiving aid from Presbytery.
- May be appointed by Presbytery as a Judicial Commission or Administrative Commission.
- May investigate failing congregations even if no complaint has been received.
- May be authorized by Presbytery to dissolve pastoral relationships when both the Pastor and the Church concur and appoint an interim Moderator per G.16-9. May investigate dissension between a Pastor and a church even if no complaint has been received.
- Permanent Judicial Commission:
 - The General Assembly shall establish a Permanent Judicial Commission with a minimum of nine persons, three classes of three each, two-thirds (2/3) must be Ruling Elders. The General Assembly shall determine their eligibility to succession. Efforts shall be made to give fair representations to Presbyteries. During an appointment to the Permanent Judicial Commission no member may hold office or be employed in court. A quorum shall be two-thirds (2/3) of membership. It shall elect its own moderator and clerk from among members and careful record shall be kept of its actions with a permanent record filed with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
- Duties of Commission shall be:
 - Questions concerning interpretation of the Book of Order coming to the General Assembly shall be referred to the Permanent Judicial Commission. It shall act as a committee, giving recommendations with reasons for its interpretation and the General Assembly shall act as it deems wise.
 - All proposals to amend the EPC constitution that come no later than 30 days prior to next the General Assembly shall be referred to the Permanent Judicial Commission which shall then be examined by the Permanent Judicial Commission for clarity, consistency, and compatibility with the rest of the EPC Constitution and shall report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly. The

General Assembly will not consider any amendment until reviewed and reported by the Permanent Judicial Commission.

- It shall make preliminary judgments on cases brought to the General Assembly until the General Assembly sustains or rejects the Permanent Judicial Commission action. It shall have power to make its own recommendations and proposals of its own to the General Assembly on the Constitution.

A reference is a written request for advice from a lower court to a next higher court. Among proper subjects for reference are new, delicate or difficult matters that seriously divide the lower court, questions on the Constitution or legal proceedings. The lower court may ask for advice or formal disposition of matters including the higher court taking jurisdiction of trial and decision. It may be brought by representatives of the lower court and should be accompanied by enough of a written record to bring understanding of matter. Even though a reference is available, it's better if each court settles its own affairs. A higher court is under no obligation to grant references, but should give advice when asked. When a court makes a reference, it ought to have all proceedings in such an order that a higher court can take the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

Chapter 17

Amendment, Union and Limitations

Amendments to the Book of Order.

- After approval of recommended change by the General Assembly, per G.16-27B.2, it shall be sent to the Presbyteries.
- No changes may be made that are contrary to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms.
- Approval of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the Presbyteries is required.
- Ratification of the next General Assembly is required to enact change. If not enough Presbyteries voted on it, the General Assembly shall encourage them to do so; if not done so by the second General Assembly following the enactment, it shall be considered lost.
- This provision can be amended only by the same procedure to change confessional documents.

Union with another denomination.

- After approval of union, it shall be sent to Presbyteries.

- Approval of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the Presbyteries is required.
- Ratification of the next General Assembly is required.
- This provision can be amended only by the same procedure for unions.

Limits in perpetuity: Rights guaranteed by the church that cannot be overturned:

- The Church may make no laws to bind conscience with respect of interpretation of Scripture. No person may be rejected for membership based on such matters unless officially declared heresy by the Church, or obstructs constitutional governance of the Church.
- The Church may make no laws that infringe on a particular Church's rights to: Elect its own officers, own and control its own property, determine its own benevolence and budget objectives, and determine its own internal life as long as it is in accord with the constitution of the Church.
- This section may be added to by amendment but no deletions may be made.

Chapter 18

Union Churches

This section lays out a format by which particular churches may unite with other particular churches in the Reformed tradition to form Union churches with approval of Presbytery and corresponding courts of the other denominations.

THE BOOK OF ORDER OF THE EPC

PART TWO - THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

Chapter 1

Discipline – Its Nature, Subjects and Purpose

Definition: Discipline is the exercise of authority given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide members and their children to promote purity and welfare. One sense of discipline is the right ordering of the church by its courts, and the other, restricted and technical sense, is Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedures. This second definition is what is meant in the Book of Discipline.

Grounds: Not every offense rises to Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedures. Three that do are heresy, immorality, and contempt for the established order of the Church.

Church Members Who Are Also Employees: Subject to both employee sanctions as set up by the employer and the Book of Discipline sanctions as a church member.

Persons Subject to Discipline: Members on all rolls are entitled and subject to discipline's benefits.

Purpose: It is important and necessary to maintain God's honor, restore sinners, and remove offense from the Church. Ministers are to teach its practice in congregation and courts of church.

Basis: It is Scriptural law, because it is the revelation of God's holy will. Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6: 1 provide principles of personal admonition moving to public exercise.

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."

Definitions:

- Church: The EPC, its General Assembly, its Presbyteries and particular churches.
- Contempt: Willful conduct in the deliberate disrespect of a court of church, constitution and officers acting in an official capacity.
- Heresy: Expressed or implied denial of essential Christian doctrine openly taught and obstinately maintained.
- Immorality: Conduct inconsistent with biblical standards for conduct.
- Jurisdiction: Authority of a court to render a decision.

Chapter 2

Pastoral Care

It is the duty of the church to evangelize, both at home and abroad.

The church's power is moral and spiritual, having no civil effect.

The church has the duty to provide for the nurture of its members.

Though not possessing civil authority, the church has power to exclude anyone from its property, services or ministry upon its own named conditions (ex: requiring standards for letting a person teach Sunday School, etc.)

Chapter 3

Jurisdiction

Since “God alone is Lord of conscience” the church has jurisdiction only over those who place themselves under her authority as members.

Original Jurisdiction:

- Session: Disciplinary cases over members of its particular church.
- Presbytery: Disciplinary cases over Ministers of the Presbytery.
- Dissolved Churches: Presbytery shall assume jurisdiction over unfinished cases.
- Transfer of membership: Transferee of a particular church or Presbytery remains under the jurisdiction of the first until received by the second.
- Assumption of jurisdiction: If a court is unwilling or unable to try the accused, the next higher court may assume jurisdiction after giving 30 days notice to the lower court.
- Failure to act: After 90 days failure to act, a higher court may assume jurisdiction upon the motion by any member of the church. It may issue instructions to the lower court or take the case. Termination of Jurisdiction shall occur if the accused renounces jurisdiction, immediately in writing, or after 10 days if orally renounced with no written acknowledgement. Renunciation shall terminate membership in the EPC and remove that person as officer.

Chapter 4

Offenses

Heresy, Immorality or Contempt as can be proved from Scripture, the Westminster Documents, or three parts of the Book of Order.

Offenses may be personal (against a person or persons) or general.

Private offenses known only to a few persons; public known to more than a few.

Preliminary Sanctions:

- If Session needs to act before formal action can be taken against the accused, the accused may be excluded from the sacraments.

Out of Bounds Offenses:

- If an alleged offense is committed at a distance from that which has jurisdiction of the accused, the court at which the alleged act occurred, after finding strong presumption of guilt, shall send notice to the court of jurisdiction to proceed against the person or the court of jurisdiction may transfer it to coordinate with the court where the offense occurred.

Chapter 5

Actions for Discipline

Commencement: An action may commence upon a charge filed by person or persons to the Clerk of the jurisdictional court, or by a court upon strong presumption of guilt.

Limitations on Action: Must be brought within three years of offense unless unknown or not reasonably knowable by the offended party. If the offended party is under 18, an action must be brought by their 21st birthday.

Preliminary Investigation: The court shall commence after receiving charges, and determine whether there is a strong presumption of guilt.

Proceedings: The Court shall appoint a prosecutor, who shall prepare an indictment and proceed to a trial as in Ch. 6-9.

Trial: Ch. 8-9.

Decision: Ch. 10.

Chapter 6

Procedures

Investigation: Shall be done with care and discretion over members, especially when the alleged aggrieved requests, in writing, an investigation. An investigation shall commence only with written charges filed with the Clerk of court, or the court finds it necessary to investigate. A Judicial Investigative Committee can be appointed by the court to investigate, but shall have no disciplinary powers of the court except investigative.

Prosecutor: If strong presumption of guilt is found, the court shall appoint a prosecutor from its ranks to prepare an indictment and prosecute the case. If a session case, the prosecutor does not have to be a member of the court, but only a member of the church. The Prosecutor shall not be an offended person

Parties in a case are only two: Accuser and Accused. The Accuser is always the EPC; the Prosecutor is always to be a representative of the EPC. On appeal, parties are known as appellant and appellee.

Private Reconciliation: If the accusation comes from the court rather than an offended party, steps in 1-6 are not necessary. In many cases, sending a committee to speak privately to the person and bring him to a sense of repentance is advisable. Then a committee can bring a recommendation of further actions to the court.

Biased Accusations and Testimony: The Court should exercise great caution with persons who: hold a malignant spirit against the accused, are not of good character, are under sanctions themselves, are deeply interested in the accused's conviction, are litigious, contentious, rash or imprudent.

Chapter 7

General Provisions Applicable to All Cases of EJP

Warning: Given to all from Galatians 6:1 (NIV).

Processing a Charge:

- Commencement: The first meeting is only to appoint a prosecutor, order the indictment drawn, give a copy with names of all witnesses served to the accused, and set a trial date.

Commissions:

- May decide at this time to refer to judicial commissions in accordance with 9-5 and Book of Government 16-26B.1.
- Commissioners shall be ordained elders within the jurisdiction of court involved.
- Moderator Pro-Tem: With consent of the Moderator, one of the court's own may be elected Moderator Pro-Tem for only that particular case.

Indictment:

- Heading: "In the name of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church," and concludes: "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."

Contents:

- Clearly state times, places and circumstances that require discipline of the alleged so the alleged may have adequate notice and opportunity to make defense.

Formal Summons:

- Issuance to accused and such witnesses as both parties shall call.

Contents:

- Parties, times and place of trial, and warning of sanctions for failing to obey summons.

Service of Summons:

- In person or mail with receipt.

Witness and Exhibits List:

- Given to all parties not less than five days before trial.

Refusal to Obey Summons:

- Two summons, then sanctions if refusing to obey. The member shall be suspended from Sacraments, and officers may be removed from office and excommunicated. If the member refuses to obey and his/her offense is serious as described in 12, he/she may be removed from membership and fellowship of the church. Witnesses who are members and refusing to obey summons are subject to sanctions.
- Time periods between summons shall be no less than 10 days. After the second summons, at the discretion of the court with sufficient time to appear or explain lack of appearance.

Chapter 8

Evidence

Witness must be competent, that is, able to testify. The Accused may be allowed, but not compelled, to testify without inference of guilt. The person who filed charges is not required to testify, even on demand of the accused. Family members are not required to testify against each other. Witnesses not accused, or members of the court, may be excluded from other witness testimony if any party objects. An oath in God's name will be taken to tell the truth. Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them and then by the opposite party under permission of the Moderator. If the offense took place at a distance, a judicial investigative committee may go and take testimony or a coordinate court may do so. The opposite party is afforded an opportunity to be there. The court may determine credibility of the witness. The Record, when authenticated by the Moderator or Clerk or both, shall be considered authentic when proclaimed so by a formal written statement to that effect, and shall be treated as such by any other court. Burden of proof requires more than one person's testimony or other supporting evidence.

Chapter 9

The Trial

Proceedings:

- The Charge
- Indictment
- Service of Summons
- Opening Statements: 15 minutes for each party unless the court grants more. Prosecutor first, then the accused.
- Testimony
- Exclusion of Prosecutor and Accused: When questions arise, the court may exclude both parties until the question is settled.
- Closing Arguments: 15 minutes for each party; the prosecutor is allowed to both open and close, as long as he/she stays within equal time to the accused.
- Deliberations: Roll called and members express opinions. Parties may be excluded at this point.
- The Vote: All members of the court shall vote either guilty or not guilty by secret ballot on each indictment. A guilty verdict shall be rendered only by two-thirds (2/3) vote. The Moderator announces a decision when the parties return to the courtroom.
- Imposition of Sanctions: The Prosecutor and the Accused found guilty shall be given opportunity to present evidence bearing on sanctions only. Parties may be excluded and sanctions rendered only by simple majority of votes cast, and entered upon record.
- Motion for New Trial may be granted by the court if new evidence is discovered after the trial is over. The Court may grant this request.

Any party may challenge seating of court member for inappropriate disclosure of opinion, unauthorized absentia from trial, or conflict of interest.

No paid counsel is allowed, but a learned or professional counsel may be allowed for both parties, provided they are members of the church. The council may not therefore be a member of the court.

The Record of trial shall be entered in court's permanent records within 30 days of the proceedings. The parties shall be allowed to make copies of them at their own

expense. Lower courts shall transmit records to a higher court upon appeal and when the final court renders a decision, it shall be likewise communicated to all lower courts. A Judicial Commission shall have all rights, duties and obligations of the court it represents. A Judicial Commission shall be between three and seven members elected by the court, with the Presbytery Judicial Commission being as near as possible to a two-to-one Ruling Elder to Teaching Elder ratio.

Chapter 10

Disciplinary Sanctions

The court is exhorted to deal with any party found guilty with meekness and tenderness. Sanctions are: Admonition, Suspension, Removal from Office, and Excommunication. If milder sanctions fail to amend the person, stronger actions may be administered. If matters complained of and brought to trial are found as nothing more than infirmity that do not hinder a person's ministry, the court shall take measures to see the infirmity amended.

- Admonition is a formal reproof and warning to the offender by a church court.
- Suspension is a temporary exclusion from sacraments or other church ministries. For officers, this can mean definite or indefinite removal from church office. If a person confesses and shows repentance, suspension may be of a definite time period, but – in general – suspension should be indefinite until fruit of repentance is seen.
- Removal from office is setting aside of person's ordination and election to office without excommunication. This may be accompanied by other sanctions.
- Excommunication is removal of a person from membership and fellowship of the church. This is meant to reclaim the offender, deliver the church from disgrace, and motivate the church with fear by example of his/her discipline.
- Sanctions should be suited to the nature of the offense. For private offenses, sanctions should be given in the presence of the court alone. For public offenses, it will be in the discretion of the court to act in accordance with the following: For heresy or immorality, with the person in rebellion, the court may use the highest sanctions. A Minister may be suspended without dissolving the pastoral relationship at discretion of the Presbytery. If he/she is removed from office without excommunication, the Presbytery will assign him/her to a particular church as a member. In accordance with 3-5, no sanction shall be administered to one renouncing jurisdiction. Trial may conclude only with the accused's permission.
- Admonition may be administered in private if offense is only known to a few. If public, the admonition shall be pronounced by the Moderator and may be

made public if appropriate. If a person confesses, his/her action shall be fully recorded and judgment made without judicial procedures. When an officer confesses, before judgment is rendered, some matter of serious behavioral crime or vice, he/she shall be immediately removed from office. If an officer is removed, they shall not be restored for at least one year, with accompanying conduct change that virtually assures no repeat offense. If it is a Minister, restoration shall come only when sentiment of the church is strongly in favor of it and the court inflicting the sanction consents and removes the sanction.

- Suspension may be for a definite or indefinite period of time. It is to impress upon the offender the evil of his/her sin and lead him/her to repentance. Indefinite suspension shall include a formal address to the offender by the Moderator. Similar addresses are given for Removal from Office and Excommunication, with steps taken in cases of excommunication being given as preamble to pronouncement of sentence.

Chapter 11

Removal of Sanction

The Court should pray for the offender and may restore a suspended offender to sacraments with a formal declaration in writing.

If an Excommunicated offender desires to be readmitted, they must demonstrate repentance and request that the Session restore them. On the day of readmission several questions shall be put to him/her of sincerity of repentance and desire to live an amended life. The declaration shall formally be made with prayer and thanksgiving.

Restoration to church office shall be made following public confession on similar pattern to excommunication restoration. Re-election is required of exercise of office.

Special caution should be taken with suspended Ministers to “test sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness.” In cases where a person under sanction lives in a place remote from a sanctioning court, the court may transfer jurisdiction to a court of closest jurisdiction.

Chapter 12

Appeals

Process of appeals is given in detail with definition, parties, evidence, entitlement, grounds, notice, filing of record to appellant court, stay pending appeal, and procedures given including decision on appeal, right of counsel, abandonment of appeal upon failure to show at appellant court on appointed time, rebuke for unchristian attitude of appellant, and rebuke of lower court for failing in timely filing of record.

Chapter 13

Complaints

A Complaint is a written representation against some act or decision of a lower court made to a higher court. Any member in good standing can file a complaint, except in a judicial case where appeal is taken. Procedures for filing a complaint are given in detail, similar to other judicial procedures.

Chapter 14

Dissent and Protest

A Dissent is a statement on record, by the minority, objecting to erroneous judgments they believe were made by the majority. The statement shall be accompanied by reasons.

A Protest is a more solemn and formal statement on record, strenuously objecting to ill advised or erroneous judgment they believe made by majority, with reasons given.

Record of protest or dissent shall be entered into record if it contains temperate language and respect toward the court of the church. The court may have the right of response if deemed necessary. Persons may withdraw or amend a protest.

THE BOOK OF ORDER OF THE EPC

PART THREE-THE BOOK OF WORSHIP

Chapter 1

Man's Chief End

Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. In giving glory to God, the Christian is to worship him privately, as part of an individual family, and as part of the larger family of God, the Church. Christians are to engage in corporate praise, love, commitment, and service. This visible expression is known as worship.

Called to Worship: Natural understanding reveals there is a God and it is appropriate for God's own people to worship him. It is especially so for corporate worship. Corporate worship should lift up the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and offer dedication of life in service to him.

Called to Serve: Worship begets service. God's people gather to worship then scatter to serve. This includes witnessing God's marvelous deeds and the preaching of God's grace according to Scripture, and the demonstration of that grace in ministry to needs. The Church becomes God's instrument in the world in this way.

The Church as a Body of Christ: As the Church worships and serves, it is acting as the Body of Christ, serving the great Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. The Church builds the inner life of the Church, then extends its ministry into the world. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, both in the church and in the world.

Chapter 2

Public Worship of God

The acceptable way of public worship is established by God and laid out in Scripture. Worship shall include reading, preaching and hearing of the Word, singing of psalms and hymns, right administration of sacraments, and thankful prayer. All worship should be performed in “a holy and religious manner.” It must not be neglected or forsaken.

The Lord’s Day: One day in seven should be set aside for the worship of God. Since the resurrection of Jesus until the end of the world it is the first day of the week (Sunday). It is a remembrance of the resurrection, showing God’s power over sin and death.

- A. Christians may worship anywhere, but there are especially set aside places for that purpose. It does not make places less sacred, but sets up a permanent witness.
- B. No one should unnecessarily be kept from worshipping God on the Lord’s Day.

Preparing for the Lord’s Day: Christians should come to worship with their hearts prepared to hear and receive God’s Word. The worries of the week should be set aside when the worshipper comes in to worship.

- A. People should gather in quiet, reverent manner, praying for worship leaders, those who gather to worship, those who are hindered from doing so, and themselves.
- B. All should gather at the appointed time, participate fully and “depart only when the benediction has been pronounced.” “No unbecoming conduct should be practiced.”

The Order of Common Worship: While not bound by “rigid rules and regulations for worship ... the people are to remember to do all things decently and in order that all may participate and God may be glorified.” Though the EPC does not prescribe any set formula for worship, it “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. Pastor: Has duty to determine order, sequence, elements and proportion of service in consultation with Session and reminded of guidance in Scripture,

reformed tradition, customs, circumstances, and needs of the congregation within limits of The Book of Worship.

- B. All who come to worship should actively participate, by design.
- C. Each time of worship should give expression to the whole Gospel. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to emphasize seasons of the church year from Advent to Trinity Sunday.
- D. It is appropriate to join with other parts of the Church to celebrate certain days in conformity with A. above. Special days of prayer and fasting may be set aside as well.

The Word of God in Worship: Scripture, read, preached and heard, is the featured part of worship:

- A. Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is the infallible rule of faith and practice.
- B. Jesus Christ is the supreme Word of God made flesh, full of grace and truth. When Scripture is read in worship, Jesus is revealed, so Scripture must be read.
- C. Reading of the Word is to be done “with a sense of awe and reverence.”
- D. The Pastor has sole discretion on passage and length of reading. Pastor must exercise care in this duty. Lectionary is appropriate to use.

Sound Preaching of the Word: Worship ordinarily must include “sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word,” so a listener may respond with simple faith. Scripture interprets Scripture.

- A. Preaching should follow closely on reading of the Word and be based upon it.
- B. The sermon should relate to the congregation in which it is preached. The Preacher should be living it as well.
- C. Worshippers have a duty to be faithful hearers of the Word.
- D. The Pastor and Session must “protect the pulpit” by only allowing those invited by the Pastor and/or Session to do so.

Music in Worship: Singing psalms with grace in heart is a necessary part of common worship. The whole congregation is truly a choir, so corporate singing is not to be neglected.

- A. The purpose of music is not an end in itself but to give glory to God. When there is a choir, it should be members of a particular church, called into that service as much as possible. The choir's conduct is as important as the Pastor's.
- B. The Pastor has authority over music as well as other parts of worship. The music staff should always consult with the Pastor in music matters.
- C. Care should be taken to select contemporary and traditional hymns so "that all may rejoice." Words should be appropriate for worship and reflect Reformed theology.
- D. Use of various instruments is appropriate unless disapproved by the church Session. They should be aids, not hindrances to congregational participation.
- E. Worship should ordinarily conclude with a hymn prior to the benediction.

Prayer in Worship: The Minister ordinarily has the duty of prayer but may invite others to do so "from time to time." The Minister prays for the people as people silently pray along with him. It must be prayed in the name of Jesus, by help of the Holy Spirit, according to the will of God, for lawful things for God's people, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervor, faith, love and perseverance, in a language common to all.

- A. The Pastor should give as much attention to preparation for prayer as preaching.
- B. People are to prepare themselves for prayer as well.
- C. Prayers need not be in fixed forms, but should include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession and communion of saints. Adoration is glory and honor to God. Confession is the voicing of sins common to all with silent confession as well. Assurance of pardon is an appropriate response to confession. Thanksgiving is gratitude to God for what he has done. Supplication is requests of the people. Intercession is prayers made in behalf of others. Communion of Saints is prayers of gratitude for the saints who have gone on.

Offerings of the People of God: Recognizing God's authority over every good gift, and people as his stewards of those gifts in returning offering to God, people are to be reminded not only of proper stewardship but the use of all they have and are. Three principle areas to express this are:

- A. Offering of self: Offer self to God: heart, mind, body and soul.
- B. Offering of tithes and gifts: Worship should include a time to offer them.
- C. Offering of service to others: Announcement of opportunities for service should be made when appropriate.

Chapter 3

The Sacraments

Only two sacraments are ordained by Christ: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Ordinarily, only lawfully ordained Ministers may administer the sacraments, but only on behalf of Christ and the Church. When there is no Pastor, Session may authorize a Ruling Elder, or Presbytery a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

Sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, representing Christ "and all his benefits." They confirm our relationship to him, and show the difference between the Church and the world. Though there is a spiritual relationship between the sign of water, bread and wine, the power for it is in the Holy Spirit and the promise of God, who is the giver of them.

The Sacrament of Baptism: Through baptism a person becomes a part of the visible church, both the believer(s) and their children. As a sign it shows God's forgiveness and our redemption in Christ. As a seal, it marks us as adopted children of the heavenly Father, indicates engrafting into Christ, rebirth, remission of sins, and Spirit-led power to walk in new life. Baptism is to continue to the end of the world.

- A. Candidates for Baptism: Those who have professed faith in Christ, and believing parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of infants.
- B. Method: Water is used, by pouring or sprinkling. Immersion is allowed but is not necessary.
- C. Effectiveness: Baptism is not necessary for salvation, as some who are baptized will be lost and others who are not baptized will be saved. Yet, it is a sin to neglect this sacrament as God promises to bless his people through it. Grace is not tied to the moment of baptism.
- D. Administration: Grace received does not come from the form, or minister of baptism, and should be administered only once.
- E. Time and place: Baptism should be done before the family of believers in a public worship, with the meaning of it explained. If circumstances justify administering it elsewhere, the Minister may judge, and at least one Ruling Elder should be present on behalf of the congregation. This should not be a private ceremony.
- F. Adults: When not baptized as an infant, upon making a profession of faith an adult can be baptized and admitted into the visible Church.
 - 1. Proper instruction shall be given.
 - 2. The Minister has a duty to remind the people of the meaning of baptism.

3. The recipient has the duty to profess a faith in Jesus Christ and to walk with him, and support the Church.
 4. The Congregation has a role to be the covenant community and make a vow to help nurture that person.
 5. Administration: The Minister shall ask God's blessing on the sacrament, saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." A brief prayer shall ensue and declaration be made that the person is received into Christ's Church and may receive the Lord's Supper and share in the ministry and governance of the church.
- G. Infants: Believing parents are encouraged to present their children for baptism and not unduly delay. Infant baptism requires two-fold affirmation: parents and congregation. Parents and the congregation together are to encourage growth of the child in grace until child claims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
1. Who may present children: One or both believing parents or believing guardian(s) of the child. Ordinarily presenters are active members of that particular church. At its discretion, Session may authorize those on inactive roll to present their child, or believers who are not members of that church but of some other true branch of the visible church. Then Session must notify the governing body of that particular church of the baptism. Session ordinarily approves baptism, unless the Minister believes it is inexpedient. Then, he must report it to Session. Session must record all Baptisms in permanent record.
 2. Instruction of parents in the meaning of baptism is the duty of Session and the Minister.
 3. Godparents: Ordinarily the congregation stands as godparents, but those who might have responsibility for the children in case of parental death can come and take vows with the parents. Those who come with them should be members of the church as well.
 4. Obligation of the Minister: The Minister has a duty to remind the congregation of the meaning of baptism, for themselves, as well as the parents.
 5. Obligation of Parents: Five questions, acknowledging child's need for Jesus' cleansing blood, claiming his covenant promises, dedicating of child to God, committing to prayer for and teach child Scripture and great articles of faith in Christ, and use of every means including participating in life of church to bring child up in the Lord.
 6. Obligation of Congregation: To assume responsibilities with parents and set godly examples for the child in order that he/she might confess Christ.

7. Administration: Of the sacrament shall be similar to F.5. above.
8. Duty of Session: To record each baptism and watch over the child's nurture.

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Instituted by Jesus on the night of his betrayal. It remembers his work on the Cross, seals the benefits of Calvary for believers, and signifies spiritual growth, nourishment and the bond of communion between believers.

- A. Commemoration: Not a re-offering of Christ but a remembrance of once for all.
- B. Nature: While named body and blood they are still bread and wine. The meaning of them is discerned by the faith of the believer.
- C. Different names: Lord's Supper, Breaking of Bread, Holy Communion, Eucharist (Thanksgiving.)
- D. Significance: Worthy partakers receive Christ crucified in their hearts, and benefits of his death on their behalf. It conveys what it signifies when it is received by faith, and not unworthily. When it is unworthily received, those who do so condemn themselves.
- E. Frequency: As often as each Lord's Day, but no less than quarterly.
- F. Place of commemoration: Ordinarily part of a regular service.
- G. Special times: With those who are ill, with at least one Session member present and the Minister giving a brief explanation of sacrament. Special observances may be authorized by Session with Session represented. Presbytery and the General Assembly may authorize it, too.
- H. Preparation: At least one week's notice prior to the sacrament. It is always appropriate for Session to offer further instruction.
- I. Invitation to partake: All who are true believers present at the service may partake, even those from other congregations. All should be reminded of the meaning of the sacrament and warned of the consequences of unworthy participation. Baptized children may be invited provided they have appeared before Session and professed faith acceptably to Session. Session may receive such children into full membership.
- J. Bread and Wine: Adequate preparation should be made with a large piece of bread to break and a cup with pouring vessel during commemoration.
- K. Commemoration: Words of institution read from the gospels or I Corinthians 2. The bread and wine are blessed and set apart from ordinary use "to holy use

and mystery.” Bread is broken before the people with words of institution as a visible demonstration of sacrifice of Christ, as well as the pouring of the cup with words of institution and then the distribution.

- L. Distribution of elements: It is proper for people to gather at the table, but ordinarily Ruling Elders distribute the elements to worshipers. Court of church may appoint godly people to distribute elements when no Ruling Elders are available.
- M. Conclusion: A time of private prayer, self-examination, hymn, and benediction. A properly ordered offering by Session for the poor or other worthy cause is appropriate.

Chapter 4

The Worship of God at Other Times

The principal time of worship is the Lord’s Day. However Session has the right and duty to assemble the people at other times. Ordinary parts of worship should be in place, but Session may call for special emphasis.

Days of Prayer and Fasting: Jesus set the example in fasting. The early church practiced fasting, and the Church now will do well to follow that example. Session should be diligent and eager to pursue a special day. Christians are called individually to practice fasting.

- A. When called by Church Session: A purpose should be announced and adequate time given to prepare, with a day set aside for public worship during the fast.
- B. Private or family observance of a day of prayer and fasting: It is appropriate to do so regularly.
- C. When called by a higher court: It is appropriate for Presbytery or the General Assembly to call one.

Days of Thanksgiving: May be ordered by the Church Session or a higher court, as well as families.

Individual Worship: Individuals should develop practice of daily, scriptural worship.

Family Worship: Families should practice a regular time of scriptural worship, and worship together in public worship in a particular congregation.

Chapter 5

Christian Marriage

While not a sacrament, marriage is ordained of God and intended to be lifelong. God designed marriage for the mutual help of husband and wife, for development of character, and for having children.

Who Should Marry: One man and one woman who may give consent unless a blood relationship is forbidden in Scripture may marry. They should share a common Christian faith.

Church's Role: Marriage should be performed in a place of common worship by an ordained Minister, with family present. By approving it, the Church affirms divine institution of it and invokes God's blessing upon those who enter it according to his Word.

Remarriage of Divorced Persons: Marriage should be as long as a couple lives. However, due to human weakness and sin, gross and persistent denial of marriage vows which are unrepented of may be grounds for separation or divorce. Remarriage may be sanctioned by the Church in keeping with the redemptive gospel, when penitence is clear and a resolve to do a Christian marriage right is evident. Divorced persons should examine themselves to see if remaining unmarried may be God's vocation for them.

Minister's Role in Marriage: The Minister shall consult with those contemplating marriage, giving godly advice, instruction and biblical teachings of roles, duties and relationships in a Christian home. The Minister may refuse marriage to those he deems not ready. The Minister must fulfill all civil requirements of performing and registering marriage, as well as with Session records.

Service: The marriage ceremony is an act of worship, under direction of the Minister. Music appropriate to the occasion is to be determined by the Minister or Session. Hymns sung by all are appropriate, and decorations should not be ostentatious to detract from the duty to God. The service shall include prayers for a new family, vows exchanged, Scriptures read and charge given, with a public declaration given at the end of the service and a benediction pronounced.

Blessing of Civil Marriage: A blessing is appropriate as long as the couple follows the conditions set above for couples preparing for marriage.

Chapter 6

Christian Burial of the Dead

Christian burial above all witnesses to faith of believers and confidence in resurrection of body and everlasting life. It is a time of worship, giving glory to God

in care to the bereaved, remembrance of his providence and hope in Christ. The focus should be on God who raised Jesus from death and promises resurrection to his people.

Place of Worship: Ordinarily, place of common worship, as it is with baptism and marriage.

Parts of Worship: As with Scriptural worship, with emphasis on remembrance of the bereaved and an appeal to receive Christ as Lord and Savior to eternal life.

Casket of Deceased: Is not necessary to be present at worship, or appropriate to be open if present. Ostentatious decoration is to be avoided. It is permissible for Christians to bury, cremate or donate bodies.

Committal: Ordinarily for immediate family and close friends, before or after worship service. Scripture, brief prayer of thanksgiving for person's life, and committing of the body to its place of rest, as well as committing the soul to God, then a benediction.

Chapter 7

Service to God

The first duty of Christians is to give glory to God and then share that glory with others in service. Service is the fruit of the Gospel. "Faith and works are inseparably linked and are incomplete without one another."

Service of Evangelism: The first task of the Church is to share the Gospel.

Service of Teaching: Go into the world to make converts. Then, teach those converts.

- A. Duty in the Home
- B. Duty in the Particular Church
- C. Duty in Other Courts

Service of Giving: Church members are expected to offer self, tithes and gifts, and service to others.

- A. Self: Self-giving is never complete as it is a continual re-surrender and recommitment.
- B. Tithes and Gifts: The EPC considers a tithe a minimum biblical amount and gifts are over and above that. Giving should be done regularly and systematically.
- C. Service to Others: It is incumbent on believers to serve others as Christ taught.

1. Individual believers are to serve in the church, courts, and agencies of the church.
2. A particular church is to serve as corporate witness in the world of God's love.
3. The Presbytery and the General Assembly as higher courts are to serve as well, and offer opportunity for their jurisdictions to do so.

Service of Compassion: The Church is to serve the sick, sorrowing, hungry and poor. Session is responsible not only for in-church ministries, but community ones as well.

Service of Education: Education may include Christian School at a particular church level, colleges or seminaries at the General Assembly level.