

THE  
BOOK OF  
CHURCH ORDER  
OF  
THE ORTHODOX  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Containing the Standards of  
Government, Discipline, and Worship

Together with  
Suggested Forms  
for Use in Connection with  
the Book of Discipline  
and Particular Services  
and  
The Recommended Curriculum  
for Ministerial Preparation

— 2025 edition —  
Including all revisions effective on  
January 1, 2025

The Committee on Christian Education  
of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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The Form of Government

First published 1937

Revised 1978, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987,  
1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2011, 2015, 2025

The Book of Discipline

First published 1940

Revised 1983, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1995, 2005, 2011, 2025

The Directory for the Public Worship of God

First published 1939

Revised 1988, 1991

Thoroughly revised, 2011

Printed in USA

Issued by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Published by and available from:

The Committee on Christian Education  
of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

607 Easton Road, Bldg. E

Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539

Phone 215/830-0900

Order online at [store.opc.org](http://store.opc.org)

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## Preface

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is governed by three sets of documents: its primary, secondary, and tertiary standards (cf. Form of Government, Chapter XXXII, Section 1). The primary standard of the Church is the Word of God, contained in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. Standing above the Church's constitution, the Word of God is "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him" (Shorter Catechism, Q/A 2), for it alone is divinely inspired, infallible, and inerrant (cf. Psalm 19:7–11; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21). Subordinate to the Word of God is the constitution, consisting of two sets of standards. The doctrinal standards of the Church (the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) are its secondary standards. The standards of government, discipline, and worship comprise its tertiary standards.

*The Book of Church Order*, which you now hold in your hand, contains the tertiary standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: its Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God. While printed separately from the secondary (doctrinal) standards, the tertiary standards are not conceived, nor should they be used, in isolation from them. Several sections of the doctrinal standards refer directly or indirectly to worship and ecclesiology, such as those dealing with the sufficiency of Scripture, Christian liberty and liberty of conscience, religious worship and the Sabbath day, the civil magistrate, the church, the sacraments, church censures, and synods and councils.

The genius of Presbyterian church government lies in its appreciation for the value of such tertiary standards. They do not replace or compete with the Scriptures. Rather, they set forth rules and procedures by which the Church corporately interprets and applies the Word of God. That is, this *Book of Church Order* provides the effective

means by which the teaching of the Scriptures is applied to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's government, discipline, and worship. As Presbyterians have put this in the past, a book that rightly orders the Church is not necessary for the *being* of the Church (since there are true churches that do not follow these rules and procedures) but is necessary for the *well-being* of the Church. The rules and procedures set forth in this book will promote and encourage the spiritual health of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The differences in authority among the primary, secondary, and tertiary standards come to expression in two important respects. First, the language of the Church's ordination vows reflects the relative weight of these standards. Ministers, elders, and deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are required to *believe* the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, to *sincerely receive and adopt* the Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and to *approve* of the government, discipline, and worship of this Church. There is a lessening of the required commitment to the lower levels of these standards. Second, the standards are distinguished by the processes by which amendments may be made to them. The primary standard of the Holy Scriptures cannot be altered, for they are inerrant and infallible; the secondary standards of doctrine (that is, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms) may be amended only with difficulty and rarely; and the tertiary standards of church order (contained in *The Book of Church Order*) may be more easily and frequently revised.

This 2025 edition of *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* represents the current understanding of what this branch of the church believes the Scriptures teach about the government, discipline, and worship of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been prepared in accordance with instructions of the General Assembly, in consultation with the stated clerk of the Assembly. The Committee on Christian Education has taken on the responsibility of publishing and distributing the book.

Since the publication of the previous edition (2020), three amendments have been made to these tertiary standards. The first



was to the opening paragraph of the Form of Government, Chapter XXV, Section 7, which was revised to clarify that this section properly applies in all circumstances of installing previously ordained ruling elders and deacons of the OPC, as well as to make explicit the historic practice that ruling elders and deacons who were ordained in other churches (i.e., other denominations) are required to take the vows of ruling elders and deacons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church when they are installed. The second amendment was to the Form of Government, Chapter XV, Section 3, which was revised in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that necessitated the postponement of the 87th General Assembly from 2020 to 2021. Changing the approved date and location for the meeting of the next General Assembly after the adjournment of the previous Assembly was unprecedented in the history of the OPC when the pandemic occurred. As such, there was no clear provision in the Form of Government to allow for such a change after the Assembly’s adjournment if an emergency required it. The amendment to Form of Government XV, 3 provides a constitutional procedure for making changes to the meeting date and place for the upcoming General Assembly in cases of emergency or necessity. Because this amendment resulted in a new section being added to the chapter, all subsequent sections were renumbered but are otherwise unchanged from the 2020 edition. The third amendment was to the Book of Discipline, Chapter III, Section 2, which replaced the words “unavoidable impediments” with the word “circumstances” in the two-year statute of limitation for admitting judicial charges.

Per the Form of Government, Chapter XXXII, Section 2, this 2025 edition of *The Book of Church Order* will remain in use in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church until at least 2030.

Hank L. Belfield  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania  
June 26, 2024



# **A Brief History of *The Book of Church Order* of the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church***

As the date for the publication of the 2025 edition of *The Book of Church Order* drew near, it was suggested to the stated clerk of the General Assembly that he consider adding to his preface a brief history of the formation, revision, and adoption of the tertiary standards of the constitution of the OPC. As one who values the history of our church, I was delighted to follow that wise recommendation. Yet not wanting to reinvent the wheel and knowing that those who live through past events can often recount that history better than one who is a mere student of those events, I have chosen to present a summary by stitching together excerpts from the prefaces of previous editions of *The Book of Church Order*, written by former stated clerks of the General Assembly.

I trust that the recounting of the initial adoption of the tertiary standards that make up the OPC's *Book of Church Order* and the subsequent sixty-two-year process of revising that threefold constitutional resource will be viewed by the reader as a summary of time and effort well spent, for the way a church governs, exercises discipline, and worships God is no trivial matter. Moreover, given that the church this side of glory is imperfect, she ought continually to embrace that motto of the Protestant Reformation: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est!* (The Reformed Church is always reforming!). The work entrusted by various General Assemblies to wise and learned churchmen for making needed revisions to *The Book of Church Order* not only demonstrates the OPC's commitment to that important Reformation maxim but also—and more importantly—to the biblical principles of doing all things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40) and all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). In reading

the following account, we who are blessed with enjoying the fruit of the diligent labor of previous generations of ministers and ruling elders would do well to give thanks to God for blessing our communion with such capable and godly men. In addition, we should come to appreciate that the BCO is not the mere product of any individual or single committee but is a carefully crafted work of the Church for the Church that we all might serve the Lord well. *Soli Deo gloria!*

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*Rev. John P. Galbraith*  
*From the 1988 edition*

It seems well to include here a brief summary of the history of the adoption of these standards [of government, discipline, and worship] by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The formation of this book was begun at the First General Assembly, held in June 1936. That Assembly elected a Committee on the Constitution, composed of the Rev. Ned B. Stonehouse (who became chairman), the Rev. H. McAllister Griffiths, and ruling elder Murray Forst Thompson. The Committee was charged, in addition to its primary obligation to recommend the form of the doctrinal standards to be adopted at the Second Assembly, to “prepare for submission to the next General Assembly a Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Worship of God.” Before the Second Assembly convened in November of that same year, the Committee was able to complete only the first of these documents. The Form of Government was considered and provisionally adopted at that time and at the Third Assembly, held in June 1937, finally adopted. The Directory for the Public Worship of God was submitted to the Fourth Assembly, and after discussion and revision at that Assembly and the Sixth Assembly, held in May 1939, it was adopted. The Book of Discipline, although adopted provisionally as early as the Third Assembly, was revised at the Fourth and Sixth Assemblies and finally adopted at the Seventh Assembly, held in June 1940. Others who served on that Committee, in addition to the original members, were the Rev. Messrs. Alexander K. Davison, R. B. Kuiper, Robert Strong, and Paul Woolley.

In 1948 the Fifteenth General Assembly elected a Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government, composed of the Rev. Messrs. John P. Galbraith (who became chairman), John Murray, and Ned B. Stonehouse. The Committee was charged with “reworking” the Form of Government and proposing amendments to the next Assembly. As the Committee engaged in its work, it became clear that extensive revisions would be necessary. Ultimately, its work was to span a number of years, five versions of a new Form of Government, additions and changes to the personnel of the Committee, and, finally, a virtually new Form of Government. In the course of its work, that Committee studied the governmental standards of other Presbyterian denominations and consulted with representatives of such churches. A source document of especial note was the original Form of Government that grew out of the Westminster Assembly, *The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers*; its influence is seen clearly in Chapter 1 of the present Form of Government. The Committee presented to the Forty-Fourth Assembly in June 1977 a text for a new Form of Government. It reported also its intention to recommend final amendment to the Forty-Fifth Assembly in 1978, which it did. In both instances, the respective assemblies approved, and the presbyteries concurred. The revision was completed at the Forty-Sixth Assembly in 1979, and the Committee was discharged.

During the course of its work, the constituency of the Revision Committee underwent a number of changes. In all, thirteen members served on the Committee over the years, only one of whom was on the original revision committee. In addition to the original members and those who were active members of the Committee when the revision was approved, given below, those who served at various other times were the Rev. Messrs. Jay E. Adams, Robert L. Atwell, John P. Clelland, and Robert S. Marsden. The active members when the revision was finally approved in 1979 were the Rev. Messrs. John P. Galbraith (chairman), Edmund P. Clowney, D. Clair Davis, Robert W. Eckardt, and John J. Mitchell, and ruling elders Richard A. Barker and Edward A. Haug.

At one time the General Assembly had added revision of the Book of Discipline to the task of the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government. But when it became apparent to the Committee that the volume of its work would delay revision of the Book of Discipline, it recommended to the Thirty-Fourth Assembly in April 1967 that it erect a separate Committee on Revisions to the Book of Discipline. The Assembly concurred, but then assigned to that Committee the task of revising the Directory for Worship and changed its name to the Committee on Revisions to the Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship. Elected to that Committee were the Rev. Messrs. Edwards E. Elliott (chairman), Edward L. Kellogg, and Lawrence R. Eyres. The Forty-First Assembly reconstituted the Committee and elected the Rev. Messrs. Donald J. Duff (chairman), Glenn D. Jerrell, and Jack J. Peterson as its members. That Committee recommended a major revision to the Book of Discipline, which was adopted effective with the Fiftieth Assembly in June 1983. The Directory for Worship was corrected in 1988 in regard only to reference citations in the Form of Government.

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*Donald J. Duff*  
*From the 2005 edition*

At the Fifty-Sixth General Assembly in June 1989, the Committee on Revisions to the Book of Discipline and the Directory for Worship was renamed the Committee on Revisions to the Directory for Public Worship, and new members were elected. The Rev. Messrs. George R. Cottenden, John P. Galbraith, and John V. Yenchko were elected. Mr. Yenchko resigned in February 1990, and the Rev. Gregory E. Reynolds was elected by the Fifty-Seventh General Assembly in June 1990 to replace him. He [later] resigned and was replaced with the Rev. Bernard J. Stonehouse. At the Sixty-First General Assembly, the Committee was augmented with the Rev. Messrs. Robert D. Knudsen and Moisés Silva. Mr. John O. Kinnaird was elected as an alternate. Upon the death of the Rev. Bernard J. Stonehouse in June 1999, Mr. Kinnaird began to serve on the Committee. Dr. Robert D. Knudsen died in February 2000. Dr.

Moisés Silva resigned from the Committee after the General Assembly in 2000, and the Rev. Larry E. Wilson, who had been elected as an alternate, began active service on the Committee.

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*George R. Cottenden*  
*From the 2010 edition*

The Seventy-Second General Assembly in June 2005 assigned to the Committee on Revisions to the Directory for Public Worship the task of preparing a series of suggested forms for the imposition and removal of censures to be used with the Book of Discipline.

The Rev. Danny E. Olinger had been elected as an alternate to the Committee beginning with the Seventieth General Assembly in June 2003. He became a full member when the Rev. John P. Galbraith retired from service in October 2006. From then until the completion of its work, the Committee consisted of Messrs. Cottenden (chairman), Kinnaird, Olinger, and Wilson.

The Committee presented its Amended Proposed Revised Version of the Directory, together with revisions to its suggested forms for particular services and suggested forms for the imposition and removal of censures for the Book of Discipline, to the Seventy-Fourth General Assembly in June 2007. It also proposed the moving of certain sections relating to ordination and installation from the Directory to the Form of Government. After consideration at the 2007, 2008, and 2009 Assemblies, the Seventy-Sixth General Assembly in 2009 approved the suggested forms and approved and sent the Final Proposed Revision of the Directory and amendments to the Form of Government to the presbyteries for their approval. The stated clerk reported to the Seventy-Seventh General Assembly that the revisions and amendments had been approved by a majority of the presbyteries. The moderator of that Assembly therefore declared, in accordance with instructions adopted by the previous Assembly, that the amendments would take effect January 1, 2011. This brought to completion a process of revising *The Book of Church Order* that began in 1948.





# THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

## Chapter I Christ, the King and Head of the Church

1. Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even forever, having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all; he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church and gave offices necessary for the building of his church, for making disciples of all nations and perfecting his saints.

2. There is therefore but one King and Head of the church, the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who rules in his church by his Word and Spirit. His mediatorial office includes all the offices in his church. It belongs to his majesty from his throne of glory not only to rule his church directly but also to use the ministry of men in ruling and teaching his church through his Word and Spirit, thus exercising through men his own authority and enforce-

ing his own laws. The authority of all such ministerial office rests upon his appointment, who has ordained government in his church, revealed its nature to us in his Word, and promised his presence in the midst of his church as this government is exercised in his name.

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

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

## **Chapter II**

### **The Church**

1. Jesus Christ, being now exalted far above all principality and power, has erected in this world a kingdom, which is his church.

2. The universal church visible consists of all those persons, in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and promise submission to his commandments.

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

4. The work of the church, in fellowship with and obedience to Christ, is divine worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness. The means appointed by Christ through which the church does this work include the confession of the name of Christ before men; the exercise of fellowship in encouraging one another; the reading, teaching, and preaching of the Word of God; praying; singing; fasting; administering baptism and the Lord's Supper; collecting and distributing offerings; showing mercy; exercising discipline; and blessing the people.

## **Chapter III**

### **The Nature and Exercise of Church Power**

1. The power which Christ has committed to his church is not vested in the special officers alone, but in the whole body. All believers are endued with the Spirit and called of Christ to join in the worship, edification, and witness of the church which grows as the body of Christ fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in due measure of each part. The power of believers in their general office includes the right to acknowledge and desire the exercise of the gifts and calling of the special offices. The regular exercise of oversight in a particular congregation is discharged by those who have been called to such work by vote of the people.

2. Those who join in exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction are the ministers of the Word or teaching elders, and other church governors, commonly called ruling elders. They alone must exercise this authority by delegation from Christ, since according to the New Testament these are the only permanent officers of the church with gifts for such rule. Ruling elders and teaching elders join in congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies, for those who share gifts for rule from Christ must exercise these gifts jointly not only in the fellowship of the saints in one place but also for the edification of all the saints in larger areas so far as they are appointed thereto in an orderly manner, and are acknowledged by the saints as those set over them in the Lord.

Government by presbyters or elders is a New Testament ordinance; their joint exercise of jurisdiction in presbyterial assemblies is set forth in the New Testament; and the organization of subordinate and superior courts is founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, expressing the unity of the church and the derivation of ministerial authority from Christ the Head of the church.

3. All church power is only ministerial and declarative, for the

Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. No church judicatory may presume to bind the conscience by making laws on the basis of its own authority; all its decisions should be founded upon the Word of God. “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship” (Confession of Faith, Chapter XX, Section 2).

4. All church power is wholly moral or spiritual. No church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction; they may not inflict any civil penalties nor may they seek the aid of the civil power in the exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security.

5. Nevertheless, church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction to which Christians are commanded to submit themselves. Therefore the decisions of church officers when properly rendered and if in accord with the Word of God “are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word” (Confession of Faith, Chapter XXXI, Section 2).

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Unity of the Church**

1. Since the church of Christ is one body, united under and in one God and Father, one Lord, and one Spirit, it must give diligence to keep this unity in the bond of peace. To this end the church must receive those endued with gifts of Christ as Christ himself, must submit to those whose call to govern in the church has been properly acknowledged, and in particular must learn of those with gifts of teaching the Word of God. Further, since every Christian is endued with some gift for the edification of the body, he must minister this gift to the church as a faithful steward. Church government must maintain this fellowship in Christ and in the gifts of the Spirit and seek its restoration when it has been disrupted through schism.

2. It is the right and duty of those who rule in the church of God to maintain order and exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and duty. These officers and the whole church must censure or cast out the erroneous or scandalous, always observing the requirements of the Word of God, and seeking the honor of Christ's name, the good of his church, and the reclamation of the offender.

3. The manifestation of the unity of the church requires that it be separate from the world. Apostasy in faith and life is destructive of the fellowship in Christ; only by rejecting such error can Christian fellowship be maintained. There are many antichrists, many false apostles and teachers. From these the church must turn away, and those who steadfastly hear the voice of false shepherds and follow them cannot be regarded as the sheep of Christ. There are organizations which falsely call themselves churches of God, and others which once were churches, but have become synagogues of Satan. Communion with such is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ and his saints.

4. The visible unity of the Body of Christ, though not altogether

destroyed, is greatly obscured by the division of the Christian church into different groups or denominations. In such denominations Christians exercise a fellowship toward each other in doctrine, worship, and order that they do not exercise toward other Christians. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have gravely departed from apostolic purity; yet all of these which maintain through a sufficient discipline the Word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true manifestations of the church of Jesus Christ. All such churches should seek a closer fellowship, in accordance with the principles set forth above.

## **Chapter V**

### **Offices in the Church**

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ established his church of the new covenant on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The apostles were appointed to be witnesses to the risen Christ, testifying in the Holy Spirit to what they had seen and heard, heralding the gospel to the world, and grounding the church in the teaching of Christ. Together with the prophets they spoke by revelation, recording in the Scriptures of the New Testament the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. When their testimony was completed, their calling and office were not continued in the church and the powers and signs that endued and sealed their ministry ceased.

2. Our Lord continues to build his church through the ministry of men whom he calls and endues with special gifts for teaching, ruling, and serving. Some of these special gifts can be most profitably exercised only when those who possess them have been publicly recognized as called of Christ to minister with authority. It is proper to speak of such a publicly recognized function as an office, and to designate men by such scriptural titles of office and calling as evangelist, pastor, teacher, bishop, elder, or deacon. There are diversities of ministry within any office, for every man is called to be a steward of his own gifts. At the same time, a general designation of office may be applied to a group of functions within which separate offices could be distinguished.

3. The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church are those given for the ministry of the Word of God, of rule, and of mercy. Those who share in the rule of the church may be called elders (presbyters), bishops, or church governors. Those who minister in mercy and service are called deacons. Those elders who have been endued and called of Christ to labor also in the Word and teaching are called ministers.



## **Chapter VI**

### **Ministers or Teaching Elders**

1. The ministry of the Word is a calling of God to stewardship in the gospel. In this ministry there is a diversity of gifts that are essential to the discharge of evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching functions.

2. Every minister of the Word, or teaching elder, must manifest his gifts and calling in these various aspects of the ministry of the gospel and seek by full exercise of his ministry the spiritual profit of those with whom he labors. As a minister or servant of Christ it is his duty to feed the flock of God, to be an example to them, to have oversight of them, to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing and beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, to exhort and convince the gainsayer by sound doctrine, and to dispense the sacraments instituted by Christ. Among those who minister the Word the Scripture distinguishes the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.

3. He who fills this office shall be sound in the faith, possess competency in human learning, and be able to teach and rule others. He should exhibit holiness of life becoming to the gospel. He should be a man of wisdom and discretion. He should rule his own house well. He should have a good report of them that are outside the church.

4. Every minister shall be a member of a regional church and has communicant fellowship in any local congregation of that regional church. The presbytery, with the concurrence of a ministerial member, may request a session within its bounds to exercise pastoral care over him in its behalf. A session, with the concurrence of the presbytery, may grant the right to vote in the congregation to any ministerial member of the regional church.

## **Chapter VII**

### **Evangelists**

1. Jesus Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth, has commanded his church to make disciples of all the nations. From the throne of his glory he sent forth the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, to empower the witness of the church to the gospel. While it is the calling of every believer to confess Christ before men, and while God gives particular gifts and calling to some to minister the Word, and while every minister of the Word must evangelize in the fulfillment of his calling, there are some who are particularly called by Christ and his church as evangelists. Ordinarily such men shall preach the Word free of pastoral charge in a particular flock in order that they may labor to bring in other sheep. And to those sheep whom Christ has brought in, evangelists shall administer the sacraments until a congregation shall have been regularly organized. Since the gifts and functions of evangelists are necessary until the end of the age, this ministry is permanent and not confined to the apostolic period.

2. The evangelist, in common with other ministers, is ordained to perform all the functions that belong to the sacred office of the minister. Yet distinctive to the function of the evangelist in his ministry of the gospel are the labors of (a) a missionary in a home or foreign mission field; (b) a stated supply or special preacher in churches to which he does not sustain a pastoral relation; (c) a chaplain in institutions or in military forces; (d) an administrator of an agency for preaching the gospel; and (e) an editor or similar ministry through the press and other means of communication.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Pastors**

Christ's undershepherd in a local congregation of God's people, who joins with the ruling elders in governing the congregation, is called a pastor. It is his charge to feed and tend the flock as Christ's minister and with the other elders to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to conduct the public worship of God; to pray for and with Christ's flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of the people, instructing and counseling individuals, and training them to be faithful servants of Christ; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and to make known the gospel to the lost.

## **Chapter IX**

### **Teachers**

1. A teacher is a minister of the Word who has received particular gifts from Christ for expounding the Scripture, teaching sound doctrine, and convincing gainsayers, and is called to this ministry.

2. A minister may serve a local congregation as a teacher if there is at least one other minister serving as pastor. The teacher may also give instruction in a theological seminary; or teach the Word in a school, college, or university; or discharge this ministry in some other specific way, such as writing or editing in the field of Christian religious education. He shall take a pastoral oversight of those committed to his charge as teacher, and be diligent in sowing the seed of the Word and gathering the harvest, as one who watches for souls.

## **Chapter X**

### **Ruling Elders**

1. Christ who has instituted government in his church has furnished some men, beside the ministers of the Word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereto. Such officers, chosen by the people from among their number, are to join with the ministers in the government of the church, and are properly called ruling elders.

2. Those who fill this office should be sound in the faith and of exemplary Christian life, men of wisdom and discretion, worthy of the esteem of the congregation as spiritual fathers.

3. Ruling elders, individually and jointly with the pastor in the session, are to lead the church in the service of Christ. They are to watch diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals. Evils which they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the session. They should visit the people, especially the sick, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the children of the covenant. They should pray with and for the people. They should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and help him in his labors.

## **Chapter XI**

### **Deacons**

1. The Scriptures designate the office of deacon as distinct and perpetual in the church. Deacons are called to show forth the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy toward the saints and strangers on behalf of the church. To this end they exercise, in the fellowship of the church, a recognized stewardship of care and of gifts for those in need or distress. This service is distinct from that of rule in the church.

2. Those chosen to this office should be of great faith, exemplary lives, honest repute, brotherly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.

3. In order to facilitate the performance of the duties of their office the deacons of each particular church shall be constituted a board of deacons. The board shall choose its own officers from its membership.

4. The board shall oversee the ministry of mercy in the church and shall collect and disburse funds for the relief of the needy. Other forms of service for the church may also be committed to the deacons.

5. In the discharge of their duties the deacons shall be under the supervision and authority of the session. Accordingly, the board shall keep a record of its proceedings and of all funds and their distribution, and shall submit its records to the session once every three months, and at other times upon request of the session. If it seems to be for the best interest of the church, the session may require the board of deacons to reconsider any action, or may, if necessary, overrule it.

6. It is desirable that the session and the board of deacons meet

together at regular intervals to confer on matters of common responsibility.

7. In a church in which there are no deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the session.

## **Chapter XII**

### **Governing Assemblies**

1. All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers. These are to be used to maintain truth and righteousness and to oppose erroneous opinions and sinful practices that threaten the purity, peace, or progress of the church. All assemblies have the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline reasonably proposed and the power to obtain evidence and inflict censures. A person charged with an offense may be required to appear only before the assembly having jurisdiction over him, but any member of the church may be called by any assembly to give testimony.

2. Each governing assembly exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters belonging to it. The session exercises jurisdiction over the local church; the presbytery over what is common to the ministers, sessions, and the church within a prescribed region; and the general assembly over such matters as concern the whole church. Disputed matters of doctrine and discipline may be referred to a higher governing assembly. The lower assemblies are subject to the review and control of higher assemblies, in regular graduation. These assemblies are not separate and independent, but they have a mutual relation and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate body.

3. Assemblies have the authority to erect committees and commissions and to delegate to them specific interim powers. The membership of such committees and commissions need not be limited to the membership of the appointing assembly when the delegated tasks and powers do not require it.

4. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted in these assemblies, nor shall any one be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken.



## **Chapter XIII**

### **The Local Church and Its Session**

1. The local church consists of a definite membership organized as a distinct congregation with its officers. Two or more local congregations may be associated together under the government of a single session. The membership of a local congregation consists of communicant and noncommunicant members, all of whom have the privilege of pastoral oversight, instruction, and government by the church.

2. Communicant members are those who have been baptized, have made a credible profession of faith in Christ, and have been enrolled and admitted to all the rights of church membership by the session. Noncommunicant members are the baptized children of communicant members.

3. The officers in local congregations are ministers, ruling elders, and deacons. The number of each is to be determined by taking into account the needs of the congregation and the number of those to whom Christ has given the gifts required for such offices.

4. The session, which is the governing body of the local church, consists of its pastor, its other ministers, and its ruling elders. It shall choose its own moderator annually from among its members.

5. The session shall convene at the call of the moderator, the presbytery, any two members of the session, or upon its own adjournment. A quorum of a session is two ruling elders, if there are three or more, or one ruling elder if there are fewer than three, together with the pastor or one of the pastors of the local congregation. In no case may the session conduct its business with fewer than two present who are entitled to vote.

6. When the pastor is unable to be present, or when for other

reasons it seems advisable, another minister, normally of the same presbytery, acceptable to the session and the pastor, may be invited to be present for counsel; he shall be without vote, but may be elected to moderate the meeting.

When a church is without a pastor, the session shall request the presbytery to appoint a minister, normally of the same presbytery, to meet with them, or shall itself invite such a minister; he shall have the right to vote, and to be elected to moderate the meeting.

When it is impractical without great inconvenience for a minister to attend, those present may conduct business, but the grounds for the call of such a meeting shall be reviewed at the next meeting at which a minister is present.

7. The session is charged with maintaining the government of the congregation. It shall oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship; it shall concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation. It shall receive, dismiss, and exercise discipline over the members of the church, supervise the activities of the diaconate, the board of trustees and all other organizations of the congregation, and have final authority over the use of the church property. The session also shall appoint ruling elder commissioners to higher assemblies.

8. The session shall keep the following records: (1) minutes of its meetings, including a record of the administration of the sacraments and changes in the membership of the congregation; (2) minutes of the meetings of the congregation; and (3) rolls of the members of the congregation, both of communicant members and of their baptized children, with the dates of their reception. Such rolls shall designate those members worshipping with a mission work. Births, baptisms, censures, restorations, deaths, and removals shall be noted on these rolls. The session shall submit its minutes and the minutes of the congregation to the presbytery for review at least once every year.

9. The names of members shall be placed upon or removed

from the rolls of the church only by order of the session, and according to the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

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

Whenever a member desires dismissal to a church of which the session cannot approve, and he cannot be dissuaded, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the session institutes disciplinary action against him; upon being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll.

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

## **Chapter XIV**

### **The Regional Church and Its Presbytery**

1. A regional church consists of all the members of the local congregations and the ministers within a certain district. The general assembly may organize a regional church when there are at least four congregations, two ministers, and two ruling elders, within a region.

2. The presbytery is the governing body of a regional church. It consists of all the ministers and all the ruling elders of the congregations of the regional church.

3. Meetings of the presbytery shall be composed, insofar as possible, of all the ministers on the roll and one ruling elder from each congregation commissioned by the respective sessions. Any four presbyters, among whom shall be at least two ministers and one commissioned ruling elder, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a quorum.

4. The moderator shall be chosen from among its members from year to year, or for some shorter term if the presbytery so determines, and shall serve until his successor is installed.

5. The presbytery has the power to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care, always respecting the liberties guaranteed to the individual congregations under the constitution. In the exercise of its jurisdiction the presbytery has responsibility for evangelism within the bounds of its region, especially in areas which are not within the sphere of service in any one congregation. Similarly the presbytery shall seek to foster fellowship in worship and nurture in the church as a whole within its region.

The presbytery has the power to organize and receive congregations (cf. Chapter XXIX), to unite and dissolve congregations, at the request of the people and with the advice of the sessions involved, to

visit particular churches for the purpose of inquiring into their state and of taking proper measures to insure that the evils which may have arisen in them shall be redressed. Presbytery shall examine and approve or censure the records of church sessions.

Further, the presbytery has power to receive and issue all appeals, and other matters, that are brought before it from church sessions in a regular manner, subject to the provisions of the Book of Discipline; to resolve questions of doctrine or discipline seriously and reasonably proposed; to condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the church; to take under its care, examine, and license candidates for the holy ministry; and to ordain, install, remove, and judge ministers.

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

7. The presbytery shall meet on its own adjournment; and when any emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator, or, in case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the stated clerk, shall, at the request of any two ministers and two ruling elders, the ruling elders being of different congregations, call a special meeting; the moderator or the stated clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter shall be sent, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every minister and the clerk of every session under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, at least ten days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meeting besides the particular business for which the judicatory has been convened.

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

9. Uncommissioned elders of the regional church, and presbyters in good standing in other presbyteries or in churches of like faith and practice, who may be present, may be invited to sit with the presbytery as corresponding members. Such members shall be entitled to deliberate and advise, but not to vote in any decisions of the presbytery.

## **Chapter XV**

### **The Whole Church and Its General Assembly**

1. The whole church consists of all the members of its regional churches.

2. The general assembly, which is the governing body of the whole church, shall consist of not more than one hundred and fifty-five voting commissioners, including the moderator and stated clerk of the previous assembly, the stated clerk of the current assembly, and such ministers and ruling elders as are commissioned by the respective presbyteries in accordance with proportions determined by a previous general assembly. In the event that the general assembly fails to establish such proportions, the next general assembly shall consist of every minister and of one ruling elder from every local church.

3. The general assembly shall meet ordinarily at least once in every year. In the event of unanticipated circumstances that require a change in date or location of the general assembly, the stated clerk and the moderator of the preceding assembly, in consultation with appropriate committees, are authorized to change the date and venue, along with other provisions that may be warranted.

4. On the day appointed for the purpose the moderator of the preceding assembly shall open the meeting and preside until a moderator is chosen. In the event of his absence the member present who was last elected moderator of the general assembly shall preside in his place. Each commissioner shall present his credentials to the clerk of the assembly. Any twenty of these commissioners, of whom at least five shall be ministers and at least five ruling elders, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall be a quorum for the transaction of business. No commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the assembly until he has been enrolled.

5. The moderator of the preceding assembly, or a minister appointed by him in his place, shall preach a sermon at the opening of the general assembly. Each session of the assembly shall be opened with prayer. And the whole business of the assembly being finished, and the vote taken for dissolving the present assembly, the moderator shall say from the chair, "By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the church, let this general assembly be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another general assembly, chosen in the same manner, to meet at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. \_\_\_\_\_," after which he shall pray and return thanks, and the apostolic benediction shall be pronounced.

6. When any emergency shall require the calling of a general assembly sooner than the time specified by the previous assembly, the moderator of the previous assembly, or in the case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the stated clerk, at the request of twenty presbyters, including at least five ministers, and ruling elders from at least five congregations, shall call a special general assembly. The moderator or the stated clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter shall be sent, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every minister and to the clerk of every session at least twenty days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meeting except the particular business for which the assembly has been convened.

7. The general assembly shall seek to advance the worship, edification, and witness of the whole church. It shall seek to resolve all doctrinal and disciplinary questions regularly brought before it from the lower assemblies. It shall seek to promote the unity of the church of Christ through correspondence with other churches.

8. The duties peculiar to the general assembly include organizing regional churches, reviewing the records of the presbyteries, and calling ministers or licentiates to the missionary or other ministries of the whole church directly or through its standing committees.



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

## **Chapter XVI**

### **Congregational Meetings**

1. Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the session. A stated meeting shall be held at least once annually to consider the affairs of the congregation. Other meetings shall be called when the session deems it to be for the best interests of the congregation or when requested in writing to do so by one-fourth of the communicant members of the congregation in good and regular standing. Only those and all those persons who are communicant members of the congregation in good and regular standing shall be entitled to vote. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted, nor shall anyone be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken.

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

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

4. The moderator and the clerk of the session shall serve as moderator and clerk respectively in congregational meetings. In the event that it is impracticable or inexpedient for either or both of these to serve, the session shall appoint others from among its number, or request a minister or ruling elder of the presbytery to serve.

5. The clerk shall keep a correct record of all the business trans-

acted at the meeting and preserve it with the records of the session. Minutes of the congregational meeting shall be approved by the congregation before the close of the meeting.

6. When the laws of the state require, the congregation shall transact business as a corporation. All other business shall be conducted in the congregational meeting.

7. A congregation may withdraw from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church only according to the following procedure:

a. Before calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of taking any action contemplating withdrawal from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the session shall inform the presbytery, ordinarily at a stated meeting, of its intention to call such a meeting, and shall provide grounds for its intention. The presbytery, through representatives appointed for the purpose, shall seek, within a period not to exceed three weeks after the presbytery meeting, in writing and in person, to dissuade the session from its intention. If the session is not dissuaded, it may issue a written call for the first meeting of the congregation. The call shall contain the session's recommendation, with its written grounds, together with the presbytery's written argument.

b. If the vote of the congregation favors withdrawal, the session shall call for a second meeting to be held not less than three weeks, nor more than one year, thereafter. If the congregation, at the second meeting, reaffirms a previous action to withdraw, it shall be the duty of the presbytery to prepare a roll of members who desire to continue as members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to provide for the oversight of these continuing members.

c. The presbytery shall be given the opportunity, at any congregational meeting at which withdrawal is being considered, to dissuade the congregation from withdrawing.

## **Chapter XVII**

### **Congregations without Pastors**

1. A congregation without a pastor shall continue to meet on the Lord's Day for the purpose of prayer, the singing of praises, and the hearing of the Word of God. When a minister or licentiate is not available the session shall be responsible for the conducting of services. A sermon or exhortation in accord with the standards of the Church shall be presented by reading, recording, or oral delivery to the congregation.

2. The presbytery may supervise a church that is without a pastor through a ministerial advisor (cf. Chapter XIII, Section 6) or a committee. Such supervision includes cooperation with the session, or with any authorized committee of the particular church, in the supply of the pulpit and in the seeking and securing of a pastor.

3. Under ordinary circumstances only ministers and licentiates of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shall be employed as regular supplies in congregations without pastors. However, other ministers or licentiates may be employed as regular supplies upon approval of the presbytery.

## **Chapter XVIII**

### **Moderators**

1. In the judicatories of the church there shall be a moderator chosen from among its members as presiding officer so that business may be conducted with order and dispatch.

2. The moderator is to be considered as possessing, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary for the preservation of order, for convening and adjourning the judicatory, and directing its operations according to the rules of the Church. The moderator of the presbytery as provided in Chapter XIV, Section 7, and the moderator of the previous general assembly as provided in Chapter XV, Section 5, of this Form of Government, shall be empowered to convene the judicatory before the ordinary time of meeting.

3. If the moderator is a member of the body over which he presides, he may vote in all decisions of that body.

## **Chapter XIX**

### **Clerks**

Every judicatory shall choose a clerk from among those who are or those eligible to be its members to serve for such a term as the judicatory may determine. It shall be the duty of the clerk to be accountable for the recording of the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required; and such extracts under the hand of the clerk shall be considered as authentic vouchers of the facts which they declare, in any ecclesiastical judicatory and to every part of the Church.

## **Chapter XX**

### **Ordination and Installation**

1. It being manifest by the Word of God that no man ought to take upon himself the office of deacon, ruling elder, or minister, the Scriptures declare that the church shall set men apart by solemn act for its service.

2. Ordination is that act by which men are set apart to the offices of deacon, ruling elder, and minister. It is the church's solemn approval of and public attestation to a man's inward call, his gifts, and his calling by the church.

3. The church shall invest him with the office only when satisfied as to his gifts and only in response to a call to do work appropriate to that office. In the case of deacons and ruling elders their service shall be in the church. In the case of ministers their service normally shall be in the church, though in unusual circumstances it may be, if approved by the presbytery, in nonecclesiastical religious organizations.

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

5. Ordination shall be performed by the body which examines the candidate. In the case of deacons and ruling elders it shall be by the session, except that when a congregation is without a session the presbytery shall ordain such officers as have been elected by the congregation and approved by the presbytery. In the case of ministers ordination shall be by the presbytery.

6. Installation is the act by which a person who has been chosen to perform official work in the church, having been ordained, is placed in position to do that work. When a man receives his first

call to a service his ordination and installation shall be performed at the same time.

7. The installation of deacons and ruling elders shall be performed by the session except as provided in Section 5, above. The installation of ministers shall be in the charge of the presbytery.

8. When an officer, by reason of advanced age or disability, retires or is retired from a position and is no longer engaged in a service that requires a call in terms of Chapters XXIII or XXV of this Form of Government, the body calling him to that service in which he was last engaged before his retirement may, in recognition of his long and/or meritorious service, designate him “emeritus” with the title of his previous service.



## **Chapter XXI**

### **Licensing Candidates to Preach the Gospel**

1. The Holy Scriptures require that some trial be previously made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the gospel, in order that this sacred office may not be degraded by being committed to weak or unworthy men and that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose candidates for ordination shall first be licensed by presbyteries to preach the gospel as probationers. After a period of probation sufficient to make trial of their qualifications and service, and having received reports that their services are edifying to the church, the presbyteries may in due time proceed to ordain such probationers, or licentiates, to the sacred office.

2. Prior to licensure candidates shall be taken under care of a presbytery. A candidate must be a communicant member of a local congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; ordinarily it should be of the same presbytery in which he is applying to be taken under care. The presbytery shall receive a written recommendation from the session of the local congregation of which the candidate is a member, certifying that in its judgment his Christian faith and potential gifts qualify him to be taken under the care of the presbytery with a view to ordination to the gospel ministry. It is of particular importance, at this time, that the presbytery inquire as to the grace of God in him and whether he be of such holiness of life as is requisite in a minister of the gospel. It is therefore the duty of a presbytery, in taking a candidate under its care, to examine him respecting his Christian faith, life, service, and the motives influencing him to desire the sacred office. The presbytery must show its continuing concern for the progress of all the candidates under its care, and shall continually guide, counsel, and help them as they further prepare themselves for the work of the ministry.

If a candidate desires to place himself under the care of a pres-

bytery other than his own, he shall request his presbytery to forward the written recommendation of his session to the presbytery under whose care he desires to place himself. That presbytery shall examine the candidate as required above of all candidates and, if it receives him as a candidate shall give him all that continuing care above required.

3. It is highly reproachful to religion and dangerous to the church to entrust the preaching of the gospel to weak and ignorant men. The presbytery shall therefore license a candidate only if he has received a bachelor of arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from a college or university of reputable academic standing, and has completed an adequate course of study lasting at least one year and a half in a theological seminary.

4. The candidate for licensure shall be examined by the presbytery, or by a committee appointed for that purpose, in the English Bible, ecclesiastical history, theology, and the original languages of the Scriptures. The presbytery shall also satisfy itself, by receiving testimonials or by other means, of the candidate's piety and exemplary life and his personal zeal for and experience in presenting the gospel to others. If the examination of candidates is referred to a committee, an examination at least in theology shall also be held before the presbytery; and if one-fourth of the presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination in theology, the candidate shall be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the presbytery.

5. In order to make trial of his gifts to explain and vindicate and practically to enforce the doctrines of the gospel, the presbytery shall further require that the candidate prepare (1) a sermon, which the presbytery may ask to be delivered in its presence, (2) an essay on a theological theme, and (3) an exegesis of the Hebrew or Greek text of a passage of Scripture.

6. That the most effectual measures may be taken to guard

against the admission of unqualified men into the sacred office, no exception shall be made of any of the educational or other requirements for licensure outlined above unless the presbytery, after reporting the whole matter to the general assembly and weighing such advice as it may offer, shall judge, by a three-fourths vote of the members present, that the exception is warranted by the manifest qualifications of the candidate for the holy office of the gospel ministry.

7. If the presbytery is satisfied with the trials of a candidate for licensure, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner. The moderator shall propose to him the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?

(4) Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this presbytery, or any other presbytery under the jurisdiction of which you may come?

8. After the candidate has answered these questions in the affirmative the moderator shall offer prayer suitable to the occasion and shall address the candidate in the following or similar words: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority that he has given to the church for its edification, we license you to preach the gospel, wherever God in his providence may call you; and for this purpose, may the blessing of God rest upon you, and the spirit of Christ fill your heart. Amen."

The presbytery shall record the licensure in its minutes and provide the licentiate with a certificate in the following form:

At \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ the Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ having received testimonials in favor of \_\_\_\_\_, of his being in the communion of the church, of his piety and exemplary life, of his proficiency in the liberal arts, divinity, and other studies, and of his personal zeal for the gospel and his ability to present it to others, approved all these parts of trial; and he having adopted the Confession of Faith of this Church, and satisfactorily answered the questions to be put to candidates to be licensed, the presbytery did license to preach the gospel of Christ as a probationer for the holy ministry within the bounds of this presbytery, or wherever else he shall be orderly called.

9. When any candidate for licensure shall have occasion, while his trials are going on, to remove from the bounds of his own presbytery into those of another, the latter presbytery, on his producing proper testimonial from the former, may take up his trials at the point at which they were interrupted, and conduct them to a conclusion.

10. A licentiate shall move outside the limits of his regional church for an extended period of time only by permission of his presbytery; in such a case an extract of the record of his licensure and a statement of his service as a licentiate, signed by the clerk, shall be his testimonials to the presbytery under whose jurisdiction he shall come. When a licentiate shall undertake regular duties within the bounds of a regional church he shall place himself under the jurisdiction of its presbytery.

11. When, over a considerable period of time, either a licentiate's services do not appear to be edifying to the church, or he is not actively seeking a call to ministerial service except for reasons of furthering his preparation for the ministry, the presbytery may, if it think proper, recall his license. The period of time ordinarily should not exceed two years.

## **Chapter XXII**

### **Calling a Minister**

1. A minister or licentiate may be called to ministerial service by a congregation; he may also be called by a presbytery or the general assembly, either directly or through their agencies, for work not related to any one particular congregation. Only ministers and licentiates may be called.

2. All calls shall be presented to the person called only by consent of presbytery. No minister shall be transferred to other service without his consent.

3. When a congregation desires to call a pastor it shall ordinarily choose a special committee from its own membership to assist it in selecting him. If the committee is not identical with the session, invitations to preach to the congregation shall be issued only with the approval of the session. No person shall be called by the congregation without the prior approval of the session, except that any ten members entitled to vote or one-fifth of all those entitled to vote, which ever be the larger number, may present a nomination to the congregation, such nomination having been previously submitted to the special committee for its consideration.

4. When the special committee is prepared to make its report it shall inform the session and present to it a copy of its proposed report so that the session may consider such nominations as may be contemplated in the proposed report. The session shall then, if it deems it advisable, convene a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of hearing the report of the committee and acting on it; it shall, however, always be the duty of the session to convene the congregation in accordance with Chapter XVI, Section 1, and to conduct the meeting in accordance with that chapter.

5. When the meeting has been convened and the call of the

meeting has been found in order, it is expedient that the moderator give an exhortation to the congregation suited to the purpose of its coming together. The special committee, or the session, shall then present its report, after which the congregation shall determine whether it wishes to proceed to call a pastor.

6. If the congregation decides to vote to call a pastor the moderator shall conduct the election. The voting shall be by ballot, a majority being required for election.

If the vote is unanimous a call shall be drawn in due form. If there is a majority and a minority the moderator shall address the congregation seeking to persuade the minority to concur in the call. A ballot shall then be taken to determine the number concurring in the call. If there is still a minority unwilling to concur, the moderator shall advise the majority and the minority concerning their mutual responsibilities. A final ballot shall then be taken to determine the number desiring to prosecute the call in the circumstances. If a majority decides to prosecute the call it shall be drawn in due form and the presbytery shall be informed of the proceedings.

If at any point in the meeting the congregation decides not to call a pastor it may refer the matter back to the special committee, or to the session, as the case may be, for report to a later meeting, or take such other action as may be appropriate.

7. When the congregation has determined to issue a call it shall by vote determine the terms of the call, and shall order it subscribed either by the electors, or by the session or other representatives of its choice. The session shall then draw up the call in proper form and see to its signing by the proper signatories.

After the congregation has determined the signatories of the call it may appoint commissioners to represent it at the next meeting of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs for the purpose of having the call found in order and its terms approved. The clerk of the session shall present the call to the clerk of the presbytery, who shall present it to a meeting of the presbytery at the earliest practicable time.

8. If the congregation has chosen to subscribe its call by representatives the moderator shall certify to the presbytery that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a vote of the congregation.

The moderator shall also certify as to the validity of the meeting of the congregation and that the call as presented has been prepared in all respects as directed by vote of the congregation.

9. A call from a congregation shall be in the following or like form:

The congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ Church being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied with the ministerial qualifications of you \_\_\_\_\_, and having good hopes that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation; promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly care and employment, we promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ in regular \_\_\_\_\_ payments during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church, together with free use of a house and \_\_\_\_\_ vacation each year.

A call from a presbytery or the general assembly or an agency thereof shall be in appropriately similar form.

10. When a call from a congregation has been presented to its presbytery for approval the presbytery may find the call in order, approve its terms, and determine to place it in the hands of the person called, whether or not he be of the same presbytery; may refer the call back to the congregation with recommendations either to amend or desist from the call; or may, for reasons which it shall communicate to the congregation, decline to place the call in the person's hands.

If the call is to a minister or licentiate who is under the jurisdic-

tion of another presbytery of this Church the clerk of the presbytery which has jurisdiction over the calling congregation shall, if that presbytery approves the call, forward the call to the person called and a copy to the clerk of his presbytery. The calling congregation's presbytery may, before acting on the call, require the person called to be interviewed by the presbytery or a committee of the presbytery in order to judge of his fitness in the circumstances. If the person resides at an inconvenient distance from the presbytery's area such an interview may be arranged, if agreeable to all parties, at the time of his visiting the congregation prior to the issuance of a call.

11. When a call is issued by a presbytery or the general assembly, or an agency thereof, a person designated by the calling body shall sign the call, forward it to the person called, send a copy to the presbytery that has jurisdiction over him, and certify to that presbytery as to the validity of the meeting at which the call was issued and that the call has been prepared in all respects as determined at that meeting.

12. The procedures to be followed in response to a call from within the Church shall be:

a. When the call is to the pastor of a congregation, and he is disposed to accept the call, he shall inform the congregation of his desire and ask them to concur with him in requesting their presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship; such request shall be voted on by the congregation at a regularly called meeting of the congregation.

If the congregation concurs in his request the pastor shall request their presbytery to approve the call and to dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregation declines to concur in his request he may, if he is still disposed to accept the call, request the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship; in such a case the congregation shall be given the opportunity to be represented at the meeting of presbytery to plead its cause.

When the presbytery has received a request to approve a call and to dissolve a pastoral relationship it may grant the request, re-



quire the pastor and congregation to give the matter further consideration, or require the continuance of the relationship.

If a pastoral relationship is dissolved, the presbytery shall declare the pulpit vacant as of a specified date and record the facts in its records. If the call is to work under the jurisdiction of another presbytery, the minister shall be dismissed to that presbytery as of a convenient date and the clerk of the dismissing presbytery shall so inform the presbytery to which the minister is being dismissed.

b. When the call is to a minister serving a presbytery or the general assembly, or an agency thereof, a procedure parallel to that for a pastor shall be followed.

c. When the call is to a minister without a charge, or if his charge is not under the jurisdiction of the Church, he shall, if he is disposed to accept the call, request the presbytery to approve the call and grant him permission to accept it.

d. When the call is to a licentiate and he is disposed to accept the call he shall request his presbytery to approve the call and grant him permission to accept it. Before the presbytery considers his request it shall have determined that he has satisfactorily completed his probation for the gospel ministry.

e. If the person called decides to decline the call he shall promptly inform the calling body and the presbytery through which the call was issued, and return the call to the calling body.

f. No minister may leave his charge without the prior approval of the presbytery.

13. a. When a call to a minister of another denomination is contemplated the person presiding at the meeting of the calling body shall, before a vote is taken, inform it of the provisions of this section.

b. When the calling body has voted to issue a call to such a minister it shall present it to the appropriate presbytery for approval; if the presbytery approves the call it shall place it in his hands contingent upon his reception into the presbytery.

c. If the minister desires to accept the call the presbytery shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications in

regard to piety, faith, and learning that are required of candidates for ordination as given in Chapter XXIII. This evidence shall include written testimonials from qualified persons of his satisfactory exercise of the requisite gifts for the ministry of the Word.

In no case shall an examination on the floor of presbytery be waived. If one-fourth of the presbyters present are dissatisfied with the examination in theology the minister shall be required to undergo an examination in the subject again at a future meeting of the presbytery. If at the outset of such subsequent meeting one-fourth of the presbyters so request, a clear recording of this examination shall be made and filed with the presbytery.

The presbytery shall require him to answer affirmatively the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by

your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?

d. Under no circumstances shall such a person be permitted to undertake any of the duties contemplated in the call nor to occupy living quarters that are to be provided by the calling body, and he shall be strongly advised not to change his residence in any case, until after the call has been approved and his reception by the presbytery has been completed.

14. A person receiving a call shall respond to it ordinarily within three weeks unless otherwise agreed to by the calling body.

15. The acceptance of a call shall be regarded as a request for installation in the case of a minister, and for ordination and installation in the case of a licentiate, and the presbytery shall proceed as soon as convenient to act upon the request in terms of Chapter XXIII, Sections 4ff.

16. Within the terms of this chapter the phrase “find the call in order” shall mean to determine that the call has been properly drawn and issued, and that its terms conform to the constitution of the Church; and the phrase “approve its terms” or “approve the call” shall mean to sanction the terms specified in the call.

## **Chapter XXIII**

### **Ordaining and Installing Ministers**

1. When a call is issued to a minister or licentiate it shall be regarded as a request by the calling body for his installation. When the person called has declared his willingness to accept the call this shall be regarded as his request to be installed; in the case of a licentiate it shall be regarded as a request first to be ordained.

2. A licentiate may be ordained as a minister of the Word when he has given sufficient evidence that he has the ministerial gifts required for instruction and rule in Christ's church in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XXI, Section 1, and has been called to a ministerial service approved by the presbytery. A minister may be received from another denomination when he has given sufficient evidence that he has the ministerial gifts required for instruction and rule in Christ's church in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 of this chapter.

3. That the most effectual measures may be taken to guard against the admission of unqualified men into the sacred office the presbytery shall ordain a licentiate, or receive a minister from another denomination, if he has satisfactorily completed the academic requirements set forth in Chapter XXI, Section 3, and an adequate course of study in a theological seminary equivalent to that required for a regular three-year theological degree.

Ordination of a licentiate, or reception of a minister from another denomination, without the full requirements specified above and in Section 6, below, may be granted as an exception to the above rule only if the presbytery, after reporting the whole matter to the general assembly and weighing such advice as it may offer, shall judge, by a three-fourths vote of the members present, that such exception is warranted by the qualifications of the candidate.

If the presbytery is satisfied as to the ministerial qualifications of the candidate but finds that he lacks competency in the Hebrew and

Greek languages, or one of them, it may judge by a three-fourths vote of the members present to waive these requirements without referring this question to the general assembly for advice. Such action shall be taken only when the applicant has given affirmative answer to the following question:

Do you agree that you will make a continuing endeavor, under the direction of the presbytery, to attain competency in those languages until the presbytery is satisfied?

4. When a licentiate indicates his willingness to accept a call, the presbytery shall, at the earliest time convenient to both the presbytery and the licentiate, examine him as to his qualifications for the sacred office, with a view to his ordination.

5. If a licentiate is called to ministerial service within the Church, and the presbytery has authorized his ordination, he shall be ordained and installed at an occasion arranged for the purpose. If he is called to ministerial service under auspices other than those of this Church and indicates that he desires to accept the call, the presbytery, if it approves of the call and authorizes his ordination, shall ordain him at a time suitable to the parties concerned.

6. Trials for ordination shall consist of the following: (1) the evaluation of written and oral testimonials as to the candidate's satisfactory exercise of the gifts for the gospel ministry; (2) an examination as to the candidate's Christian faith and life; as to his knowledge of the Bible, theology, apologetics, ecclesiastical history, the Greek and Hebrew languages, and such other branches of learning as to the presbytery may appear requisite; and as to his knowledge of the confession, government, discipline, and worship of the Church; this examination may include such written discourses, founded on the Word of God, as shall seem proper to the presbytery. If the examination is referred to a committee an examination at least in theology shall also be held before the presbytery; if one-fourth of the presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination in theology, the candidate shall be required to continue the examina-

tion at a future meeting of the presbytery.

7. When a licentiate has been called to be the pastor of a congregation and has expressed his desire to accept the call, and the presbytery has satisfied itself that he has the requisite qualifications for the office and service as specified in Sections 1, 5, and 6, above, the presbytery shall appoint a time to meet to ordain and install him. The service shall be, if convenient, in the church of which he is to be the minister. It is also recommended that a day of prayer and fasting be observed in the congregation previous to the day of ordination.

8. At the time for ordination and installation the moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside over the meeting of the presbytery, with the congregation present. A minister previously appointed shall preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Afterwards the moderator shall briefly inform the congregation of the proceedings of the presbytery preparatory to this occasion; he shall also instruct the congregation, in the following or similar language, concerning the warrant and nature of the office of minister of the Word of God and the duties of a pastor toward a congregation:

The Word of God clearly teaches that the office of minister was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul declares that our Lord “gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.”

The duties of the minister of Christ may briefly be set forth under the following heads: the faithful exposition of the Word of God and its application to the needs of the hearers, in order that the unconverted may be reconciled to God and that the saints may be built up in their most holy faith; the offering of prayer to the Lord on behalf of the congregation; the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and the exercise, in conjunction with the ruling elders, of the government

and discipline of the church.

The office of the minister is first in the church for dignity and usefulness, for, by our God's sovereign design, the ministry of the Word is the primary instrument in our Lord's gathering and perfecting of his church. The person who fills this office is designated in Scripture by different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor and teacher. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house of God, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. As he is commanded to warn the house of Israel against the enemies of God and his Word, he is termed watchman. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.

He shall instruct them concerning the duties of a congregation toward a pastor, and shall endeavor to give the people a proper sense of the solemnity of both ordination to the office and installation in the field of service.

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

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own

heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?

(8) Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, in agreement with your declaration when you accepted their call? And do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them as God shall give you strength?

9. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the moderator shall propose to the people the following questions, to which they shall answer in the affirmative by holding up their right hands:

(1) Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your minister?

(2) Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?

(3) Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?

(4) And do you promise to continue to him, while he is your pastor, that worldly maintenance which you have promised, and whatever else you may see needful for the honor of religion and



his comfort among you?

10. If these questions have been satisfactorily answered, the candidate shall then kneel, and by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, he shall be solemnly ordained to the holy office of the gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise and the moderator shall declare him to be ordained a minister of the Word of God and the pastor of that congregation. The presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship. The moderator, or others appointed for the purpose, shall give solemn charges in the name of God to the newly ordained minister and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties, and shall, by prayer, commend them both to the grace of God and his holy keeping. At the conclusion of the service the pastor shall dismiss the congregation with a benediction.

11. When a minister of this Church is to be installed as the pastor of a congregation the installation may be performed either by the presbytery or by a committee appointed for that purpose, as may appear most expedient; and the following order shall be observed therein:

A time shall be appointed for the installation at such time as may appear most convenient and due notice thereof given to the congregation.

When the presbytery, or committee, shall be convened and constituted at the time appointed, a sermon shall be delivered by a previously appointed minister. Immediately thereafter the moderator shall state to the congregation the purpose of the meeting and briefly review the relevant proceedings of the presbytery. And then, addressing the minister to be installed, he shall propose to him the following questions:

(1) Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation as its pastor, in agreement with your declaration when you accepted its call?

(2) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you

know your own heart, that in taking upon you this charge you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?

(3) Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the gospel of Christ?

Having received satisfactory answers to all these questions, he shall propose to the people the following questions, to which they shall answer in the affirmative by holding up their right hands:

(1) Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your minister?

(2) Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?

(3) Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?

(4) And do you promise to continue to him, while he is your pastor, that worldly maintenance which you have promised, and whatever else you may see needful for the honor of religion and his comfort among you?

If these questions have been satisfactorily answered the moderator shall pronounce and declare the minister being installed to be regularly constituted the pastor of that congregation. Solemn charges in the name of God shall then be given to the newly installed pastor and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties, and they shall both, by prayer, be commended to the grace of God and his holy keeping. At the conclusion of the service the pastor shall dismiss the congregation with a benediction.

12. a. When a minister of another denomination is called to be the pastor of a congregation of this Church and has indicated his desire to accept the call, the presbytery shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications in regard to piety, faith, and learning that are required of candidates for ordination as provided in Sections 3 and 6, above. This evidence shall include written testimonials from qualified persons of his satisfactory exercise of the gifts for the ministry of the Word.

In no case shall an examination on the floor of presbytery be waived. If one-fourth of the presbyters present are dissatisfied with the examination in theology the minister shall be required to undergo an examination in the subject again at a future meeting of the presbytery. If at the outset of such subsequent meeting one-fourth of the presbyters so request, a clear recording of this examination shall be made and filed with the presbytery.

The presbytery shall require him to answer affirmatively the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?

b. After the fulfillment of these requirements the presbytery shall proceed to install the minister in the following manner:

A suitable time shall be appointed for the installation and due notice given to the congregation.

When the presbytery shall be convened and constituted at the time appointed, a sermon shall be delivered by a previously appointed minister. Immediately thereafter the moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall state to the congregation the purpose of the meeting and briefly review the relevant proceedings of the presbytery.

Then, addressing the minister to be installed, he shall propose to him the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity

of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?

(8) Are you now willing to undertake the work of the ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and do you promise to discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you in that capacity as God may give you strength?

(9) Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation as its pastor, in agreement with your declaration when you accepted its call?

(10) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you this charge you are influenced by a desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?

(11) Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the gospel of Christ?

Having received satisfactory answers to all these questions, the moderator shall propose to the people the following questions, to which they shall answer in the affirmative by holding up their right hands:

(1) Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your minister?

(2) Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due

exercise of discipline?

(3) Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?

(4) And do you promise to continue to him, while he is your pastor, that worldly maintenance which you have promised, and whatever else you may see needful for the honor of religion and his comfort among you?

If these questions have been satisfactorily answered the presiding minister shall solemnly pronounce and declare the minister being installed to be regularly constituted the pastor of that congregation. A charge shall then be given to both parties and prayer offered as directed in Section 10. At the conclusion of the service, the pastor shall dismiss the congregation with a benediction.

c. Under no circumstances shall a person be permitted to undertake any of the duties contemplated in the call nor to occupy living quarters that are to be provided by the calling body, and he shall be strongly advised not to change his residence in any case, until after the call has been approved and the presbytery has approved him for installation and reception.

13. When a licentiate has been called to be an evangelist, or teacher of the Word of God, and he has indicated his desire to accept the call, and the presbytery has been satisfied with his qualifications for ordination to the sacred office and for installation into the service to which he has been called, in the terms of Sections 1, 3, and 6, above, it shall appoint a time for him to be ordained and installed. It is fitting that these be done before a congregation at a service held for the purpose.

14. At the time for ordination and installation the moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside over the meeting of the presbytery with the congregation present. A minister previously appointed shall preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Afterwards the moderator shall briefly inform those

assembled, in the following or similar language, concerning the warrant and nature of the office of minister of the Word of God and concerning the duties which the minister's service will place upon him:

The Word of God clearly teaches that the office of minister was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul declares that our Lord "gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ."

The duties of the minister of Christ may briefly be set forth under the following heads: the faithful exposition of the Word of God and its application to the needs of the hearers, in order that the unconverted may be reconciled to God and that the saints may be built up in their most holy faith; the offering of prayer to the Lord on behalf of the congregation; the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the exercise, in conjunction with the ruling elders, of the government and discipline of the church.

The office of the minister is first in the church for dignity and usefulness, for, by our God's sovereign design, the ministry of the Word is the primary instrument in our Lord's gathering and perfecting of his church. The person who fills this office is designated in Scripture by different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor and teacher. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house of God, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. As he is commanded to warn the house of Israel against the enemies of God and his Word, he is termed watchman. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.

He shall endeavor to give the people a proper sense of the solemnity of both ordination to the office and installation in his field of service.

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

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before those among whom you labor wherever you may be?

(8) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God) you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?



(9) Are you now willing to undertake the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God), and do you promise to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties of this ministry as God may give you strength?

15. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, he shall then kneel, and by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, he shall be solemnly ordained to the holy office of the gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise and the moderator shall declare him to be ordained a minister of the Word of God and installed as an evangelist (or teacher of the Word of God). The presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

The moderator, or another appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge in the name of God to the newly ordained and installed minister to persevere in the discharge of his duties, and shall then, by prayer, commend him to the grace of God and his holy keeping. The newly ordained and installed minister shall close the service with a benediction.

16. When a minister of this Church is called to be an evangelist, or a teacher of the Word of God, and he has indicated his desire to accept the call, the presbytery shall satisfy itself that he has the qualifications for that service. If it is satisfied it shall appoint a time for his installation by the presbytery or by a committee appointed for that purpose. It is fitting that the installation take place in the presence of a congregation at a service held for that purpose.

The time being come, and the meeting convened, a sermon shall be preached by a previously appointed minister. The moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall then briefly inform those assembled concerning the purpose of the meeting and concerning the relevant proceedings of the presbytery.

Then addressing the minister to be installed, he shall propose to him the following questions:

(1) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you

know your own heart, that in taking upon you the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God) you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?

(2) Are you now willing to undertake the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God), and do you promise to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties of this ministry as God may give you strength?

Affirmative answers to these questions having been made, a solemn charge in the name of God shall be given to the newly installed minister to persevere in the discharge of his duties. Prayer shall then be offered, commending him to the grace of God and his holy keeping. The newly installed minister shall close the service with a benediction.

17. When a minister of another denomination is called to serve as an evangelist, or as a teacher of the Word of God, and the provisions of Chapter XXII, Section 13, have been fulfilled, the presbytery shall install him in the following manner in the service to which he has been called:

A time shall be set for the installation at which the moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside. It is fitting that the installation take place in the presence of a congregation at a service held for that purpose.

The time being come and the presbytery convened, a sermon shall be preached by a previously appointed minister. The moderator shall then briefly inform those assembled concerning the purpose of the meeting and concerning the relevant proceedings of the presbytery.

Then addressing the minister to be installed, he shall propose to him the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before those among whom you labor wherever you may be?

(8) Are you now willing to undertake the work of the ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and do you promise to discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you in this capacity as God may give you strength?

(9) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God) you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?

(10) Are you now willing to undertake the work of an evangelist (or a teacher of the Word of God), and do you promise to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties of this ministry as God may give you strength?

Affirmative answers to these questions having been made, a solemn charge in the name of God shall be given to the newly installed minister to persevere in the discharge of his duties. Prayer shall then be offered, commending him to the grace of God and his holy keeping. The newly installed minister shall close the service with a benediction.

18. If a minister of another denomination, though not having a call to service in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, desires to labor in the gospel in this church, the presbytery to which he applies shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications, in regard to piety, faith, and learning, that are demanded of candidates for ordination as provided in Sections 3 and 6, above. The evidence shall include written testimonials from qualified persons of his satisfactory exercise of the gifts of the ministry of the Word.

In no case shall an examination on the floor of presbytery be waived. If one-fourth of the presbyters present are dissatisfied with the examination in theology the minister shall be required to undergo an examination in the subject again at a future meeting of the presbytery. If at the outset of such subsequent meeting one-fourth of the presbyters so request, a clear recording of this examination shall be made and filed with the presbytery.

If the presbytery is satisfied as to the ministerial qualifications of the candidate but finds that he lacks competency in the Hebrew and Greek languages, or one of them, it may judge by a three-fourths vote of the members present to waive these requirements without referring this question to the general assembly for advice. Such action shall be taken only when the applicant has given affirmative answer to the following question:

Do you agree that you will make a continuing endeavor, under the direction of the presbytery, to attain competency in those languages until the presbytery is satisfied?

Although such a minister may not be received as a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church until the favorable judgment of the presbytery has been confirmed by his receiving a call to specific

service the presbytery, after approving his examination, shall require him to give affirmative answer, before the presbytery, to the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely approve the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Will you, if you become a minister of this Church, be willing to be in subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

(5) Are you induced, so far as you know your own heart, to enter the ministry of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church from love for God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?

(6) Will you, if you become a minister of this Church, be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before those among whom you labor wherever you may be?

(7) Will you, if you become a minister of this Church, be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(8) Will you, if you become a minister of this Church, undertake and discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you as an Orthodox Presbyterian minister, as God may give you strength?

The candidate having been approved and having answered the

above questions in the affirmative, the fact shall be recorded in the minutes of the presbytery, and the clerk shall promptly inform the other presbyteries of the church of this fact. Normally the minister will remain in his denomination while he seeks a call to service in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. However, if such continued membership is unacceptable to him the presbytery may, at his request, enroll him as a member of the regional church; he shall thus not be enrolled as a member of the presbytery, and the presbytery shall hold his ministerial credentials in suspense while he seeks a call to service. The presbytery, having approved his qualifications for the ministry, shall authorize him to preach in the church as a candidate for a call to service. If and when he receives a call to service his ministerial credentials shall be restored and he may be installed for his service.

If after a period not to exceed two years gifts for the ministry are not confirmed by receipt of a call to service the presbytery shall consider divesting him from office in accordance with Chapter XXVI, Section 3, of the Form of Government. If the presbytery divests him of office, presbytery shall require him to seek membership in a particular congregation.

19. If a minister is to be installed in a position that is a change of function from his previous service the presbytery shall weigh his qualifications for the new function when consideration is given to approval of his call. Such change of function, if approved, shall be noted in the records of the presbytery.

20. When a presbytery has ordained or installed a minister a record of the fact shall be made in the minutes of the presbytery.

The presbytery's decision to install shall be regarded also as its decision to receive the minister into the presbytery if he had been a licentiate or was coming from another presbytery or denomination. Upon installation his name shall be placed on the roll of the presbytery.

If the newly enrolled minister has come from another presbytery of this Church the clerk of the installing presbytery shall notify

promptly the presbytery from which the minister has come so that his name may be removed from the roll of his former presbytery. If the minister has come from another denomination the clerk of the installing presbytery shall notify the proper authority of the minister's former denomination.

21. If a minister enrolled in a presbytery (a) desires to engage in a ministry not under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church within the bounds of another presbytery, or (b) desires to transfer to another presbytery for other purposes for which a call and installation are inappropriate, such transfer may be effected without a call and without installation, provided the minister's reasons are satisfactory to both the dismissing and the receiving presbytery (cf. Chapter XX, Section 8).

22. If a retired minister of another denomination desires to transfer his ministerial credentials to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, he may be enrolled as a member of the presbytery without a call and without installation, provided his reasons are satisfactory and he is received in accordance with the relevant provisions of Section 18 of this chapter.

## **Chapter XXIV**

### **Dissolving Ministerial Relationships**

1. When a minister desires leave to resign a ministerial charge in order to accept a call to similar service in another charge within the Church the provisions of Chapter XXII, Section 12, shall be observed.

2. If any congregation desires to be relieved of its pastor it may, through a duly called meeting of the congregation, ask him to resign. If the pastor agrees to do so, the presbytery shall be requested to dissolve the pastoral relationship as of a mutually agreeable date. If the pastor is not willing to resign the congregation may petition the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship and may send representatives to the meeting to support the request. The presbytery may grant the request, but only after giving the pastor opportunity to present his reasons for not concurring, or it may urge the congregation to reconsider its action.

3. If a presbytery, or an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly, decides to dissolve its relationship with a minister who is serving it under terms of a call it shall inform him of its decision and of the date on which the dissolution is to take place. It shall also provide adequate care of his needs to permit him to find another field of service.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly, the agency shall at the same time notify the minister's presbytery of its decision.

a. If the minister agrees to leave his service with a body that is not a presbytery the body shall inform his presbytery of the dissolution.

b. If the minister does not agree to leave his service with the body he shall consult with it in person or by correspondence to clarify the reasons for the dissolution and to seek agreement.

If the body is a presbytery and the minister continues to with-



hold his agreement, the presbytery may nevertheless proceed to dissolve the relationship.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly and the minister continues to withhold his agreement, he may request his presbytery to consult with the agency in the matter. If the presbytery agrees that the relationship should be dissolved it shall so inform the minister and the agency he serves and the dissolution shall be implemented as of the date originally set or, if that has become impractical, a later date established by the agency.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery and the presbytery does not agree with the dissolution the presbytery shall determine what redress is appropriate.

If the body is an agency of the general assembly and the presbytery does not agree with the dissolution it may, nevertheless, counsel the minister to accept the decision in the circumstances or it may overture the general assembly, seeking redress.

Continuation of the minister's financial support in such cases shall be determined by the body in the light of the existing circumstances.

If the matter is concluded by dissolution of the relationship the minister's presbytery shall be informed and the fact entered in its records.

4. If a minister desires permission to resign a charge in order to take up a different kind of labor he shall offer his resignation to the body he serves and shall seek its concurrence, and shall ask his presbytery to approve the contemplated labor. Presbytery shall require him to inform it of the kind of work he would perform, with a view to determining if the work is the work of the ministry and if it would be in accord with his ministerial vows.

If the presbytery approves his doing the contemplated work, and if the body that he serves has agreed to his resignation, he shall be free to leave at a mutually agreeable date, and the presbytery shall be informed. If the body that he serves does not agree to his resignation he may withdraw it or ask the presbytery, at a meeting to which the body may send representatives to plead its cause, to dissolve the

relationship. The presbytery may ask him to reconsider his request, or deny it, or grant it.

5. When a minister desires to resign a charge without other ministerial work in view the procedures of Section 4 shall be followed. If the presbytery grants the request it shall advise with him concerning his resuming ministerial labor, taking into consideration Chapter XXVI of this Form of Government.

## **Chapter XXV**

### **Electing, Ordaining, and Installing Ruling Elders and Deacons**

1. Every congregation shall elect ruling elders and deacons, except in extraordinary circumstances. Those elected must be male communicant members in good and regular standing in the church in which they are to exercise their office.

2. Each congregation shall determine, by vote of communicant members in good and regular standing, to choose elders or deacons for either lifetime service or limited terms of service on the session or board of deacons. In a congregation that has determined to choose ruling elders or deacons for limited terms of service a full term shall be three years. When there are three or more ruling elders or three or more deacons the session or board of deacons shall consist of three classes, one of which shall be elected each year. A person may be elected for a full term or partial term. Ruling elders, once ordained, when they are not reelected to a term of service, shall not thereby be divested of the office, but may be commissioned to higher judicatories by the session or the presbytery, and may perform other functions of the office when so appointed by an appropriate judicatory. Similarly deacons, when not elected to a term of service in the congregation, may be commissioned by an appropriate judicatory to perform specific diaconal functions.

3. In order that these sacred offices not be committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the congregations shall have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be governed and served, no one shall normally be eligible for election to office until he has been a communicant member in good standing for at least one year, shall have received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership. Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be en-

couraged by the session to prepare themselves for the offices of ruling elder or deacon so that their study and opportunities for service may be provided for in a systematic and orderly way.

4. Any member of the congregation who is entitled to vote may propose to the session nominations for these offices. The session shall certify those nominees whom, upon examination, it judges to possess the necessary qualifications for office. At least one Lord's Day preceding the date appointed for the election the session shall announce to the congregation the names of those it has certified. Election shall be from among those certified.

5. After a person has been elected to the office of ruling elder or deacon the session shall determine a time for his ordination. The person elected shall be put in actual possession of his office only by ordination whereby he is solemnly set apart for the labor to which he has been called.

6. The person elected shall be ordained and installed, in the presence of the congregation, in the following manner:

a. The minister, in the following or similar language, shall state the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder or deacon, the character to be sustained by the officer, and duties to be fulfilled:

i. In the case of a ruling elder:

The office of ruling elder is based upon the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided for his church officers who should rule in his name. Paul and Barnabas "appointed . . . elders in every church"; and Paul commanded that those who "rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching." In this passage the Scriptures distinguish between elders who labor particularly in the Word and in doctrine—usually called ministers or pastors—and elders who join with the minister in the government and discipline of the church—generally called ruling elders.

It is the duty and privilege of ruling elders, in the name and

by the authority of our ascended king, to rule over particular churches, and, as servants of our great shepherd, to care for his flock. Holy Scripture enjoins them: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." As a consequence, ruling elders must be zealous in maintaining the purity of the ministration of the Word and sacraments. They must conscientiously exercise discipline and uphold the good order and peace of the church. With love and humility they should promote faithfulness on the part of both elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties. Moreover, they should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, ruling elders must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

ii. In the case of a deacon:

The office of deacon is based upon the solicitude and love of Christ for his own people. So tender is our Lord's interest in their temporal needs that he considers what is done unto one of the least of his brethren as done unto him. For he will say to those who have ministered to his little ones: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

In the beginning the apostles themselves ministered to the poor, but subsequently, in order that they might be able to devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, they committed that responsibility to others, having directed the people to choose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Since the days of the apostles the church has recog-

nized the care of the poor as a distinct ministry of the church committed to deacons.

The duties of deacons consist of encouraging members of the church to provide for those who are in want, seeking to prevent poverty, making discreet and cheerful distribution to the needy, praying with the distressed and reminding them of the consolations of Holy Scripture.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, deacons must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and “when the chief shepherd shall be manifested,” they “shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

b. He shall then propose to the candidate the following questions:

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

(3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

(4) Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?

(5) Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon) in this congregation and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

c. When each of these questions has been answered in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you prom-

ise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the constitution of this Church, entitles him?

d. When the members of the church have answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and with the laying on of hands to the office of ruling elder or deacon.

e. The minister shall then declare:

I now declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and that he is entitled to all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his office entitles him.

f. After this the minister shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

g. When there is an existing session, it is proper that the members of that body, in the face of the congregation, take the newly ordained elder by the hand, saying, in words to this purpose, “We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part of this office with us.”

7. A ruling elder or deacon who has already been ordained may be elected to further service in the same or another congregation in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of this chapter. When such a person is elected to further service, he shall be publicly installed in the following manner, with the addition of questions 1–4 in Section 6 of this chapter for those who have never taken the vows of ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

a. The minister shall review before the congregation, in the following or similar language, the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder or deacon, the character to be sustained by the officer, and the duties to be fulfilled:

i. In the case of a ruling elder:

The office of ruling elder is based upon the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided for his church officers who should rule in his name. Paul and Barnabas “appointed . . . elders in every church”; and Paul commanded that those who “rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.” In this passage the Scriptures distinguish between elders who labor particularly in the Word and in doctrine—usually called ministers or pastors—and elders who join with the minister in the government and discipline of the church—generally called ruling elders.

It is the duty and privilege of ruling elders, in the name and by the authority of our ascended king, to rule over particular churches, and, as servants of our great shepherd, to care for his flock. Holy Scripture enjoins them: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.” As a consequence, ruling elders must be zealous in maintaining the purity of the ministration of the Word and sacraments. They must conscientiously exercise discipline and uphold the good order and peace of the church. With love and humility they should promote faithfulness on the part of both elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties. Moreover, they should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, ruling elders must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and “when the chief shepherd shall be manifested,” they “shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

ii. In the case of a deacon:

The office of deacon is based upon the solicitude and love of Christ for his own people. So tender is our Lord’s interest in their temporal needs that he considers what is done unto one of the



least of his brethren as done unto him. For he will say to those who have ministered to his little ones: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

In the beginning the apostles themselves ministered to the poor, but subsequently, in order that they might be able to devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, they committed that responsibility to others, having directed the people to choose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Since the days of the apostles the church has recognized the care of the poor as a distinct ministry of the church committed to deacons.

The duties of deacons consist of encouraging members of the church to provide for those who are in want, seeking to prevent poverty, making discreet and cheerful distribution to the needy, praying with the distressed and reminding them of the consolations of Holy Scripture.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, deacons must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

b. He shall then propose to the officer the following question:

Do you agree to serve as a ruling elder (or deacon) in this congregation, and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

c. When the question has been answered in the affirmative the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in

the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the constitution of this Church, entitles him?

d. When a majority of the members of the church who are present have answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the minister shall then declare:

I now declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and that he is entitled to all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his office entitles him.

e. After this the minister shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

## **Chapter XXVI**

### **Divesting from Office**

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

2. An officer may also be divested of his office without censure, for reasons other than delinquency in faith or life.

3. a. A presbytery shall consider divesting a minister of his office without censure if:

(1) he fails to seek a ministerial charge actively unless temporarily for reasons of health; or

(2) it appears to the presbytery, over a period of time normally not to exceed two years, that he is not called to ministerial service because he does not possess the gifts requisite for the gospel ministry; or

(3) he fails to perform adequately the work of the ministry through lack of the requisite gifts; or

(4) permanent physical or mental disability prevents him from exercising the office.

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

c. A motion to divest shall require a two-thirds majority of those voting.

d. When a minister is divested of his office or demits the ministry, the presbytery shall remove his name from its roll and dismiss him to a local church. Until his reception he shall continue a member of the regional church without membership in a local con-

gregation.

e. If a minister desires to resign from or refuses to serve in his office, the presbytery ordinarily shall require him to wait six months and in the meantime ascertain whether the reasons for his actions are of sufficient weight. If at the end of this time his desire is unchanged and the presbytery is satisfied of his reasons, he shall be allowed to demit the ministry and the presbytery shall record the fact in its minutes and remove his name from the roll.

4. a. A ruling elder or deacon may be divested of his office if his services do not appear to be edifying to the congregation. In such a case the following procedure shall be followed:

(1) The process of divestiture may be originated by the session or by a petition to the session signed by one-fourth of the communicant members in good and regular standing. The officer in question shall be given the opportunity at a meeting of the session to defend his continuance in office or to demit the office.

(2) If the question is to be presented to the congregation it shall be at a regularly called meeting. The call for the meeting shall stipulate that this matter is to be considered at the meeting, and the officer shall be notified at the same time.

(3) The congregation, by a two-thirds majority of those voting, may request the presbytery for permission to remove him from office.

(4) If the presbytery gives its permission the session shall divest him of his office.

b. A ruling elder or deacon who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the session concerning his decision. If, after such counseling, he persists in his decision, he shall be allowed to demit his office, and the session shall record the fact in its minutes.

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

to that office.

6. Nothing in this chapter shall be held to imply that when a minister retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing any of the functions of that office.

7. Nothing in this chapter shall be held to imply that when a ruling elder or deacon retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing, on occasion, the functions of that office.

## **Chapter XXVII**

### **Missions**

1. Sessions, presbyteries, and the general assembly have their respective responsibilities for the work of missions. Each congregation and presbytery, as well as the general assembly, is obliged to pursue the task of evangelism within its respective bounds. Foreign missions is conducted by the general assembly on behalf of the whole church, or by individual presbyteries and congregations acting in coordination with one another and with the general assembly.

2. The general assembly or its agencies normally may initiate mission work within the bounds of a presbytery only with the consent of that presbytery; but in extraordinary circumstances the general assembly on its own initiative may appoint missionaries to labor within the bounds of a presbytery for a period not to exceed six months.

3. A person appointed to labor within the bounds of a presbytery shall place himself under the jurisdiction of that presbytery as soon as practicable. If his work is not limited to one presbytery he shall be under the jurisdiction of that presbytery most convenient to him.

## **Chapter XXVIII**

### **Ministers Laboring outside the Church**

1. A minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church may under certain circumstances and conditions labor in churches other than those of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A candidate for ordination who seeks or intends to labor in such a church may under certain circumstances and conditions be ordained by a presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Such labor may be distinctly missionary in its nature and purpose in that it may provide the minister with the opportunity of ministering the gospel to unbelievers and of promoting the cause which the Orthodox Presbyterian Church represents. Such labor may, in certain cases, be that of a pastor or of a teacher, presenting the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with the opportunity of providing other churches with a ministry which otherwise they might not enjoy.

2. Although it is impossible to delineate all the practical circumstances and conditions under which it may be proper for a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to engage in such labor, the following general principles based upon the standards of the Church must be adhered to in all cases:

a. Ministers cannot undertake to labor in other churches if such labor requires the performance of functions inconsistent with their ordination vows or with the other provisions of the standards of the Church. They cannot undertake such work if the relationship requires that they preach anything contrary to the system of truth taught in the Holy Scriptures or requires that they refrain from preaching the whole counsel of God. Such work cannot be undertaken if the relationship requires them to conduct worship that is not in accord with the standards of the Church. Ministers cannot participate in the government of such churches if such government is contrary to the principles of presbyterian government set forth in these standards. And such discipline as the relationship may require them to administer must be in accord with the principles of disci-

pline set forth in these standards.

b. Ministers who perform such labor shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the churches concerned shall be advised of this fact.

c. Though the churches in which such ministers labor are in no respect under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the presbyteries and the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shall always exercise oversight of the work being performed by such ministers, and shall take due care that the work being performed is consistent with the standards of the Church.

d. Ministers may act as pastors of such churches provided none of the foregoing conditions is violated in the assumption of such a responsibility.

e. Presbyteries cannot install ministers as pastors of churches other than those of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

f. If ministers are installed as pastors under other auspices, the installation must not be such as in any way prejudices the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church over them. Such pastoral installation cannot take place if the installation formula prescribed by the church concerned prejudices this jurisdiction.

g. The ultimate objective of all such labor cannot be anything less than the establishment of such churches as churches of Presbyterian and Reformed testimony, provided that the churches concerned are not already such. To make the objective less than this would be inconsistent with the profession and vows made in ordination.

3. The principles of Sections 1 and 2 shall also apply to the relationship of ministers to nonecclesiastical religious organizations.

4. Such ministers shall report at least once each year to the presbytery under whose jurisdiction they are. This report shall concern their ministerial activities, and shall include especial reference to the relationship of these activities to the interest and welfare of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.



## **Chapter XXIX**

### **Organizing and Receiving Congregations**

#### **A. Organizing Congregations**

1. A group of believers, meeting regularly for worship on the Lord's Day and under the jurisdiction of a session or presbytery, and not yet organized as a separate congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, shall be denoted in the records of the presbytery as a mission work. Such persons may be enrolled as members of an existing congregation or as members at large of the regional church. The mission work may, with the permission of the session or presbytery, use the name Church in its publicity.

2. A group of believers may be organized as a separate congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church only under the supervision of presbytery. The presbytery of the regional church to which the congregation would most naturally belong shall have the jurisdiction in the matter.

3. In organizing a mission work of an existing congregation as a new and separate congregation (church) the procedure shall be as follows:

a. The session shall designate a list of members for the proposed new congregation according to the preference of the members. This list shall become the charter roll of the new congregation.

b. The session shall call joint or separate congregational meetings of the continuing congregation and the mission work for the purpose of petitioning presbytery to organize the mission work into a new and separate congregation.

c. The session shall call a congregational meeting of the mission work for the purpose of electing ruling elders and deacons (Form of Government, Chapter XXV) and the calling of a pastor (Form of Government, Chapter XXII) to serve as officers of the new church.

d. When the above actions have been approved by presbytery, a service of recognition and installation shall be conducted by the presbytery or a committee appointed by the presbytery. At the appointed time the congregation shall be informed of the action of the presbytery and the moderator shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

In reliance upon God for strength do you solemnly promise to walk together as a church of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

The members shall answer in the affirmative by raised hand. After this the congregation shall be recognized as a new and separate church of the regional church and the officers shall be (ordained and) installed according to this Form of Government.

4. In organizing a mission work of a presbytery as a new and separate congregation (church) the procedure shall be as follows:

a. While it is preferable to have members of a mission work as members of a local congregation under the jurisdiction of a local session, circumstances may make it easier to enroll such members as members at large of the regional church under the direct jurisdiction of the presbytery. In such cases the presbytery shall maintain a list of such members at large of a mission work.

b. When it appears that it is desirable and feasible to organize a mission work of the presbytery as a new congregation, the presbytery, with the concurrence of the members at large, shall designate the list of the members at large of the regional church of the mission work as the charter roll of the proposed new congregation.

c. The presbytery shall call a meeting of the members at large of the regional church of the mission work for the purpose of petitioning presbytery to organize them into a new church.

d. The presbytery shall call a meeting of the members at large of the regional church of the mission work for the purpose of electing ruling elders and deacons (Form of Government, Chapter XXV) and the calling of a pastor (Form of Government, Chapter

XXII) to serve as officers of the new church.

e. When the above actions have been approved by presbytery, a service of recognition and installation shall be conducted by the presbytery or a committee appointed by the presbytery. At the appointed time the congregation shall be informed of the action of the presbytery and the moderator shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

In reliance upon God for strength do you solemnly promise to walk together as a church of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

The members shall answer in the affirmative by raised hand. After this the congregation shall be recognized as a new and separate church of the regional church and the officers shall be (ordained and) installed according to this Form of Government.

5. In organizing a group of believers who are not members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and are not an existing congregation of another church as a new and separate congregation (church) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church the procedure shall be as follows:

a. Such persons as are associated together in a desire to be a new and separate congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shall apply to the presbytery, through its clerk, to be received. In their application they shall state the reasons which have moved them to apply for membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

b. The presbytery, a committee of presbytery, or a session appointed by the presbytery shall examine the applicants as to their Christian faith and life and their knowledge of and willingness to submit to the standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. If the presbytery or the appointed session is satisfied regarding these matters it may proceed to approve them for membership and appoint a time for their reception and organization as a particular congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

c. At the appointed time the group of believers shall be informed of the action of the presbytery and the moderator shall address to them the vows of membership and the following question:

In reliance upon God for strength do you solemnly promise to walk together as a church of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

The members shall answer in the affirmative by raised hand. After this the congregation shall be recognized as a new and separate church of the regional church.

d. The presbytery or the appointed session shall then see to it that there are officers to serve the new church according to the provisions of this Form of Government, Chapters XXV and XXII.

## **B. Receiving Congregations**

1. A congregation not belonging to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church may be received only under the supervision of presbytery. The presbytery of the regional church to which the congregation would most naturally belong shall have jurisdiction in the matter.

2. In receiving an existing, local church not belonging to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a new and separate congregation (church) the procedure shall be as follows:

a. A congregation which desires to become a congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shall apply to the presbytery, through its clerk, to be received. In its application the congregation shall state the reasons which have moved it to apply for membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

b. The presbytery or a committee appointed by the presbytery shall examine the applicants as to their Christian faith and life and their knowledge of and willingness to submit to the standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

c. The elders of the congregation, if there be such, shall be examined as to their qualifications as set forth in Chapter X and as

to their subscription to the formula for the ordination of elders in Chapter XXV, Section 6, of this Form of Government.

d. The pastor of the congregation, if there be such, shall be examined according to Chapter XXIII, Section 2, of this Form of Government.

e. When the above actions have been approved by presbytery, a service of recognition and installation shall be conducted by presbytery or a committee appointed by the presbytery. At the appointed time the congregation shall be informed of the action of the presbytery and the moderator shall address to the congregation the following question:

In reliance upon God for strength do you solemnly promise to walk together as a church of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

The congregation shall answer in the affirmative by raised hand. After this the congregation shall be recognized as a new and separate church of the regional church. Then the officers shall be (ordained and) installed according to this Form of Government.

## **Chapter XXX**

### **Organizations of Members of the Church**

1. Every Christian has the freedom and obligation to exercise the general office of the believer not only individually but also in fellowship with other members of the body of Christ. Members of the church may therefore associate together for specific purposes in the exercise of their common calling. Such organizations, however, under ordinary circumstances, shall not assume the prerogatives or exercise the functions of the special officers of the church.

2. When a church fails to perform its divinely given task, church members should seek remedies through biblical procedures of government and discipline. In the event that remedy cannot be obtained, or if the church is unable to work in a particular situation, Christians may organize to carry on activities that would more normally be conducted under the appropriate judicatory of the church, until these unusual circumstances are overcome.

3. When an organization purports to represent a particular church, or a presbytery, or the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, it must obtain the approval, and be subject to the jurisdiction and oversight, of the session of the particular church, or of the presbytery, or of the general assembly, respectively.

## **Chapter XXXI**

### **Incorporation and Corporations**

1. The general assembly, the several presbyteries, and the several churches may maintain corporations to act as agents of the respective authorities to handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities.

2. Only those and all those who are communicant members of a particular church in good and regular standing and meeting the requirements of the civil authorities shall be entitled to vote at corporation meetings of the particular church. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted, nor shall anyone be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken.

3. The board of trustees of a particular church shall ordinarily be chosen from among the ruling elders and deacons in that church, but other communicant members of the church may be elected as trustees if it seems desirable, provided, however, that the number of such members shall be less than one-half the total membership of the board. Its duties shall be those which the state requires of trustees of corporations together with such other duties relating to the properties of the church as may be delegated to them by the session or the congregation. Such delegation shall be in accord with Chapter XIII, Section 7, of this Form of Government.

4. Meetings of corporations for the transaction of their business shall be provided for in their charter and bylaws, which must always be in accord with the standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and must not infringe upon the powers or duties of the judicatories of the Church.

5. All particular churches shall be entitled to hold, own, and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of reversion to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church whatsoever, unless the particu-

lar church should become extinct, provided, however, that any particular church may, if it so desires, give or dedicate its property to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A congregation that desires to withdraw from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to retain its property shall follow the provisions of Chapter XVI, Section 7, of this Form of Government. Dissolution of a particular church by any judicatory, or by any other form of ecclesiastical action, shall not be deemed as making a particular church extinct within the meaning of this article. But these provisions shall not be construed as limiting or abrogating the right of the judicatories of this Church to exercise all constitutional and proper authority over the particular churches as spiritual bodies.



## **Chapter XXXII**

### **The Constitution and Its Amendment**

1. The constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, consists of its standards of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship, namely, its Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God. When the latter three documents are published together, the combined document shall be entitled *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*.

2. With the exception noted in Section 3, below, the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God may be amended only in the following manner: The general assembly after due discussion shall propose the amendment to the presbyteries; each presbytery shall vote on the question before the next regular assembly, and the clerk of each presbytery shall notify the clerk of the assembly, in writing, of the action of the presbytery; if a majority of the presbyteries has thus signified approval of the amendment, the amendment shall become effective on January 1 of the first year ending in 5 or 0 following the year in which the clerk announces to the assembly that a majority of the presbyteries has approved the amendment. If the assembly proposing the amendment desires it to become effective earlier than the date hereinbefore provided, it may set an earlier date, but not sooner than the next regular assembly, by a two-thirds vote. No amendments shall be proposed to the presbyteries without written grounds for the proposed amendments.

3. The Confession of Faith and Catechisms and the forms of subscription required of ministers, licentiates, ruling elders, and deacons, as these forms are found in the Form of Government, may be amended only in the following manner: The general assembly shall determine whether a suggested change is worthy of consider-

ation. If so determined, it shall appoint a committee to consider any suggested change and to report to the next regular assembly with recommendations; that assembly may then propose the amendment to the presbyteries by a two-thirds majority of the members voting; approval by a presbytery shall be by a majority of the members voting, and following the decision the clerk of presbytery shall notify the clerk of the assembly, in writing, of the decision of the presbytery; if two-thirds of the presbyteries approve the amendment it shall be adopted finally only after approval of the next ensuing assembly by a two-thirds vote of the members voting.

4. Organic union of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with another denomination shall follow the same procedure as in Section 3, above, for amending the Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

5. None of the provisions of Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter nor of this fifth section shall be modified except by the process that is set forth in Section 3.

# THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

## Chapter I The Nature and Purposes of Discipline

1. Ecclesiastical discipline is the exercise of that authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to the visible church for the preservation of its purity, peace, and good order.

2. Administrative discipline is concerned with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church in other than judicial cases. The purpose of its exercise is that all rights may be preserved and all obligations faithfully discharged.

3. Judicial discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses, an offense being defined as anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of the church which is contrary to the Word of God. The purpose of judicial discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of his church, and to reclaim the offender.

4. All members of the church, both communicants and those who are members by virtue of baptism only, are under the care of the church, and subject to ecclesiastical discipline including administrative and judicial discipline.

## **Chapter II**

### **Jurisdiction**

#### **A. General Provisions**

1. Original jurisdiction over an individual belongs to the judicatory of the body of which the individual is a member. Original jurisdiction over judicatories belongs to the next higher judicatory.

2. All certificates of dismissal shall specify the particular body to which the person is dismissed, and shall be sent directly to that body by the dismissing judicatory. The receiving body shall notify the dismissing judicatory of the fact of reception when accomplished.

3. If a person charged with an offense requests that he be dismissed to another body within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the judicatory of jurisdiction shall grant this request only for reasons which it deems weighty. If the request is granted, it shall inform the judicatory to whose care the person is being committed of the charge which has been brought against him and also of any action which the dismissing judicatory may have taken with reference to the charge, and the judicatory which receives him shall conclude the case.

#### **B. The Session's Jurisdiction**

1. The session of a particular church shall have jurisdiction over all those whose names are on the roll of the church.

2. Members shall be received and their names placed on the roll of the church only by order of the session and according to the following provisions:

a. Members may be received by a letter of transfer from another Orthodox Presbyterian church. The session shall acquire jurisdiction over him by virtue of its vote of reception (see the Direc-

tory for the Public Worship of God, Chapter IV, Section C), and at that time he shall become invested with all the rights and privileges of membership therein, which rights and privileges shall not be impaired by the filing of a complaint, unless and until such complaint shall be sustained by the highest judicatory to which such complaint is made.

b. Members may be received by a letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice approved by the session. The session may examine the candidate for membership to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the work of Christ alone, is trusting Christ for salvation, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life. The session shall acquire jurisdiction over him by virtue of its vote of reception and his public profession of faith before the congregation according to the Directory for the Public Worship of God, Chapter IV, Section D, and at that time he shall be invested with all the rights and privileges of membership therein, which rights and privileges shall not be impaired by the filing of a complaint, unless and until such complaint shall be sustained by the highest judicatory to which complaint is made.

c. Members may be received by reaffirmation of faith. Reaffirmation of faith is made by an individual who has previously confessed his faith and united with a church other than a church of like faith and practice, and now desires to become a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The session shall examine the candidate for membership to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the work of Christ alone, is trusting Christ for salvation, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life. The session shall acquire jurisdiction over him by virtue of its vote of reception and his public profession of faith before the congregation according to the Directory for the Public Worship of God, Chapter IV, Section E, and at that time he shall be invested with all the rights and privileges of membership therein, which rights and privileges shall not be impaired by the filing of a

complaint, unless and until such complaint shall be sustained by the highest judicatory to which complaint is made.

d. Members may be received by confession of faith. Confession of faith is made by an individual who has not previously been a communicant member of the church, and now desires to become a communicant member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The session shall examine the candidate for membership to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the work of Christ, is trusting Christ for salvation, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life. The session shall acquire jurisdiction over him by virtue of its vote of reception and his public profession of faith before the congregation according to the Directory for the Public Worship of God, Chapter IV, Section B or F (as the case may require), and at that time he shall be invested with all the rights and privileges of membership therein, which rights and privileges shall not be impaired by the filing of a complaint, unless and until such complaint shall be sustained by the highest judicatory to which complaint is made.

e. Noncommunicant unbaptized children whose parent(s) are members of the church shall be received by baptism.

f. Noncommunicant baptized members may be received with their parent(s).

3. The names of members shall be removed from the roll of the church only by order of the session and according to the following provisions:

a. Members may be removed by a letter of transfer to another congregation approved by the session. When upon the request of a member the session dismisses him to another congregation, the clerk shall send a letter commending him to its care, and the clerk of the receiving church shall notify the dismissing church of the date of his reception. When notification is received the clerk shall remove his name from the roll and record the fact in its minutes. He shall be considered subject to the jurisdiction of the session which dismissed him until the time when he actually is received by the body to which

he has been dismissed.

b. Members may be removed when they desire to be dismissed to a church of which the session cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice. If it appears to the session that the spiritual interests of the members will be advanced by their uniting with such a church, it shall grant them certificates of standing, and, upon being informed that they have joined such a church, shall remove their names from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

c. Members shall be removed from the roll of the local church by ordination as a teaching elder, according to the Form of Government, Chapter VI, Section 4.

d. Members may be removed by erasure according to the following provisions:

(1) When a member desires dismissal to a church of which the session cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice, nor a church which will advance his spiritual interests, and he cannot be dissuaded, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the session institutes disciplinary action against him; on being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(2) When a member of a particular church, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the efforts of the session to dissuade him from his course have failed, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes, unless the session institutes or continues other disciplinary action against him.

(3) When a member unites with a church of another denomination without a certificate of dismissal, the session may erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(4) When a member cannot be found, the session may, after two years, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(5) When a member, without adequate reason, persists in attending a church of another denomination in preference to his own, or persistently and over an extended period of time absents

himself from the stated services of the church, his name may be erased from the roll according to the following procedures: he shall be earnestly and personally dealt with by the session. If this effort fails, he shall be notified that at a meeting of the session not less than two months later his standing shall be reviewed. The session shall inform him of the time, date, and place of this meeting and invite him to show why his name should not be erased from the roll. If satisfactory reasons are not presented, the session shall erase his name from the roll, record the circumstances in its minutes, and send notification to him.

(6) When a noncommunicant member neglects the ongoing exhortation of the session to profess faith in Christ and rejects the covenantal responsibility of submission to home or church, the session may upon prior notification erase his name from the roll.

e. Noncommunicant members may be removed with their parent(s).

f. Members shall be removed at their death. The session shall remove the name of the deceased from the roll and record the fact in its minutes.

g. Members may be removed by excommunication according to this Book of Discipline, Chapter VI, Sections B.5, C.1, and C.2.

### **C. The Presbytery's Jurisdiction**

1. Presbytery shall have original jurisdiction over all the members of the regional church not enrolled as members of a local church. The provisions of this chapter, Sections B.2 and B.3, shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

2. The presbytery shall have original jurisdiction over all the teaching elders who are on the roll of the presbytery. The names of teaching elders shall be placed on or removed from the roll of presbytery only by order of the presbytery, and according to the provisions of the Form of Government and this Book of Discipline. If a teaching elder has been dismissed to another presbytery, he shall



be considered subject to the jurisdiction of the presbytery which dismissed him until the time when his name is placed on the roll of the presbytery (cf. Form of Government, Chapter XXIII, Section 20) to which he has been dismissed. The receiving body shall acquire jurisdiction over him when his name is placed on the roll of the presbytery (cf. Form of Government, Chapter XXIII, Section 20) and at that time he shall be invested with all the rights and privileges of membership therein, which rights and privileges shall not be impaired by the filing of a complaint, unless and until such complaint shall be sustained by the highest judicatory to which complaint is made.

### **D. Special Circumstances**

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

2. If a church ceases to exist, the presbytery of jurisdiction shall secure the records, exercise care over its members, and issue certificates of dismissal to other churches.

3. If a presbytery ceases to exist, the general assembly shall assign each church and minister to some other presbytery.

4. The higher judicatory in each instance shall either conclude any uncompleted case of discipline begun in the lower judicatory, or refer the case to the judicatory to whose care the accused has been committed.

## **Chapter III**

### **Steps in the Institution of Judicial Process**

1. A charge of an offense may be brought by an injured party, by a person not an injured party, or by a judicatory. The offense alleged in the charge should be serious enough to warrant a trial (cf. Chapter III, Section 7.b [6]). No charge shall be admitted against an elder, unless it is brought by two or more persons, according to I Timothy 5:19.

2. No charge shall be admitted by the judicatory if it is filed more than two years after the commission of the alleged offense, unless it appears that circumstances have prevented an earlier filing of the charge. A charge shall be considered filed when it has been delivered to the clerk or the moderator of the judicatory.

3. Every charge of an offense must: (a) be in written form, (b) set forth the alleged offense, (c) set forth only one alleged offense, (d) set forth references to applicable portions of the Word of God, (e) set forth, where pertinent, references to applicable portions of the confessional standards, (f) set forth the serious character of the offense which would demonstrate the warrant for a trial.

Each specification of the facts relied upon to sustain the charge must: (a) be in written form, (b) declare as far as possible, the time, place, and circumstances of the alleged offense, (c) be accompanied with the names of any witnesses and the titles of documents, records, and recordings to be produced.

4. Offenses are either public or private. Public offenses are those which are commonly known. Private offenses are those which are known to an individual only, or, at most, to a very few individuals. Private offenses may or may not be personal, a personal private offense being one which involves injury to the person bringing the charge.

5. No charge of a personal private offense shall be admitted unless the judicatory has assured itself that the person bringing the charge has faithfully followed the course set forth in Matthew 18:15–17; nor shall a charge of a private offense which is not personal be admitted unless it appears that the plaintiff has first done his utmost privately to restore the alleged offender. However, even in the case of public offenses, it is not wrong to seek reconciliation in terms of Matthew 18:15–17 or Matthew 5:21–26 or Galatians 6:1.

6. When a member of the church is about to present a charge, he shall be solemnly warned by the judicatory that he may be censured if the judicatory, after conducting the preliminary investigation defined in this chapter, Section 7, determines that judicial process with respect to such charge may not be instituted. No censure stronger than a rebuke shall be pronounced without a trial.

7. a. If a charge in the form prescribed in this chapter, Section 3, is presented to the judicatory of jurisdiction by an individual or individuals, the judicatory shall proceed to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether judicial process shall be instituted. A committee may be appointed for this purpose, but its findings shall always be reviewed by the judicatory.

b. The judicatory, or the committee, shall consider (1) the form of the charge; (2) the form and relevancy of the specifications; (3) the competency of the witnesses named in the specifications; (4) the apparent authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings adduced in support of the charge and specifications; (5) whether the specifications, if true, would support the charge; and (6) also, whether the charge, if proved true, would constitute an offense serious enough to warrant a trial. It shall also prepare a statement of the facts of the case, arranged by date in the form of a chronology.

An offense which is serious enough to warrant a trial is: (1) an offense in the area of conduct and practice which seriously disturbs the peace, purity, and/or unity of the church, or (2) an offense in the area of doctrine for the nonordained member which would

constitute a denial of a credible profession of faith as reflected in his membership vows, or (3) an offense in the area of doctrine for the ordained officer which would constitute a violation of the system of doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures as that system of doctrine is set forth in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

The judicatory, or committee, should it be persuaded that the charge and specifications, if proved true, would constitute an offense serious enough to warrant a trial, shall not dismiss the case on technical grounds but shall require that the charge and specifications be put in proper form. If the person bringing the charge fails to do this, it shall become the responsibility of the judicatory.

c. Furthermore, if a person who has brought the charge requests the judicatory to assume responsibility for prosecuting the case, the judicatory shall bring the charge, provided the preliminary investigation warrants instituting judicial process.

d. When the form of the charge and specifications has been approved by the judicatory, it shall fix the time, date, and place for the trial of the case and shall cite the accused to appear at that time.

8. a. A judicatory may contemplate bringing a charge of an offense against a person subject to its jurisdiction. If a charge in the form prescribed in this chapter, Section 3, is presented to the judicatory by the judicatory, it shall conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether judicial process shall be instituted. A committee may be appointed for this purpose but its findings shall always be reviewed by the judicatory.

b. The judicatory, or the committee, shall consider (1) the form of the charge; (2) the form and relevancy of the specifications; (3) the competency of the witnesses named in the specifications; (4) the apparent authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings adduced in support of the charge and specifications; (5) whether the specifications, if true, would support the charge; and (6) also, whether the charge, if proved true, would constitute an offense serious enough to warrant a trial. It shall also prepare a statement of the facts of the case, arranged by date in the form of a chronology.

An offense serious enough to warrant a trial is: (1) an offense in the area of conduct and practice which seriously disturbs the peace, purity, and/or unity of the church, or (2) an offense in the area of doctrine for the nonordained member which would constitute a denial of a credible profession of faith as reflected in his membership vows, or (3) an offense in the area of doctrine for the ordained officer which would constitute a violation of the system of doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures as that system of doctrine is set forth in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. The judicatory, or committee, should it be persuaded that the charge and specifications, if proved true, would constitute an offense serious enough to warrant a trial, it shall not dismiss the case on technical grounds, but shall require that the charge and specifications be put in proper form.

c. When the form of the charge and specifications has been approved by the judicatory, it shall fix the time, date, and place for the trial of the case and shall cite the accused to appear at that time.

[Suggested forms for filing a written charge and for citing the accused to appear can be found on pages 169–70.]

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Trial of Judicial Cases**

#### **A. Rules for Those Involved**

##### 1. Regarding the Judicatory

a. At the beginning of every trial, the moderator shall announce:

This body is about to sit in a judicial capacity and I exhort you, the members, to bear in mind your solemn duty faithfully to minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human judgments to that infallible rule.

The announcement and the exhortation shall be repeated at the opening of each subsequent session of the trial judicatory. A session shall terminate as soon as the trial judicatory recesses, but a meeting is terminated only by adjournment.

b. The judicatories of the church shall ordinarily sit with open doors. In every case involving a charge of heresy the judicatory shall be without power to sit with closed doors. In other cases, where the ends of the discipline seem to require it, the trial judicatory at any stage of the trial may determine by a vote of three-fourths of the members present to sit with closed doors.

c. No person shall be deprived of the right to set forth, plead, or offer in evidence in any judicatory of the church the provisions of the Word of God or of the subordinate standards.

d. If unusual circumstances require it, a judicatory may deny an accused person the right of participating in the Lord's Supper, or of performing the functions of his office, until the case is concluded.

e. In a trial before the session if the accused refuses or fails to appear without satisfactory reason for his absence at the time appointed for the trial of the case, he shall again be cited, with the warning that, if he does not appear, it will proceed with the trial in his absence. The time allowed for the appearance on a citation shall

be determined by the issuing session with due consideration for the circumstances.

In a trial before a presbytery if the accused refuses or fails to appear without satisfactory reason for his absence at the time appointed for the trial of his case, it will proceed with the trial in his absence.

## 2. Regarding the Clerk

a. The clerk shall keep an accurate roll of the members attending each session of the trial judicatory. A session shall terminate as soon as the trial judicatory recesses.

b. The trial judicatory shall preserve a complete and accurate record of the trial. In the minutes recording the course of the procedure, the following shall not be omitted: (1) the charge and specifications; (2) objections made and exceptions taken at any stage of the trial; (3) a list of witnesses who testified and a summary of their testimony; (4) all rulings and decisions of the trial judicatory; and (5) the minutes of any private deliberations. Reproductions of part of the trial or the entire trial may be incorporated into the minutes of the trial judicatory. These minutes, together with all relevant papers, shall be certified by the trial judicatory and transmitted to the higher judicatory in cases of appeal.

c. Ordinarily all citations shall be served in person, but in case that is not possible, citations shall be sent by certified mail to the person cited.

## 3. Regarding the Accused

a. The accused shall be entitled to the assistance of counsel. No person shall be eligible to act as counsel who is not a member in good standing of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The accused may not sit in judgment on his own case at any stage thereof, including the preliminary investigation. No person who is counsel in a judicial case may sit in judgment on the same case in any stage following the preliminary investigation.

b. The accused may take exception to any and all rulings or decisions made by the trial judicatory.

c. The accused shall be allowed one copy of the minutes at the expense of the judicatory. Additional copies may be obtained by him at cost.

#### 4. Regarding Witnesses

a. Any person may be a witness in a judicial case if the trial judicatory is satisfied that he has sufficient competence to make the affirmation required of witnesses in this chapter, Section A.4.b.

b. The moderator shall require each witness before he testifies to make the following affirmation: "I solemnly swear, that by the grace of God, I will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth concerning the matters on which I am called to testify."

c. If it becomes necessary to obtain testimony from witnesses who are subject to the jurisdiction of another judicatory of the church, such testimony may be obtained either by the taking of depositions, or by having such judicatory, at the request of the trial judicatory, issue citations directing such persons to appear and testify before the trial judicatory.

d. The trial judicatory shall have power to direct that the testimony of witnesses be taken by a commission appointed by the trial judicatory when it concludes that unusual circumstances require such a course. A representative of the trial judicatory and the accused, or his counsel, may examine and cross-examine such witnesses, and interpose objections concerning (1) the admissibility of any oral testimony, (2) the competency of the witnesses, (3) the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings identified by the witnesses. The commissioners must be communicant members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They shall record such testimony and objections as may be offered, and, without ruling upon the objections, shall transmit to the trial judicatory a complete transcript of the proceedings.

e. If a witness who is a member of the church fails to obey a lawful citation, he shall be cited again with the warning that if he does not appear, or give satisfactory reason for his absence, he may be charged with contempt. The time allowed for appearance on a citation shall be determined by the issuing judicatory with due con-



sideration for the circumstances.

f. If a member of the church under the jurisdiction of another judicatory has been cited as a witness, and such person refuses to appear, the trial judicatory will communicate the facts to the judicatory having jurisdiction over the person concerned.

## **B. Rules for Evidence**

1. Evidence must be factual in nature. It may be direct or circumstantial. Caution should be exercised in giving weight to evidence which is purely circumstantial.

2. The accused may object to the competency of any witness and the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any testimony or evidence produced in support of the charge and specifications. The trial judicatory shall decide on all such objections after allowing the accused to be heard in support thereof.

3. A specification presented in support of a charge may be established by the testimony of witnesses or by duly authenticated documentary evidence. The testimony of one witness shall not be sufficient to establish the truth of any specification.

4. If the accused so requests, no witness, unless a member of the judicatory, called to witness regarding facts in support of any specification shall testify in the presence of another witness who is to testify concerning the same specification.

5. The trial judicatory shall appoint one of its members to conduct the examination of witnesses on its behalf, but other members shall also have the right to take part in the examination. Witnesses produced in support of the charge and specifications shall testify in the presence of the accused unless the accused has failed to present himself after citation according to this chapter, Section A.1.e. Witnesses named in the specifications shall first be examined by the trial judicatory. The accused may then cross-examine. If the trial judica-

tory asks any further questions, the accused shall be given opportunity for recross-examination. Witnesses summoned at the request of the accused shall first be examined by the accused. If the trial judicatory cross-examines, the accused shall be given opportunity to conduct a redirect examination. Leading questions shall be permitted only under cross-examination.

6. Certified records of a judicatory shall be received in evidence in any other judicatory if their relevancy is first established.

7. All questions concerning the competency of any witness and the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any testimony or evidence taken by a commission shall be determined by the trial judicatory after the accused has been given an opportunity to be heard.

8. New evidence discovered during the trial may be offered, but, if such evidence is produced against the accused, he shall be given reasonable time to investigate it and to supplement his defense.

9. If new evidence is produced by the accused after he has been found guilty, the trial judicatory shall examine such evidence. If it is satisfied that there was good reason for not producing it at the trial, it shall grant a new trial, or, in case an appeal has been lodged, it shall certify these facts to the appellate judicatory and the record of the case shall then be returned to the trial judicatory for the purpose of a new trial.

### **C. Rules of Trial Proceedings**

#### **1. First Meeting of the Trial**

a. At the first meeting of the trial judicatory only the following actions shall be taken:

(1) The charges and specifications shall be read and formally presented to the accused together with the names of any witnesses and copies of any documents which may be presented against him.

(2) The trial judicatory shall fix the time, date, and place for the second meeting of the trial, which shall not be less than ten days later, and shall issue citations directing all persons to appear at that time whose presence it may deem necessary.

(3) The accused shall be granted citations in which he may insert the names of the witnesses whom he wishes the trial judicatory to summon.

b. No meeting of the trial judicatory held prior to the time at which it proceeds with the previously mentioned actions shall be considered the first meeting within the meaning of this chapter.

## 2. Second Meeting of the Trial

a. At the second meeting of the trial judicatory the accused may interpose objections concerning (1) the regularity of the proceedings up to this point and (2) the form of the charge, the form and relevancy of the specifications, the competency of the witnesses named in the specifications, and the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings submitted in support of the charge and specifications. The trial judicatory shall determine the validity of any such objections. If the accused at this point requests the trial judicatory to do so, it shall determine whether the proof of the charge and specifications would show the commission of an offense serious enough to warrant a trial. It may dismiss the case forthwith, or permit such amendments of the charge and specifications as do not alter their essential nature. If the trial judicatory decides that the trial should proceed, the accused shall be called on to plead “guilty” or “not guilty,” and his plea shall be entered upon the record. If the accused pleads “guilty,” the trial judicatory shall determine the censure. If the accused pleads “not guilty,” or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed. The proceedings described in this section may extend over as many meetings as are necessary for their completion.

b. Absence from any session of the second or of a subsequent meeting of the trial judicatory shall disqualify a member from voting thereafter and from being counted in the computation of a quorum, but shall not deprive him of any other right as a member of the trial

judicatory. Unless a quorum is present, a trial judicatory shall not continue in session, but it may recess or adjourn.

c. When all the evidence against the accused has been presented and he has had an opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses testifying against him, the accused shall have the right to move for the dismissal of the charges. If this motion is denied by the trial judicatory, the accused may then present the evidence in support of his defense.

### 3. Conclusion of the Trial

a. After all the evidence has been presented, the accused may make his final argument with respect to the evidence and the law of the church. The trial judicatory, after deliberation, shall vote on each charge and each specification separately. If the trial judicatory decides that the accused is guilty, it shall proceed to determine the censure.

b. When the trial judicatory has concluded its deliberations, the moderator shall announce its decision on each charge and each specification. If the accused has been found guilty, the trial judicatory shall state what censure it proposes to pronounce against the accused. The censure shall not be pronounced before the expiration of the time in which the accused may file notice of appeal. If notice of appeal is filed and an appeal is taken within the time prescribed in this Book of Discipline, Chapter VII, the trial judicatory may not execute its judgment unless and until the judgment is affirmed by the judicatory to which final appeal is taken.

### 4. Trial in Absentia

If the judicatory proceeds with the trial in the absence of the accused, a counsel shall be appointed at the first meeting of the trial to present a case to the trial judicatory in defense of the accused. Such counsel, although not acting directly in behalf of the accused, shall be entitled to present evidence, interview witnesses, interpose objections, and otherwise act in defense of the accused. The trial judicatory shall deliver copies of the charge, specifications, and names of witnesses either personally or by certified mail to the

accused along with notification that the trial is proceeding without him and the time, date, and place of the second meeting of the trial judicatory. The second meeting of the trial judicatory shall proceed as though the accused had pleaded “not guilty” in the case. The trial shall then proceed according to the provisions of this chapter. When the trial judicatory has concluded its deliberations, the moderator shall announce its decisions according to this chapter, Section C.3.b and shall communicate such decisions to the accused in writing either personally or by certified mail.

[A suggested form for citing a witness is found on page 171.]

## **Chapter V**

### **Cases without Full Process**

1. When a person comes before a judicatory as his own accuser, the judicatory may proceed to judgment without full process, determining first, what offense, if any has been committed, and, if a serious offense (cf. Chapter III, Section 7.b [6]) has been committed, what censure shall be pronounced.

2. Erasure is an act of discipline without full process.

a. The names of members may be removed from the roll of the church by erasure according to the following provisions:

(1) When a member desires dismissal to a church of which the session cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice, nor a church which will advance his spiritual interests, and he cannot be dissuaded, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the session institutes disciplinary action against him; on being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(2) When a member of a particular church, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the efforts of the session to dissuade him from his course have failed, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes, unless the session institutes or continues other disciplinary action against him.

(3) When a member unites with a church of another denomination without a certificate of dismissal, the session may erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(4) When a member cannot be found, the session may, after two years, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(5) When a member, without adequate reason, persists in attending a church of another denomination in preference to his own, or persistently and over an extended period of time, absents

himself from the stated services of the church, his name may be erased from the roll according to the following procedures: he shall be earnestly and personally dealt with by the session. If this effort fails, he shall be notified that at a meeting of the session not less than two months later his standing shall be reviewed. The session shall inform him of the time, date, and place of this meeting and invite him to show why his name should not be erased from the roll. If satisfactory reasons are not presented, the session shall erase his name from the roll, record the circumstances in its minutes, and send notification to him.

(6) When a noncommunicant member neglects the ongoing exhortation of the session to profess faith in Christ and rejects the covenantal responsibility of submission to home or church, the session may upon prior notification erase his name from the roll.

b. The names of ministers may be removed from the roll of the presbytery by erasure according to the following provisions:

(1) When a minister, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the presbytery that he desires to renounce the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church by abandoning his ministry and membership therein, or by declaring himself independent, or by joining another body without a regular dismissal, the presbytery shall seek to dissuade him from his course, and, if these efforts fail, it shall erase his name from its roll and record the circumstances in its minutes unless the presbytery institutes or continues disciplinary action.

(2) When a minister has been absent from the meetings of presbytery for two years and the presbytery after diligent search is unable to find him, his name shall be erased from the roll.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Censure and Restoration**

#### **A. Censure**

1. In judicial discipline there are five degrees of censure: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and excommunication. Censures shall be pronounced in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an act of the whole church, by the moderator on behalf of the trial judicatory.

2. If a person who has been adjudged guilty refuses or fails to present himself for censure at the time appointed, the trial judicatory shall cite him to appear at another time. If he does not appear after this citation, the censure shall be pronounced in his absence.

#### **B. Degrees of Censure**

##### **1. Admonition**

Admonition consists in tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his sin, warning him of his danger, and exhorting him to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

##### **2. Rebuke**

Rebuke is a form of censure more severe than admonition. It consists in setting forth the serious character of the offense, reproving the offender, and exhorting him to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

##### **3. Suspension**

a. Suspension is a form of censure by which one is deprived of the privileges of membership in the church, of office, or of both. It may be for a definite or an indefinite time. Suspension of an officer from the privileges of membership shall always be accompanied by suspension from office, but the latter does not necessarily involve



the former.

b. An officer or other member of the church, while under suspension, shall be the object of deep solicitude and earnest dealing to the end that he may be restored. When the trial judicatory which pronounced the censure is satisfied of the penitence of the offender, or when the time of suspension has expired, the censure shall be removed and the offender shall be restored. This restoration shall be accompanied by a solemn admonition. Restoration to the privileges of membership may take place without restoration to those of office.

c. When a minister has been indefinitely suspended, the judicatory shall immediately notify all the presbyteries of the church.

#### 4. Deposition

a. Deposition is a form of censure more severe than suspension. It consists in a solemn declaration by the trial judicatory that the offender is no longer an officer in the church.

b. When a minister is deposed from his office, the presbytery shall erase his name from the roll of the ministerial members of the presbytery and dismiss him to a particular church or enroll him as a member of the regional church without membership in a particular church.

c. Deposition of a pastor or his suspension for an indefinite time involves the dissolution of the pastoral tie. The sentence of deposition or suspension shall be read before the congregation, and the pulpit shall be declared vacant. In case of suspension for a definite period the presbytery, after giving the session an opportunity to be heard, shall decide whether the pastoral relation shall be dissolved.

d. When a minister has been deposed, the judicatory shall immediately notify all the presbyteries of the church.

#### 5. Excommunication

Excommunication is the most severe form of censure and is resorted to only in cases of offenses aggravated by persistent impenitence. It consists in a solemn declaration by an ecclesiastical judicatory that the offender is no longer considered a member of the body of Christ.

## **C. Procedural Considerations**

### 1. Pronouncement of Censure

The indefinite suspension, deposition, or excommunication of an officer or other member of the church shall be announced to the church in which the officer holds office, or in which the member holds membership. These censures shall always be accompanied by prayer to God that he may graciously use the discipline for the restoration of the offender, the edification of the church, and his own glory.

### 2. Review of Suspension

a. In case of indefinite suspension, the judicatory of original jurisdiction shall review the suspension, not later than twelve months after imposition of censure, to determine whether or not the offender has shown repentance and may be restored.

b. When, in its review of suspension, the judicatory of original jurisdiction is not satisfied that the offender has shown repentance, the judicatory shall determine whether the suspension should be continued or increased to deposition or to excommunication or to both.

c. Continued suspension for an indefinite time shall be reviewed again within twelve months of the conclusion of the previous review.

### 3. Increase of Censure

a. No further trial is necessary to increase the censure of indefinite suspension from office to deposition or the censure of indefinite suspension from the privileges of church membership to excommunication.

b. If increase of censure is imposed, without further trial, it shall be the duty of the judicatory so acting to record the circumstances in its minutes.

c. The judgment to increase censure shall in any case be subject to appeal.

**D. Restoration**

1. An officer deposed because of a commonly known offense shall be restored only after the judicatory has assured itself that the restoration will not be attended by injury to the cause of the gospel.

2. An officer who has been deposed cannot resume his former office without again being ordained.

3. Restoration shall always be accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving to God for his redeeming grace.

[Suggested forms to use for the public imposition and removal of censures can be found on pages 176–80.]

## **Chapter VII**

### **Appeals**

1. An appeal in a judicial case is the removal of the case to an appellate judicatory by the filing of a petition asking that the final judgment of a lower judicatory be reversed or modified. An appeal may be taken by the accused, or by a judicatory whose judgment has been reversed or modified by an appellate judicatory.

2. Decisions and rulings made by the trial judicatory during the course of the trial shall not be appealable but may be assigned as grounds of appeal from the final judgment of the judicatory.

3. Notice of an intention to appeal must be filed in writing, within ten days after the judgment has been announced, with the clerk or the moderator of the judicatory from which appeal is to be taken.

4. In order to perfect an appeal, the appellant must lodge the appeal and the specifications of error with the clerk of the appellate judicatory within thirty days after the filing of the notice of appeal. The appellant shall also serve a copy of the appeal to the clerk of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken. The clerk of the appellate judicatory shall give the appellant and the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken reasonable notice of the time, date, and place fixed by the appellate judicatory for the hearing of the appeal.

5. The clerk of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken shall submit the entire record of the case, including the chronology, to the clerk of the appellate judicatory.

6. If the appellate judicatory does not sustain any of the specifications of error, the judgment of the lower judicatory shall be affirmed. If the appellate judicatory sustains any specification of error, it shall determine whether the error is of such importance as

to require a reversal or modification of the judgment. An appellate judicatory which decides not to sustain the judgment of a lower judicatory may remit the case to the trial judicatory for a new trial, may modify the judgment, or may reverse the judgment.

7. When the judgment of a lower judicatory is before an appellate judicatory, neither the appellant, nor any member of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken shall propose or second motions, or vote in any decisions concerning the case.

[Suggested forms to use when giving a notice to appeal or for the appeal itself are located on pages 172–73.]

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Dissents and Protests**

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

2. Any member of a judicatory may file a written protest stating his reasons for objecting to an action or judgment of the judicatory. A protest must be filed with the moderator or clerk within ten days after the judicatory has taken the action or announced the judgment, provided, however, that a protest against an action or judgment of the general assembly must be filed prior to the dissolution thereof. A protest shall be read to the judicatory and shall be recorded in the minutes.

3. The judicatory may, if it so desires, place in its minutes an answer to a protest.

## IX

### Complaints

1. A complaint is a written representation, other than an appeal or a protest, charging a judicatory with delinquency or error. It may be brought by an officer or other member of the church against the session or the presbytery to which he is subject, by one session against another session, by a session against the presbytery which has jurisdiction over it, or by one presbytery against another presbytery.

2. A complaint shall first be presented to the judicatory which is alleged to be delinquent or in error, and this judicatory shall be asked to make amends. The complaint shall be presented as soon as possible after the alleged delinquency or error, and always within three months, unless it is shown that it could not have been presented within that time.

3. If, after considering a complaint, the judicatory alleged to be delinquent or in error is not convinced that it has been delinquent or has erred, and refuses to make amends, the complainant may appeal to the next higher judicatory having jurisdiction. The appeal shall carry the complaint to that judicatory. Appeal shall be entered at the earliest possible time. Before this action is taken, notice of intention to appeal must be given to the judicatory against which the complaint is directed. The complaint carried to the higher judicatory must be the same complaint presented to the lower judicatory.

4. When a complaint has been carried to a higher judicatory, the clerk of the judicatory which is charged with delinquency or error shall submit to the clerk of the higher judicatory the relevant papers, including a statement of the facts of the case arranged by date in the form of a chronology, and a certified copy of any minutes or other documents evidencing the alleged delinquency or error. The clerk of the higher judicatory shall give the complainant and the judica-

tory against which the complaint is directed reasonable notice of the time, date, and place fixed for the hearing of the complaint by the higher judicatory. Neither the complainant nor any member of the judicatory whose alleged delinquency or error is complained of shall propose or second motions, or vote in any decisions concerning the matter.

5. If a complaint against a session has been carried to the presbytery which has jurisdiction over it, and the presbytery has rendered a decision, either the complainant or the session may appeal the decision to the general assembly. The appeal shall carry the complaint against the session to the general assembly and the general assembly shall adjudicate the case as constituted by that complaint. Appeal shall be entered at the earliest possible time. Notice of intention to appeal, and copies of the appeal itself, shall be given to both lower judicatories, and the clerks of those judicatories shall submit the relevant papers to the clerk of the general assembly. Reasons may be appended to the appeal. These reasons may include alleged delinquencies in the presbytery's handling of the case and other matters germane to the issues of the case as constituted by the complaint against the session.

6. A complaint, carried by appeal to a higher judicatory, may be sustained; or, denied; or, remanded, with grounds, to the next lower judicatory. A decision to remand shall state whether jurisdiction in the matter is being returned to the lower judicatory, or retained by the higher judicatory.

7. If a judicatory is adjudged delinquent or in error by a higher judicatory, the higher judicatory shall determine what amends are to be made.

[Suggested forms to use when filing a complaint or for an appeal are located on pages 174–75.]



# THE DIRECTORY FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD

## Preface

The purpose of this Directory is to express the Church's common understanding of the principles and practice of public worship that is Reformed according to the Scriptures and, subordinately, to the Confession and Catechisms. Where practices are understood by the Church to be required by the Word of God, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence, they are mandated. In matters of circumstance and form in worship not specifically provided for in Scripture, the Directory provides guidance for their ordering according to the light of nature and Christian prudence, consonant with the general rules of the Word.

The Directory seeks to make clear this distinction in its use of language. The following denotations used in the Directory are to be understood as indicated. The first category denotes practices that are required by the Word of God.

1. Practices that are mandated are denoted by “shall,” “will,” “is to be,” “must,” and “are to be.”

The following three categories denote practices that are not mandated:

2. Practices that are strongly recommended are denoted by “should,” “ought to,” “is desirable,” and “is advisable.”

3. Practices that are commended as suitable are denoted by “is appropriate,” “is well,” and “is fitting.”

4. Practices that are permissible are denoted by “may.”

Other imperative forms occur in the Directory, and sometimes the forms in the list above are varied by modifying words or are put in the negative, either of which alters their force. For example, “may not” and “may only” are mandatory prohibitions, even though “may” is permissive. The meaning of these additional and altered forms is to be determined by the rules of English usage, with due respect to the distinctions outlined above.

The Suggested Forms for Particular Services are, by definition, suggested. The distinctions outlined above do not apply to the Suggested Forms.

Scripture quotations in the Directory and the Suggested Forms are drawn from the King James Version with a few variations, indicated by brackets, where deemed advisable for current understanding, without prejudice to other translations. In the use of the Directory, any accurate, faithful translation may be substituted.

## **Chapter I**

### **The Principles of Public Worship**

#### **A. God's Institution of Public Worship**

1. The living and true God, our triune Creator, has instituted the worship of himself by all people everywhere in spirit and in truth.

a. Because man's chief end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever, all of life is to be worshipful. Nevertheless, worship itself consists primarily in specific acts of communion with God.

b. Only those people whose hearts have been made new through God's grace by the work of the Holy Spirit can worship God.

c. While believers are to worship in secret as individuals and in private as families, they are also to worship as churches in assemblies of public worship, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected or forsaken. Public worship occurs when God, by his Word and Spirit, through the lawful government of the church, calls his people to assemble to worship him together.

2. In his Word, God has specially appointed one day in seven as a Sabbath to be kept holy to him. It is the duty of every one to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, the Sabbath was the last day of the week, marking the completion of six days of work, anticipating eternal rest in the coming Messiah. By raising Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, God sanctified that day. And from the time of the apostles, the church, accordingly, has kept the first day of the week holy as the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and as the day on which it is to assemble for worship. Now each weekly cycle begins with the people of God resting in Christ in the worship of his name, followed by six days of work. The Lord's Day thus both depicts that the Christian's rest has already begun in Christ, and anticipates the eternal rest of his sons and daughters in the new heaven and the new earth.

3. God's covenant people are to devote the entire Lord's Day as holy to the Lord.

a. In order to sanctify the day, it is necessary for them to prepare for its approach. They should attend to their ordinary affairs beforehand, so that they may not be hindered from setting the Sabbath apart to God.

b. It is advisable for each individual and family to prepare for communion with God in his public ordinances. Therefore, they ought to do this by reading the Scriptures, by holy meditation, and by prayer, especially for God's blessing on the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

c. They are then to observe a holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts concerning their everyday employment and recreations, and to devote themselves to delighting in the public and private exercises of communion with God and his people, in showing mercy and doing good in his name, and in works of necessity.

d. They shall so order works of necessity on that day that they do not improperly detain others from the public worship of God, nor otherwise hinder them from sanctifying the Sabbath.

4. The Lord's Day is a day of holy convocation, the day on which the Lord calls his people to assemble for public worship.

a. Although it is fitting and proper that the members of Christ's church assemble for worship on other occasions also, which are left to the discretion of particular sessions, the Lord calls the whole congregation of each local church to the sacred duty and high privilege of assembling for public worship each Lord's Day. He expressly commands his people to draw near to him, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together.

b. It is highly advisable that a congregation assemble for public worship at the beginning and the ending of the Lord's Day. God established this pattern for his Old Testament people when he commanded morning and evening sacrifice and incense burning. Moreover, he sanctifies the entire Lord's Day to himself and gives his people in it a foretaste of their eternal enjoyment of him and his people.

## **B. The Nature of Public Worship**

1. An assembly of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but is, before all else, a meeting of the triune God with his covenant people. In the covenant, God promises his chosen ones that he will dwell among them as their God and they will be his people.

a. The triune God is present in public worship, not only by virtue of the divine omnipresence, but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Savior. Through Christ, God's people have access by one Spirit to the Father.

b. In an assembly of public worship, the triune God is not only the One to whom worship is directed, but also the One who is active in the worship of the church. Through his public ordinances, the covenant God actively works to engage his people in communion with himself. In public worship, God communes with his people, and they with him, in a manner which expresses the close relationships of the Father and his redeemed children, of the Son and his beloved bride, and of the Holy Spirit and the living temple in which he dwells.

c. Pastors and ruling elders are to endeavor to inculcate in themselves and in the congregation expectations for, attitudes concerning, and behavior during public worship which are appropriate to the glorious fact that public worship is covenantal communion between God and his people in his public ordinances.

2. Because Christ is the Mediator of the covenant, no one draws near to God except through him alone.

a. God's people enter the Most Holy Place, the heavenly sanctuary, by the redeeming blood of Jesus, by the new and living way opened for them through the curtain, that is, his flesh. They draw near through him as their Great High Priest, who has not entered a man-made sanctuary but heaven itself, now to appear for them in God's presence.

b. Public worship is to be conducted in a manner that plainly expresses conscious reliance upon the mediation and merits of Jesus

Christ. To this end, it is well that there be a prayer of confession of sin early in the worship service. It is fitting that the minister, as God's ambassador, then declare an assurance of God's grace in Christ, reminding each worshiper that he can have boldness to approach the holy God only through the mediation and merits of Jesus Christ.

3. By the Spirit of the exalted Christ, God draws near to his people and they draw near to their God. They come by grace to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, joining innumerable angels and all the people of God in joyous and reverent communion with him.

a. God's people not only are to come into his presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of his perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also are to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise for the great salvation that he has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and which he applies to them by his Holy Spirit. All are therefore to worship with sincere devotion, reverence, and expectation.

b. Public worship is to be conducted in reliance on the gracious working of the Spirit of the exalted Christ, which alone can make anyone capable of such sincerity, reverence, devotion, awe, expectation, and joy. Hence, from its beginning to its end, public worship should be conducted in that simplicity which manifests dependence on the Spirit of Christ to bless his own ordinances.

c. Accordingly, the whole congregation should assemble promptly, that all may be present and may join together for the entire worship service. Unless necessary, none should depart until after the benediction. All should refrain from any behavior that would distract other worshipers or detract from their communion with God.

4. In public worship, God's people draw near to their God unitedly as his covenant people, the body of Christ.

a. For this reason, the covenant children should be present so far as possible, as well as adults. Because God makes his covenant with believers and their children, families should be taught and encouraged to sit together as families.

b. For the same reason, no favoritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than himself.

c. The unity and catholicity of the covenant people are to be manifest in public worship. Accordingly, the service is to be conducted in a manner that enables and expects all the members of the covenant community—male and female, old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, healthy and infirm, people from every race and nation—to worship together.

d. Because God's people worship, not as an aggregation of individuals, but as a congregation of those who are members of one another in Christ, public worship is to be conducted as a corporate activity in which all the members participate as the body of Christ.

5. The triune God assembles his covenant people for public worship in order to manifest and renew their covenant bond with him and one another. The Holy Spirit engages them and draws them into the Father's presence as a living sacrifice in Christ. God himself has fellowship with them, strengthening and guiding them for life in his presence and service in his kingdom.

a. Public worship should be conducted in a manner that reflects God's initiative in the covenant itself, making clear that God establishes and renews his covenant with his people, assuring God's people of those things which they so easily forget unless Christ crucified is portrayed before their eyes week after week, cultivating the expectation that God himself meets his people in Christ as the Holy Spirit works through the public ordinances, always keeping central the persons and works of the triune God.

b. Consequently, it is well that public worship be so conducted that it is apparent that God summons his church to assemble in his presence, that he assures his people of his receiving and cleansing them through Christ the Mediator, that he consecrates them to himself and his service by his Word, that he communes with them and gives them grace to help in time of need through his means of grace, and that he sends them out to serve with his blessing.

6. The triune God reveals the way of knowing and worshipping him in his Word, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

a. The principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible—either as they are expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture—and from no other source.

b. God may not be worshiped according to human imaginations or inventions or in any way not prescribed by his Word, nor may the church require her members to participate in elements of worship that God's Word does not require. Only when the elements of worship are those appointed in God's Word, and the circumstances and forms of worship are consonant with God's Word, is there true freedom to know God as he is and to worship him as he desires to be worshiped.

7. The end of public worship is the glory of the triune God. To that end, Christ builds his church by perfecting the saints and adding to its membership such as are being saved—all to the glory of God.

a. Through public worship on the Lord's Day, God calls his people to serve him all the days of the week in their every activity, and enables them, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

b. God's people are to be led to engage in all the elements of worship with a single-minded focus on God's glory and with a humble and dependent expectation that the exalted Lord Jesus Christ himself will edify them and build his church through his appointed means of grace—all to the glory of God.

### **C. The Parts of Public Worship**

1. Because a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people, a worship service consists of two principal parts: those elements which are performed on behalf of God (through a representative voice) and those elements which are performed by the congregation (through their own or a



representative voice).

a. By his Spirit working through the ministry of the Word, God addresses his people in the call to worship, in the salutation and benediction, in the reading and preaching of the Word, and in the sacraments.

b. His people, enabled by the Holy Spirit, address God in prayer, in song, in offerings, in hearing the Word, in confession, and in receiving and partaking of the sacraments.

c. It is advisable that these two parts be made to alternate.

2. The triune God is not a passive spectator in public worship, but actively works in each element of the service of worship. Neither are the people of God to be passive spectators in public worship, but by faith are to participate actively in each element of the service of worship.

a. Public worship should be conducted in a manner that enables and expects God's people by faith actively to embrace the blessing of the Lord in the salutation and benediction; to pray with him who leads in prayer, so that the prayer being uttered aloud becomes their prayer; to attend, in the reading of God's Word, to what God reveals of himself, his redeeming actions for them, and his will for their lives; to confess together with all the people the faith of the church; to heed the Word of truth as the sermon is preached and to appropriate it to their lives as God, through his servant, proclaims and applies it; to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the praise of God and the edification of one another; to offer their possessions and themselves together as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

b. Accordingly, it is appropriate that worshipers at times respond with brief spoken or sung expressions of praise or affirmation such as "hallelujah" or "amen." The former is a heartfelt declaration that the living God alone is worthy of adoration. The latter grows out of the responsibility of God's people to affirm solemnly and earnestly the truthfulness of his Word and the permanence of his character. It is especially fitting for the congregation to join in an "amen" at such times as a response to a blessing, a Scripture reading, a psalm or hymn, a confession of faith, or a prayer. When believers

sing or say “amen,” they are testifying to their wholehearted agreement with what has been spoken as being in harmony with God’s permanently valid Word.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ has not prescribed a set order for public worship; rather, he has given his church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God’s Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, so that all things are done decently and in order, and God’s people approach him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness.

a. While Christ has not prescribed a set order for public worship, this does not mean that it is fitting to ignore proper and scriptural patterns of worship that have been historically observed by the church, particularly in the Reformed tradition. The order of worship should be so structured that there will be an enlightened movement on the part of the congregation from one element of the service to the next. When each act of worship is full of meaning, the order of the elements will assume a coherent, edifying form.

b. Worship should be conducted with regard to the time, taking care that neither reading, singing, praying, preaching, nor any other ordinance be disproportionate, one to the other, nor the whole rendered either too short or too tedious.

4. The session does well to ensure that the public worship assembly space is so arranged as to reflect and reinforce God’s initiative in drawing near to and gathering his people through the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

a. Because the pulpit, baptismal font, and communion table facilitate the part of worship which is performed on behalf of God, it is fitting that they be positioned so as to draw the focus of the congregation upon the Word and sacraments, and that they be easily accessible and visible to the entire congregation throughout the worship service. Because the Word is primary and the sacraments serve to seal the Word, it is fitting that the pulpit be in the position of prominence.

b. Because musicians and musical instruments serve the part of worship that is performed by the congregation, it is fitting that they be positioned with or behind the congregation.

### **D. The Oversight and Conduct of Public Worship**

1. Public worship is Christian, not only when the worshipers consciously recognize that Christ is the Mediator by whom alone they can come unto God, but also when they honor the exalted Christ as the living and only Head of the church, who rules over public worship.

a. He rules over public worship by his Word and Spirit, not only directly, but also through the ministry of officers in their ruling and teaching his church.

b. The exalted Christ thus applies himself and his benefits to the elect through his Spirit working in human hearts by and with his Word, especially in its public reading, its preaching, its sealing by the sacraments, and as it is received in faith by prayer.

2. For this reason:

a. The session is responsible to give immediate oversight to the conduct of public worship in the local church.

b. Public worship is ordinarily to be conducted by those who have been ordained to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in the administration of his Word and sacraments. The pastor of the church is ordinarily responsible to plan and conduct public worship.

c. Men who have been licensed by a presbytery to preach the gospel may plan and conduct worship as probationers in order that the churches may form a better judgment respecting the fitness of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. They may not, however, pronounce the salutation or the benediction or administer the sacraments.

d. When the session deems it fitting, ruling elders may lead the congregation in prayer, read the Scriptures to the congregation, lead unison or antiphonal readings of Scripture by the congregation, lead congregational singing, or, on occasion, exhort the congrega-

gation as part of public worship. They may not, however, pronounce the salutation or the benediction or administer the sacraments.

e. On occasion, with the approval of the session and under the close supervision of a minister, exceptions may be made for other men being prepared for the gospel ministry in Christ's church who are either members of the congregation governed by that session or are ministerial interns under that session. They may not, however, pronounce the salutation or the benediction or administer the sacraments.

f. No others should take such leadership in overseeing or conducting public worship.

## **Chapter II**

### **Elements of Ordinary Public Worship**

#### **A. The Part from God to the People**

##### 1. The Call to Worship

a. God having summoned his people to assemble in his presence to worship him on the Lord's Day, there ought to be a call to the congregation, in God's own words, to worship him. He who performs this element serves as God's representative voice; accordingly, it ordinarily should be performed by a minister of the Word.

b. It is fitting that the congregation respond to the call to worship in words of Scripture, or with singing, or with prayer, or with all of these.

##### 2. The Public Reading of God's Word

a. Because the hearing of God's Word is a means of grace, the public reading of the Holy Scriptures is an essential element of public worship. He who performs this serves as God's representative voice. Thus, it ordinarily should be performed by a minister of the Word. Through this reading, God speaks directly to the congregation in his own words. For this reason, the reader should refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human comments. He should use an accurate, faithful translation in the language of the people. He should read clearly and with understanding, and the congregation should attend to the reading with the deepest reverence.

b. It is desirable that portions from both the Old and the New Testaments be read each Lord's Day. It is also well that the law of God be read frequently.

c. The public reading of the Scriptures to the congregation is to be distinguished from the unison or antiphonal reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation together. In the former, God addresses his people; in the latter, God's people address their God, expressing in the words of Scripture their own

contrition, adoration, gratitude, and other holy sentiments. The Psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for this purpose.

### 3. The Preaching of God's Word

a. The preaching of the Word, the power of God unto salvation, is indispensable in the public worship of God. It is therefore a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of man, and that he handle the Word of God correctly, always setting forth Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. In the sermon, God addresses the congregation by the mouth of his servant, and through his Spirit opens the ears of his people.

b. The preacher shall prepare each sermon prayerfully and diligently. He may not use a text merely as a point of departure, but must take pains to expound the chosen text, bringing in other texts as applicable, carefully explaining the meaning, and diligently applying the particular text(s) for the salvation and edification of his hearers. He should take care in preaching that his exposition and application of the Scriptures be clear and simple, having regard to the capacity of the hearers, in demonstration of the Spirit and power, with fervor and zeal, and that he not divorce Christian duty from Christian faith.

The preacher must, as Christ's ambassador, seek to build up the saints in the most holy faith and beseech the unconverted to be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the gospel of salvation by grace be proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, in order that the hearers may learn to rely for salvation only on the grace of God in Christ, to the exclusion of their own works or character, ascribing all glory to God alone for their salvation. The preacher is to instruct his hearers in the whole counsel of God, exhort the congregation to more perfect obedience to Christ, and warn them of the sins and dangers that are around them and within them. A preacher fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls who neglects to warn the congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the gospel.

c. The session is to give diligence that no person enter the pulpit concerning whose soundness in doctrine and life, or knowledge of Scripture, there is reasonable doubt.

#### 4. The Sacraments

a. The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, as visible signs and seals of the Word of the covenant, are important elements of public worship. They represent Christ and his benefits, confirm his people's participation in him, visibly mark off from the world those who belong to his church, and solemnly bind them to covenant faith and loyalty.

b. Because the sacraments are ordinances of Christ for the benefit of the visible church, they are to be administered only under the oversight of the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God, baptism being a sacrament whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper signifying and sealing the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of his mystical body. Nevertheless, if a session judges that circumstances require otherwise, the sacraments may be administered elsewhere; but, in any event, the church must be represented in the service.

c. Although the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the piety or intention of the person administering them, they are not to be administered by any private person, but only by a minister of the Word.

#### 5. Blessings

a. The salutation and the benediction are blessings pronounced in God's name and in his own words. Accordingly, they are properly used only in a gathering of Christ's church and by a minister of the Word.

b. A salutation is the greeting from God to his people who have gathered to worship him. It is fittingly pronounced immedi-

ately before or after the call to worship. Words of salutation from Scripture are to be used, such as the opening greeting from one of the New Testament epistles, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

c. A benediction is the pronouncement of God’s blessing upon his people at the conclusion of the worship service. Words of benediction taken from Scripture are to be used. The high priestly benediction, “The LORD bless thee [you], and keep thee [you]: the LORD make his face shine upon thee [you], and be gracious unto thee [you]: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee [you], and give thee [you] peace” (Num. 6:24–26), or the Trinitarian apostolic benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14), are distinctly appropriate. If, however, the minister deems another benediction taken from Scripture more fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it.

## **B. The Part from the People to God**

### **1. Public Prayer**

a. Prayer is an essential element of public worship. In order to be accepted by God, prayer is to be by faith, in the name of the Son of God, by the help of his Spirit, and according to God’s will.

b. In preparation for the service, the session should provide circumstances conducive to the people adopting an attitude appropriate to worship. It is highly advisable that each person prepare by engaging in silent prayer prior to the beginning of the service.

c. He who leads in public prayer serves as the voice of the congregation. For this reason, he should pray in such a way, in clear words and in the plural, that the entire assembly of God’s people can pray with him; and it is the duty of the members of the congregation, not only to hear his words, but also to pray them in their hearts. To these ends, he who leads should diligently prepare himself for public prayers, so that he may perform this duty with propriety and with profit to the worshipers.



d. It is particularly appropriate that public prayer be led by a pastor of the congregation, because in it he both guides the people in their corporate prayer to God and teaches them how to pray biblically. Accordingly, every minister should, by a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, by the study of the best writings on prayer, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God, endeavor to acquire both the spirit and the skill of prayer, as should ruling elders. When a guest minister is present, it is well that a pastor or ruling elder, as one who knows the congregation, lead in the prayers of intercession.

e. Near the beginning of the service, there should be a brief prayer of approach to God in response to his call to enter his presence for worship. It may express humble adoration, confess unworthiness and inability to worship aright, seek his merciful acceptance through Jesus Christ, and invoke the gracious working of the Holy Spirit.

f. During the service, there should be comprehensive prayer, which may be offered as more than one prayer throughout the worship service. Such prayer should include adoration of God's perfections, thanksgiving for all his mercies, confession of sin, supplication for forgiveness through the blood of the atonement and for renewal by the Holy Spirit, lamentation in times of distress or crisis, and intercession for the needs of God's people and others. It is fitting that the congregation intercede for the whole of mankind; for civil rulers; for the church universal; for Christian missions at home and abroad, Christian education, and other Christian activities; for our whole Church; for churches in ties of like faith with us; for the welfare of the local congregation itself, including its officers, its ministries, and its members, pleading for their growth in sanctification and remembering the daily needs and care of the people—the families, the singles, the rising generation, the elderly, the poor, the sick, the dying, the mourning, the erring, and unsaved loved ones; and for whatever else may seem particularly suitable.

g. It is fitting that a prayer of confession of sin precede or follow any reading of the law of God to the congregation.

h. It is appropriate that there be a brief offertory prayer ei-

ther immediately preceding or immediately following the worship of God with offerings. Such prayer may thank God for his gifts, devote the offering and the worshipers to his service, and invoke his blessing on its use and on those who give.

i. It is fitting to pray at the time of the reading and preaching of the Word. Such prayer may petition for the Holy Spirit to grant illumination and to apply the Word preached to the minds, hearts, and lives of the people and give thanks for the Word received. Ordinarily, such prayer should be by the one preaching the Word.

j. While public prayer must always be offered with deep humility and holy reverence and be free from vain repetition or display of words, it can be fitting at times for the entire congregation to pray vocally in unison. The form of prayer that our Lord Jesus taught his disciples, commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer,” is particularly appropriate for this use by the congregation. Great care should be taken, however, to guard against allowing this practice to become a mere formula or ritual.

k. It is fitting to encourage the congregation to join vocally in a corporate “amen” at the conclusion of a prayer.

## 2. Congregational Singing

a. Congregational singing is a duty and privilege to be practiced and cultivated in all the churches. Let every member of the church take part in this act of worship. God’s people should sing, not merely with the lips, but with understanding and with grace in their hearts, making melody to the Lord.

b. As public worship is for the praise and glory of God and the building up of the saints, not for the entertainment of the congregation nor the praise of man, the character of the songs used therein is to befit the nature of God and the purpose of worship.

c. Congregations do well to sing the metrical versions or other musical settings of the Psalms frequently in public worship. Congregations also do well to sing hymns of praise that respond to the full scope of divine revelation.

d. In the choice of song for public worship, great care must

be taken that all the materials of song are fully in accord with the Scriptures. The words are to be suitable for the worship of God and the tunes are to be appropriate to the meaning of the words and to the occasion of public worship. Care should be taken to the end that the songs chosen will express those specific truths and sentiments which are appropriate at the time of their use in the worship service.

e. Musical gifts are properly used in public worship to assist the congregation in its worship of God. They may not be used for the praise or applause of men. No person may take a special part in the musical service unless he is a professing Christian who adorns his profession with a godly walk, or who is a baptized covenant child whose conduct is appropriate to his status.

### 3. Public Confession of Faith

a. Individual believers are to publicly profess their faith in Christ before God and his people in order formally to pledge their commitment to serve Christ and to be welcomed into all the privileges of full communion with God's people.

b. It is also fitting that the congregation as one body confess its common faith, using creeds that are true to the Word of God, such as the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed.

### 4. The Bringing of Offerings

a. The bringing of offerings in the public assembly of God's people on the Lord's Day is a solemn act of worship to almighty God. The people of God are to set aside to him the firstfruits of their labors; in so doing, they should present themselves with thanksgiving as a living sacrifice to God. All should participate in this act of worship when God gives opportunity for it. Parents are to instruct and encourage their children by precept and example to give of their substance regularly, purposefully, generously, and joyfully to the Lord through his church.

b. It is the duty of the pastor, since he is to proclaim to the people the whole counsel of God, to cultivate biblical stewardship and the grace of liberal giving in the members of the church. He

should remind them of the admonition in Scripture that everyone is to give as the Lord has prospered him, of the assurance of Scripture that God loves a cheerful giver, and of the blessed example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, in order that poor sinners through his poverty might become rich.

c. The session shall take care that the offerings of the congregation are used only for biblical purposes, such as the maintenance of public worship, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, the ministry of mercy in Christ's name, and other Christian objects. The offering ordinarily should not be used to transmit funds to causes other than the ministries of the Church. If a member of the Church designates a gift to a particular cause, it shall be the responsibility of the session to determine, before the gift is accepted, if it is appropriate to support that cause through the Church or if the gift should be returned to the donor.

d. It is desirable that Christian love be demonstrated by offerings for the use of the deacons in the ministry of mercy on behalf of the church. It is appropriate that a special offering be received for this purpose following the Lord's Supper.

## **Chapter III**

### **The Administration of the Sacraments**

#### **A. General Provisions**

1. In order that the sacraments may be observed with discernment and profit, it is imperative that adequate preparation be made prior to their administration. Before observing the sacraments, God's people ought to meditate on the teaching of the Word of God concerning them, particularly as summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms. It is also advisable that from time to time the preaching include suitable instruction on the sacraments. Moreover, when the sacraments are being celebrated, the minister shall always accompany them by the preaching of the Word, and he shall take especial care in that preaching to proclaim Christ and his benefits, so that God's people can understand what the sacrament means. In connection with the administration of the sacraments, he shall set forth a summary of the teaching of the Word of God as to their institution, meaning, and nature.

2. The baptism of infants is not to be unduly delayed, but is to be administered as soon as practicable. The baptism of adults must await their public profession of faith in Christ.

3. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently, but the frequency may be determined by each session as it may judge most conducive to edification.

4. In the administration of the sacraments, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in this chapter, but, except in the case of the words of the baptismal formula, he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms (below), which are suggested as appropriate. He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom, as he deems best for the edification of the people.

## **B. Baptism**

### 1. The Baptism of Infants

#### a. Prerequisites

For a child to be presented for baptism, at least one parent must be a communicant member of the Church, in good standing, normally of the local congregation. In order to present a child for baptism, parents shall make prior arrangements with the session. Before presentation for baptism, the session shall ensure that instruction has been given to the parent(s) as to the nature, privileges, and responsibilities of baptism for the parents and the child. Only parents who are communicant members of the Church may be permitted to take parental vows. If the session shall judge it appropriate, a parent who is not a communicant member may stand with the spouse during the baptism. In such a circumstance, it shall be the duty of the minister to inform the congregation of the situation, including that the one parent is not a member of this congregation and is not taking the vows. In extraordinary circumstances, at the parents' request, the session may permit the baptism of a child of parents who are communicant members of another church which is approved by the session, on behalf of and with the written permission of the governing body of that church. In such a case, the session shall inform the other governing body, in writing, when the baptism has been administered.

#### b. The Administration of Baptism to Infants

##### (1) The Institution of the Sacrament

The minister ought to read the words of the institution of the sacrament of baptism from a passage such as Matthew 28:18–20.

##### (2) The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament

The minister shall first summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God and the Confession and Catechisms of this church as to the meaning and nature of the sac-

rament of baptism. In doing so, he may use these or like words:

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted baptism as a covenant sign and seal for his church. He uses it not only for the solemn admission of the person who is baptized into the visible church, but also to depict and to confirm his ingrafting of that person into himself and his including that person in the covenant of grace.

The Lord uses baptism to portray to us that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and need to be cleansed.

He uses it to witness and seal to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. The time of the outward application of the sign does not necessarily coincide with the inward work of the Holy Spirit which the sign represents and seals to us. Because these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In our baptism, the Lord puts his name on us, claims us as his own, and summons us to assume the obligations of the covenant. He calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

(3) Exhortation to the Members of the Congregation to Improve Their Baptism

Then the minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As solemn vows are about to be made before you, and baptism is now to be administered, you who are baptized will do well to take this occasion to reflect on your own baptism. Christ has put his name and claim on you. He calls you to be repentant for your sins against your covenant God, to confess your faith

before men, and to live in newness of life to God, who sealed his covenant with you by the blood of his own Son.

#### (4) The Ground of Baptizing Infants

The minister shall then give instruction as to the ground of the baptism of infants. He may use these or like words:

Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For God commands that all who are under his covenant of grace be given the sign of the covenant.

God made the promise of the covenant to believers and to their offspring. In the Old Testament, he declared to Abraham: “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee [you] and thy [your] seed after thee [you] in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee [you], and to thy [your] seed after thee [you]” (Gen. 17:7). For this reason, in the Old Testament, God commanded that covenant infants be given the sign of circumcision.

The covenant is the same in essence in both the Old and the New Testaments. Indeed, the grace of God for the consolation of believers is even more fully manifested in the New Testament. Thus, rather than rescinding the covenant promise to believers and to their offspring in the New Testament, God reaffirms it. He declares that “the promise is unto you, and to your children” (Acts 2:39). He promises, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt [you will] be saved, and thy [your] house” (Acts 16:31). He affirms that if even one parent is a believer, the children are “holy” (1 Cor. 7:14). Moreover, our Savior admitted little children into his presence, embracing and blessing them, and saying, “Of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

And so, in the New Testament no less than in the Old, the children of believers have an interest in the covenant and a right to the covenant sign and to the outward privileges of the covenant people, the church. In the New Testament, baptism has replaced circumcision as the covenant sign. Therefore, by the



covenant sign of baptism the children of believers are to be distinguished from the world and solemnly admitted into the visible church.

(5) The Covenant Commitment of the Parents

The minister shall then require the parents to vow publicly their duty as Christian parents to present their children for baptism and to nurture them in the Christian faith, by answering these or equivalent questions in the affirmative:

(1) Do you acknowledge that although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore are subject to condemnation, they are holy in Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace, and as children of the covenant are to be baptized?

(2) Do you promise to teach diligently to [name of child] the principles of our holy Christian faith, revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church?

(3) Do you promise to pray regularly with and for [name of child], and to set an example of piety and godliness before (him/her)?

(4) Do you promise to endeavor, by all the means that God has appointed, to bring [name of child] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, encouraging (him/her) to appropriate for (himself/herself) the blessings and fulfill the obligations of the covenant?

(6) Prayer

The minister shall then pray for the presence and blessing of the triune God, that the grace signified and sealed by baptism may be abundantly realized.

(7) The Baptism

Then, calling the child by name, the minister shall say, as he baptizes him with water, without adding any other ceremony:

[Name of child], I baptize you into the name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

(8) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation

It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation, in these or like words:

As [name] is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his visible church, the whole congregation is obligated to love (him/her) and receive (him/her) as a member of the body of Christ. For “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body,” and therefore are members of one another. Christ claims this little child as his own and calls you to receive (him/her) in love and commitment. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name of child] and (his/her) parents in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith.

(9) Charge

It is then fitting that the minister give a charge to the parents in the following or like words:

Beloved in Christ Jesus, we give thanks to God for this child that he has given you, and for your expressed desire for (him/her) to know the Lord and to follow him all (his/her) days. Along with the great blessing of the gift of this child have come responsibilities that you have just acknowledged and to which you have solemnly committed yourselves, and I charge you to continue steadfastly in the commitments that you have made today before God and these witnesses, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

(10) Prayer

The whole service of baptism shall then be concluded with prayer. It is well in such prayer to thank the Lord for his covenant of grace, rejoice that this child has been included, and to ask the Lord to graciously enable him to be a covenant keeper, daily

dying to sin and walking in newness of life in Christ.

## 2. The Baptism of Adults

### a. Prerequisites

An adult who seeks to be baptized shall make a public profession of his faith before the congregation prior to the baptism. He shall previously have received instruction in the Christian faith in accordance with the confessional standards of this Church, including instruction as to the meaning of baptism, and have also made before the session of the church a credible profession of faith in Christ according to the provisions of Chapter IV, Section A.3, of this Directory.

### b. The Administration of Baptism to Adults

#### (1) The Institution of the Sacrament

The minister ought to read the words of the institution of the sacrament of baptism from a passage such as Matthew 28:18–20.

#### (2) The Covenant Commitment of the One Receiving Baptism

At the time of the service at which the person is to be baptized, he shall first profess his faith publicly before the assembled congregation. The minister may address him in these or like words:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you, in that our Savior has sought and found you and through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace. We rejoice that in his grace he has brought you to this congregation and given you the desire to profess your faith before us and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.

To this end, the minister shall require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by answering these or equivalent

questions in the affirmative:

- (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
- (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?
- (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
- (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
- (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

If the session deems it appropriate, it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

After answers to the above questions in the affirmative, the minister shall proceed to the baptism.

### (3) The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament

The minister shall then summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God and the Confession and Catechisms of this church as to the meaning and nature of the sacrament of baptism. He may use these or like words:

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted baptism as a covenant sign and seal for his church. He uses it not only for the solemn admission of the person who is baptized into the visible church, but

also to depict and to confirm his ingrafting of that person into himself and his including that person in the covenant of grace.

The Lord uses baptism to portray to us that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and need to be cleansed.

He uses it to witness and seal to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Because these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In our baptism, the Lord puts his name on us, claims us as his own, and summons us to assume the obligations of the covenant. He calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

(4) Exhortation to the Members of the Congregation to Improve Their Baptism

Then the minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As solemn vows have been made before you, and baptism is now to be administered, you who are baptized will do well to take this occasion to reflect on your own baptism. Christ has put his name and claim on you. He calls you to be repentant for your sins against your covenant God, to confess your faith before men, and to live in newness of life to God, who sealed his covenant with you by the blood of his own Son.

(5) Prayer

Thereupon the minister shall pray for the presence and blessing of the triune God, that the grace signified and sealed by baptism may be abundantly realized.

## (6) The Baptism

Then, calling the person by name, he shall baptize him with water, without any other ceremony, saying:

[Name of person], I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

## (7) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation

It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As [name] is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his visible church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive (him/her). For “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body,” and therefore are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

## (8) Welcome and Charge

It is then fitting that the minister address the baptized person in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God’s people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the Holy Supper.

I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion

for ever and ever. Amen.

(9) Prayer

The whole service of baptism shall be concluded with prayer. It is well in such a prayer to thank the Lord for his covenant of grace, rejoice that this brother has been included, and to ask the Lord to graciously enable him to be a covenant keeper, daily dying to sin and walking in newness of life in Christ.

**C. The Lord's Supper**

1. The Institution of the Sacrament

The minister shall read the words of the institution and instruction of the Lord's Supper as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–29 or one of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, or Luke 22:14–20). In addition, he may read words of instruction from passages such as John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10.

2. The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament

The minister shall then summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God as to the meaning and nature of the sacrament in the following or like words:

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to be observed by his church until he comes again. It is not a resacrificing of Christ, but is a remembrance of the once-for-all sacrifice of himself in his death for our sins. Nor is it a mere memorial to Christ's sacrifice. It is a means of grace by which God feeds us with the crucified, resurrected, exalted Christ. He does so by his Holy Spirit and through faith. Thus he strengthens us in our warfare against sin and in our endeavors to serve him in holiness. The sacrament further signifies and seals the forgiveness of our sin and our nourishment and growth in Christ. The bread and wine represent the crucified body and the shed blood of the Savior, which he gave for his people. In this sacrament,

God confirms that he is faithful and true to fulfill the promises of his covenant, and he calls us to deeper gratitude for our salvation, to renewed consecration, and to more faithful obedience. The Supper is also a bond and pledge of the communion that believers have with him and with each other as members of his body. As Scripture says, “For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). The Supper anticipates the consummation of the ages, when Christ returns to gather all his redeemed people at the glorious wedding feast of the Lamb. As we come to the Lord’s Table, we humbly resolve to deny ourselves, to crucify the sin that is within us, to resist the devil, and to follow Christ as becomes those who bear his name.

### 3. Invitation and Fencing the Table

The minister shall then declare who may come to, and who are excluded from, the Lord’s Table according to the Word of God. He may use the following or like words:

It is my privilege as a minister of Christ to invite all who are right with God and his church, through faith in the Lord Jesus, to come to the Lord’s Table. If you have received Christ and are resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to you in the gospel, if you are a baptized and professing communicant member in good standing in a church that professes the gospel of God’s free grace in Jesus Christ, and if you live penitently and seek to walk in godliness before the Lord, then this Supper is for you, and I invite you in Christ’s name to eat the bread and drink the cup.

At the same time, God’s Word says, “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth [eats] and drinketh [drinks] unworthily, eateth [eats] and drinketh [drinks] damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:27–29). If you are not trusting in



Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you are not a member of a faithful Christian church, if you are not living penitently and seeking to walk in godliness before the Lord, then I warn you in the name of Christ not to approach the Holy Table of the Lord.

This warning is not aimed to keep the humble and contrite from the Table of the Lord, as if it were for those who were free from sin. In fact, it is for sinners that our Lord gives this Supper as a means of grace. Through the elements of bread and wine, our Lord graciously gives himself and all his benefits to everyone who eats and drinks in a worthy manner, discerning the body of the Lord. It is one thing to eat and drink in a worthy manner. It is very different, however, to imagine that we are worthy to eat and drink. We dare not come to the Lord's Table as if we were worthy and righteous in ourselves. We come in a worthy manner if we recognize that we are unworthy sinners who need our Savior, if we consciously discern his body given for our sins, if we hunger and thirst after Christ, giving thanks for his grace, trusting in his merits, feeding on him by faith, renewing our covenant with him and his people.

Let us examine our minds and hearts to determine whether such discernment is ours, to the end that we may partake to the glory of God and to our growth in the grace of Christ. Come then with joy and thankfulness to the Lord's Table. The Lord's Supper is medicine for poor, sick souls. Come to Jesus and find rest, refreshing, and nourishment for your weak and weary soul.

#### 4. Exhortation

If desired, the minister may exhort the people of God, in the following or other words, to embrace in the sign the thing that is signified:

Beloved congregation, lift up your hearts from these visible elements even to heaven itself, where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, from where we look for him to return and perfect our redemption. All the promises of God are yes and amen in him. Every spiritual blessing is found in him. With joyful

hearts, in Christian love, partake of his Table, giving thanks for the great love that he has shown to us.

### 5. Prayer

The distribution of the elements shall be preceded by prayer. It is well in such prayer to praise God for his mighty power and grace in bringing salvation; confess our unworthiness to come to the Table because of our own utter lack of righteousness; reaffirm our trust in God's grace and in Christ's righteousness and mediation; plead for the Lord to grant the gracious, effectual working of his Spirit in us; thank God for the elements, request him to use them for their intended purpose; and ask him to grant that by faith his people may feed upon Jesus Christ, crucified and raised for them, so that, being strengthened by grace, they might live in him and for him.

### 6. Partaking of the Elements

After prayer and thanksgiving, the minister shall take the bread, saying in the following or like words:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, as I, ministering in his name, give this bread to you.

The minister shall then break the bread and give it to the people. The bread may be eaten either upon reception of it, or in unison when all have been served, as the session may judge most conducive to edification. The minister may continue, before the bread is eaten, saying:

Our Lord Jesus said, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me."

Having given the bread, the minister shall take the cup and give it to the people, saying in the following or like words:

In the same manner, our Savior also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been done in his name, he gave it to his dis-

ciples, as I ministering in his name give this cup to you.

The minister shall then give the cup, as in the distribution of the bread. The minister may continue, before the cup is drunk, saying:

Our Lord Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; drink of it, all of you.”

### 7. Response of Thanksgiving and Commitment

When all have partaken, prayer should be offered. It is well in such prayer to give thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through whom we have the forgiveness of sins; recommit God’s people to Christ and to each other; present them as a living sacrifice to God; and plead that the Holy Spirit will make the sacrament effectual to the edifying and strengthening of God’s people.

It is well that the congregation respond by singing a psalm or hymn that focuses on the benefits of Christ’s death and the triumph of the gospel, bringing forth gratitude and joy and renewed commitment of the believer to his Lord, and that an offering be taken for the relief of the poor or for some other sacred purpose.

### 8. Blessing

The following benediction is particularly appropriate when the Lord’s Supper has been celebrated:

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

## IV

### Public Reception of Church Members

#### A. General Provisions

1. Only those may be admitted to full communion in the church who have been baptized and have made public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

2. In order to aid those who contemplate making public profession or reaffirmation of faith in Christ to understand the implication of this significant act and to perform it meaningfully, the pastor or someone approved by the session shall conduct classes in Christian doctrine and life, both for the covenant youth and for any others who may manifest an interest in the way of salvation.

3. Before permitting anyone to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall announce his name to the congregation on a prior Lord's Day in order that the members of the church may have opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a credible profession. In order for the session to assure itself so far as possible that the candidate makes a credible profession, it shall examine him to ascertain that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.

4. In the public reception of church members, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in this chapter, but he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms (below), which are suggested as appropriate. He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom as he deems best for the edification of the people.

5. The session shall always take special care to preserve the full meaning of membership vows. If the session modifies the vows, it shall record those vows and its rationale in its minutes and report it to the next stated meeting of the presbytery.

6. Unbaptized covenant children whose parent(s) are communicant members of the congregation may be received only by baptism.

7. Baptized children ordinarily shall be received as noncommunicant members when their parents are received as communicant members.

8. Noncommunicant members of the congregation may be received into communicant membership only by confession of faith.

9. The following provisions are designed to assist ministers and sessions to receive members in accordance with the Book of Discipline, Chapter II, Section B.2, which provisions should always be followed.

### **B. Reception into Full Communion of Noncommunicant Members by Profession of Faith**

1. When a noncommunicant member is received into full communion, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, it is highly advisable that the minister remind the people that he is already a member of the church, albeit a noncommunicant member, and has been receiving the blessings of Christ as a member of the church, and that those blessings have resulted in this day wherein, having given evidence of conscious saving faith in Christ, he is now about to confess that faith and become a communicant member of the congregation. The minister may then address him in these or like words:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you, in that you have accepted God's covenant

promise that was signified and sealed unto you in your infancy by holy baptism. We ask you now to profess your faith publicly.

2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or equivalent questions:

(1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

(2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

(3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

If the session deems it appropriate, it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

From the time [name] was baptized, the whole congregation has been obligated to love and receive (him/her) as a member of the church. As (he/she) is received into full communion, the

congregation is reminded of these obligations. For in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to receive (him/her) in love and commitment. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the following or similar words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the Holy Supper.

I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

### **C. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another Orthodox Presbyterian congregation, that reception is effective at the time of the action of the session to receive him. Nevertheless, a session may deem it appropriate to welcome that person publicly into the congregation and allow him to give public expression to his faith. If this is done, it shall be made clear to the

congregation that the person has already been received by action of the session. Nevertheless, the minister may address him in appropriate words similar to those found below in Section D.4.

### **D. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Church of Like Faith and Practice**

1. When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice approved by the session, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in these or like words:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you, in that you have accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We praise him that he brought you into communicant membership in a church of like faith and practice with this congregation. We rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has now brought you here and given you a desire to unite with us, and that your former church has committed you to our fellowship and oversight. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.

2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or equivalent questions:

(1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

(2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

(3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and



humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

If the session deems it appropriate, it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

3. The minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with this congregation of God's people.

I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

### **E. Reception by Reaffirmation of Faith**

1. When a person is received into membership by reaffirmation of faith, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in these or like words:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you, in that you have accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has brought you into this congregation and given you a desire to reaffirm the faith that you have previously professed, and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.

2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or equivalent questions:

(1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

(2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

(3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and

humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

If the session deems it appropriate, it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with this congregation of God's people.

I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

### **F. Reception of New Members by Public Profession of Faith**

1. When an unbaptized person is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith and baptism. He shall be received in accord with Chapter III, Section B.2, of this Directory. When a previously baptized person who is not a member of the congregation and has not previously made a confession of his faith is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in these or like words:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you, in that our Savior has sought and found you and through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace. We rejoice that in his grace he has brought you to this congregation and given you the desire to profess your faith before us and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.

2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or equivalent questions:

(1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

(2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

(3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

If the session deems it appropriate, it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore, you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the Holy Supper.

I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

## **Chapter V**

### **Special Occasions of Public Worship**

Under the gospel, we are commanded to keep no other particular day holy, except the Lord's Day. Nevertheless, God's people may observe special occasions as the dispensations of God's providence administer cause and opportunity. Such observance is both consonant with Scripture and pastorally appropriate.

#### **A. Prayer and Fasting**

1. When great and notable calamities come upon or threaten the church, community, or nation, when judgment is deserved because of sin, when the people seek some special blessing from the Lord, or when a pastor is to be ordained or installed (Form of Government, Chapter XXIII, Section 7), it is fitting that the people of God engage in times of solemn prayer and fasting.

2. Prayer and fasting may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the Church at the discretion of the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of prayer and fasting that the judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to their members.

3. Public notice is to be given before the time of prayer and fasting comes, to enable persons to order their temporal affairs so that they can participate.

4. It is especially appropriate on days of prayer and fasting called by the Church that the people of God gather for a time of prayer, the singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. Let them lament their distress or unworthiness before the Lord, confess their sins, humbly implore the Lord for deliverance from the judgment present or imminent or for the blessing

sought, and commit themselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord their God. It is fitting on such days that God's people abstain from food and from such activities as may distract from their solemn engagement in prayer.

## **B. Thanksgiving**

1. When God's blessings on the church, community, or nation are particularly evident, it is fitting that the people of God engage in special times of thanksgiving.

2. Special times of thanksgiving may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the Church as called by the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of thanksgiving that the judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to their members.

3. Public notice is to be given before the day of thanksgiving comes, to enable persons to order their temporal affairs so that they can participate.

4. It is especially appropriate on special days of thanksgiving called by the Church that the people of God gather for prayer, testimony to God's blessings, joyful singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. Let them give thanks to God for his goodness to his people and especially for the greatness of his mercies to them in Christ. And let them commit themselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord their God in gratitude for his blessings. It is fitting on such days that God's people spend the day in expressions of Christian love and charity toward one another, rejoicing more and more in the Lord, as becomes those who make the joy of the Lord their strength. Also, they may feast together before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.



# SUGGESTED FORMS

FOR USE IN CONNECTION WITH

## THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

### I

#### CHARGE AND SPECIFICATIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the trial judicatory] of  
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church charges \_\_\_\_\_ with  
\_\_\_\_\_ [here name the alleged offense]: \_\_\_\_\_ [here  
give references to applicable portions of the Word of God, and,  
where pertinent, to relevant provisions of the constitution].

Specifications: That on or about \_\_\_\_\_ the said \_\_\_\_\_ did  
\_\_\_\_\_ [here set forth briefly the place and circumstances of the  
alleged offense].

Witnesses and/or Documents: \_\_\_\_\_ [here set forth the  
names of witnesses and/or the titles of documents to be produced  
in support of the charge and specifications].

\_\_\_\_\_ [Moderator]

\_\_\_\_\_ [Clerk]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**II**

**CITATION OF ACCUSED**

To \_\_\_\_\_:

You are hereby cited to appear before \_\_\_\_\_, meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock at \_\_\_\_\_, then and there to hear and receive certain charges and specifications which have been preferred against you by \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the trial judicatory] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

[In the case of a second citation, add the appropriate warning prescribed by Chapter IV, Section A.1.e, of the Book of Discipline.]

By order of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the trial judicatory] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

\_\_\_\_\_ [Moderator]

\_\_\_\_\_ [Clerk]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**III**

**CITATION OF WITNESS**

To \_\_\_\_\_:

You are hereby cited to appear before \_\_\_\_\_, meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock, at \_\_\_\_\_, then and there to give evidence in the trial of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the name of the accused].

[In the case of a second citation of a witness who has failed to appear after a first citation, add the warning prescribed in Chapter IV, Section A.4.e, of the Book of Discipline.]

By order of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the trial judicatory] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

\_\_\_\_\_ [Moderator]

\_\_\_\_\_ [Clerk]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV**

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL  
(in Judicial Cases)**

To \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk [or Moderator] of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the judicatory from which the appeal is to be taken] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

And now, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_, comes \_\_\_\_\_ and gives notice of intention to appeal to \_\_\_\_\_ from the judgment of \_\_\_\_\_ in the case of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the name of the accused].

\_\_\_\_\_, Appellant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**V**

**APPEAL**  
**(in Judicial Cases)**

To \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk [or Moderator] of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the judicatory to which the appeal is taken] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

And now, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_, comes \_\_\_\_\_ and appeals from the judgment of \_\_\_\_\_ in the case of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the name of the accused], and in support of said appeal sets forth the following specifications of error:

\_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the judicatory from which the appeal is taken] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church erred in \_\_\_\_\_ [here state concisely the error alleged to have been made].

[Additional specifications of error may be filed.]

\_\_\_\_\_, Appellant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VI**

**COMPLAINT**

To \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk [or Moderator] of \_\_\_\_\_ [here insert the title of the judicatory to which the complaint is taken] of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

And now, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_, comes \_\_\_\_\_ and complains against the action [or delinquency] of \_\_\_\_\_ in connection with \_\_\_\_\_ [here state briefly the matter of which complaint is made].

In bringing this complaint I affirm that I believe that the session [or presbytery] has erred [or has been delinquent] and that this error [or delinquency] is serious; that I have tried to understand the session's [or presbytery's] point of view; that I have seriously examined, in prayer before the Lord, my willingness to be in subjection to my brothers in Christ; and that I have made a serious effort to correct the error [or delinquency] short of entering a complaint.

In support of this complaint I set forth the following grounds: [Here set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs the grounds of fact, circumstance and law in support of the complaint.]

\_\_\_\_\_, Complainant  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VII**

**APPEAL**  
**(in Administrative Cases)**

To \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk of \_\_\_\_\_:

And now, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_, comes \_\_\_\_\_ and appeals from the decision of the \_\_\_\_\_ on the enclosed complaint of \_\_\_\_\_ against actions of the \_\_\_\_\_, in order to bring that complaint to \_\_\_\_\_ for adjudication.  
\_\_\_\_\_, Appellant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## VIII

### THE PUBLIC IMPOSITION AND REMOVAL OF CENSURES

(This document was prepared for the use of sessions of local congregations. Presbyteries using it shall make appropriate adaptations.)

#### A. The Manner of Imposing Censure

The power which the exalted Christ gives the rulers of his church is for edification, not destruction. Therefore, when a member is found guilty of a fault deserving censure, the session shall proceed with all tenderness and in the spirit of meekness, each considering himself lest he also be tempted, with the hope of reclaiming or gaining the offender. They should impose censure with great solemnity, so that all might fear, so that it may be a means of impressing the offender's heart with a proper sense of his sin, and so that by God's gracious blessing it may lead him to repentance. They should do all this in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

#### B. Indefinite Suspension

1. When the judicatory has passed sentence, indefinitely suspending an officer or a member of the church from privileges, it is fitting that when the sentence is announced, it be in a gathering of the congregation.

2. The one making the announcement may begin by setting forth the teaching of Scripture concerning God's fatherly discipline (cf. Heb. 12:7–11), the church as God's instrument in discipline (cf. Matt. 18:17ff.), and the obligation upon the church to fulfill this role (1 Cor. 5:1–13).

3. He may then announce the censure using the following or similar words:



Whereas [name] has been found guilty by (his/her) own confession, or by sufficient proof (as the case may be), of the sin of [here name the particular offence], we have suspended (him/her) from the privileges of church membership [and/or, as appropriate, the privileges of his office], until (he/she) gives satisfactory evidence of repentance.

4. To this the judicatory shall add such advice, admonition, or rebuke, as it may judge necessary; and it shall conclude the whole with prayer to almighty God, that he would accompany this act of discipline with his blessing.

5. The indefinite suspension of an officer or other member of the church shall be announced to the church in which membership or office is held.

6. After a person has been thus suspended, the minister and elders should frequently converse with him, as well as pray for him in private, that it would please God to grant him repentance. And, especially in connection with celebrating the Lord's Supper, they should offer up public prayers for any who have shut themselves out from this holy communion.

7. When the judicatory is satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of any such suspended member, it shall permit him to profess his repentance, and restore him to fellowship (and/or, as appropriate, the privileges of office) in the presence of the church.

8. If a suspended person fails to manifest repentance for his offence, and continues in impenitence, it may become the duty of the judicatory to excommunicate (and/or, as appropriate, depose him from office) without further trial.

### **C. Excommunication and Deposition**

1. When the judicatory has passed sentence imposing excommu-

nication, with or without previous suspension, it is fitting that when the sentence is announced, it be in a gathering of the congregation.

2. The minister should then make a brief statement of the several steps which have been taken, with respect to the offender, announcing that the session has found it necessary to excommunicate him. He should begin by showing from Scripture (for example, Matthew 18:15–18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1–5) the power of the church to cast out unfaithful members. He should briefly explain the nature, use, and consequences of excommunication.

3. He shall then announce the censure. He may use the following or similar words:

Whereas [name] has by (his/her) own confession, or by sufficient proof (as the case may be), been found guilty of [here name the particular offence], and after much admonition and prayer refuses to hear the church and manifests no evidence of repentance; therefore, in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, (he/she) has been excluded from the communion of the church.

4. He may instruct and warn the congregation in the following or similar words:

Beloved congregation, [name] may no longer use the sacraments. (He/she) has no part any more in the spiritual blessings and benefits which Christ bestows upon his church. As long as (he/she) persists in sin, let (him/her) be to you as an unbeliever. We exhort you, beloved Christians, do not wash your hands of (him/her). On the contrary, pray for (him/her) with lamentation. Try to evangelize and warn (him/her) as you would a lost sheep. But do not associate with (him/her) as a fellow believer, that (he/she) may be ashamed and be brought to repentance. This excommunication, beloved, is a warning for us all. Let us fear the Lord and be cautious, for he who thinks he stands must take heed lest he fall. Continue in the true fellowship with the Fa-

ther and his Son Jesus Christ, and also with all faithful believers, so that we may obtain eternal salvation. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

5. He should then lead the congregation in prayer for the conviction and reclaiming or gaining of the excommunicated person, and for the establishment of all true believers.

6. When an officer is to be deposed, these provisions should be appropriately modified.

#### **D. Readmission of an Excommunicated Person**

1. When an excommunicated person is so affected by his state that he is brought to repentance and desires to be readmitted to the privileges of the church, the session of the church which excommunicated him, being satisfied of the evidence of his repentance and contrition, shall proceed to readmit him. It is fitting that the sentence of restoration be openly pronounced by the minister in a service of public worship on the Lord's Day.

2. It is well that the elders stand with the minister before the congregation.

3. The minister may address the congregation in the following or similar words:

[Name] was excluded from the communion of the church, but (he/she) has now given satisfactory evidence of repentance to the session. Therefore, in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we declare (him/her) absolved from the sentence of excommunication, and we do restore (him/her) to the communion of the church, that (he/she) may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus, to (his/her) eternal salvation.

4. The minister may then address the restored believer in these or similar words:

Beloved (brother/sister), be assured in your heart that the Lord himself has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtleties of Satan, the wickedness of the world, and the folly of the flesh, lest you again become entangled in sin. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit again. I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession which you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

5. The minister may then address the congregation in these or similar words:

Beloved Christians, receive this (brother/sister) in love. Rejoice and be thankful, for this (brother/sister) was dead and is alive. (He/she) was lost and is found. Rejoice with the angels, for our Lord Jesus said, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). Do not look on (him/her) any longer as a stranger, but as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God.

6. The congregation should then be led in prayer. It is well in such prayer to thank and praise God for granting repentance and restoration to the one who has been restored; and to pray that he may grow in assurance and joy; that he may walk faithfully, and that just as he has previously caused grief, so now may he be the cause of great joy and edification; that God may graciously enable us to forgive and receive; and that he would enable us all to persevere in faith, hope, and love.

### **E. Other Censures**

Censures other than indefinite suspension from church privileges, or deposition, or excommunication, shall be imposed in such manner as the judicatory may direct.

# **SUGGESTED FORMS**

**FOR**

## **PARTICULAR SERVICES**

### **I**

#### **THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE**

##### **A. Guiding Principles**

1. Marriage is an institution ordained by God for the honor and happiness of mankind, in which one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union, so long as both shall live. It is not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity prohibited by the Word of God.

2. Christians are to marry only in the Lord. Therefore, although it is not required, it is fitting that their marriage be solemnized by a minister of the Word in order that special instruction may be given to them and suitable prayers made, when they enter into this union. It is also well that, prior to the marriage, the minister give Christian counsel to those entering this estate. Ministers are admonished to emphasize the need of spiritual and confessional compatibility in marriage. When husband and wife differ on the essentials of the faith, their lack of harmony endangers the covenant nurture of their children and the unity of a truly Christian home.

3. Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the honor of the church are deeply intertwined with it. Therefore, the intent to marry should be sufficiently

published previous to its solemnization. It is well that announcement of a planned wedding be made in the church of each of the two parties in each of the three weeks prior to the wedding. All ministers should take care in this matter to transgress neither the laws of God nor the laws of the state. In order that the peace and comfort of families will not be endangered and that no just objection may exist against their marriage, the parties applying should be properly certified to the minister. Moreover, the solemnization of marriage must always be performed before at least two or three witnesses.

4. Marriage is not a sacrament; nor is it peculiar to the church of Christ. For this reason, marriage ought not to be solemnized during the Lord's Day assembly for public worship, and it is best that it not be solemnized on the Lord's Day.

5. It is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey, if not contrary to Scripture.

## **B. Suggested Form for a Wedding Service**

The following service is designed for those who are professing members, in good standing, of a faithful Christian church.

*At the time and place appointed for the solemnization of marriage, the persons to be married shall take their place before the minister in the following or similar manner, the bridegroom having the bride to his left. The company may be requested to stand or be seated during the ceremony as may seem best in the circumstances.*

### 1. Declaration of Purpose

*The minister shall state the purpose of the service. He may use the following or similar words:*

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God and these witnesses to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony.

God himself instituted marriage at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world. He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and brought her to the man. Our Lord Jesus Christ honored marriage by his presence and first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And he confirmed it as a divine ordinance and as a union not to be severed when he declared, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh'? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Moreover, the Holy Spirit sets forth the sacred and exalted nature of marriage when he likens it to the mystical union that exists between Christ and his redeemed bride, the church, saying, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Accordingly, God has designed marriage for the enrichment of the lives of those who enter into this estate, for the orderly propagation of the human race, for the generation of a holy seed, and for the avoidance of sexual immorality, all to the glory of the covenant God.

Husbands and wives thus have responsibilities befitting God's purposes for their relationship. The Holy Scripture says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for [her]." The husband is to love his wife as his own body, to care for her, and to cherish her. The Holy Scripture says also, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." The wife is to submit to her husband, to respect him, and to entrust herself to his loving care. Both husbands and wives are to be faithful to each other, to assist each other in all good things,

to heartily forgive each other their sins and shortcomings, and to love each other as themselves. Thus united in love, they will more and more reflect in their marriage the unity of Christ and his church.

Into this holy estate these two persons, M— and N—, come now to be joined.

## 2. Public Determination of Lawfulness

*The minister may say:*

If anyone can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, let him now declare it, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

*If there is no objection, the minister may proceed, saying:*

I require and charge you both that, if either of you knows any cause why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it.

## 3. Public Declaration of Consent

*Then, if no obstacle appears, the minister shall say to the man:*

[Man's first name], will you have this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love her as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, will you comfort her, honor and cherish her, and forsaking all others keep yourself only unto her as long as you both shall live?

*The man shall answer:*

I will.

*Then the minister shall say to the woman:*

[Woman's first name], will you have this man to be your lawfully wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love him, comfort him,



respect and submit to him even as the church submits to Christ, and forsaking all others keep yourself only unto him as long as you both shall live?

*The woman shall answer:*

I will.

#### 4. Public Transfer of Authority

*Then the minister may say:*

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

*The father of the woman (or someone in his stead) may say,*

I do.

*Her father (or someone in his stead) shall place her right hand in the hand of the bridegroom, and be seated.*

#### 5. Invocation

*The minister may pray, in these or like words:*

Most holy and most merciful Father, at once the God of nature and of grace, Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of mankind, fountain of life, of love, and of joy and peace, whose presence is the happiness of every condition; we beseech you to be present and favorable to these, your servants, and to fill them with a sense of the solemnity of the vows they are about to make. Enable them, we pray, to remember and to keep these vows, looking to you for your assistance, and help them to enter into these sacred obligations in humble dependence upon your enabling grace. Grant this, O Father, with the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

#### 6. Homily

*At this time it is fitting for the minister to give a brief message from the Word of God appropriate to the occasion.*

## 7. Exchange of Vows

*Then the bridegroom shall say (after the minister, if desired):*

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

*The bride shall say (after the minister, if desired):*

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

## 8. Exchange of Rings (if desired)

*The minister may ask the bridegroom:*

What symbol do you give as a pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows?

*The bridegroom shall put a ring on the bride's left hand and say (after the minister, if desired):*

This ring I give you as a token and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

*If this is a double-ring ceremony, the minister may then ask the bride:*

What symbol do you give as a pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows?

*The bride shall put a ring on the bridegroom's left hand and say (after the minister, if desired):*

This ring I give you as a token and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

## 9. Prayer

*The minister may pray in these or like words:*

Most merciful and gracious God, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, we beseech you, set the seal of your approval upon the marriage into which our brother and sister have entered this day. Grant them your fatherly blessing. Work in them the grace of your Holy Spirit. Enable them to fulfill with pure and constant affection the vow and covenant made between them. Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace, that, loving and serving you with one mind and heart all the days of their life, they may be abundantly enriched with the tokens of your everlasting favor in Christ Jesus our Lord. In all of life's experiences, lift up your countenance upon them, that they may be thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity. May their marriage be fruitful for this life and for the life to come. Grant them wisdom and strength to build a home that will be to the glory of your name and the coming of your kingdom. May they live together many years, and in the hour of death may they part in the blessed hope of celebrating forever with all the saints of God the marriage of Christ and the church he loved. Hear our prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## 10. Declaration

*The minister shall say:*

By virtue of the authority committed unto me as a minister of the church of Jesus Christ, I now pronounce you husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of the State, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*Then joining their hands, he shall pronounce:*

What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

11. Kiss

*The minister may say:*

You may now seal your commitment with a kiss.

*The husband and wife may exchange a discreet kiss.*

12. Blessing

*The minister may say:*

The Lord our God fill you with his grace, and grant that you may long live together in all godliness and holiness. Amen.

13. Presentation

*The minister may then conclude the service, saying:*

It now gives me great pleasure to present to you, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. [name].

## II

### THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

#### A. Guiding Principles

1. For the sake of convenience and pastoral care, a funeral service may be held at a time other than that of burial.

2. Circumstances attending specific cases differ so entirely that ministers must use their own discretion as to what mode of conducting this service will most promote the honor of God and the edification of the people. It should be observed that the Scriptures and the prayers in the following service have been arranged with the burial of believers or their children primarily in mind. When other persons are to be buried, the service should be modified accordingly. The following principles, however, should be followed as general rules:

a. Care should be taken that it be evident that the ultimate goal of the service is to exalt God, not to exalt man. Personal reference may have some place, but the entire service should emphasize the reading of Scripture and acts of direct worship.

b. The minister should never declare the deceased to have died finally impenitent. God alone is the Judge. The inference in many cases, suggested by the facts, will be plain and terrible enough.

c. The minister should always be careful not to imply, by use of Scriptures or otherwise, the salvation of persons whose lives and deaths have possessed no grounds for such a hope.

d. The minister ought always to point the living to the grace of God in Christ Jesus as their sole ground of confidence.

3. From the reference to the minister in this service it is not to be inferred that only a minister may officiate. However, it would be well if a minister of the Word, normally the deceased person's pastor, were to do so.

## **B. Suggested Form for the Burial of the Dead**

### **1. The Funeral Service**

#### a. Opening Scripture Sentences

*When the people have assembled, the minister may begin the service with several of these or other appropriate sentences from the Holy Scriptures:*

“Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” *Ps. 124:8*

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” *Ps. 103:13–14*

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” *Ps. 116:15*

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” *Rom. 14:7–9*

“To live is Christ, and to die is gain ... to depart, and to be with Christ ... is far better.” *Phil. 1:21, 23*

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” *1 Tim. 6:7*

“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” *Job 1:21*

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” *Job 19:25–27*

“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” *John 11:25–26*

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” *2 Cor. 1:3–4*

b. Prayer

*Then the minister may lead the people in the following, or a similar, prayer, and ending, if desired, with the Lord’s Prayer:*

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in you. We come to you in the name of your only begotten and well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Grant us, we beseech you, through his precious blood, peace and pardon, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And seeing that we have in him an high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, may we come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in this time of our need.

We thank you for the precious promises of your Word. We praise you for the light of the gospel. We acknowledge your sovereign will and your infinite compassion. Be pleased, therefore, to look upon our sorrow, and for the sake of your dear Son to grant us the consolation of your Holy Spirit. And we pray that you will enable us to hear your holy Word, so that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. Grant to us, too, that we may hold fast our confidence in your forgiving mercy and the blessed assurance of eternal life. We ask these blessings of you, our Father, through him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, who rose from the dead, and who is exalted at your right hand, even Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

c. Psalm or Hymn

*A psalm or hymn may then be read by the minister or sung by the people.*

d. Scripture Reading from the Psalms

*Then the minister may read one or more of the following or other appropriate psalms:*

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” *Ps. 23*

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.” *Ps. 27:1–5*

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy



sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." *Ps. 90*

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." *Ps. 103:13-18*

Psalm 39:4-13 and Psalm 130 may also be found appropriate.

e. Scripture Reading Presenting the Gospel Message of Salvation

*The minister may then wish to address those assembled in these or other appropriate words:*

Hear now the promises of the gospel given to those who are found to be in Christ Jesus.

*Then let the minister read one or more of these, or similar, passages presenting the gospel message of salvation by God's grace in Christ:*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” *John 3:16–17*

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.” *John 10:9–11, 27–30*

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man

some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” *Rom. 5:1–11*

Romans 8:1–11 may also be found appropriate.

#### f. Scripture Reading Addressing Particular Needs

*Then, if it is deemed fitting, the minister may read one or more Scripture passages addressed to particular needs.*

*Selections relating to the death of covenant children:*

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” *Gen. 17:7*

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” *Acts 2:39*

“Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.” *Jer. 31:15*

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” *Mark 10:13–16*

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” *Matt. 18:10*

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” *Matt. 18:14*

“While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” *Mark 5:35–39*

“Jesus ... said ... Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” *Mark 10:14–16*

“And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then

David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." *2 Sam. 12:15–23*

"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." *Job 1:21*

*Selections relating to the sudden death of youth or middle-aged persons:*

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." *1 Pet. 1:24*

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." *Prov. 27:1*

"For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." *James 4:14*

"[Man] knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." *Eccl. 8:7–8*

"One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.... And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." *Job 21:23–26*

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.... For ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” *Mark 13:33–37*

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” *Luke 12:35–36*

*Selections applying to the death of the elderly:*

“We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” *Ps. 90:9–10*

“And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.” *Gen. 47:9*

“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” *Prov. 16:31*

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” *Ps. 92:12–15*

*Selections concerning a notably useful and fruitful Christian life:*

“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” *Prov. 4:18*

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remem-

brance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." *Mal. 3:16-18*

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." *Heb. 10:23-25*

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." *Matt. 25:34-40*

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." *Dan. 12:3*

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." *James 5:19-20*

## g. Psalm or Hymn

*Then another psalm or hymn may be read or sung.*

## h. Scripture Reading Concerning the Resurrection and the Life Everlasting

*Then let the minister read one or more of these or other appropriate Scripture passages giving the gospel promise of the resurrection and the life everlasting:*

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.... But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of



the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”  
*1 Cor. 15:20–28, 35–58*

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.... If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he

shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.... These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." *John 14:1-3, 15-20, 25-27*

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." *1 Pet. 1:3-9*

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Be-

hold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." *Rev. 21:1-4, 22-27*

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." *Rev. 22:1-7*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; and Revelation 7:13-17 may also be found appropriate.

i. Sermon

*If it is desired, an address may be given here. It is appropriate that it be brief, and it should direct the hearers to the grace of God in Christ.*

j. Psalm or Hymn

*Then another psalm or hymn may be read or sung.*

k. Prayer

*Then the minister may lead the people in this, or other, prayer:*

Almighty and most merciful God, we come again to you in prayer, acknowledging your sovereign power, and right as our Creator, both to give and to take away as seems good unto you. We remember all your mercies, and your saving grace revealed to us in Christ, your Son, our Redeemer. We thank you for your favor shown to our beloved friend in bringing (him/her) to a knowledge of your redeeming love, granting (him/her) faith in Christ, the Savior.

We humbly pray for your bereaved servants that you will give to them meek and trustful submission to your will. May they have divine comfort through joy in the presence of our risen Christ and the enlightenment of your Holy Spirit. We pray that you will fill their sorrowing hearts with your love, that they may wholly rest in you to bring eternal joy out of grief, and life from death, through the power of your resurrected Son, who now sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us.

We pray that you will grant grace to us who remain, to imitate the righteous dead in faith and in loving service. Give us, we pray, perseverance to continue faithful to the end, following Christ our Lord, so that we may finally be received unto heaven through his sacrifice for us and in our place, and, with all your elect, adore you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

## 2. The Interment

### a. Scripture Sentences

*At the place of burial, if it seems desirable, let the minister say:*

“I am the resurrection, and the life,” saith the Lord; “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” *John 11:25–26*

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” *2 Cor. 5:1*

### b. Committal

*Then, if it seems desirable, earth or flowers may be scattered upon the casket, while the minister may say:*

Forasmuch as it hath pleased almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of this world the soul of our (brother/sister), we therefore commit (his/her) body to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose coming in glorious majesty the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the mortal bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

### c. Affirmation

*Then the minister may say:*

“I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” *Rev. 14:13*

*Or, if the spiritual condition of the deceased is uncertain, he may use the following or other Scripture passages:*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” *John 3:16*

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”  
*John 5:24*

d. Prayer

*Then the minister shall offer the following, or a similar prayer:*

O almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, grant that we may realize the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that we may live before you in godly fear all our days, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

We humbly beseech you to comfort the sorrowing, and to support them in their grief. Raise us up each one, we pray you, from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, so that we too, when we depart this life, may rest in Christ, and at the resurrection be found acceptable in your sight, through the mediation and merits of him who died on the cross and rose again. Amen.

*As soon as the service comes to an end, the minister should move to speak a personal word of comfort to the bereaved, after which the others who have gathered will be free to do so.*

### III

## THANKSGIVING FOR A CHURCH BUILDING

### A. Guiding Principles

1. Under the gospel, the worship of God is no longer localized in a holy site on this earth. The living God is rather worshiped in spirit and in truth in the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ the Mediator is. It may nevertheless be expedient to set aside a place for worship assemblies and the service of God's people. When God provides such a place, it is fitting for a congregation corporately to thank him, to ask his special blessing on its use, and to commit itself to using the place for his glory, especially for the advancement of the gospel.

2. Such thanksgiving may be given a special occasional service on the Lord's Day or another suitable time.

### B. A Service of Thanksgiving for a Church Building

The session may design an appropriate service of thanksgiving for a church building, which may include elements of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. The following may be incorporated into the service, along with other elements of worship, as deemed appropriate.

It is fitting that psalms or hymns be sung throughout the service, that a sermon suited to the occasion be preached, and that an offering be received.

*As part of the praise, prayer, and thanksgiving, the minister may say:*

Beloved in the Lord, seeing that it has pleased almighty God to prosper us in our undertaking to build [secure] a building for his worship and service, let us therefore seek his blessing in our use of it, to the end that pure apostolic doctrine and order may be maintained herein, and that the Holy Spirit may make his own ordinances effectual in the lives of those who enter here.

*Then the minister and the people may pray antiphonally:*

O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**For this place, we give you our thanks.**

O eternal Son of God, Redeemer of your people and Head of your church:

**For this place, we give you our thanks.**

O Spirit of God, Lord and Giver of life, our Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter:

**For this place, we give you our thanks.**

And now, O God, we ask that you bless our use of this place.

For the worship of God in praise and prayer;

For the preaching of the gospel of your grace in Christ;

For the celebrating of your holy sacraments:

**We beseech your blessing.**

For the dissemination of sacred knowledge;

For the promotion of righteousness and holiness;

For the extension of your kingdom:

**We beseech your blessing.**

For release to the captives;

For recovering of sight to the blind;

For rest to the heavy laden:

**We beseech your blessing.**

For comfort to those who mourn;

For strength to those who are tempted;

For assurance to those of little faith:

**We beseech your blessing.**

For the sanctifying of the family;

For the nurturing of the young;

For the perfecting of believers:

**We beseech your blessing.**

In gratitude for your gracious keeping of your covenant through-



out past generations;  
In reliance upon your promise that the gates of hell shall not  
prevail against your church;  
In the hope of the eternal glory of your church triumphant:  
**We beseech your blessing.**

*At an appropriate point during the service, the minister may say (in these or similar words):*

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, O living and true God, Maker of heaven and earth, our God, and our Father, you dwell in the high and holy place, yet also in him who is of a contrite and humble spirit. We adore you for your manifold perfections, for the infinite majesty and glorious beauty of your being, and for the truthfulness and sanctity of your divine revelation.

We thank you for your infinite mercies to us. In particular, we bless you for the gift of your Son, even Jesus, to be our Savior and the Savior of all who believe in him. It is in his name that we now praise you and offer our petitions before you. We praise you for your church, of which he is the only Head and King and of which we, by your grace alone, are members for all eternity. We humble ourselves before you this day, for we confess that we are not worthy to receive from your hand the blessings of not only your common grace, but, even more especially, the unspeakable mercies of your saving grace in Christ Jesus. We recognize that it is by the abundance of your great grace and mercy that you have granted us faith in Jesus Christ and, through him, the forgiveness of all our sins and the assurance of our final entrance into your presence, there to join all the members of your church from all ages, that vast multitude which no one can number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues. How great is your compassion!

And now you have put it into our hearts to prepare [secure] this facility where your people may gather in your worship and service. We earnestly beseech you to watch over and

protect all who serve in this place. We plead with you that here may be preached only the pure gospel of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. May all that is proclaimed here be clearly and firmly grounded upon the unchanging foundation of your holy Word. Grant that no part of your sacred revelation may be neglected, but that your servants who minister here shall give to the whole Scriptures that due reverence that will exhibit its breadth and majesty. We pray that by the favor and power of your Holy Spirit, you will in this place convert sinners unto you, and that you will gather, build up, and strengthen your saints through the proclamation of your matchless Word.

And we beseech you by your Holy Spirit, that you may ever be present effectually to guide, illumine, and inform those who teach here. May you prepare the hearts of the hearers to receive with meekness the instruction that is presented, and grant that their lives may show forth the triumph of your grace and adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In response to your mercies, O gracious God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we commit ourselves to you. Grant that we might offer ourselves to you in this congregation as one living sacrifice, consecrated to your service and to the advancement of your gospel. Grant that your grace will be mighty in us and sufficient for us, so that you may keep us in this resolve. May you ever work in us both to will and to do of your own good pleasure. Please give us grace to live together in holy love, peace, purity, and unity, that you may command the blessing upon us, even life evermore. Make us conscientious in all our duties, and keep us always watchful against sin, as becomes those who know that your eye is ever upon us. Grant that we may walk in the fear of the Lord, and may the joy of the Lord be our strength.

So bless the use of this facility, we pray, that it may ever serve the propagation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the extension of the kingdom of God. Teach us to so look and long for the return of the Lord of glory that we may be renewed day by day in our devotion to him, and that we may always be prepared to greet him and to enter in with him to the marriage

THANKSGIVING FOR A CHURCH BUILDING

supper of the Lamb, forever to dwell in that holy city where we will need no lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be our light, and we will reign forever and ever.

And now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

*The service may be concluded with the following or another benediction from Scripture:*

“The LORD bless thee and keep thee;

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” *Num. 6:24–26*



**THE**  
**RECOMMENDED CURRICULUM**  
**FOR**  
**MINISTERIAL PREPARATION**  
**IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

This Recommended Curriculum was approved by the Fifty-fourth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to serve as a guideline to ministerial candidates, presbyteries, and seminaries (Form of Government, Chapter XXIII, Section 3). The elements in the Curriculum are not to be understood as additions to the constitutional requirements stated in the Form of Government (XXI, 3, 4; XXIII, 3, 6) regarding the preparation and evaluation of qualifications of candidates for the ministry of the Word. Seminary course work by itself may not ensure fulfillment of the Recommended Curriculum for candidates whose presbyteries use the Curriculum as a guideline; therefore presbyteries may expect supplementation of a candidate's seminary course work through individual guided study, supervised ministry experience, or other means.

**SCRIPTURE**

I. Bible Content

A. Study of the English Bible

1. The candidate should be required to read through the Bible in English.
2. Course work should include areas such as archaeology, history and geography, emphasizing the significance of

these disciplines for the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture.

B. Required comprehensive examination on Bible content

*Goal:* The candidate should have a thorough knowledge of the content of the English Bible and an ability to communicate it.

II. Biblical Languages

A. Hebrew

1. Grammatical forms
2. Syntactical principles
3. Exegetical procedures
4. Required readings in the Hebrew Scriptures

B. Greek

1. Grammatical forms
2. Syntactical principles
3. Exegetical procedures
4. Required readings in the Greek New Testament

*Goal:* The candidate should be able to exegete the Scriptures from the original languages in the preparation of sermons and Bible lessons, using lexical and grammatical tools.

III. Hermeneutics (or, Principles and Methods of Interpretation)

A. Principles of Interpretation

B. Biblical Theology

C. History of and Issues in Biblical Criticism (Higher and Textual)

D. Special Hermeneutical Issues

1. Old Testament
2. New Testament

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the principles, procedures and problems involved in the interpretation of God's Word, and

should demonstrate a growing proficiency in the faithful exposition of Scripture. He shall be able to read the Bible as God intended it, in its organic unity and its historical diversity. The centrality of Christ, the covenant and the kingdom in the Scriptures determines our understanding of the Scriptures as a whole and as individual texts. The Bible is the progressively unfolding history of the redemptive acts and words of God, climaxing in the coming of Christ and his kingdom, ushering in the new age, the last days.

Christ has accomplished this through his death and resurrection, and the sending of his Spirit to the church on the day of Pentecost. The Bible also holds out the blessed hope to Christ's church that this new covenant kingdom, which is not yet consummated, will appear in the fullness of God's glory with Christ's return on the last day.

#### IV. Use of the Bible in Ministry

- A. The candidate should be required to prepare advanced exegetical papers on assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages.
- B. The candidate should be required to use his interpretive skills and tools in the preparation of sermons and Bible lessons/courses.

*Goal:* The candidate should be able to faithfully explain Scripture for the building up of God's people, moving from a careful study in the original languages through the interpretive process, and arriving at a clear exposition of the text's meaning and application for the church today.

## DOCTRINE

### I. Church History

A study of the history of the church since the New Testament period, in all eras, with particular emphasis on the heritage and uniqueness of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the flow of history, the historical development of Christian theology and the influence upon it of secular history and philosophy, and the progress of ecclesiastical development; and he should have an awareness of the relation of the cultural context to the history of the church.

## II. Apologetics

- A. Introduction to Apologetic Methodology and Practice including (1) the school of Van Tilian presuppositionalism as the most biblically faithful expression of Reformed apologetics, and (2) a survey of positions held by other Reformed apologists
- B. Survey of Non-Christian Thought (including the history of humanistic thought and its contemporary manifestation in various worldviews and spheres of intellectual and aesthetic activity—philosophy, literature, drama, popular arts, scientific methodology—as well as a survey of non-Christian religions and cults)
- C. Survey of Contemporary Theology (including the old liberalism, neoorthodoxy, liberation theology, etc.)

*Goal:* The candidate should gain a sound intellectual basis for the positive presentation of the Christian faith from a Reformed perspective, and should be equipped to deal with anti-Christian systems of thought in their various contemporary manifestations.

## III. Theology and Ethics

- A. Systematic Theology: Study of the whole system of doctrine revealed in Scripture as one organic body of truth, basic to all theological disciplines, with emphasis upon the centrality of doctrine in the proclamation of the Word in all the witness and work of the church: prolegomena, theology proper, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, including a specific study of the secondary doctrinal standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the



### Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms

- B. Ethics: Study of the goal, motive and standard of the Christian way of life set forth in God's Word (the two "great commandments," the ten commandments, the sermon on the mount, etc.)

*Goal:* The candidate should obtain a knowledge of and commitment to the Reformed faith (including such distinctives as the inerrancy of Scripture, the sovereignty of God, covenant theology, the five points of Calvinism, etc.); and he should become proficient in communicating this faith. He should manifest an understanding of and commitment to a biblical lifestyle in both personal and social ethics.

#### IV. Polity

- A. Biblical Church Government: Study of the biblical foundations of the principles and practice of presbyterian church government
- B. Church Order and Parliamentary Procedure in the OPC

*Goal:* The candidate should gain an understanding of the biblical teaching on the nature and structure of the church, as well as a working knowledge of the contents and application of *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (containing the standards of government, discipline, and worship) and *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

## **PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

### I. The Pastor's Personal Life

- A. Spiritual Life
  - 1. Growth in godliness
  - 2. Call to the ministry of the Word
- B. Communication and Interpersonal Relations
  - 1. With his family

2. With the church
3. With the community

*Goal:* The candidate should learn how to develop his personal relationship to God through the study of Scripture and through prayer, and how to express his devotion to God through developing and maintaining godly relationships with those of his own household, with others in the household of faith and with those outside the faith. Growing out of this, the candidate should be guided in determining the genuineness of his sense of call to the gospel ministry.

## II. Worship

- A. Biblical Principles of Public Worship: Study of the biblical standards which should govern the public worship of God and of their implementation in the worship life of a congregation, including special attention to the OPC's Directory for the Public Worship of God
- B. The Preaching of God's Word
  1. Theology of preaching
  2. Principles and practices of preaching
- C. The Sacraments

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the regulative principle of public worship and its application to the specific elements of a congregation's worship services, and the centrality of preaching within the biblical pattern of public worship. He should demonstrate increasing proficiency in preaching the Word and in leading a congregation in public worship.

## III. Evangelism

- A. Theology of Reformed Evangelism
- B. The Pastor's Role in the Practice of Evangelism

*Goal:* The candidate should be able to express the bearing of the Reformed faith on the practice of announcing the gospel to non-

Christians. He should develop methods for bringing the message of Christ to others and should implement those methods by engaging in evangelism and by training others to do so.

#### IV. Missiology

- A. Reformed Theology of Missions
- B. Strategy of Missions, both within one's own culture and cross-culturally

*Goal:* The candidate should gain an understanding of the issues and practices involved in the planting and extension of the church both within a single culture and cross-culturally, including such areas as linguistics, indigenization, the use of anthropological perspectives, the use of printed and electronic media, and the relation of missions to political and social reforms.

#### V. Pastoral Care

- A. Theology of Pastoral Care and Counseling
- B. Practice of Pastoral Counseling

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the biblical principles which govern his shepherding of God's people and should gain practical experience in counseling (e.g., through the use of case studies and through the observation of and/or participation in actual counseling sessions).

#### VI. Christian Education

- A. Theology of Christian Education
- B. History of Christian Education
- C. Practice of Christian Education

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the biblical basis of Christian education and its historical development. He should gain proficiency in the development of a plan for Christian education in the home and in the church, in the training of Bible teachers for church-related ministries, and in the discerning and developing of spiritual gifts within the church.

VII. Pastoral Administration

A. Theology of Administration

B. Practice of Administration

*Goal:* The candidate should understand the biblical principles of administration and leadership, such as planning and evaluation, strategy and oversight, the stewardship of time, the delegation of authority/responsibility and the harmonious employment of the spiritual gifts of the members of Christ's body (Eph. 4:11–16).

*This Recommended Curriculum  
may be amended by a majority vote of a general assembly.*

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