

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

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## **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.

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## 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, XX, 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, XXXI, 2).

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## 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.

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## **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 was 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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.
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## **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 reputation, 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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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 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 at least once in every year. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

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## **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 transacted 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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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 presbytery 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.

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## **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, whichever 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 jurisdiction 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, require 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.

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## **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 examination 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 concerning the warrant and nature of the office of minister of the Word of God, and the duties of a pastor toward a congregation and a congregation toward a pastor, and shall endeavor to give to the congregation a proper sense of the solemnity of both ordination and installation.

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 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.

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 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, and shall endeavor to give them 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, 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).

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## **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.

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 withhold 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.

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## **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 encouraged 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 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.



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 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 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 been installed for a limited term of service may be elected to additional terms of 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:

a. The minister shall review before the congregation 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.

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.

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## **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 congregation.

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 reason 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 counselled by the session concerning his decision. If, after such counselling, 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.

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## **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.

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## **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 discipline 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.

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## **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.

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## **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.
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## **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 memberships 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 particular 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.

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## **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 consideration. 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.