

**THE  
BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER  
OF THE  
GRACE PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
OF NEW ZEALAND**

WITH APPENDICES

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Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Adapted from *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*.



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## **PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER**

### **I. THE KING AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH**

Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government rests, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth, even forever (Isaiah 9:6-7); 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 has 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 (Ephesians 1:20-23); He, being ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, received gifts for His Church, and gave all offices necessary for the edification of His Church and the perfecting of His saints (Ephesians 4:10-13).

Jesus, the Mediator, the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Saviour, and Head of the Church, contains in Himself, by way of eminency, all the offices in His Church, and has many of their names attributed to Him in the Scriptures. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister, Bishop and the only Lawgiver in Zion.

It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising His own authority and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His Kingdom.

Christ, as King, has given to His Church officers, oracles and ordinances; and especially has He ordained therein His system of doctrine, government, discipline and worship, all of which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deducted therefrom; and to which things He commands that nothing be added, and that from them naught be taken away.

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, He is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit, and the benefits of all His offices are effectually applied by the Holy Ghost.

## II. PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES

The Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, in setting forth the form of government founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, reiterates the following great principles which have governed the formation of the plan:

1. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from any doctrines or commandments of men (a) which are in any respect contrary to the Word of God, or (b) which, in regard to matters of faith and worship, are not governed by the Word of God. Therefore, the rights of private judgment in all matters that respect religion are universal and inalienable. No religious constitution should be supported by the civil power further than may be necessary for protection and security equal and common to all others.
2. In perfect consistency with the above principle, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ has appointed. In the exercise of this right it may, notwithstanding, err in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet even in this case, it does not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only makes an improper use of its own.
3. Our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible Church, which is His body, has appointed officers not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline for the preservation both of truth and duty. It is incumbent upon these officers and upon the whole Church in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing in all cases the rules contained in the Word of God.
4. Godliness is founded on truth. A test of truth is its power to promote holiness according to our Saviour's rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). No opinion can be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon the same level.

On the contrary, there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

5. While, under the conviction of the above principle, it is necessary to make effective provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. In all these it is the duty both of private

Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.

6. Though the character, qualifications and authority of church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of officer investiture, the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society.
7. All church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or by representation, is only ministerial and declarative since the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. No church judicatory may make laws to bind the conscience. All church courts may err through human frailty, yet it rests upon them to uphold the laws of Scripture though this obligation be lodged with fallible men.
8. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church.

If the preceding scriptural principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigour and strictness of government and discipline, applied with pastoral prudence and Christian love, will contribute to the glory and well-being of the Church.

### III. THE CONSTITUTION DEFINED

The constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand which is subject to and subordinate to the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, and the Rules of Discipline, and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.

## **PART I - FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

### **CHAPTER 1 The Doctrine of Church Government.**

**1-1** The scriptural form of church government, which is representative or Presbyterian, is comprehended under five heads: a. The Church; b. Its members; c. Its officers; d. Its courts; e. Its orders.

**1-2** The Church which the Lord Jesus Christ has erected in this world for the gathering and perfecting of the saints is His visible kingdom of grace, and is one and the same in all ages.

**1-3** The members of this visible Church catholic are all those persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and promise submission to His laws.

**1-4** The officers of the Church, by whom all its powers are administered, are, according to the Scriptures, teaching and ruling elders and deacons.

**1-5** Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is not a several, but a joint power, to be exercised by presbyters in courts. These courts may have jurisdiction over one or many churches, but they sustain such mutual relations as to realise the idea of the unity of the Church.

**1-6** The ordination of officers is ordinarily by a court.

**1-7** This scriptural doctrine of Presbytery is necessary to the perfection of the order of the visible Church, but is not essential to its existence.

## **CHAPTER 2 The Visible Church Defined.**

**2-1** The Visible Church before the law, under the law, and now under the Gospel, is one and the same and consists of all those who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with their children.

**2-2** This visible unity of the body of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; but all of these, which maintain the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognised as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ.

**2-3** It is according to scriptural example that the Church should be divided into many individual churches.

### **CHAPTER 3 The Nature and Extent of Church Power.**

**3-1** The power which Christ has committed to His Church vests in the whole body, the rulers and those ruled, constituting it a spiritual commonwealth. This power, as exercised by the people, extends to the choice of those officers whom He has appointed in His Church.

**3-2** Ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is twofold. The officers exercise it sometimes severally, as in preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and comforting the afflicted, which is the power of order; and they exercise it sometimes jointly in Church courts, after the form of judgment, which is the power of jurisdiction.

**3-3** The sole functions of the Church, as a kingdom and government distinct from the civil commonwealth, are to proclaim, to administer, and to enforce the law of Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

**3-4** The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual; that of the State includes the exercise of force. Church and State are both appointed by God and therefore accountable to Him. Whilst the State has no right to intermeddle with ecclesiastical affairs, the Church does have a responsibility to proclaim God's will to the State and nation of New Zealand.

**3-5** The Church, with its ordinances, officers and courts, is the agency which Christ has ordained for the edification and government of His people, for the propagation of the faith, and for the evangelisation of the world.

**3-6** The exercise of ecclesiastical power, whether joint or several, has the divine sanction when in conformity with the statutes enacted by Christ, the Lawgiver, and when put forth by courts or by officers appointed thereunto in His Word.

## **CHAPTER 4 The Particular Church.**

**4-1** A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeable to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom.

**4-2** Its officers are its teaching and ruling elders and its deacons.

**4-3** Its jurisdiction, being a joint power, is lodged in the church Session, which consists of its pastor, pastors, its associate pastor(s) and its ruling elders.

**4-4** The ordinances established by Christ, the Head, in His Church are prayer; singing praises; reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God; administering the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; public solemn fasting and thanksgiving; catechising; making offerings for the relief of the poor and for other pious uses; and exercising discipline; the taking of solemn vows, and the ordination to sacred office.

**4-5** Churches without teaching elders ought not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but should be convened by the Session on the Lord's Day, and at other suitable times, for prayer, praise, the presenting and expounding of the Holy Scriptures, and exhortation, or the reading of a sermon of some approved minister. In like manner, Christians whose lot is cast in destitute regions ought to meet regularly for the worship of God.

## **CHAPTER 5 The Organisation of a Particular Church.**

### **A. Mission Churches**

**5-1** A mission church may be properly described in the same manner as the particular church is described in BCO 4-1. It is distinguished from a particular church in that it has no permanent governing body, and thus must be governed or supervised by others. However, its goal is to mature and be organised as a particular church as soon as this can be done decently and in good order.

**5-2** Ordinarily, the responsibility for initiation and oversight of a mission church lies with Presbytery, exercised through its committee on Mission to New Zealand, or by a Session, in cooperation with presbytery's committee on Mission to New Zealand. However, if the mission church is located outside the bounds of Presbytery, the responsibility may be exercised through the General Assembly's committee on Mission to New Zealand.

**5-3** The mission church, because of its transitional condition, requires a temporary system of government. Depending on the circumstances and at its own discretion, Presbytery may provide for such government in either of two ways:

1. Cooperate with the Session of a particular church in arranging a mother-daughter relationship with a mission church. The Session may then serve as the temporary governing body of the mission church.
2. Appoint a commission to serve as a temporary Session of the mission church. When a minister of the presbytery has been approved to serve as pastor of the mission church, he shall be included as a member of the commission and serve as its moderator.

**5-4** Pastoral ministry for the mission church may be provided:

- a. by a minister of the presbytery called by presbytery to serve as pastor, or
- b. by stated supply (BCO 22-5, 22-6), or
- c. by a series of qualified preachers approved by the temporary government.

**5-5** When a mission church lacks sufficient elder candidates to form a full session and seek particularisation they may still proceed with the normal process of electing, ordaining and installing Ruling Elders as outlined in 24-1. This process is to take place under the oversight of the Presbytery through the temporary governing body of the mission church. The Presbytery shall then appoint these men to the temporary governing body. At all times it should remain the goal of the mission church to mature

and be organised as a particular church as soon as this can be done decently and in good order.

Where an elder has been elected and installed in a mission church, then upon particularisation, he shall remain as a member of the newly constituted Session without further action.

**5-6** The temporary government shall receive members (BCO 12-5 a.) into the mission church according to the provisions of BCO Chapter 57 so far as they may be applicable. As members of the mission church those received are communing or noncommunings members of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

- a. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its pastor (BCO 5-4 a.), each member so received shall be understood to assent to the call of that minister and to affirm the promises made to the pastor in BCO 0.
- b. Meetings of the members of the mission church shall be governed according to the provisions of BCO Chapter 25 so far as they may be applicable, and shall be conducted according to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

**5-7** Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the court having oversight of their temporary governing body.

**5-8** Mission churches shall maintain a roll of communicant and non-communicant members, in the same manner as, but separate from, other particular churches.

**5-9** It is the intention of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand that mission churches enjoy the same status as particular churches in relation to civil government.

## **B. The Organisation of a Particular Church**

**5-10** A new church can be organised only by the authority of Presbytery.

- a. A presbytery should establish standing rules setting forth the prerequisites that qualify a mission church to begin the organisation process, e.g., the minimum number of petitioners and the level of financial support to be provided by the congregation. The number of officers sufficient to constitute the quorum for a session shall be necessary to complete the organisation process.

- b. The temporary government of the mission church shall oversee the steps necessary for organisation.
- c. When the temporary government determines that among the members of the mission congregation there are men who appear qualified as officers, the nomination process shall begin and the election conclude following the procedures of BCO Chapter 24 so far as they may be applicable.
- d. The election of officers shall normally take place at least two weeks prior to the date of the organisation service. However, the effective date of service for the newly elected officers shall be upon the completion of the organisation service.
- e. If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the session, until deacons can be secured.
- f. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its pastor, and members of the mission church have been received according to BCO 5-7, no further action with respect to the call of that pastor to the church to be organised shall be necessary. If no such minister has been appointed, or if the minister serving chooses not to continue as pastor of the newly organised church, a pastor shall be called as follows:
  - 1. The temporary government shall oversee the election of a pastor according to the provisions of BCO Chapter 20 so far as they are applicable. If a candidate is to be proposed before the organisation, the congregational meeting to elect a pastor shall take place at least two weeks before the service of organisation. This may be the same meeting called for the election of other officers.
  - 2. The ordination and/or installation shall be according to the provisions of BCO Chapter 21 so far as they are applicable. The service may take place at the service of organisation.
- g. In order to proceed to organisation as a particular church the members of the mission church shall sign a petition to Presbytery requesting the same.
- h. Upon presbytery's approval of the petition, presbytery shall appoint an organising commission and shall set the date and time of the organisation service.
- i. At the service of organisation the following elements shall be included in the order deemed by the organising commission to be appropriate:
  - 1. The organising commission shall ordain and/or install ruling elders and/or deacons according to the provisions of BCO 24-6 so far as they may be applicable.

2. If a pastor is being ordained and/or installed at the service, the organising commission shall act according to the provisions of BCO Chapter 21 so far as they may be applicable.
3. A member of the organising commission shall require communicant members of the mission church present to enter into covenant, by answering the following question affirmatively, with uplifted hand:

**Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as an organised church, on the principles of the faith and order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the purity and peace of the whole body?**

4. The moderator shall then say:

**I now pronounce and declare that you are constituted a church according to the Word of God and the faith and order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

### **C. Inland Revenue requirements for Charitable Donee Status and Income Tax Exemption**

**5-11** While the Church has a worldwide focus, for financial purposes, the Church's primary focus is within New Zealand. Should from time to time the Church wish to transmit funds overseas in fulfilment of its wide purposes the measures taken shall not exceed those allowed by Inland Revenue.

**5-12** Any income, benefit or advantage shall be applied to the charitable purposes of the Church.

No member of the Church or any person associated with a member shall participate in or materially influence any decision made by the Church in respect of the payment to or on behalf of that member or associated person of any income, benefit or advantage whatsoever.

Any such income paid shall be reasonable and relative to that which would be paid in an arms length transaction (being the open market value).

The provision and effect of this clause shall not be removed from this document and shall be included and implied into any document replacing this document.

**5-13** No addition to or alteration of the charitable objects, as contained in Chapter 4 “The Particular Church”, the personal benefits clause 5-12 or the winding up clause 5-14 shall be approved without the Inland Revenue’s approval.

**5-14** Winding up Clause

If upon the winding up or dissolution of a Church, there remains after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities any assets or property, these shall be distributed only to some other charitable organisation approved by the Inland Revenue within New Zealand having the objects in accord with the objects of this Church.

**CHAPTER 6 Church Members.**

**6-1** The children of believers are, through the covenant and by right of birth, noncommuning members of the church. Hence they are entitled to Baptism, and to the pastoral oversight, instruction and government of the church, with a view to their embracing Christ and thus possessing personally all benefits of the covenant.

**6-2** Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptised, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table. (See BCO 46-4 for associate members).

**6-3** All baptised persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the church, even though they are adults and have made no profession of their faith in Christ.

**6-4** Those only who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptised, and admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table, are entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church. (See BCO 57-4 and 58-4)

**CHAPTER 7 Church Officers - General Classification.**

**7-1** Under the New Testament, our Lord at first collected His people out of different nations, and united them to the household of faith by the ministry of extraordinary officers who received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and who were agents by whom God completed His revelation to His Church. Such officers and gifts related to new revelation have no successors since God completed His revelation at the conclusion of the Apostolic Age.

**7-2** The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders and deacons. Within the class of elder are the two orders of teaching elders and ruling elders. The elders jointly have the government and spiritual oversight of the Church, including teaching. Only those elders who are specially gifted, called and trained by God to preach may serve as teaching elders. The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. In accord with Scripture, these offices are open to men only.

**7-3** No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein, or receive any official titles of spiritual pre-eminence, except such as are employed in the Scriptures.

**CHAPTER 8 The Elder.**

**8-1** This office is one of dignity and usefulness. The man who fills it has in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed *bishop* or *pastor*. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he is termed *presbyter* or *elder*. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed teacher. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same office.

**8-2** He that fills this office should possess a competency of human learning and be blameless in life, sound in the faith and apt to teach. He should exhibit a sobriety and holiness of life becoming the Gospel. He should rule his own house well and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

**8-3** It belongs to the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelise the unconverted and make disciples. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.

**8-4** As the Lord has given different gifts to men and has committed to some special gifts and callings, the Church is authorised to call and appoint some to labour as teaching elders in such works as may be needful to the Church. When a teaching elder is called to such needful work, it shall be incumbent upon him to make full proof of his ministry by disseminating the Gospel for the edification of the Church. He shall make a report to the Presbytery at least once each year.

**8-5** When a man is called to labour as a teaching elder, it belongs to his order, in addition to those functions he shares with all other elders, to feed the flock by reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments. Ordinarily the sacraments should be administered by the lawfully ordained teaching elder. However at the discretion of the Session there may be occasions where it is deemed prudent for a ruling elder to administer sacraments. As the teaching elder is

sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed *ambassador*. As he bears glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing, he is termed *evangelist*. As he stands to proclaim the Gospel, he is termed *preacher*. As he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed *steward* of the mysteries of God.

**8-6** When a teaching elder is appointed to the work of an evangelist, he is commissioned to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments in foreign countries or the destitute parts of the church.

**8-7** A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a teaching elder to work with an organisation outside the jurisdiction of the New Zealand Grace Presbyterian Church, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work. As far as possible, such a teaching elder shall be a member of the Presbytery within whose bounds he labours.

**8-8** As there were in the Church under the law, elders of the people for the government thereof, so in the Gospel Church, Christ has furnished others besides ministers of the Word with gifts and commission to govern when called thereunto, which are called *ruling elders*.

**8-9** Elders being of one class of office, ruling elders possess the same authority and eligibility to office in the courts of the Church as teaching elders. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their own aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so.

**8-10** Definitions.

Teaching Elder is the inclusive term. *Minister* or *Pastor* are titles usually given to Teaching Elders with pastoral charge of a congregation.

## **CHAPTER 9 The Deacon.**

**9-1** The office of deacon is set forth in the Scriptures as ordinary and perpetual in the Church. The office is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus; it expresses also the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need.

**9-2** It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation.

In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session. In a church in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.

**9-3** To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgement.

**9-4** 9-5The deacons of a particular church shall be organised as a Board, of which the pastor shall be an advisory member. The Board shall elect a chairman and a secretary from their number and a treasurer to whom shall be entrusted the funds for the current expenses of the church. It shall meet separately at least once a quarter, and whenever requested by the Session. The Board of each church shall determine the number necessary for a quorum.

The Board shall keep a record of its proceedings, and of all funds and their distribution, and shall submit its minutes to the Session regularly, and at other times upon request of the Session.

It is desirable that the Session and the Board of Deacons meet in joint session once a quarter to confer on matters of common interest.

**9-5** Deacons may properly be appointed by the higher courts to serve on committees, especially as treasurers. It is suitable also that they be appointed trustees of any fund held by any of the Church courts. It may also be helpful for the

Church courts, when devising plans of church finance, to invite wise and consecrated deacons to their councils.

**9-6** The deacons may, with much advantage, hold conference from time to time for the discussion of the interests committed to them. Such conferences may include representatives of churches covering areas of smaller or larger extent. Any actions taken by these conferences shall have only an advisory character.

**9-7** It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need.

## **CHAPTER 10 Church Courts in General.**

**10-1** The Church is governed by various courts, in regular gradation, which are all, nevertheless, Presbyteries, as being composed exclusively of presbyters.

**10-2** These courts are church Sessions, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly.

**10-3** The pastor (for prudential reasons) is ordinarily moderator of the Session, but may if he wishes, request one of the ruling elders to moderate. The moderator of the Presbytery may be elected at each stated meeting of the court, or for a period of time up to one year. The Moderator of General Assembly shall be chosen one term prior to that in which he officiates, according the procedures set out in the Rules for Assembly Operations. At the beginning of the meeting at which his term begins he shall be welcomed as the new Moderator. The Moderator shall ordinarily serve for a two year term. He, or in case of his absence the last moderator present or the oldest minister longest a member of the court, shall open the next meeting with a sermon unless it is impracticable, and shall hold the chair until a new moderator be chosen.

The moderator has all authority necessary for the preservation of order and for the proper and expeditious conduct of all business before the court, and for convening and adjourning the court according to its own ruling. In any emergency, he may by circular letter change the time or place, or both, of meeting to which the court stands adjourned, giving reasonable notice thereof.

Moderators exercise a casting vote only.

**10-4** A clerk or clerks shall be elected by the Session, Presbytery, and General Assembly to serve for a definite period as determined by the court.

It is the duty of the clerk, besides recording the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required. Such extracts under the hand of the clerk shall be evidence to any ecclesiastical court, and to every part of the Church.

**10-5** Every meeting of the Session, Presbytery and General Assembly shall be opened and closed with prayer, and in closing the final session a psalm or hymn may be sung and the benediction pronounced.

**10-6** The expenses of ministers and ruling elders in their attendance on the courts shall be defrayed by the bodies which they respectively represent.

**10-7** Electronic Meetings in Courts of the Church

- a. The courts of the Church shall ordinarily meet physically at an announced time and place. However, they may at their discretion hold meetings where all or some of the members attend by electronic means where it is clearly impractical for full in person meetings to occur. Such meetings must ensure that all attending electronically are able to fully participate in speaking, hearing (and seeing if audio-visual), and voting.
  1. As much as is practical the meetings shall be run as for in person meetings, with the exception of celebrating the Lord's Supper at General Assembly. These principles shall also apply to commissions of the Church courts.
  2. Committees may pass resolutions by email or other non-concurrent participation and decision making.
  3. Courts and commissions may, in extraordinary circumstances, approve resolutions using non-concurrent means with an 80% majority of all those entitled to vote in that court.
  4. If any member object to deliberating upon an issue by any electronic means, the meeting shall require a 3/4 majority vote in order to continue the debate online. The matter debated online will also require a 3/4 majority to be carried.
- b. Each court may determine its own by laws for further regulating electronic meetings provided they are not less stringent than those in BCO 10-7.

**CHAPTER 11 Jurisdiction of Church Courts.**

**11-1** These assemblies are altogether distinct from the civil magistracy, and have no jurisdiction in political or civil affairs. They have no power to inflict temporal pains and penalties, but their authority is in all respects moral or spiritual.

**11-2** The jurisdiction of Church courts is only ministerial and declarative, and relates to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, to the order of the Church, and to the exercise of discipline.

*First*, they can make no laws binding the conscience; but may frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, within or without the Church, and decide cases of conscience.

*Secondly*, they have power to establish rules for the government, discipline, worship, and extension of the Church, which must be agreeable to the doctrines relating thereto contained in the Scriptures, the circumstantial details only of these matters being left to the Christian prudence and wisdom of Church officers and courts.

*Thirdly*, they possess the right to require obedience to the laws of Christ. Hence, they admit those qualified to sealing ordinances and to their respective offices, and they exclude the disobedient and disorderly from such offices or from sacramental privileges. The highest censure to which their authority extends is to cut off the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers. Moreover, they possess all the administrative authority necessary to give effect to these powers.

**11-3** All Church courts are one in nature, constituted of the same elements, possessed inherently of the same kinds of rights and powers, and differing only as the Constitution may provide. When, however, according to Scriptural example, and needful to the purity and harmony of the whole Church, disputed matters of doctrine and order arising in the lower courts are referred to the higher courts for decision, such referral shall not be so exercised as to impinge upon the authority of the lower court.

**11-4** For the orderly and efficient dispatch of ecclesiastical business, it is necessary that the sphere of action of each court should be distinctly defined. The Session exercises jurisdiction over a single church, the Presbytery over what is common to the ministers, Sessions, and churches within a prescribed district, and the General Assembly over such matters as concern the whole Church. The jurisdiction of these courts is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution.

Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury

of the peace, purity, or progress of the Church. Although each court exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters specially belonging to it, the lower courts are subject to the review and control of the higher courts, in regular gradation. These courts are not separate and independent tribunals, but they have a mutual relation, and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole Church performed by it through the appropriate organ.

## **CHAPTER 12 The Church Session.**

**12-1** The church Session consists of the pastor, associate pastor(s), if there be any, and the ruling elders of a church. The pastor and two ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. Assistant pastor or pastors, although not members of the Session, may be invited to attend and participate in discussion without vote.

When a church has no pastor three ruling elders shall constitute a quorum; if there are less than three ruling elders, they do not constitute a Session, but they should take spiritual oversight of the church, should represent it at Presbytery, should grant letters of dismission, and should report to the Presbytery any matter needing the action of a Church court.

Where a church does not have sufficient elders to constitute a quorum Sessions may, with the concurrence of Presbytery, co-opt elders from other Sessions in order to form a quorum

Any Session, by a majority vote of its members, may fix its own quorum, provided that it is not smaller than the quorum stated in these paragraphs.

**12-2** The pastor is, ordinarily, the moderator of the Session. If he is unable to attend, the Session may elect one of its members to preside. Should prudential reasons at any time make it advisable for a minister other than the pastor to preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the Session, invite a minister of the same Presbytery to perform this service.

**12-3** When a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, with consent of the Session, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion, or one of its own members elected to preside. In judicial cases, the moderator shall be a minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs.

**12-4** Associate or assistant pastors may substitute for the pastor as moderator of the Session at the discretion of the pastor and Session.

**12-5** The church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has power:

- a. To inquire into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the church members under its care; to censure those found delinquent; to see that parents do not neglect to present their children for Baptism; to receive members into the communion of the Church; to remove them for just cause; to grant letters of dismissal to other churches, which when given to parents, shall always include the names of their noncommuning baptised children;

- b. To examine, ordain, and install ruling elders and deacons on their election by the church, and to require these officers to devote themselves to their work; to examine the records of the proceedings of the deacons; to approve and adopt the budget;
- c. To approve actions of special importance affecting church property;
- d. To call congregational meetings as required and not less than one per year when necessary; to establish and control Sunday schools and Bible classes with special reference to the children of the church; to establish and control all special groups in the church such as Men in the Church, Women in the Church and special Bible study groups; to promote World missions; to promote obedience to the Great Commission in its totality at home and abroad; to order collections for pious uses;
- e. To exercise, in accordance with the Directory for Worship, authority over the time and place of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, over all other religious services, over the music in the services, and over the uses to which the church building and associated properties may be put; to take the oversight of the singing in the public worship of God; to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to determine the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the Church and congregation;
- f. To observe and carry out the lawful injunctions of the higher courts; and to appoint representatives to the higher courts, who shall, on their return, make report of their diligence.

**12-6** The Session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. Moreover, the pastor has power to convene the Session when he may judge it requisite; and he shall always convene it when requested to do so by any two of the ruling elders. When there is no pastor, it may be convened by two ruling elders. The Session shall also convene when directed so to do by the Presbytery.

**12-7** Every Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings, which record shall be submitted at least once in every year to the inspection of the Presbytery.

**12-8** Every Session shall keep an accurate record of baptisms, of communing members, of noncommuning members, and of the deaths and dismissions of church members.

**12-9** Meetings of the Sessions shall be opened and closed with prayer.

## **CHAPTER 13 The Presbytery.**

**13-1** The Presbytery consists of all the teaching elders and churches within its bounds, that have been accepted by the Presbytery. When the Presbytery meets as a court it shall comprise all teaching elders and one ruling elder from each congregation or two from a congregation that is vacant. In order to achieve parity between teaching and ruling elders additional ruling elders may represent their churches on a pro rata basis according to communicant membership.

**13-2** Ministers shall be members of their local congregation of which they are pastors and shall be members of and accountable to presbytery in all matters concerning their calling.

A minister shall be required to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he resides, unless there are reasons which are satisfactory to his Presbytery why he should not do so. When a minister labours outside the geographical bounds of, or in a work not under the jurisdiction of his Presbytery, at home or abroad, it shall be only with the full concurrence of and under circumstances agreeable to his Presbytery, and to the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he labours, if one exists. When a minister shall continue on the rolls of his Presbytery without a call to a particular work for a prolonged period, not exceeding three years, the procedure as set forth in BCO 34-10 shall be followed.

**13-3** Every ruling elder not known to the Presbytery may be required to produce evidence of his regular appointment from the Session of the church which he represents.

**13-4** Any three ministers belonging to the Presbytery, together with at least three ruling elders, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a quorum competent to proceed to business.

However, any Presbytery, by a majority vote of those present at a stated meeting, may fix its own quorum provided it is not smaller than the quorum stated in this paragraph.

**13-5** Ordinarily, only a minister who receives a call to a definite ecclesiastical work within the bounds of a particular Presbytery may be received as a member of that Presbytery except in cases where the minister is already honourably retired and is continuing to fulfil recognised ministry in the life of the church, or in those cases deemed necessary by the Presbytery, subject to the review of the General Assembly. In such cases deemed necessary, which may include the case of a minister without call whose circumstances appear to require relocation within the bounds of that

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Presbytery, the time allotment of BCO 13-2 shall be counted from the day the minister was first continued on the roll without call in any Presbytery.

**13-6** Ministers seeking admission to a Presbytery from other Presbyteries in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand shall be examined on Christian experience, and also touching their views in theology, the Sacraments, and church government. If applicants come from other denominations, the General Assembly shall ensure, through the Administration and Finance Committee that at the Presbytery examination there shall be the presence of at least one teaching elder from each of the other Presbyteries. The concurrence of these teaching elders is necessary for the Presbytery examination to be sustained. The Presbytery shall examine them thoroughly in knowledge and views as required by BCO 21-4 and require them to answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their ordination as contained in BCO 21-5. Ordained ministers from other denominations being considered by Presbyteries for reception may come under the extraordinary provisions set forth in BCO 21-4.

**13-7** The Presbytery shall cause to be transcribed, in some convenient part of the book of records, the obligations required of ministers at their ordination, which shall be subscribed by all admitted to membership, in the following form:

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, do sincerely receive and subscribe to the above obligation as a just and true exhibition of my faith and principles, and do resolve and promise to exercise my ministry in conformity thereunto.**

**13-8** *Reserved.*

**13-9** The Presbytery has power to receive and issue<sup>1</sup> appeals, complaints, and references brought before it in an orderly manner. In cases in which the Session cannot exercise its authority, Presbytery shall have power to assume original jurisdiction. It has power:

- a. To receive under its care candidates for the ministry; to examine and license candidates for the holy ministry; to receive, dismiss, ordain, install, remove and judge ministers;
- b. To review the records of church Sessions, redress whatever they may have done contrary to order and take effectual care that they observe the Constitution of the Church;

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case".

- c. To establish the pastoral relation and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or where the interest of religion imperatively demands it;
- d. To set apart evangelists to their proper work; to require ministers to devote themselves diligently to their sacred calling and to censure the delinquent;
- e. To see that the lawful injunctions of the higher courts are obeyed;
- f. To condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church; to visit churches for the purpose of inquiring into and redressing the evils that may have arisen in them; to unite or divide churches, at the request of the members thereof; to form and receive new churches; to take special oversight of churches without pastors; to dissolve or dismiss churches with the consent of two thirds of their communing members;
- g. To devise measures for the enlargement of the Church within its bounds; in general, to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care;
- h. And, finally, to propose to the Assembly such measures as may be of common advantage to the Church at large.

**13-10** When a Presbytery determines to dissolve a church, it shall give no less than sixty (60) days notice of such dissolution to the local church. With such notice, Presbytery shall communicate to the members their responsibility to transfer their membership to other particular or mission churches. In addition, Presbytery shall:

1. transfer membership to existing churches, with the consent of the individuals and the Sessions of the receiving churches; or
2. grant a letter of dismissal to an individual so requesting, testifying that the individual was a member in good standing of the local church at the date of dissolution (see BCO 46-7). Until such time as the person is received by a church the Presbytery shall continue to provide pastoral oversight; or
3. place individuals under the oversight of a commission of Presbytery acting as a session (BCO 15-2), for up to one year, renewable, until such time as either a new congregation can be formed or such persons are dismissed to membership in another church.

**13-11** The Presbytery shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, and shall send it up to the General Assembly annually for review. It shall report to the General Assembly every year, all the important changes which may have taken place, such as licensures, ordinations, the receiving or dismissing of members, the removal of members by death, the union and the division of churches, and the formation of new ones.

**13-12** The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on its own adjournment. The Moderator shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of three teaching elders and three ruling elders from at least three different churches. Should the Moderator be for any reason unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall, under the same requirements, issue the call. If both Moderator and Stated Clerk are unable to act, any three teaching elders and three ruling elders of at least three different churches shall have power to call a meeting. However, any Presbytery may prescribe in its rules its own requirements for calling a special meeting, provided that those requirements are not less than those stated in this section. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than ten days in advance to each teaching elder and to the Clerk of Session of every church. In the notice, the purpose of the meeting shall be stated, and no business other than that named in the notice is to be transacted. The Presbytery also shall convene when directed to do so by the General Assembly, for the transaction of designated business only.

**13-13** Ministers or ruling elders in good standing in other Presbyteries, or in any evangelical church, being present at any meeting of Presbytery, may be invited to sit as visiting brethren. It is proper for the moderator to introduce these brethren to the Presbytery. This provision shall also apply to the General Assembly.

## **CHAPTER 14 The General Assembly.**

**14-1** The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and represents in one body all the churches thereof. It bears the title of The General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, and constitutes the bond of union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts.

### Principles for the Organisation of the Assembly

1. The Church is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.
2. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the Church at every court level, and the Assembly is responsible to encourage and promote the fulfilment of this ministry by the various courts.
3. The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work, being implemented at the General Assembly level through equally essential committees.
4. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation to support the whole work of the denomination as they be led in their conscience held captive to the Word of God.
5. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to evaluate needs and resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfilment of the Great Commission.
6. The Church recognises the right of individuals and congregations to labour through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.
7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church judicatories. They are not to establish policy, but rather execute policy established by the General Assembly.
8. The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the General Assembly.
9. The Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of all presbyteries, wherever possible.
10. The committees are to be established on the basis of an equal number between teaching and ruling elders.
11. Nominations for membership on Assembly committees shall ordinarily be presented by the Finance and Administration committee who shall first canvas Presbyteries for potential nominees.
12. The Assembly permanent committees are the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, Committee on Christian Education and Publications,

Committee on Mission to New Zealand, and Committee on Mission to the World.

13. The General Assembly establishes guidelines for items such as but not limited to terms of call and stipends after hearing recommendations from the appropriate committee.

**14-2** The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least annually upon its own adjournment. It shall consist of all teaching elders in good standing with their Presbyteries and one ruling elder from each congregation or two from a congregation that is vacant. In order to achieve parity between teaching and ruling elders additional ruling elders may represent their churches on a pro rata basis according to communicant membership.

**14-3** When an emergency shall require a meeting of the General Assembly earlier than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator shall issue a call for a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of ten percent (10%) of the commissioners who had seats in the assembly at its preceding meeting, representing at least one-third (1/3) of the sessions. Should the moderator be for any reason unable to act, the stated clerk shall under the same requirements issue the call.

The members of the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to the preceding meeting of the Assembly or their alternates. A Session, however, shall have the right to elect a commissioner or alternate in the stead of one who had died since the last meeting of the Assembly, or of one who has notified the moderator of the Session of his inability to serve. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than twenty (20) days in advance to each commissioner and to the moderator of each Presbytery. In the notice the purpose of the meeting is to be stated and no other business is to be transacted.

**14-4** *Reserved.*

**14-5** Any twelve commissioners, of which half shall be ruling elders, shall constitute a quorum, provided there are at least two commissioners present from each presbytery.

**14-6** The General Assembly shall have power:

- a. To receive and issue<sup>1</sup> all appeals, references, and complaints regularly brought before it from the lower courts; to bear testimony against error in

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case".

- doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline;
- b. To give its advice and instruction, in conformity with the Constitution, in all cases submitted to it;
  - c. To review the records of the Presbyteries, to take care that the lower courts observe the Constitution; to redress whatever they may have done contrary to order;
  - d. To devise measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the Church;
  - e. To erect new Presbyteries, and unite and divide those which were erected with their consent;
  - f. To institute and superintend the agencies necessary in the general work of evangelisation; to appoint ministers of such labours as fall under its jurisdiction;
  - g. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, according to the rules provided therefore;
  - h. To receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of three-fourths (3/4) of the Sessions, other ecclesiastical bodies whose organisation is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church; to authorise Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying within their geographical bounds respectively;
  - i. To superintend the affairs of the whole Church;
  - j. To correspond with other churches; to unite with other ecclesiastical bodies whose organisation is conformed to the doctrines and order of this Church, such union to be effected by a mode of procedure defined in BCO Chapter 26; and
  - k. In general to recommend measures for the promotion of charity, truth and holiness through all the churches under its care.

**14-7** Actions of the General Assembly pursuant to the provision of BCO 14-6 such as deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and judicial decisions are to be given due and serious consideration by the Church and its lower courts when deliberating matters related to such action. Judicial decisions shall be binding and conclusive on the parties who are directly involved in the matter being adjudicated, and may be appealed to in subsequent similar cases as to any principle which may have been decided. (See BCO 3-5 and 3-6, and WCF 31:3).

**14-8** The whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote taken for final adjournment, the moderator shall say from the chair:

**By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, I do now declare that the General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is adjourned, to convene at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.**

After which he shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce or cause to be pronounced on those present the apostolic benediction.

**14-9** The General Assembly, before receiving into its membership any church, shall designate a commission to meet with the church's ruling elders to make certain that the elders understand and can sincerely adopt the doctrines and polity of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as contained in its Constitution. In the presence of the commission, the ruling elders shall be required to answer affirmatively the questions required of officers at their ordination.

## **CHAPTER 15 Ecclesiastical Commissions.**

**15-1** A commission differs from an ordinary committee in that while a committee is appointed to examine, consider and report, a commission is authorised to deliberate upon and conclude the business referred to it, except in the case of judicial commissions of a Presbytery appointed under BCO 15-3. A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted to the court appointing it. Upon such submission this record shall be entered on the minutes of the court appointing, except in the case of a presbytery commission serving as a session or a judicial commission as set forth in BCO 15-3. When a commission is appointed to serve as an interim Session, its actions are the actions of a Session, not a Presbytery. Every commission of a Presbytery or Session must submit complete minutes and a report of its activities at least once annually to the court which commissioned it.

**15-2** Among the matters that may be properly executed by commissions are the taking of the testimony in judicial cases, the ordination of ministers, the installation of ministers, the visitation of portions of the church affected with disorder, and the organisation of new churches.

Every commission appointed by Presbytery shall consist of at least two teaching elders and two ruling elders, and the Presbytery at the time of the appointment of the commission shall determine what the quorum shall be. However, should a Presbytery clothe a commission with judicial powers and authority to conduct judicial process, or with power to ordain or install a teaching elder of the Gospel, the quorum of such commission shall not be less than two teaching elders and two ruling elders. The quorum for a commission appointed as an interim session need not conform to the requirements of a judicial commission, but only to those of a session (BCO 12-1). When the ordination of a minister is committed to a commission, the Presbytery itself shall conduct the previous examination.

**15-3** Presbytery as a whole may try a judicial case within its jurisdiction (including the right to refer any strictly constitutional issue to a study committee with options listed below), or it may of its own motion commit any judicial case to a commission. Such a commission shall be appointed by the Presbytery from its members other than members of the Session of the church from which the case comes up. The commission shall try the case in the manner presented by the Rules of Discipline and shall submit to the Presbytery a full statement of the case and the judgment rendered. The Presbytery without debate shall approve or disapprove of the judgment, or may refer, (a debatable motion), any strictly constitutional issue(s) to a study committee. In case of referral, the Presbytery shall either dismiss some or all of the specific charges raised in the case or decide the case only after the report of the study

committee has been heard and discussed. If Presbytery approves, the judgment of the commission shall be final and shall be entered on the minutes of Presbytery as the action. If Presbytery disapproves, it shall hear the case as a whole, or appoint a new commission to hear the case again.

**CHAPTER 16 Church Orders -- The Doctrine of Vocation.**

**16-1** Ordinary vocation to office in the Church is the calling of God by the Spirit, through the inward testimony of a good conscience, the manifest approbation of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a lawful court of the Church.

**16-2** The government of the Church is by officers gifted to represent Christ, and the right of God's people to recognise by election to office those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the election, or at least the consent of that church.

**16-3** Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by which he is to be ordained.

**CHAPTER 17 Doctrine of Ordination.**

**17-1** Those who have been called to office in the Church are to be inducted by the ordination of a court.

**17-2** Ordination is the authoritative admission of one duly called to an office in the Church of God, accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands, to which it is proper to add the giving of the right hand of fellowship.

**17-3** As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special charge, no man shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of a definite work.

## **CHAPTER 18 Candidates for the Gospel Ministry.**

**18-1** A candidate for the ministry is a member of the Church in full communion who, believing himself to be called to preach the Gospel, submits himself to the care and guidance of the Presbytery in his course of study and of practical training to prepare himself for this office.

**18-2** Every applicant for the ministry must put himself under the care of Presbytery, which should ordinarily be the Presbytery that has jurisdiction of the church of which he is a member. The endorsement of his Session must be given to the Presbytery, consisting of testimonials regarding his Christian character and promise of usefulness in the ministry. The endorsement should also describe the activities of ministry the applicant has participated in with brief evaluation.

Every applicant for care shall be a member of the congregation whose session provides an endorsement for at least six months before filing his application, except in those cases deemed extraordinary by the Presbytery.

Every applicant must file his application with the clerk of the Presbytery at least one month before the meeting of the Presbytery. An applicant for care may not be received under care and examined for ordination at the same meeting of the Presbytery, since he must serve a period of at least one year of internship prior to ordination (see BCO 19-7 and 21-4). An applicant for internship is obliged to be under care and may be licensed to preach the Gospel; further, one who is not already under care may be taken under care, be licensed to preach the Gospel, and become an intern at the same meeting of Presbytery.

**18-3** The applicant shall appear before the Presbytery in person, and shall be examined by the Presbytery on experiential religion and on his motives for seeking the ministry.

If the testimonials and the examination prove satisfactory, the Presbytery shall receive him under its care after the following manner:

The moderator shall propose to the applicant these questions:

- 1. Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a becoming Christian character, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for the sacred ministry?**
- 2. Do you promise to submit yourself to the proper supervision of the Presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for the ministry?**

If these questions be answered in the affirmative, the moderator, or someone appointed by him, shall give the candidate a brief charge; and the proceeding shall close with prayer.

The name of the applicant is then to be recorded on the Presbytery's roll of candidates for the ministry.

**18-4** The candidate continues to be a private member of the church and subject to the jurisdiction of the Session, but as respects his preparatory training for the ministry he is under the oversight of the Presbytery. It shall be the duty of the Presbytery to show a kindly and sympathetic interest in him, and to give him counsel and guidance in regard to his studies, his practical training, and the institutions of learning he should attend. In no case may a candidate omit from his course of study any of the subjects prescribed in the Form of Government as tests for ordination without obtaining the consent of Presbytery (see BCO 21-4); and where such consent is given the Presbytery shall record the fact and the reasons therefore.

**18-5** For the development of his Christian character, for the service he can render, and for his more effective training, the candidate, when entering on his theological studies, should be authorised and encouraged by the Presbytery to conduct public worship, to expound the Scriptures to the people, and to engage in other forms of Christian work. These forms of service should be rendered under the direction of Presbytery, and also with the sanction and under the guidance of the candidate's instructors during the time of his being under their instruction. A candidate should not undertake to serve a church which is without a pastor as regular supply unless he has been licensed and approved for that supply by the Presbytery having jurisdiction of the church (see BCO 19-1).

**18-6** The Presbytery shall require every candidate for the ministry under its care to make a report to it at least once a year; and it shall secure from his instructors an annual report upon his department, diligence, and progress in study.

**18-7** The Presbytery may, upon application of the candidate, give a certificate of dismissal to another Presbytery. The candidate may be allowed to retain membership in his home church upon the request of his Session and the approval of both Presbyteries involved. A candidate shall, at his request, be allowed to withdraw from the care of the Presbytery. The Presbytery may also, for sufficient reasons, remove the name of the candidate from its roll of candidates; but in such a case it shall report its actions and the reasons therefore to the candidate and to the Session of his church.

**18-8** An applicant coming as a candidate from another denomination must present testimonials of his standing in that body and must become a member of a congregation in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. He shall then fulfil the requirements of applicants listed under BCO 18-2, as well as requirements placed

upon those desiring to be licensed or to become an intern as set forth in BCO Chapter 19.

## CHAPTER 19 Licensure and Internship

### A. Licensure

**19-1** To preserve the purity of the preaching of the Gospel, no man is permitted to preach in the pulpits of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand on a regular basis without proper licensure from the Presbytery having jurisdiction where he will preach. An ordained teaching elder who is a member in good standing of another Presbytery of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand may be licensed after being examined as to his views, according to the provision of BCO 13-6. This license shall immediately become void if the minister's own Presbytery administers against him a censure of suspension from office or the sacraments, or deposition from office, or of excommunication (in the event of such censures, the Presbytery with jurisdiction shall always notify the licensing Presbytery). A ruling elder, a candidate for the ministry, a minister from some other denomination, or some other man may be licensed for the purpose of regularly providing the preaching of the Word upon his giving satisfaction to the Presbytery of his gifts and passing the licensure examination. (See also BCO 22-5 and 22-6.)

### **19-2** Examination for Licensure.

The examination for licensure shall be as follows:

- a. Give a statement of his Christian experience and inward call to preach the Gospel in written form and/or orally before the Presbytery (at the discretion of the Presbytery):
- b. Be tested with a written and/or oral examination by the Presbytery (at the discretion of the Presbytery) for his:
  1. basic knowledge of Biblical doctrine as outlined in the *Confession of Faith* of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
  2. practical knowledge of the Bible content.
  3. basic knowledge of the government of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as defined in *The Book of Church Order*.
- c. Be examined orally before Presbytery for his views in the areas outlined in part b above.
- d. Provide his written sermon on an assigned passage of Scripture embodying both explanation and application, and present orally his sermon or exhortation before Presbytery or before a committee of Presbytery.

No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of examination except in extraordinary cases; and whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these parts, it shall always make a record of the reasons therefore, and of the trial parts omitted.

**19-3** Questions for Licensure.

If the Presbytery be satisfied with the trials of the applicant, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner:

The moderator shall propose to him the following questions, namely:

1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the whole system of doctrine in the *Confession of Faith* of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture?**
3. **Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?**
4. **Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this Presbytery, or of any other into the bounds of which you may be called?**

**19-4** The applicant having answered these questions in the affirmative, the moderator shall offer a prayer suitable for the occasion, and shall address the applicant as follows:

**In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He has given to the Church for its edification, we do license you to preach the Gospel in this Presbytery 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.**

Record shall be made of the licensure in the following or like form:

**At \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery, having received testimonials commending \_\_\_\_\_, proceeded to submit him to the prescribed examination for licensure, which was met to the approval of the Presbytery. Having satisfactorily answered the questions for licensure, \_\_\_\_\_ was licensed by the Presbytery to preach the Gospel within the bounds of this Presbytery.**

**19-5** When any licentiate shall have occasion to remove from the bounds of his Presbytery into those of another, the latter Presbytery may, at its discretion and upon a two thirds majority vote, on his producing proper testimonials from the former, repeat any portion of the previous Presbytery's examination it desires. The Presbytery into whose bounds the licentiate is moving, however, may examine the man concerning:

- a. his Christian experience,
- b. his call to preach the Gospel,
- c. his views in theology,
- d. Bible content,
- e. church government.

This Presbytery then may license him to preach within its bounds.

**19-6** The license to preach the Gospel shall expire at the end of four years. The Presbytery may, if it thinks proper, renew it without further examination. The licentiate must apply for renewal prior to expiration. If the license expires, the stated clerk shall report the expiration to the Presbytery and to the individual's Session, and such action shall be recorded in the minutes. The procedures of BCO 19-2 must be followed for re-licensure and such fact shall be recorded in the minutes. The license may be terminated at any time by a simple majority vote of the issuing Presbytery. The Presbytery shall always record its reasons for this action in its minutes.

## **B. Internship**

**19-7** The Holy Scriptures require that some trial be previously made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Word, both concerning their gifts and concerning their ability to rule as teaching elders, in order that this sacred office may not be degraded by being committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the Church may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those to whom this sacred office is to be committed.

To provide for such a period of trial, a candidate for ordination must serve an internship. This period of internship shall be at least one year in length, and may be longer at the discretion of the Presbytery so as to give sufficient time for the Presbytery to judge the candidate's qualifications and service. This period of internship may occur during or after the candidate's formal theological education. When it occurs during his formal theological education, it may include an intern year in addition to his time of academic training or it may run concurrent with his academic training.

The nature of the internship shall be determined by the Presbytery, but it should involve the candidate in full scope of the duties of any regular ministerial calling approved by the Presbytery. It is to be both a time of practical instruction and testing by the Presbytery, and may be in any work which the Presbytery deems to be a suitable ministry to test the intern's gifts. The intern should be closely supervised by the Presbytery throughout this trial period.

**19-8** An applicant for internship must be a candidate and may be a licentiate in the Presbytery in which he is seeking to become an intern. He may, however, become a candidate, and an intern at the same meeting of Presbytery. If an applicant for internship is already a candidate in another Presbytery, that Presbytery should dismiss him as a candidate to the Presbytery in which he is seeking to become an intern.

**19-9** Examination for Internship.

Before the applicant begins his period of internship, he shall give to the Presbytery a written and/or an oral statement (at the discretion of the Presbytery) of his inward call to the ministry of the Word.

**19-10** When an applicant is approved for internship, the moderator of the Presbytery shall offer a prayer suitable for the occasion, and shall address the applicant, if present, as follows:

**In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He has given to the Church for its edification, we do declare you to be an intern of this Presbytery as a means of testing your gifts for the holy ministry 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.**

Record shall be made of the internship in the following or like form, namely:

**At \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery, having received testimonials commending \_\_\_\_\_, having received him as a candidate for the ministry, has placed him under internship at his request in order to test his gifts for the holy ministry.**

**19-11** When any intern shall have occasion, while his internship is in progress, to remove from the bounds of his own Presbytery into those of another, the latter Presbytery may, at its discretion, on his producing proper testimonials from the

former, take up his internship at the point at which it was left, and conduct it to a conclusion in the same manner as if it had been commenced by itself. Presbytery may examine the intern on:

- a. his Christian experience,
- b. his call to the ministry,
- c. his views in theology, and
- d. church government.

When God gives the intern the providential opportunity to serve the church and to receive part of his training within the bounds of a Presbytery other than the one in which he has been declared an intern, the Presbyteries involved may develop a cooperative agreement to assure the proper training of the intern. In such cases the home Presbytery retains the final responsibility for and authority over the internship, but may rely to any extent considered necessary and proper in the circumstances, on the assistance of the sister Presbytery. When regular preaching of the Word is involved, care must be taken to comply with BCO 19-1.

**19-12** Presbyteries should require interns to devote themselves diligently to the trial of their gifts; and no one should be ordained to the work of the ministry of the Word until he has demonstrated the ability both to edify and to rule in the Church. Reports on every intern in the Presbytery should be presented at each stated meeting of the Presbytery by the committee of Presbytery charged with the oversight of interns, and these reports shall become a part of the minutes of Presbytery. The Presbytery shall also require every intern himself to make a report to it at least once a year describing his ministerial experiences. If the intern is still studying, the Presbytery shall secure from his instructors an annual report upon his deportment, diligence, and progress in study.

**19-13** At the end of the period of time set by the Presbytery for his internship, an intern shall have his internship either approved or disapproved. Even if it is approved, he cannot be ordained without a call to some specific work. If the internship is disapproved, the Presbytery may either extend it for another definite period of time or it may completely rescind his intern status and may revoke his internship. If the intern shall devote himself unnecessarily to such pursuits as interfere with a full trial of his gifts, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery to rescind his intern status, and to record its reasons therefore in the Minutes of Presbytery.

**19-14** An intern, who, during his internship, is to serve a congregation in the capacity of the minister of the Word must be called by the congregation in the same way that a regular minister is called. A congregation may later call such a man as its pastor.

This call must be approved by Presbytery prior to the time of ordination. In the event a congregation does not desire to call such a man as its pastor as determined by a congregational vote, notice should be given as early as possible. Interns may be called to serve as assistants to ministers during their internship, by the Session of a church with approval of the call by Presbytery.

**19-15** Restrictions.

The intern may be asked by the moderator of a Session temporarily to chair the meeting of the Session. In such cases the moderator shall supervise this activity and may overrule the intern or re-assume the chair at will. The intern is not a member of Session and may not vote in the meetings unless he has previously been ordained a Ruling Elder and elected to the Session by the congregation. Normally, he shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Session and Diaconate when he has been called to work out his internship by a congregation. He shall have the right to conduct funerals. An intern may not administer the Sacraments. He may serve on committees of the church he serves.

**19-16** Where circumstances warrant, a Presbytery may approve previous experience which is equivalent to internship. This equivalency shall be decided by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of Presbytery at any of its regular meetings. Such equivalent experience shall be decided only after the Presbytery's internship committee has determined and reported that the candidate has met the following requirements:

- a. he has had at least one (1) year of experience in comparable ministry;
- b. he has satisfactorily performed the full scope of ministerial duties;
- c. he has the manifest approbation of God's people in a local church as having the requisite gifts for the pastoral ministry.

## **CHAPTER 20 The Election of Pastors.**

**20-1** Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. (See also BCO 8-7 and 21-1).

A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as stipend, holidays, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the BCO Chapter 8.

**20-2** Every church should be under the pastoral oversight of a minister, and when a church has no pastor it should seek to secure one without delay.

A church shall proceed to elect a pastor in the following manner: The Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pulpit committee which may be composed of members from the congregation at large or the Session, as designated by the congregation. The pulpit committee shall, after consultation and deliberation, and with the approval of Session, recommend to the congregation a pastoral candidate who, in its judgment, fulfils the Constitutional requirements of that office (e.g., BCO Chapter 8, 13-6 and Chapter 21) and is most suited to be profitable to the spiritual interests of the congregation (cf. BCO 20-6).

The Session shall order a congregational meeting to convene at the regular place of worship. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of this meeting shall be given at least one week prior to the time of the meeting.

**20-3** When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it is important that they should elect a minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer. All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the churches to which they are respectively attached.

**20-4** Method of voting: The voters being convened, and prayer for divine guidance having been offered, the moderator shall put the question:

**Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor?**

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If they declare themselves ready, the moderator shall call for nominations, or the election may proceed by ballot without nominations. In every case a majority of all the voters present shall be required to elect.

**20-5** On the election of a pastor, if it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to the candidate who has received a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the moderator shall endeavour to dissuade the majority from prosecuting it further; but if the electors be nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a pastor, the moderator shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by them, certifying at the same time in writing the number of those who do not concur in the call, and any facts of importance, all of which proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the call.

**20-6** Form of call: The terms of the call shall be approved by the congregation in the following or like form:

**The \_\_\_\_\_ Church being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, \_\_\_\_\_, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labours that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call 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. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ a year in regular monthly (or quarterly) payments, and other benefits, such as, manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses etc., during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.**

**In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Attest: I, having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to \_\_\_\_\_ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the *Book of Church Order*, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorised to do so by vote of the congregation.**

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**Moderator of the Meeting**

**20-7** If any church shall choose to designate its ruling elders and deacons, or a committee to sign its call, it shall be at liberty to do so. But it shall, in such case, be fully certified to the Presbytery by the minister or other person who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the church, and that the call has been in all other respects prepared as above directed.

**20-8** Prosecution of call: One or more commissioners shall be appointed by the church to present and prosecute the call before their Presbytery.

**20-9** When a pastor desires to accept a call to another Presbytery, he must be examined and approved by the Presbytery for the pastorate to which he is being called, and must be released for transfer by his present Presbytery from his pastorate.

**20-10** A congregation desiring to call a pastor from his charge, shall, by its commissioners to the Presbytery prosecute the call before its Presbytery. The Presbytery, having heard all the parties, may, upon viewing the whole case, either recommend them to desist from prosecuting the call; or may order it to be delivered to the minister to whom it is addressed, with or without advice; or may decline to place the call in his hands; as it shall appear most beneficial for the peace and edification of the Church at large.

No pastor shall be transferred without his own consent.

**20-11** If the congregation or other field of labour to which a minister, licentiate, or candidate is called, be under the jurisdiction of a different Presbytery, on his acceptance of a call he shall be furnished with the proper testimonials, and required to repair immediately to the Presbytery, in order that he may be regularly inducted into his office. (See BCO Chapter 21).

**20-12** A candidate or licentiate found fit and called (in accordance with BCO 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for ordination. If approved the Presbytery shall proceed to his ordination.

**20-13** A missionary who is an ordained teaching elder in another denomination found fit and called (in accordance with BCO 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for admission to Presbytery in accordance with BCO 13-6. If approved he shall be enrolled as a member of Presbytery.

## **CHAPTER 21 The Ordination and Installation of Ministers.**

**21-1** No minister, licentiate or candidate shall receive a call from a church but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deem it for the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed.

Ordinarily a candidate or licentiate may not be granted permission by the Presbytery to move on to the field to which he has been called, prior to his examination for licensure or ordination. Likewise an ordained minister from another Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand Presbytery or another denomination, ordinarily shall not move on to the field to which he has been called until examined and received by Presbytery.

**21-2** When an intern has completed his internship to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, and has accepted a call, the Presbytery shall take immediate steps for his ordination.

**21-3** No Presbytery shall ordain any intern to the office of minister of the Word with reference to his labouring within the bounds of another Presbytery, but shall furnish him with the necessary testimonials, and require him to repair to the Presbytery within whose bounds he expects to labour, that he may submit himself to its authority, according to the Constitution of the Church.

**21-4** An intern applying for ordination shall be required to present a diploma of Bachelor or Master from some approved theological seminary or authentic testimonials of having completed a regular course of theological studies, or a certificate of completion of and endorsement from a theological study program as approved by the General Assembly and one of the Presbyteries of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. No Presbytery shall omit any of these educational requirements except in extraordinary cases, and then only with a three-fourths (3/4) approval of the Presbytery. Whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these educational requirements, it shall always make a record of the reasons for such omission and the parts omitted. The intern shall also present satisfactory testimonials as to the completion and approval of his internship in the practice of the ministry.

Every candidate for ordination shall ordinarily have met the requirements of the Assembly's approved curriculum. Ordinarily, the intern shall have been examined in most of the following trials when he was licensed. If the Presbytery previously approved all parts of the licensure examination, it need not re-examine the intern in those areas at this time. If there were areas of weakness, which the Presbytery noted, or if any member of the Presbytery desires to do so, the intern may be examined on

particular points again. Additionally, the intern shall be examined on any parts required for ordination which were not covered in his examination for licensure. In all cases, he should be asked to indicate whether he has changed his previous views concerning any points in the *Confession of Faith* and *Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*.

Trials for ordination shall consist of:

a. A careful examination as to:

1. his acquaintance with experiential religion, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9),
2. his knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages,
3. Bible content,
4. theology,
5. the Sacraments,
6. Church history,
7. the history of Presbyterianism in New Zealand, and
8. the principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.

A Presbytery may accept a seminary degree which includes study in the original languages in lieu of an oral examination in the original languages.

- b. He shall prepare a thesis on some theological topic assigned by Presbytery.
- c. The candidate shall prepare an exegesis on an assigned portion of Scripture, requiring the use of the original language or languages.
- d. He shall further be required to preach a sermon before the Presbytery or committee thereof, upon three-fourths (3/4) vote.

No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of trial for ordination except in extraordinary cases, and then only with three-fourths (3/4) approval of Presbytery.

Whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these parts, it shall always make a record of the reasons for such omissions and of the trial parts omitted. The Presbytery being fully satisfied of his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a day for his ordination, which ought, if practicable, to be in that church of which he is to be the pastor.

The extraordinary clauses should be limited to extraordinary circumstances of the church or proven extraordinary gifts of the man. Presbyteries should exercise diligence and care in the use of these provisions in order that they not prevent the ordination of a candidate for whom there are truly exceptional circumstances, nor

ordain (nor receive from other denominations BCO 13-6) a person who is inadequately prepared for the ministry.

**21-5** The day appointed for the ordination having come, and the Presbytery being convened, a sermon suitable for the occasion shall be preached by a person appointed or invited by the Presbytery. The Presbytery member appointed to preside shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination; he shall point out the nature and importance of the ordinance, and endeavour to impress the audience with a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

### **Questions for Ordination**

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

- 1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the whole system of doctrine in the *Confession of Faith* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any part of this system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the taking of this ordination vow?**
- 3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, in conformity with the general principles of Biblical polity?**
- 4. Do you promise to submit yourself to your brothers in the Lord?**
- 5. Have you been drawn, 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 and peace 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 your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether private or public; and to endeavour by the grace of God to maintain a lifestyle**

**appropriate for a minister of the Gospel of Christ and to be a worthy example to the flock of which God shall make you overseer?**

- 8. Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, reaffirming your acceptance of the call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to fulfil to it the duties of a pastor?**

### **Questions to Congregation**

**21-6** The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall propose to the church the following questions:

- 1. Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your pastor?**
- 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 labours, and to assist his endeavours for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
- 4. Do you affirm that you will continue to provide to him all that was promised in the terms of call and to provide for him whatever you may see needful for the sake of the Gospel and his proper support among you?**

**21-7** The people having answered these questions in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel, and the presiding minister shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly set him apart to the holy office of the Gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees; and the minister who presides shall first, followed by all members of the Presbytery, take him by the right hand, saying, in words to this effect:

**We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry with us.**

The presiding minister shall then say:

**I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed pastor of this congregation, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand; and that as such he is**

**entitled to all support, encouragement, honour , and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

After which the minister presiding, or some other teaching or ruling elder appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge to the pastor and to the congregation, to persevere in the discharge of their reciprocal duties, and then after prayer and the singing of a psalm, or hymn, the congregation shall be dismissed with the benediction. The Presbytery shall duly record its proceedings.

**21-8** After the installation, the heads of families of the congregation then present, or at least the ruling elders and deacons, should come forward to their pastor, and give him their right hand, in token of cordial reception and affectionate regard.

### **Questions for Installation**

**21-9** In the installation of an ordained minister, the following questions are to be substituted for those addressed to a candidate for ordination, namely:

- 1. Are you now willing to take charge of this congregation as their pastor, agreeable to your declaration in accepting 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 the Church?**
- 3. Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavour faithfully to fulfil all the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a lifestyle appropriate for a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeable to your ordination engagements?**

### **Questions to Congregation**

**21-10** The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall propose to the church the following questions:

- 1. Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have called to be your pastor?**
- 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 labours, and to assist his endeavours for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
4. **Do you affirm that you will continue to provide to him all that was promised in the terms of call and to provide for him whatever you may see needful for the sake of the Gospel and his proper support among you?**

**21-11** In the ordination of interns as evangelists the same questions are to be propounded as in the ordination of pastors, with the exception of the eighth, for which the following shall be substituted:

**Do you now undertake the work of an evangelist, and do you promise, in reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the fulfilment of all your duties as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

## **CHAPTER 22 The Pastoral Relations.**

**22-1** The various pastoral relations are pastor, associate pastor, and assistant pastor.

**22-2** The pastor and associate pastor are elected by the congregation using the form of call in BCO 20-6. Being elected by the congregation, they become members of the Session.

**22-3** An assistant pastor is called by the Session, by the permission and approval of Presbytery, under the provisions of BCO 20-1 and 13-2, with Presbytery membership being governed by the same provisions that apply to pastors. He is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions to moderate the Session under the provisions of BCO 12-4.

**22-4** The relationship of the associate pastor to the church is determined by the congregation. The relationship of the assistant pastor to the church is determined by the Session. The dissolution of the relationship of both is governed by the provision of BCO Chapter 23.

**22-5** In order to provide necessary changes in pastorates, a temporary relation may be established between a church and a minister called Stated Supply. If a church is unable to secure a regular pastor or a Stated Supply, then the Session with approval of Presbytery may establish a temporary relation between the church and a licentiate called Student Supply or Ruling Elder Supply.

**22-6** Such temporary relationships can take place at the invitation of the church Session to the minister of the Word, the licentiate, or the ruling elder. The length of the relationship will be determined by the Session and the minister, the licentiate, or the ruling elder, with the approval of the Presbytery. Stated supply, student supply, or ruling elder supply relationships will be for no longer than one year, renewable at the request of the Session and at the review of the Presbytery. (See also BCO 19-1).

## **CHAPTER 23 The Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation and The Procedure for Honourable Retirement.**

**23-1** When any minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the church to appear by its commissioners, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation. If the church fail to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation dissolved.

If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

The associate or assistant pastors may continue to serve a congregation when the pastoral relation of the senior pastor is dissolved, but they may not normally succeed the senior pastor without an intervening term of service in a different field of labour. However a congregation by a secret ballot with four-fifths (4/5) majority vote may petition Presbytery for an exception which by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote Presbytery may grant. Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the senior pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned.

**23-2** The Presbytery may designate a minister as honour ably retired when the minister by reason of age wishes to be retired, or as medically disabled when by reason of infirmity is no longer able to serve the church in the active ministry of the Gospel. A minister medically disabled or honour ably retired and who is continuing to fulfil recognised ministry in the life of the church, shall continue to hold membership in his Presbytery. He may serve on committees or commissions if so elected or appointed.

**23-3** A minister, being medically disabled or honour ably retired, may be elected pastor emeritus by a congregation which seeks to honour his past earnest labours among them.

## **CHAPTER 24 Election, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons.**

### **Election**

**24-1** Every church shall elect men to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. After the close of the nomination period nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
- b. For elders, his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained in the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (BCO Preface III, THE CONSTITUTION DEFINED),

Note: Those who cannot subscribe fully to the Confession of Faith with regard to baptism may at Session's discretion be declared eligible for election to office provided that they:

1. *meet the existing conditions for election to office,*
  2. *discuss their convictions on baptism with Session,*
  3. *agree not to promote any views on baptism among the membership which are at variance with those expressed in the Confession of Faith,*
  4. *Show a clear recognition and support of the fact that the church will continue to be committed to a covenantal view of baptism.*
- c. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
  - d. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (BCO 24-5)

If there are candidates eligible for the election, Presbytery having given their concurrence, (in the case of elders) the Session shall report to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections.

**24-2** The pastor is, ordinarily, moderator of congregational meetings. If there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a

24. Election, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

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minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand or any male member of that particular church.

**24-3** All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the churches to which they respectively belong. A majority vote of those present is required for election. (See also BCO 20-4.)

**24-4** The voters being convened, the moderator shall explain the purpose of the meeting and then put the question:

**Are you now ready to proceed to the election of additional ruling elders (or deacons) from the list presented?**

If they declare themselves ready, the election may proceed by private ballot without nomination. In every case a majority of all the voters present shall be required to elect.

### **Ordination and Installation**

**24-5** The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the presence of the congregation (together with Presbytery representation in the case of elders), a sermon shall be preached after which the moderator of Session shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder, or deacon, together with the character proper to be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled. Having done this, he shall propose to the candidate, in the presence of the church, the following questions, namely:

- 1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 2. In the case of an elder, do you sincerely receive and adopt the whole system of doctrine in the *Confession of Faith* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any part of this system of doctrine, you will, on your initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the taking of this ordination vow?**
- 3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?**

4. **Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all its duties, and to endeavour by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?**
5. **Do you promise to submit yourself to your brothers in the Lord?**
6. **Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?**

The officer elect having answered in the affirmative, the moderator shall address to the members of the church the following question:

### **Ruling Elders**

**Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder, and do you promise to yield him all that honour, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?**

The members of the church having answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall then be set apart, with prayer by the moderator or any other Session member and the laying on of the hands of the Session and Presbytery, to the office of ruling elder. Prayer being ended, the members of the Session and Presbytery shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand, saying in words to this effect:

**We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.**

The moderator shall then say:

**I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed a ruling elder in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honour and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

After which the moderator or any other member of the Session/Presbytery shall give to the ruling elder and to the church an exhortation suited to the occasion.

### **Deacons**

**Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a deacon, and do you promise to yield him all that honour and encouragement in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?**

The members of the church having answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall then be set apart, with prayer by the moderator or any other Session member and the laying on of the hands of the Session, to the office of deacon . Prayer being ended, the members of the Session shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand, saying in words to this effect:

**We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.**

The moderator shall then say:

**I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed a deacon in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement and honour in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

After which the moderator or any other member of the Session shall give to the deacon and to the church an exhortation suited to the occasion

**24-6** Ordination to the offices of ruling elder or deacon is perpetual; nor can such offices be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded from either office but by deposition after regular trial; yet a ruling elder or deacon may have reasons which he deems valid for being released from the active duties of his office. In such a case the Session, after conference with him and careful consideration of the matter, may, if it thinks proper, grant him leave of absence for a time or accept his resignation and dissolve the official relationship which exists between him and the church as seems most appropriate.

If a member or members in good standing have concerns about the functioning of a ruling elder or deacon, but there are no grounds for instituting formal disciplinary procedures, such concerns shall be taken up with the session. If unresolved pastorally, the standard rules for complaint or appeal shall apply.

**24-7** When a ruling elder or deacon who has been released from his official relation is again elected to his office in the same or another church, he shall be installed after the above form with the omission of ordination.

24. Election, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

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**24-8** When a ruling elder or deacon without leave of Session cannot or does not for a period of one year perform the duties of his office, his official relationship shall be dissolved by the Session and the action reported to the congregation.

**24-9** When a deacon or ruling elder becomes infirm or reaches the age of seventy (70), he may at his request and with the approval of the Session be designated deacon or elder emeritus. When so designated, he is no longer required to perform the regular duties of his office, but may continue to perform certain of these duties on a voluntary basis, if requested by the Session or a higher court. He may attend Diaconate or Session meetings, if he so desires, and may participate fully in the discussion of any issues, but may not vote.

## **CHAPTER 25 Congregational Meetings.**

**25-1** For the purpose of congregational meetings the congregation consists of all the communing members in good and regular standing of a particular church, and they only are entitled to vote.

**25-2** Whenever it may seem for the best interests of the church that a congregational meeting should be held, the Session shall call such meeting and give public notice of at least one week. No business shall be transacted at such meeting except what is stated in the notice. The Session shall always call a congregational meeting when requested in writing to do so:

- a. by one-fourth (1/4) of the communing members of a church or 100 communing members which ever is the lesser.

Upon such a proper request, if the Session cannot act, fails to act or refuses to act, to call such a congregational meeting within thirty (30) days from the receipt of such a request, then any member or members in good standing may file a complaint in accordance with the provisions of BCO Chapter 43.

**25-3** The quorum of the congregational meeting shall consist of one-fourth (1/4) of the resident communing members.

**25-4** The pastor shall ordinarily be the moderator of congregational meetings for prudential reasons. If it should be impracticable or inexpedient for him to preside, or if there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, or any male member of that particular church.

**25-5** The session clerk shall serve at that meeting and whose duty shall be to keep correct minutes of the proceedings and of all business transacted and to preserve these minutes in a permanent form, after they have been attested by the moderator.

**25-6** A particular church (including a mission church), may form and incorporate a charitable trust or society:

- a. to buy, sell, or mortgage property for the church,
- b. to hold and operate bank accounts for the furtherance of the purposes of the church,
- c. to accept and execute deeds,
- d. to hold and defend titles to the same, and

- e. to manage any permanent special funds entrusted to them for the furtherance of the purposes of the church.

The trust deed or constitution of any such trust or society shall ordinarily:

- a. reserve to the Session a power to remove any one or more of the trustees or officers of the trust or society, and a power to appoint or approve the appointment of trustees or officers of the trust or society, and
- b. subject to clause 25-11, incorporate a requirement for all decisions of the trust or society to be in conformity with the Constitution of the Church.

The powers or duties of such trustees or officers must not infringe upon the powers or duties of the Session or of the Board of Deacons.

**25-7** *Reserved.*

**25-8** A particular church, or any charitable trust or society established by it in accordance with BCO 25-6, shall have sole title to its property, real, personal, or mixed, tangible or intangible, and shall be sole owner of any equity in any real estate, or any fund or property of any kind held by or belonging to that particular church, trust or society, or any board, society, committee, Sunday school class or branch thereof. The superior courts of the Church may receive monies or properties from a particular church only by free and voluntary action of the latter.

**25-9** All particular churches shall be entitled to hold, own and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of reversion whatsoever to any Presbytery, General Assembly or any other courts hereafter created, trustees or other officers of such courts.

**25-10** The provisions of this BCO Chapter 25 are to be construed as a solemn covenant whereby the Church as a whole promises never to attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation against its will, whether or not such congregation remains within or chooses to withdraw from this body. All officers and courts of the Church are hereby prohibited from making any such attempt.

**25-11** While a congregation consists of all the communing members of a particular church, and in matters ecclesiastical the actions of such local congregation or church shall be in conformity with the provisions of this *Book of Church Order*, nevertheless, in matters pertaining to the subject matters referred to in this BCO Chapter 25, including specifically the right to affiliate with or become a member of this body or a Presbytery hereof and the right to withdraw from or to sever any affiliation of connection with this body or any Presbytery hereof, action may be taken by such local congregation or local church in accordance with the civil laws applicable to such local

congregation or local church; and as long as such action is taken in compliance with such applicable civil laws, then such shall be the action of the local congregation or local church.

It is expressly recognised that each local congregation or local church shall be competent to function and to take actions covering the matters set forth herein as long as such action is in compliance with the civil laws with which said local congregation or local church must comply, and this right shall never be taken from said local congregation or local church without the express consent of and affirmative action of such local church or congregation.

Particular churches need remain in association with any court of this body only so long as they themselves so desire. The relationship is voluntary, based upon mutual love and confidence, and is in no sense to be maintained by the exercise of any force or coercion whatsoever. A particular church may withdraw from any court of this body at any time for reasons which seem to it sufficient.

In doing so the following procedure shall be followed:

- a. At a regularly convened congregational meeting and upon a two third majority vote, a particular church may inform Presbytery of its decision to withdraw.
- b. A second congregational meeting not less than 30 days following may by two third majority vote, ratify the decision to withdraw, Presbytery having been given an opportunity to address the congregation.

**25-12** If a church is dissolved by the Presbytery at the request of the congregation and no disposition has been made of its property by those who hold the title to the property within six months after such dissolution, then those who held the title to the property at the time of such dissolution shall deliver, convey and transfer to the Presbytery of which the church was a member, or to the authorised agents of the Presbytery, all property of the church; and the receipt and acquaintance of the Presbytery, or its proper representatives, shall be a full and complete discharge of all liabilities of such persons holding the property of the church. The Presbytery receiving such property shall apply the same or the proceeds thereof at its discretion.

## **CHAPTER 26 Amending the Constitution of the Church.**

**26-1** The Constitution of the New Zealand Grace Presbyterian Church, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.

**26-2** Amendments to the *Book of Church Order* may be made only in the following manner:

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by majority of those present and voting in the General Assembly, and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Presbyteries. Where dividing the number of Presbyteries by three does not result in a whole number, then 2/3 of the total votes, to be taken by ballot across all Presbyteries, shall be considered approval of the amendment.
3. The approval and enactment by a subsequent General Assembly by a majority of those present and voting.

**26-3** Amendments to the *Confession of Faith* may be made only in the following manner:

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting in the General Assembly, and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The approval of three-fourths (3/4) of the total votes cast by ballot of those physically present and voting in all Presbyteries.
3. The approval and enactment by a subsequent General Assembly by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting.

This paragraph (BCO 26-3) can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* of the church.

**26-4** In voting upon an amendment to the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, the Presbyteries may not divide the parts of the amendment except as directed by the General Assembly which has recommended its adoption.

**26-5** Full organic union and consolidation of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand with any other ecclesiastical body can be effected only in the following manner:

1. The approval of the proposed union by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting in the General Assembly and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The approval of three-fourths (3/4) of the total votes cast by ballot of those physically present and voting in all Presbyteries.
3. The approval and consummation by a subsequent General Assembly by three-fourths (3/4) vote of those present and voting.

This paragraph (BCO 26-5) can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* of the church.

**26-6** If by reason of the failure of a number of Presbyteries to act, or to report action, on any proposed amendment to the Standards and the response of the Presbyteries is not satisfactory to the succeeding General Assembly, it may defer action for one year. In that event the General Assembly shall urge the delinquent Presbyteries to report their judgment to the next Assembly, which shall take final action on the proposed amendment.

## PART II - THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

### CHAPTER 27 Discipline - Its Nature, Subjects and Ends.

**27-1** Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare.

The term has two senses:

- a. the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts;
- b. the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial process.

**27-2** All baptised persons, being members of the Church are subject to its discipline and entitled to the benefits thereof.

**27-3** The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

- a. the glory of God,
- b. the purity of His Church,
- c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offences, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honour of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

**27-4** The power which Christ has given the Church is for building up, and not for destruction. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. Discipline is systematic training under the authority of God's Scripture. No communing or noncommunings member of the Church should be allowed to stray from the Scripture's discipline. Therefore, teaching elders must:

- a. instruct the officers in discipline,
- b. instruct the congregation in discipline,

- c. jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and church courts.

**27-5** Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will.

Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are:

- a. Instruction in the Word;
- b. Individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1);
- c. If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16);
- d. If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition (See BCO Chapter 29 and Chapter 30 for further explanation).

Steps (a) through (d) must be followed in proper order for the exercise of discipline.

## **CHAPTER 28 Disciplining of Noncommuning Members.**

**28-1** The spiritual nurture, instruction and training of the children of the Church are committed by God primarily to their parents. They are responsible to the Church for the faithful discharge of their obligations. It is a principal duty of the Church to promote true religion in the home. True discipleship involves learning the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit both at home and in the Church. Without learning there is no growth and without growth there is no discipline and without discipline there is sin and iniquity (1 Timothy 4:7).

**28-2** The home and the Church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and in the church Catechisms. To this end Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the Church to guide their children in the catechising and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.

**28-3** The Church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

**28-4** Adult noncommuning members, who receive with meekness and appreciation the oversight and instruction of the Church, are entitled to special attention. Their rights and privileges under the covenant should be frequently and fully explained, and they should be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant obligations.

**28-5** All noncommuning members shall be deemed under the care of the church to which their parents belong, if they live under the parental roof and are minors; otherwise, under that of the church where they reside, or with which they ordinarily worship.

## **CHAPTER 29 Offences.**

**29-1** An offence, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the doctrines or practice of a Church member professing faith in Christ which is contrary to the Word of God. The *Confession of Faith* of the Westminster Assembly, together with the formularies of government, discipline, and worship are accepted by the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice. Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any court as an offence, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture.

**29-2** Offences are either personal or general, private or public; but all of them being sins against God, are therefore grounds of discipline.

**29-3** Personal offences are violations of the divine law, considered in the special relation of wrongs or injuries to particular individuals. General offences are heresies or immoralities having no such relation, or considered apart from it.

**29-4** Private offences are those which are known only to a few persons. Public offences are those which are notorious.

## **CHAPTER 30 Church Censures.**

**30-1** The censures which may be imposed by church courts are admonition, suspension from the Sacraments, excommunication, suspension from office, and deposition from office. The censures of admonition or definite suspension from office shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, satisfies the court as to his repentance and makes such restitution as is appropriate. Such censure concludes the judicial process. The censures of indefinite suspension or excommunication shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, remains impenitent.

**30-2** Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

**30-3** Suspension from Sacraments is the temporary exclusion from those ordinances, and is indefinite as to its duration. There is no definite suspension from the Sacraments.

Suspension from office is the exclusion of a church officer from his office. This may be definite or indefinite as to its duration. With respect to church officers, suspension from Sacraments shall always be accompanied by suspension from office. But suspension from office is not always necessarily accompanied with suspension from Sacraments.

Definite suspension from office is administered when the credit of religion, the honour of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it, even though the delinquent has given satisfaction to the court.

Indefinite suspension is administered to the impenitent offender until he exhibits signs of repentance, or until by his conduct, the necessity of the greatest censure be made manifest. In the case of indefinite suspension from office imposed due to scandalous conduct, the procedure outlined in BCO 34-8 shall be followed.

**30-4** Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church. This censure is to be inflicted only on account of gross crime or heresy and when the offender shows himself incorrigible and contumacious. The design of this censure is to operate on the offender as a means of reclaiming him, to deliver the church from the scandal of his offence, and to inspire all with fear by the example of his discipline.

**30-5** Deposition is the degradation of an officer from his office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure.

**CHAPTER 31 The Parties in Cases of Process.**

**31-1** Original jurisdiction (the right first or initially to hear and determine) in relation to ministers of the Gospel shall be in the Presbytery of which the minister is a member, except in cases as provided in BCO 34-1. Such original jurisdiction in relations to church members shall be in the Session of the church of which he/she is a member, except in cases as provided in BCO 33-1.

**31-2** It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session, he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.

**31-3** The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the New Zealand Grace Presbyterian Church, whose honour and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor, whether voluntary or appointed, is always the representative of the Church, and as such has all its rights in the case. In appellate courts the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

**31-4** Every indictment shall begin: "**In the name of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand,**" and shall conclude, "**against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honour and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.**" In every case the Church is the injured and accusing party, against the accused.

**31-5** An injured party shall not become a prosecutor of personal offences without having tried the means of reconciliation and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ.

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:15-16).

A church court, however, may judicially investigate personal offences as if general when the interest of religion seem to demand it. So, also, those to whom

private offences are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavoured to remove the scandal by private means.

**31-6** When the offence is general, the case may be conducted either by any person appearing as prosecutor or by a prosecutor appointed by the court.

**31-7** When the prosecution is instituted by the court, it may promote the interests of religion to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the offender, and endeavour to bring him to a sense of his guilt, before instituting actual process.

**31-8** Great caution ought to be exercised in receiving accusations from any person who is known to indulge a malignant spirit towards the accused; who is not of good character; who is himself under censure or process; who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or who is known to be litigious, rash or highly imprudent.

**31-9** Every voluntary prosecutor shall be previously warned, that if he fail to show probable cause of the charges, he may himself be censured as a slanderer of the brethren.

**31-10** When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions may be suspended at the court's discretion; but this shall never be done in the way of censure.

**31-11** In the discussion of all questions arising in his own case, the accused shall exercise the rights of defendant only, not of judge.

## **CHAPTER 32 General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process.**

**32-1** It is incumbent on every member of a court of Jesus Christ engaged in a trial of offenders, to bear in mind the inspired injunction:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

**32-2** Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or unless the court finds it necessary, for the honour of religion, itself to take the step provided for in BCO 31-2.

**32-3** It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (BCO Chapter 27 through Chapter 46) and assist the parties to obtain access to them. When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court, unless by consent of parties, except:

1. to appoint a prosecutor,
2. to order the indictment drawn and a copy, along with names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, and
3. to cite all parties and their witnesses to appear and be heard at another meeting which shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation.

At the second meeting of the court the charges shall be read to the accused, if present, and he shall be called upon to say whether he be guilty or not.

If the accused confesses, the court may deal with him according to its discretion; if he plead and take issue, the trial shall proceed.

Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Parties necessarily absent should have counsel assigned to them.

**32-4** The citation shall be issued and signed by the moderator or clerk by order and in the name of the court. He shall also issue citations to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf.

**32-5** In drawing the indictment, the times, places and circumstances should, if possible, be particularly stated, that the accused may have an opportunity to make his defence.

**32-6**

32. General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process.

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- a. When an accused person shall refuse to obey a citation, he shall be cited a second time. This second citation shall be accompanied with a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court) he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. BCO 33-2; 34-4).
- b. When an accused person shall appear and refuse to plead, or otherwise refuse to cooperate with lawful proceedings, he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. BCO 33-2; 34-4).

**32-7** The time which must elapse between the serving of the first citation on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear, shall be at least ten (10) days. The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent citation shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it be quite sufficient for a seasonable and convenient compliance with the citation.

**32-8** When the offence with which an accused person stands charged took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either appoint a commission of its body, or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it. The accused shall always have reasonable notice of the time and place of the meeting of this commission or coordinate court.

**32-9** When an offence, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely otherwise to become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself that there is probable ground for accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be remitted for trial to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offence is alleged to have been committed.

**32-10** Before proceeding to trial, courts ought to ascertain that their citations have been duly served.

**32-11** In every process, if deemed expedient there may be a committee appointed, which shall be called the Judicial Committee, and whose duty it shall be to digest and arrange all the papers, and to prescribe, under the direction of the court, the whole order of the proceedings. The members of this committee shall be entitled, notwithstanding their performance of this duty, to sit and vote in the case as members of the court.

32. General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process.

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**32-12** When the trial is about to begin, it shall be the duty of the moderator solemnly to announce from the chair that the court is about to pass to the consideration of the case, and to enjoin on the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to engage.

**32-13** In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused, or at least after he shall have received due citation to attend. Witnesses may be cross-examined by both parties, and any questions asked must be pertinent to the issue.

**32-14** On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the parties; and when they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the point.

**32-15** When a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

1. The moderator shall charge the court.
2. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard.
3. The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.
4. The parties shall be heard: first, the prosecutor, and then the accused, and the prosecutor shall close.
5. The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinion in the case.
6. The vote shall be taken, the verdict announced and judgment entered on the records.

**32-16** Either party may, for cause, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case, which question shall be decided by the other members of the court.

**32-17** Pending the trial of a case, any member of the court who shall express his opinion of its merits to either party, or to any person not a member of the court; or who shall absent himself from any sitting without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered, shall be thereby disqualified from taking part in the subsequent proceedings.

**32-18** Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the clerk, which shall exhibit the charges, the answer, written record of the testimony, as defined by BCO 35-7, and all such

32. General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process.

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acts, orders, and decisions of the court relating to the case, as either party may desire, and also the judgment.

The clerk shall without delay assemble the Record of the Case which shall consist of the charges, the answer, the citations and returns thereto, and the minutes herein required to be kept.

The parties shall be allowed copies of the Record of the Case at their own expense if they demand them.

When a case is removed by appeal or complaint, the lower court shall transmit "the Record" thus prepared to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint, and the reasons therefore, if any shall have been filed.

Nothing which is not contained in this "Record" shall be taken into consideration by the higher court. On the final decision of a case in a higher court, the judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the case originated.

**32-19** No professional counsel shall be permitted as such to appear and plead in cases of process in any court; but an accused person may, if he desires it, be represented before the Session by any communing member of the same particular church, or before any other court, by any member of that court. A member of the court so employed shall not be allowed to sit in judgment in the case.

**32-20** Process, in case of scandal, shall commence within the space of one year after the offence was committed, unless it has recently become flagrant. When, however, a church member shall commit an offence, after removing to a place far distant from his former residence, and where his connection with the church is unknown, in consequence of which process cannot be instituted within the time above specified, the recent discovery of the church membership of the individual shall be considered as equivalent to the offence itself having recently become flagrant. The same principle, in like circumstances, shall also apply to ministers.

**CHAPTER 33 Special Rules Pertaining to Process Before Sessions.**

**33-1** Process against all church members, other than ministers of the Gospel, shall be entered before the Session of the church to which such members belong, except in cases of appeal. However, if the Session refuses to act in doctrinal cases or instances of public scandal and two other Sessions of churches in the same Presbytery request the Presbytery of which the church is a member to initiate proper or appropriate action in a case of process and thus assume jurisdiction and authority, the Presbytery shall do so.

**33-2** When an accused person is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments (and if an officer from his office) for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure may be made public, should this be deemed expedient by the Session. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

**33-3** If after further endeavour by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be excommunicated from the Church.

**33-4** When it is impracticable immediately to commence process against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the Church requires it, prevent the accused from approaching the Lord's table until the charges against him can be examined.

### **CHAPTER 34 Special Rules Pertaining to Process Against a Minister**

**34-1** Process against a minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member. However, if the Presbytery refuses to act in doctrinal cases or cases of public scandal and one third of the Church's Sessions request the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction (to first receive and initially hear and determine), the General Assembly shall do so.

**34-2** As no minister ought, on account of his office, to be screened in his sin, or slightly censured, so scandalous charges ought not to be received against him on slight grounds.

**34-3** If any one knows a minister to be guilty of a private offence, he should warn him in private. But if the offence be persisted in, or become public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other member of the Presbytery.

#### **34-4**

- a. When a minister accused of an offence is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments and his office for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure shall be made public. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.
- b. If after further endeavour by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be deposed and excommunicated from the Church.

**34-5** Heresy and schism may be of such a nature as to warrant deposition; but errors ought to be carefully considered, whether they strike at the vitals of religion and are industriously spread, or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding and are not likely to do much injury.

**34-6** If the Presbytery find on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the minister's usefulness, it shall take all prudent measures to remove the scandal.

**34-7** When a minister, pending a trial, shall make confession, if the matter be base and flagitious, such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a greater nature,

however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court shall without delay impose definite suspension or depose him from the ministry.

**34-8** A minister under indefinite suspension from his office or deposed for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he shall exhibit for a considerable time such an eminently exemplary, humble and edifying life and testimony as shall heal the wound made by his scandal. A deposed minister shall in no case be restored until it shall appear that the general sentiment of the Church is strongly in his favour, and demands his restoration; and then only by the court inflicting the censure, or with that court's consent.

**34-9** When a minister is deposed, his pastoral relation shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended from office it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the censure shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relation.

**34-10** Whenever a minister of the Gospel shall habitually fail to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the cause of such dereliction and, if necessary, to institute judicial proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. If it shall appear that his neglect proceeds only from his lack of acceptance to the Church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it withdraws license from a licentiate for lack of evidence of the divine call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds (2/3) being necessary for this purpose.

In such a case, the clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery forthwith deliver to the minister concerned a written note that, at the next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defence; and if the decision pass against him he may appeal, as if he had been tried after the usual forms. This principle may apply, with any necessary changes, to ruling elders and deacons.

**CHAPTER 35 Evidence.**

**35-1** All persons of proper age and intelligence are competent witnesses, except such as do not believe in the existence of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments. The accused party may be allowed, but shall not be compelled to testify; but the accuser shall be required to testify, on the demand of the accused. Either party has the right to challenge a witness whom he believes to be incompetent, and the court shall examine and decide upon his competency. It belongs to the court to judge the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence.

**35-2** A husband or wife shall not be compelled to bear testimony against one another in any court.

**35-3** The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to establish any charge; yet if, in addition to the testimony of one witness, corroborative evidence be produced, the offence may be considered to be proved.

**35-4** No witness afterwards to be examined, unless a member of the court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case, if either party object.

**35-5** Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party; after which any member of the court, or either party, may put additional questions. No question shall be put or answered except by permission of the moderator, subject to an appeal to the court. The court shall not permit questions frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

**35-6** The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms:

**Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?**

If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court, who for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so.

**35-7** Every question put to a witness shall, if required, be reduced to writing. When answered, it shall, together with the answer, be recorded, if deemed by the court or

by either party of sufficient importance, and the testimony of the witness shall be read to him for his approbation and subscription.

**35-8** The records of a court or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the moderator and clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in every other court.

**35-9** In like manner, testimony taken by one court and regularly certified shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

**35-10** When it is not convenient for a court to have the whole or perhaps any part of the testimony in any particular case taken in its presence, a commission shall be appointed or coordinate court requested, to take the testimony in question, which shall be considered as if taken in the presence of the court.

Due notice of the commission or coordinate court, and of the time and place of its meeting, shall be given to the opposite party, that he may have an opportunity of attending. If the accused shall desire on his part to take testimony at a distance for his own exculpation, he shall give notice to the court of the time and place at which it shall be taken, in order that a commission or coordinate court, as in the former case, may be appointed for the purpose. Testimony may be taken on written questions by filing the same with the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the case, and giving two weeks' notice thereof to the adverse party, during which time he may file cross-questions, if he desire it. Testimony shall then be taken by the commission or coordinate court in answer to the direct and cross-questions, if such are filed, and no notice need be given of the time and place of taking the testimony.

**35-11** A member of the court who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified for sitting as a judge if either party makes objection.

**35-12** An officer or private member of the church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.

**35-13** If after trial before any court new testimony be discovered, which the accused believes important, it shall be his right to ask a new trial and it shall be within the power of the court to grant his request.

**35-14** If, in the prosecution of an appeal, new evidence be offered which, in the judgment of the appellate court, has an important bearing on the case, it shall be competent for that court to refer the case to the lower court for a new trial; or, with the consent of parties, to admit the evidence and proceed with the case.

## **CHAPTER 36 The Imposition of Church Censures.**

**36-1** When any member or officer of the Church shall be found guilty of an offence the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother in the spirit of meekness, the members considering themselves lest they also be tempted.

**36-2** Church censures and the modes of administering them should be suited to the nature of the offences. For private offences, censure should be administered in the presence of the court alone, or in private by one or more members of the court. In the case of public offences, the degree of censure and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular censures.

**36-3** The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offence is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offence is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

**36-4** Definite suspension from office should be administered in the presence of the court alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's discretion.

**36-5** Indefinite suspension from office or the Sacraments should be administered after the manner prescribed for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that the indefinite suspension may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger. Indefinite suspension should also be administered under the blessing of God of leading him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

**Whereas, you, \_\_\_\_\_ (here describe the person as a teaching elder, ruling elder, deacon, or private member of the church) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ (here insert the offence), we the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session) in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance.**

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

**36-6** Excommunication is to be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or to be imposed in public as the court may decide. In administering this censure the moderator of the Session shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending brother, and of the decision to cut him off from the communion of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use and consequences of this censure. He shall then administer the censure in the words following:

**Whereas, \_\_\_\_\_, a member of this church has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of \_\_\_\_\_, and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church, and has manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of \_\_\_\_\_ church do pronounce him to be excluded from the Sacraments, and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.**

Prayer shall then be made that by God's blessing this solemn action of the court may issue in the repentance and restoration of the offender, and in the establishment of all true believers.

**36-7** The censure of deposition shall be administered by the moderator in the words following:

**Whereas, \_\_\_\_\_, a teaching elder of this Presbytery (or ruling elder or deacon of this church), has been proved, by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of \_\_\_\_\_, we, the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session), do adjudge him disqualified for the office of the Christian ministry (or ruling eldership, or deaconship), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the office of a teaching elder (or ruling elder or deacon) the said \_\_\_\_\_, and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof.**

If the censure include suspension or excommunication, the moderator shall proceed to say:

**We do moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said \_\_\_\_\_ from the Sacraments of the Church, until he shall exhibit satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance,**

or

**We do moreover, by the same authority, exclude the said \_\_\_\_\_ from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the fellowship of the Church.**

The sentence of deposition ought to be imposed with solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

## **CHAPTER 37 The Removal of Censure.**

**37-1** A person who has been definitely suspended from office shall be restored by the court at the end of the term of his suspension by declaring words of the following import to him:

**Whereas, you \_\_\_\_\_ have been debarred from the office of teaching elder, (or ruling elder, or deacon), but have now fulfilled the time of your censure, we, of the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session) do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the sentence of suspension and do restore you to the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof.**

**37-2** After any person has been indefinitely suspended from the Sacraments, it is proper that the rulers of the church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him and for him, that it would please God to give him repentance.

**37-3** When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of an indefinitely suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance, either in the presence of the court alone or publicly. At this time the offender shall be restored to the Sacraments of the Church, and/or to his office, if such shall be the judgment of the court. The restoration shall be declared to the penitent in the words of the following import:

**Whereas, you, \_\_\_\_\_, have been debarred from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the office of teaching elder, or ruling elder, or deacon), but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the \_\_\_\_\_ Church Session (or Presbytery), do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the said sentence of suspension from the Sacraments (and/or your office) and do restore you to the full communion of the Church (and/or the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).**

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

**37-4** When an excommunicated person shall be so affected with his state as to be brought to repentance, and to desire to be readmitted to the communion of the church, the Session, having obtained sufficient evidence of his sincere penitence, shall proceed to restore him. This may be done in the presence of the court, or of the congregation as seems best to the Session.

On the day appointed for his restoration, the minister shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him in the presence of the court or the congregation the following questions:

1. **Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God, and in refusing to hear His Church; and do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the Church?**

Answer, **I do.**

2. **Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and contrition for your sin and obstinacy; and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?**

Answer, **I do.**

3. **Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humbleness of mind and circumspection; and to endeavour to adorn by a holy life the doctrine of God our Saviour?**

Answer, **I do.**

Here the minister shall give the penitent a suitable exhortation, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words:

**Whereas, you \_\_\_\_\_, have been shut out from the communion of the church, but now have manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the Session of this church, do declare you absolved from the sentence of excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the communion of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.**

The whole shall be concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

**37-5** The restoration of a deposed officer, after public confession has been made in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the removal of censure from an excommunicated person, shall be announced to him by the Moderator in the following form, namely:

**Whereas, you, \_\_\_\_\_, formerly a teaching elder of this Presbytery (or a ruling elder or deacon of this church), have been**

**deposed from your office, but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session) do declare you absolved from the said sentence of deposition formerly pronounced against you; and we do furthermore restore you to your said office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be orderly called thereto.**

After this there shall be prayer and thanksgiving, and the members of the court shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

**37-6** When a ruling elder or deacon has been absolved from the censure of deposition, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without re-election by the people.

**37-7** When a person under censure shall remove to a part of the country remote from the court by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, it shall be lawful for the court, if it deems it expedient, to transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the delinquent resides, which shall take up the case and proceed with it as though it had originated with itself.

**37-8** In the restoration of a minister who is under indefinite suspension from the Sacraments, and/or his office, or has been deposed, it is the duty of the Presbytery to proceed with great caution. It should first admit him to the Sacraments, if he has been debarred from them. Afterwards it should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time, so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and prospect of his usefulness. When satisfied in these respects, the Presbytery shall take steps to restore him to his office. But the case shall always be under judicial consideration until the declaration of restoration has been pronounced.

**37-9** In the case of the removal of censures from, or the restoration of, a minister, jurisdiction shall be as follows:

- a. If the censure(s) does not include excommunication, the presbytery imposing the censure(s) shall retain the authority to remove the censure(s) and, at its discretion, restore him to office. This authority is retained by the presbytery even when a divested or deposed minister is assigned, under the provisions of BCO 46-8, to a session.
- b. If the censure includes excommunication, the penitent may only be restored to the communion of the church through a Session (BCO 1-3; 6-4; 57-4; 57-5; 57-6). Once the penitent is restored, and therefore a member of a local

church, the authority to remove any other censure in respect to office, concurrently imposed with that of excommunication shall belong to the court originally imposing such censure.

## **CHAPTER 38 Cases Without Process.**

**38-1** When any person shall come forward and make his offence known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process. In handling a confession of guilt, it is essential that the person intends to confess and permit the court to render judgment without process. Statements made by him in the presence of the court must not be taken as a basis of a judgment without process except by his consent. In the event a confession is intended, a full statement of the facts should be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment. The accused has the right of complaint against the judgment.

**38-2** A minister of the Gospel against whom there are no charges, if fully satisfied in his own conscience that God has not called him to the ministry, or if he has satisfactory evidence of his inability to serve the Church with acceptance, may report these facts at a stated meeting of Presbytery. At the next stated meeting, if after full deliberation the Presbytery shall concur with him in judgment, it may divest him of his office without censure. This provision shall in like manner apply with any necessary changes to the case of ruling elders and deacons; but in all such cases the Session of the church to which the ruling elder or the deacon who seeks demission belongs shall act as the Presbytery acts in similar cases where a minister is concerned.

### **38-3**

- a. When a member or officer in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by affiliating with some other branch (BCO 2-2), if at the time of the attempt to withdraw he is in good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, his new membership acknowledged, and his name removed from the roll. But if at the time of the attempt to withdraw there is a record of an investigation in process (BCO 31-2), or there are charges (BCO 32-3) concerning the member or minister, the court of original jurisdiction may retain his name on the roll and conduct the case, communicating the outcome upon completion of the proceedings to that member or minister. If the court does not conduct the case, his new membership shall be acknowledged, his name removed from the roll, and, at the request of the receiving branch, the matters under investigation or the charges shall be communicated to them.
- b. When a member or minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible church by affiliating with a body judged by the court of original jurisdiction as failing to maintain the Word and Sacraments in their

fundamental integrity (BCO 2-2), that member or minister shall be warned of his danger, and if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll, thereby, so far as the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is concerned, he is deemed no longer to be a member in any body which rightly maintains the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity, and if an officer, thereby withdrawing from him all authority to exercise his office as derived from this Church. When so acting the court shall make full record of the matter and shall notify the offender of its action.

**38-4** When a member of a particular church has wilfully neglected the church for a period of one year, or has made it known that he has no intention of fulfilling the church vows, then the Session, continuing to exercise pastoral discipline (BCO 27-1a and 27-4) in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, shall remind the member, if possible both in person and in writing, of the declarations and promises by which he entered into a solemn covenant with God and His Church (BCO 57-5, nos. 3-5), and warn him that, if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll.

If after diligently pursuing such pastoral discipline, and after further inquiry and due delay, the Session is of the judgment that the member will not fulfil his membership obligations in this or any other branch of the Visible Church (cf. BCO 2-2), then the Session shall erase his name from the roll. This erasure is an act of pastoral discipline (BCO 27-1a) without process. The Session shall notify the person, if possible, whose name has been removed.

Notwithstanding the above, if a member thus warned makes a written request for process (i.e., BCO Chapter 31-Chapter 33, Chapter 35- Chapter 36), the Session shall grant such a request. Further, if the Session determines that any offence of such a member is of the nature that process is necessary, the Session may institute such process.

39. Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision of Higher Courts.

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### **CHAPTER 39 Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision of Higher Courts.**

**39-1** The acts and decisions of a lower court are brought under the supervision of a higher court in one or another of the following modes:

1. Review and Control;
2. Reference;
3. Appeal; and
4. Complaint.

**39-2** When the proceedings of a lower court are before a higher court, the members of the lower court shall not lose the right to sit, deliberate and vote in the higher court, except in cases of appeal or complaint.

**39-3** While affirming that the Scripture is “the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined” (WCF 1.10), and that the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is “subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God” (BCO Preface, III), and while affirming also that this Constitution is fallible (WCF 31.3), the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand affirms that this subordinate and fallible Constitution has been “adopted by the church” (BCO Preface, III) “as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice” (BCO 29-1) and as setting forth a form of government and discipline “in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity” (BCO 21-5.3). To insure that this Constitution is not amended, violated or disregarded in judicial process, any review of the judicial proceedings of a lower court by a higher court shall be guided by the following principles:

1. A higher court, reviewing a lower court, should limit itself to the issues raised by the parties to the case in the original (lower) court. Further, the higher court should resolve such issues by applying the Constitution of the church, as previously established through the constitutional process.
2. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those factual matters which the lower court is more competent to determine, because of its proximity to the events in question, and because of its personal knowledge and observations of the parties and witnesses involved. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse a factual finding of a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.

39. Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision of Higher Courts.

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3. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those matters of discretion and judgment which can only be addressed by a court with familiar acquaintance of the events and parties. Such matters of discretion and judgment would include, but not be limited to: the moral character of candidates for sacred office, the appropriate censure to impose after a disciplinary trial, or judgment about the comparative credibility of conflicting witnesses. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse such a judgment by a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.
4. The higher court does have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by always deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should not consider itself obliged to exhibit the same deference to a lower court when the issues being reviewed involve the interpretation of the Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court.

## **CHAPTER 40 General Review.**

**40-1** In the spirit of mutual accountability and for the good order and fruitful functioning of the church it is recommended that every court above the Session review, at least once every two years, the functioning of the court next below. It is appropriate that such review is done by visitation by a teaching and a ruling elder, who are neither members of the court under review nor from the same congregation.

**40-2** In reviewing the functioning of a “lower” court the “higher” court may concerning matters such as:

1. Whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded;
2. Whether they have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;
3. Whether they have been wise, equitable and suited to promote the welfare of the Church;
4. Whether any advice or support is sought to assist in the cause of advancing the gospel;
5. Whether the lawful injunctions of the “higher” court have been implemented

**40-3** It is ordinarily sufficient for the “higher” court merely to record in its own minutes and in the records reviewed whether it approves, disapproves or corrects the records in any particular; but should any serious irregularity be discovered the “higher” court may require its review and correction by the “lower”. Proceedings in judicial cases, however, shall not be dealt with under review and control when notice of appeal or complaint has been given the “lower” court; and no judgment of a “lower” court in a judicial case shall be reversed except by appeal or complaint.

**40-4** Courts may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground; or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings of very great irregularity may not be distinctly recorded by them. In any of these cases their records will by no means exhibit to the “higher” court a full view of their proceedings. If, therefore, the next “higher” court be well advised that any such neglect or irregularity has occurred on the part of the “lower” court, it is incumbent on it to take cognisance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by review of its records.

**40-5** When any court having appellate jurisdiction shall be advised, either by the records of the court next below or by memorial, either with or without protest, or by any other satisfactory method, of any important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceedings of such court, the first step shall be to cite the court alleged to have offended to appear by representative or in writing, at a specified time and place, and to show what it has done or failed to do in the case in question.

The court thus issuing the citation may reverse or redress the proceedings of the court below in other than judicial cases; or it may censure the delinquent court; or it may remit the whole matter to the delinquent court with an injunction to take it up and dispose of it in a constitutional manner; or it may stay all further proceedings in the case; as circumstances may require.

**40-6** In process against a "lower" court, the trial shall be conducted according to the rules provided for process against individuals, so far as they may be applicable.

**CHAPTER 41 References.**

**41-1** A reference is a written representation and application made by a lower court to a higher for advice or other action on a matter pending before the lower court, and is ordinarily to be made to the next higher court.

**41-2** Among proper subjects for reference are matters that are new, delicate or difficult; or on which the members of the lower court are very seriously divided; or which relate to questions involving the Constitution and legal procedures respecting which the lower court feels the need of guidance.

**41-3** In making a reference the lower court may ask for advice only, or for final disposition of the matter referred; and in particular it may refer a judicial case with request for its trial and decision by the higher court.

**41-4** A reference may be presented to the higher court by one or more representatives appointed by the lower court for this purpose. It should be accompanied with so much of the record as shall be necessary for proper understanding and consideration of the matter referred.

**41-5** Although references are sometimes proper, in general it is better that every court should discharge the duty assigned it under the law of the Church.

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

**41-6** When a court makes a reference, it ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced and in perfect readiness, so that the higher court may be able to fully consider and handle the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

## **CHAPTER 42 Appeals.**

**42-1** An appeal is the transfer to a higher court of a judicial case on which judgment has been rendered in a lower court, and is allowable only to the party against whom the decision has been rendered. The parties shall be known as the appellant and appellee. An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher, except with its consent.

**42-2** Only those who have submitted to a regular trial are entitled to an appeal.

**42-3** The grounds of appeal are such as the following: any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court; refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; receiving improper or declining to receive proper evidence; hurrying to a decision before all the testimony is taken; manifestation of prejudice in the case; and mistake or injustice in the judgment and censure.

**42-4** Notice of appeal may be given the court before its adjournment. Written notice of appeal, with supporting reasons, shall be filed by the appellant with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court, within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the court. No attempt should be made to lobby the courts to which appeal is being made by either party before the case is heard.

**42-5** It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of appeal, a copy of all proceedings in connection with the case, including the notice of appeal and reasons therefore, the response of the lower court, the evidence, and any papers bearing on the case, which together shall be known as "the Record of the Case", and the higher court shall not admit or consider anything not found in this "Record" without the consent of the parties in the case. Should new evidence come to light the case shall be remanded to the lower court from which the appeal was made, unless both parties consent to admit the new evidence and proceed with the case.

**42-6** Notice of appeal shall have the effect of suspending the judgment of the lower court until the case has been finally decided in the higher court. However, the court of original jurisdiction may, for sufficient reasons duly recorded, prevent the appellant from approaching the Lord's Table, and if an officer, prevent him from exercising some or all his official functions, until the case is finally decided (cf. BCO 31-10; 33-3). This shall never be done in the way of censure.

**42-7** If a lower court shall neglect to send up "the Record of the Case" or any part of it, to the injury of the appellant, it shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher

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court, and the judgment from which the appeal has been taken shall be suspended until "the Record" is produced upon which the issue can be fairly tried.

**42-8** After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be entertained by the court, the court shall hear the case, or in accordance with the provisions of BCO 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. At the hearing, after the Record has been read, each side should be given adequate time to present its case, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or commission should go into closed session, and discuss the merits of the case.

The vote then should be taken, on each specification in this form:

**Shall this specification of error be sustained?**

If the court or commission deems it wise, it may adopt a minute explanatory of its action, which shall become a part of its Record of the Case. The court or commission shall designate one of its members to write the opinion, which opinion shall be adopted by the court or commission as its opinion.

**42-9** The decision of the higher court may be to affirm in whole or in part; to reverse in whole or in part; to render the decision that should have been rendered; or to remand the case to the lower court for a new trial. In every case a written opinion shall be prepared, and a copy of the opinion and judgment entered will be delivered personally or mailed to the lower court and the appellant, with a written receipt required.

**42-10** An appellant may represent himself or be represented as provided in BCO 32-19.

**42-11** An appellant shall be considered to have abandoned his appeal if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but an appellant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the appellant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

**42-12** If an appellant manifests a litigious or otherwise unchristian spirit in the prosecution of his appeal, he shall receive a suitable rebuke by the appellate court.

**CHAPTER 43 Complaints.**

**43-1** A complaint is a written representation made against some act or decision of a court of the Church. It is the right of any communing member of the Church in good standing to make complaint against any action of a court to whose jurisdiction he is subject, except that no complaint is allowable in a judicial case in which an appeal is taken.

**43-2** A complaint shall first be made to the court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error. Written notice of complaint, with supporting reasons, shall be filed with the clerk of the court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the court. The court shall consider the complaint at its next stated meeting, or at a called meeting prior to its next stated meeting. No attempt should be made to lobby the court to which complaint is being made by either party.

**43-3** If, after considering a complaint, the court alleged to be delinquent or in error is of the opinion that it has not erred, and denies the complaint, the complainant may make complaint to the next higher court. If the court fails to consider the complaint by or at its next stated meeting, the complainant may make complaint to the next higher court. Written notice of complaint, together with supporting reasons, shall be filed with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the lower court.

**43-4** Notice of complaint shall not have the effect of suspending the action against which the complaint is made, unless one-third (1/3) of the members present when the action was taken shall vote for its suspension, until the final decision in the higher court.

**43-5** The court against which complaint is made shall appoint one or more representatives to defend its action before the higher court, and the parties in the case shall be known as complainant and respondent. The complainant himself may present his complaint, or he may obtain the assistance of a communing member of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand who is in good standing, in presenting his complaint.

**43-6** It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of complaint, a copy of all its proceedings in connection with the complaint including the notice of complaint and supporting reasons, the response of the lower court, if any, and any papers bearing on the complaint. If the clerk of the lower court shall neglect to send up the proceedings on the complaint, he shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher

court, and the act or decision complained against shall be suspended until the proceedings are produced so that the higher court can fairly consider the complaint.

**43-7** The complainant shall be considered to have abandoned his complaint if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but a complainant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the complainant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

**43-8** After the higher court has decided that the complaint is in order, the court shall hear the complaint, or in accordance with the provision of BCO 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. If the date of the hearing shall, for good cause, be other than the same day it is presented, the court shall notify the complainant and respondent in writing of the date set for the hearing.

**43-9** At the hearing, after all the papers bearing on the complaint have been read, the complainant and respondent will be given the opportunity to present argument, the complainant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or the commission should go into closed session, and discuss and consider the merits of the complaint. The vote should then be taken as to what disposition should be made of the complaint, and the complainant and respondent notified of the court's decision.

**43-10** The higher court has power, in its discretion, to annul the whole or any part of the action of a lower court against which complaint has been made, or to send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for a new hearing.

## **CHAPTER 44 Overtures, Petitions and Memorials**

### **44-1 Overtures**

An overture is a proposal made to the General Assembly with the view of leading the superior court to take some desired action, such as the legislative or executive functions of the court may allow.

### **44-2 To General Assembly**

An Overture to the General Assembly may embody a proposal:

- a. To declare what the law of the Church is on any given question;
- b. To amend, enjoin, or repeal some specified law already in force;
- c. To enact a new law; or
- d. To introduce and pass on any measure or resolution conceived to be for the general benefit of the church.

### **44-3 Origin**

An overture may take origin from a Presbytery, a Session or from members of the supreme court during the sitting of the same.

### **44-4 From Session**

An overture from a Session must be presented to the Presbytery for transmission to the General Assembly.

### **44-5 From Presbytery**

A Presbytery may adopt and transmit to the General Assembly any overture proposed or presented; or it may transmit an overture simpliciter, without expressing any opinion thereupon; or it may decline either to adopt or transmit.

### **44-6 Notice required**

Notice of intention to propose an overture for adoption and transmission by an inferior court to the higher court must be given at a meeting of the inferior court previous to that at which the proposal is to be brought forward or in the written agenda for the Presbytery meeting posted to members of Presbytery for the meeting at which it is considered. In either case, the text of the Overture proposed must be circulated to Presbytery members in the posted agenda.

### **44-7 Transmitted**

All overtures transmitted must be accompanied by certified relevant extract minutes.

**44-8** Received

Overtures shall be received and considered by Assembly in terms of its Standing Orders.

**44-9** Supported

Presbyteries shall appoint at least two persons to support the Overture.

**44-10** Rights Reserved

A member supporting an overture is not thereby constituted a party, and is equally entitled, with other voting members of Assembly, to vote upon the question raised.

**44-11** Petitions and Memorials

The courts of the church may receive and judge of petitions and memorials presented to them on matters connected with the doctrine, discipline, worship, or government of the Church as a whole, or any of its Congregations.

**44-12** Present and Heard

Petitioners must appear and may be heard before the courts to which their petitions are presented, but this is not required in the case of a memorial.

**44-13** Definition

A *petition* usually relates only to the affairs of the petitioner or petitioners, and must be in respectful language; a *memorial* is a request to a court of the Church to take action on a matter of general concern. Apart from the provisions of the previous paragraph procedure is the same for both petitions and memorials.

**44-14** Transmission

Petitions from individual members of the Church or from Congregations addressed to Presbytery must pass through the Session and petitions addressed to the Assembly must pass through the Presbytery.

**44-15** Appeal

If an inferior court declines to transmit a petition to a superior court the petitioner has the right of appeal, to be taken in ordinary form.

**44-16** Lower Court

An inferior court may address a petition to the next higher court.

**44-17** All parties heard

When a court finds that a petition presented to it affects the interests and rights of other persons than the petitioners, it directs that due notice thereof be given to such person, and grants them an opportunity to being heard before coming to a decision on the petition.

## **CHAPTER 45 Dissents, Protests, and Objections.**

**45-1** Any member of a court who had a right to vote on a question, and is not satisfied with the action taken by that court, is entitled to have a dissent or protest recorded.

None can join in a dissent or protest against an action of any court except those who had a right to vote in the case.

Any member who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint (see BCO 39-2), and is not satisfied with the action taken by the court, is entitled to have an objection recorded.

A dissent, protest or objection shall be filed with the clerk of the lower court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the lower court or with the clerk of the General Assembly before its adjournment.

**45-2** A *dissent* is a declaration on the part of one or more members of a minority, expressing a different opinion from the majority in its action on any issue before the court, and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

**45-3** A *protest* is a more solemn and formal declaration by members of a minority, bearing their testimony against what they deem an improper or erroneous action on any issue before the court, and is generally accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

**45-4** An *objection* is a declaration by one or more members of a court who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint, expressing a different opinion from the decision of the court and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

**45-5** If a dissent, protest, or objection be couched in temperate language, and be respectful to the court, it shall be recorded; and the court may, if deemed necessary, put an answer to the dissent, protest, or objection on the records along with it. Here the matter shall end, unless the parties obtain permission to withdraw their dissent, protest, or objection absolutely, or for the sake of amendment.

**CHAPTER 46 Jurisdiction.**

**46-1** When a church member shall remove his residence away from the vicinity of congregation of which he is a member, so that he can no longer regularly attend its services, it shall be his duty to transfer his membership by presenting a certificate of disjunction from the Session of the church of which he is a member to the church with which he wishes to unite.

When the church of which he is a member has no Session, or for other good reasons it seems impossible for the member to secure a certificate of disjunction, he may be received by the Session upon other satisfactory testimonials, in which case the church of which he was a member shall be duly notified.

**46-2** When a church member shall remove his residence away from the vicinity of the congregation of which he is a member into the vicinity of another, it shall be the duty of the teaching and ruling elders of the church of which he is a member, as far as possible, to continue pastoral oversight of him and to inform him that according to the teaching of our Book of Church Order it is his duty to transfer his membership as soon as practicable to the church in whose vicinity he is living.

It shall also be the duty of the church from which the member has moved to notify the teaching and ruling elders of a church into whose vicinity he has moved and request them to take pastoral oversight of the member, with a view of having him transfer his membership, unless BCO 18-7 applies.

If a member, after having thus been advised, shall neglect for one (1) year to have his membership transferred, the Session shall then proceed, according to BCO 38-4, except in special cases such as: servicemen, students, etc.

The name of any member whose residence has been unknown for one year to the Session shall be removed from the roll and such names are not to be counted in the annual statistical reports, though act of removal should be recorded in the Session's minutes. If such a person at a later date should appear or desire transfer of his or her letter, the Session will inform the governing body of the inquiring church of their action in removing said person from their roll.

**46-3** Members of one church disjoined to join another shall be held to be under the jurisdiction of the Session disjoining them until they form a regular connection with that to which they have been disjoined.

**46-4** Associate members are those believers temporarily residing in a location other than their permanent homes. Such believers may become associate members of a particular church without ceasing to be communicant members of their home churches. An associate member shall have all the rights and privileges of that church,

with the exception of voting in a congregational or corporation meeting, and holding an office in that church.

**46-5** (*Vacated*) [see 38-4]

**46-6** When a Presbytery shall dismiss a minister, licentiate or candidate, the name of the Presbytery to which he is dismissed shall be given in the certificate, and he shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery dismissing him until received by the other.

**46-7** No certificate of disjunction from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid testimony of good standing for a period longer than one (1) year, unless its earlier presentation be hindered by some providential cause; and such certificates given to persons who have left the bounds of the Session or Presbytery granting them shall certify the standing of such persons only to the time of their leaving those bounds.

**46-8** When a Presbytery shall divest a minister of his office without censure, or depose him without excommunication, it shall assign him, to membership in some particular church, subject to the approval of the Session of that church.

## **PART III - THE DIRECTORY FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD**

The Directory for Worship is an approved guide and should be taken seriously as the mind of the Church agreeable to the Standards. However, it does not have the force of law and is not to be considered obligatory in all its parts. BCO Chapter 56, Chapter 57 and Chapter 58 do have full constitutional authority.

### **CHAPTER 47 The Principles and Elements of Public Worship.**

**47-1** Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source.

The Scriptures forbid the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in His Word, and requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word (WSC 51, 50).

**47-2** A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but before all else, a meeting of the triune God with His chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the Divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

**47-3** The end of public worship is the glory of God. His people should engage in all its several parts with an eye single to His glory. Public worship has as its aim the building of Christ's Church by the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved -- all to the glory of God. Through public worship on the Lord's day Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in their every activity, remembering, whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

**47-4** Public worship is Christian when the worshippers recognise that Christ is the Mediator by whom alone they can come unto God, when they honour Christ as the head of the Church, who rules over public worship, and when their worship is an expression of their faith in Christ and of their love for Him.

**47-5** Public worship must be performed in spirit and in truth. Externalism and hypocrisy stand condemned. The forms of public worship have value only when they serve to express the inner reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to

the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion.

**47-6** The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given His Church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterised by that simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness.

**47-7** Public worship differs from private worship in that in public worship God is served by His saints unitedly as His covenant people, the Body of Christ. For this reason the covenant children should be present so far as possible as well as adults. For the same reason no favouritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than himself.

**47-8** It behoves God's people not only to come into His presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of His perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise for the great salvation, which He has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

**47-9** The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements of worship service: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms and hymns, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, confessing the faith and observing the Sacraments; and on special occasions taking oaths.

## **CHAPTER 48 The Sanctification of the Lord's Day.**

**48-1** "The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself." (WSC 58).

**48-2** God commanded His Old Testament people to keep holy the last day of the week, but He sanctified the first day as the Sabbath by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. For this reason the Church of the new dispensation has from the time of the apostles kept holy the first day of the week as the Lord's Day.

**48-3** It is the duty of every person to remember the Lord's Day; and to prepare for it before its approach. All worldly business should be so ordered, and seasonably laid aside, as that they may not be hindered thereby from sanctifying the Sabbath, as the Holy Scriptures require.

**48-4** The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord; and to be employed in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore, it is requisite, that there be a holy resting, all the day, from unnecessary labours; and an abstaining from those recreations which may be lawful on other days; and also, as much as possible, from worldly thoughts and conversation.

**48-5** Let the provisions for the support of the family on that day be so ordered that others be not improperly detained from the public worship of God, nor hindered from sanctifying the Sabbath.

**48-6** Let every person and family, in the morning, by secret and private prayer, for themselves and others, especially for the assistance of God to their minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry, by reading the Scriptures, and by holy meditation, prepare for communion with God in his public ordinances.

**48-7** Let the time not used for public worship be spent in prayer, in devotional reading, and especially in the study of the Scriptures, meditation, catechising, religious conversation, the singing of psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs; visiting the sick, relieving the poor, teaching the ignorant, holy resting, and in performing such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy.

## **CHAPTER 49 The Ordering of Public Worship.**

**49-1** When the congregation is to meet for public worship, the people (having before prepared their hearts thereunto) ought all to come and join therein; not absenting themselves from the public ordinances through negligence, or upon pretence of private meetings.

**49-2** Let the people assemble at the appointed time, that all being present at the beginning they may unite with one heart in all the parts of public worship. Let none unnecessarily depart until after the blessing be pronounced.

**49-3** Let the people upon entering the church take their seats in a decent and reverent manner, and engage in a silent prayer for a blessing upon themselves, the minister, and all present, as well as upon those who are unable to attend worship.

**49-4** All who attend public worship are expected to be present in a spirit of reverence and godly fear, forbearing to engage in any conduct unbecoming to the place and occasion. Since the family, as ordained by God, is the basic institution in society, and God in the Covenant graciously deals with us, not just as individuals but also as families, it is important and desirable that families worship together.

## **CHAPTER 50 The Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures.**

**50-1** The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is performed by the minister as God's servant. Through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the sermon. The reading of the Scriptures by the minister is to be distinguished from the responsive reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation. In the former God addresses His people; in the latter God's people give expression in the words of Scripture to their contrition, adoration, gratitude and other holy sentiments. The psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for responsive reading.

**50-2** The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the congregation is a part of the public worship of God and should be done by the minister or some other person.

**50-3** The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be read from a good translation, not a paraphrase, in the language of the people, that all may hear and understand.

**50-4** How large a portion shall be read at once is left to the discretion of every minister; and he may, when he thinks it expedient, expound any part of what is read; always having regard to the time, that neither reading, singing, praying, preaching, nor any other ordinance, be disproportionate the one to the other; nor the whole rendered too short, or too tedious.

## **CHAPTER 51 The Singing of Psalms and Hymns.**

**51-1** Praising God through the medium of music is a duty and a privilege. Therefore, the singing of hymns and psalms and the use of musical instruments should have an important part in public worship.

**51-2** In singing the praises of God, we are to sing in the spirit of worship, with understanding in our hearts.

**51-3** It is recommended that Psalms be sung along with the hymns of the Church, but that caution be observed in the selection of hymns, that they be true to the Word. Hymns should have the note of praise, or be in accord with the spirit of the sermon.

**51-4** The leadership in song is left to the judgment of the Session, who should give careful thought to the character of those asked to lead in this part of worship, and the singing of a choir should not be allowed to displace congregational singing.

**51-5** The proportion of the time of public worship given to praise is left to the judgment of the minister, and the singing of psalms and hymns by the congregation should be encouraged.

## CHAPTER 52 Public Prayer.

**52-1** It is proper to begin the public worship in the sanctuary with the Doxology followed by a short prayer, in which the minister shall lead the people, humbly adoring the infinite majesty of the living God, expressing a sense of our distance from Him as creatures, and our unworthiness as sinners; and humbly imploring His gracious presence, the assistance of His Holy Spirit in the duties of His worship, and His acceptance of us through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is appropriate that this prayer conclude with the Lord's Prayer in which all may unite.

**52-2** Then, after singing a psalm, or hymn, it is proper that, before the sermon, there should be a full and comprehensive prayer:

- a. Adoring the glory and perfections of God, as they are made known to us in the works of creation, in the conduct of Providence, and in the clear and full revelation has made of Himself in His written words;
- b. Giving thanks to Him for all His mercies of every kind, general and particular, spiritual and temporal, common and special; above all, for Christ Jesus, His unspeakable gift, the hope of eternal life through Him, and for the mission and work of the Holy Spirit;
- c. Making humble confession of sin, both original and actual, acknowledging, and endeavouring to lead the heart of every worshipper with a deep sense of the evil of all sin, as such, as being a departure from the living God; and also taking a particular and affecting view of the various fruits which proceed from this root of bitterness; as sins against God, our neighbour and ourselves; sins in thought, in word, and in deed; sins secret and presumptuous; sins accidental and habitual. Also, the aggravations of sin, arising from knowledge, or the means of it; from distinguishing mercies; from valuable privileges; from breach of vows, etc.;
- d. Making earnest supplication for the pardon of sin, and peace with God, through the blood of the atonement, with all its important and happy fruits; for the Spirit of sanctification, and abundant supplies of the grace that is necessary to the discharge of our duty; for support and comfort, under all the trials to which we are liable, as we are sinful and mortal; and for all temporal mercies that may be necessary in our passage through this valley of tears; always remembering to view them as flowing in the channel of covenant love, and intended to be subservient to the preservation and progress of the spiritual life;

- e. Pleading from every principle warranted in Scripture; from our own necessity; the all-sufficiency of God; the merit and intercession of our Saviour; and the glory of God in the comfort and happiness of His people;
- f. Intercession and petition for others, including the whole world for mankind; for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh; for the peace, purity, and extension of the Church of God; for ministers and missionaries in all lands; for all who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for the particular church then assembled, and all other churches associated in one body with it; for the sick, dying, and bereaved; for the poor and destitute; for strangers, for prisoners, the aged and the young; for those who travel; for the community in which the church is situated; for civil rulers, and for whatever else may seem to be necessary or suitable to the occasion.

The prominence given each of these topics must be left to the discretion of the minister.

**52-3** Ordinarily there should be prayer after the sermon having relation to the subject that has been treated in the discourse; and all other public prayers should be appropriate to the occasion.

**52-4** Ministers are not to be confined to fixed forms of prayer for public worship, yet it is the duty of the minister, previous to entering upon his office, to prepare and qualify himself for this part of his work, as well as for preaching. He should, by a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, by the study of the best writers on prayer, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God, endeavour to acquire both the spirit and the gift of prayer. Moreover, when he is to offer prayer in public worship, he should compose his spirit, and so order his thoughts, that he may perform this duty with dignity and propriety, and with profit to the worshippers, lest he disgrace this important service by coarse, undignified, careless, irregular or extravagant expressions.

**52-5** All prayer is to be offered in the language of the people.

## **CHAPTER 53 The Preaching of the Word.**

**53-1** The preaching of the Word is an ordinance of God for the salvation of men. Serious attention should be paid to the manner in which it is done. The minister should apply himself to it with diligence and prove himself a "worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

**53-2** The subject of a sermon should be some verse or verses of Scripture, and its object, to explain, defend and apply some part of the system of divine truth; or to point out the nature, and state the bounds and obligation, of some duty. A text should not be merely a motto, but should fairly contain the doctrine proposed to be handled. It is proper also that large portions of Scripture be sometimes expounded, and particularly improved, for the instruction of the people in the meaning and use of the sacred Scriptures.

**53-3** Preaching requires much study, meditation, and prayer, and ministers should prepare their sermons with care, and not indulge themselves in loose, extemporary harangues, nor serve God with that which costs them naught. They should, however, keep to the simplicity of the Gospel, and express themselves in language that can be understood by all. They should also by their lives adorn the Gospel which they preach, and be examples to believers in word and deed.

**53-4** As a primary design of public ordinances is to unite the people in acts of common worship of the most high God, ministers should be careful not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with or exclude the important duties of prayer and praise, but should preserve a just proportion in the several parts of public worship.

**53-5** By way of application of the sermon the minister may urge his hearers by commandment or invitation to repent of their sins, to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and to confess him publicly before men.

**53-6** No person should be invited to preach in any of the churches under our care without the consent of the Session.

**CHAPTER 54 The Worship of God by Offerings.**

**54-1** The Holy Scriptures teach that God is the owner of all persons and all things and that we are but stewards of both life and possessions; that God's ownership and our stewardship should be acknowledged; that this acknowledgement should take the form, in part, of giving at least a tithe of our income and other offerings to the work of the Lord through the Church of Jesus Christ, thus worshipping the Lord with our possessions; and that the remainder should be used as becomes Christians.

**54-2** It is both a privilege and a duty, plainly enjoined in the Bible, to make regular, weekly, systematic and proportionate offerings for the support of religion and for the propagation of the Gospel in our own and foreign lands, and for the relief of the poor. This should be done as an exercise of grace and an act of worship, and at such time during the service as may be deemed expedient by the Session.

**54-3** It is appropriate that the offerings be dedicated by prayer.

**CHAPTER 55 Confessing the Faith.**

**55-1** It is proper for the congregation of God's people publicly to confess their faith, using creeds or confessions that are true to the Word, such as, the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Westminster Standards.

## **CHAPTER 56 The Administration of Baptism. The Baptism of Infants and Children**

**56-1** Baptism is not to be unnecessarily delayed; not to be administered, in any case, by any private person; but by an elder of the church, ordinarily a minister.

**56-2** It is not to be privately administered, but in the presence of the congregation under the supervision of the Session.

**56-3** After previous notice is given to the minister, the child to be baptised is to be presented, by one or both the parents, or some other responsible person, signifying the desire that the child be baptised.

**56-4** Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament, showing:

- a. That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ;
- b. That it is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our engrafting into Christ, and of our union with Him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal;
- c. That the water, in baptism, represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which takes away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature;
- d. That baptising, or sprinkling and washing with water, signifies the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the mortification of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ;
- e. That the promise is made to believers and their children; and that the children of believers have an interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the Church, under the Gospel, no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old Testament; the Covenant of Grace, for substance, being the same; and the grace of God, and the consolation of believers, more plentiful than before;
- f. That the Son of God admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, "For of such is the kingdom of God";
- g. That children by Baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the Visible Church, distinguished from the world, and them that are without, and united with believers; and that all who are baptised in the name of Christ, do

renounce, and by their Baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh;

- h. That they are federally holy before Baptism, and therefore are they baptised;
- i. That the inward grace and virtue of Baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered; and that the fruit and power thereof reaches to the whole course of our life; and that outward baptism is not so necessary, that through the want thereof, the infant is in danger of damnation;
- j. By virtue of being children of believing parents they are, because of God's covenant ordinance, made members of the Church, but this is not sufficient to make them continue members of the Church. When they have reached the age of discretion, they become subject to obligations of the covenant: faith, repentance and obedience. They then make public confession of their faith in Christ, or become covenant breakers, and subject to the discipline of the Church.

In these or the like instructions, the minister is to use his own liberty and godly wisdom, as the ignorance or errors in the doctrine of Baptism, and the edification of the people, shall require.

He is also to admonish all that are present to look back to their Baptism, to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make right use of their Baptism, and of the covenant sealed between God and their soul.

He is to exhort the parent to consider the great mercy of God to him and his child; to bring up the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to let him know the danger of God's wrath to himself and child, if he be negligent; requiring his solemn promise for the performance of his duty.

The minister is also to exhort the parents to the careful performance of their duty, requiring:

- a. That they teach the child to read the Word of God;
- b. that they instruct him in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, an excellent summary of which we have in the Confession of Faith, and in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, which are to be recommended to them for their direction and assistance, in the discharge of this important duty;
- c. that they pray with and for him;

- d. that they set an example of piety and godliness before him; and endeavour, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**56-5** The minister shall then read the covenant promises:

**For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. (Acts 2:39; Gen. 17:7; Acts 16:31)**

The minister shall then propose the following or similar questions:

- 1. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?**
- 2. Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?**
- 3. Do you now unreservedly present your child before God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavour to set before (him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him), that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our Christian faith, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?**

To the congregation (optional):

**Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?**

**56-6** Then the minister is to pray for a blessing to attend this ordinance, after which, calling the child by name, he shall say:

**I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

As he pronounces these words, he is to baptise the child with water, by pouring or sprinkling it on the head of the child, without adding any other ceremony; and the whole shall be concluded with prayer.

## **CHAPTER 57 The Admission of Persons to Sealing Ordinances.**

**57-1** Believers' children within the Visible Church, and especially those dedicated to God in Baptism, are non-communing members under the care of the Church. They are to be taught to love God, and to obey and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. When they are able to understand the Gospel, they should be earnestly reminded that they are members of the Church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess Him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord's Supper.

**57-2** The time when young persons come to understand the Gospel cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the Session, whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for admission to sealing ordinances.

**57-3** When unbaptised persons apply for admission into the Church, they shall ordinarily, after having received appropriate instruction and given satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptised.

**57-4** It is recommended, as edifying and proper, that baptised persons, when admitted by the Session to the Lord's Supper, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation. But in all cases, there should be a clear recognition of their previous relation to the church as baptised members.

**57-5** The time having come for the making of a public profession, and those who have been approved by the Session having taken their places in the presence of the congregation, the minister may state that:

**Of the number of those who were baptised in infancy as members of the Church of God by birthright, and as heirs of the covenant promises, the Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who come now to assume for themselves the full privileges and responsibilities of their inheritance in the household of faith.**

If there be present any candidates for Baptism, the minister may state that:

**As applicants for admission into the Church of God by Baptism, which is a sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, and of our engagement to be the Lord's, the Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who are cordially welcomed into the fellowship of the household of faith.**

The minister may then address those making a profession in the following terms:

**(All of) you being here present to make a public profession of faith, are to assent to the following declarations and promises, by which you enter into a solemn covenant with God and His Church.**

- 1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His judgment, and without hope except in His sovereign mercy?**
- 2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?**
- 3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will strive to live as becomes the followers of Christ?**
- 4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**
- 5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise with God's help to strive for its purity and peace?**

The minister may now briefly admonish those making a profession of faith as to the importance of the solemn obligations they have assumed; then baptism may be administered, if there be present any candidates for the ordinance, and the whole concluded with prayer.

**57-6** Persons received from other churches by letters of disjunction as well as those being received by reaffirmation of faith should give a testimony of their Christian experience to the Session. Their names are to be announced to the congregation with a recommendation of them to its Christian confidence and affection.

## **CHAPTER 58 The Administration of the Lord's Supper.**

**58-1** The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be observed frequently, administered by an elder of the church, ordinarily a minister; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most for edification.

**58-2** Admission to the Lord's Supper.

The ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

**58-3** It is proper that public notice should be given to the congregation, at least the Sabbath before the administration of this ordinance, and that, either then, or on some day of the week, the people be instructed in its nature, and a due preparation for it, that all may come in a suitable manner to this holy feast.

**58-4** On the day of the observance of the Lord's Supper, when the sermon is ended, the minister shall show:

- a. That this is an ordinance of Christ; by reading the words of institution, either from one of the Evangelists, or from 1 Corinthians 11, which, as to him may appear expedient, he may explain and apply;
- b. That it is to be observed in remembrance of Christ, to show forth His death till He come; that it is of inestimable benefit, to strengthen His people against sin; to support them under troubles; to encourage and quicken them in duty; to inspire them with love and zeal; to increase their faith, and holy resolution; and to beget peace of conscience, and comfortable hopes of eternal life.

Since, by our Lord's appointment, this Sacrament sets forth the Communion of Saints, the minister, at the discretion of the Session, before the observance begins, may either invite all those who profess the true religion, and are communicants in good standing in any evangelical church, to participate in the ordinance; or may invite those who have been approved by the Session, after having given indication of their desire to participate. It is proper also to give a special invitation to non-communicants to remain during the service.

**58-5** The table, on which the elements are placed, being decently covered, and furnished with bread and wine, the minister should then set the elements apart by prayer and thanksgiving.

The bread and wine being thus set apart by prayer and thanksgiving, the minister is to take the bread, and break it, in the view of the people, saying the following or like words :

**That the Lord Jesus Christ on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, gave it to His disciples, as I, ministering in His name, give this bread to you, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me"**

Here the bread is to be distributed. After having given the bread, he shall take the cup, and say:

**In the same manner, He also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been done in His name, He gave it to the disciples, saving, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink from it, all of you."**

While the minister is repeating these words, let him give the cup.

**58-6** Since believers are to act personally in all their covenanting with the Lord, it is proper that a part of the time occupied in the distribution of the elements should be spent by all in silent communion, thanksgiving, intercession and prayer.

**58-7** The minister may, in a few words, put the communicants in mind:

**Of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, held forth in this sacrament; and of their obligation to be the Lord's; and may exhort them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called; and, as they have professedly received Christ Jesus the Lord, that they be careful so to**

It may not be improper for the minister to give a word of exhortation also to those who have been only spectators, reminding them:

**Of their duty, stating their sin and danger, by living in disobedience to Christ, in neglecting this holy ordinance; and calling upon them to be earnest in making preparation for attending upon it at the next time of its celebration.**

Then the minister is to pray and give thanks to God,

**For His rich mercy, and invaluable goodness, vouchsafed to them in that Sacred Communion; to implore pardon for the defects of the whole service; and to pray for the acceptance of their persons and performances; for the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable them, as they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in Him; that they may hold fast that which they have received, that no man take**

**their crown; that their conversation may be as becomes the Gospel; that they may bear about with them, continually, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in their mortal body; that their light may so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven.**

An offering for the poor or other sacred purpose is appropriate in connection with this service, and may be made at such time as shall be ordered by the Session.

Now let a psalm or hymn be sung, and the congregation dismissed, with the following or some other Gospel benediction:

**Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**58-8** As past custom has been found in many parts of the Presbyterian Church, our congregations are urged to have a service of spiritual preparation for the Lord's Supper during the week previous to the celebration of the Sacrament.

**58-9** Where age, infirmity or other disability prevents a communing member from normal participation in the Lord's Supper it is appropriate to observe it in a private setting at Session's discretion.

**CHAPTER 59 The Solemnisation of Marriage.**

**59-1** Marriage is a divine institution though not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the Church of Christ. It is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey.

**59-2** Christians should marry in the Lord; therefore it is fit that their marriage be solemnised by a lawful minister, that special instruction be given them, and suitable prayers offered, when they enter into this relation.

**59-3** Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, in accordance with the Word of God.

**59-4** The parties should be of such years of discretion as to be capable of making their own choice; and if they be under age, or live with their parents, the consent of the parents or others, under whose care they are, should be previously obtained, and well certified to the minister before he proceeds to solemnise the marriage.

**59-5** Parents should neither compel their children to marry contrary to their inclinations, nor deny their consent without just and important reasons.

**59-6** Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the credit of Christianity, are deeply interested in it. Therefore, the purpose of marriage should be sufficiently published a proper time previously to the solemnisation to it. It is enjoined on all ministers to be careful that, in this matter, they transgress neither the laws of God, nor the laws of the community; and that they may not destroy the peace and comfort of families, ministers should be assured that, with respect to the parties applying to them, no just objections lie against their marriage.

**59-7** The minister should keep a proper register of the names of all persons whom he marries, and of the time of their marriage, for the perusal of all whom it may concern.

**CHAPTER 60 The Visitation of the Sick.**

**60-1** The power of the prayer of faith is great, and Christians therefore should make entreaty for the sick at the throne of heavenly grace, and should also seek God's blessing upon all proper means which are being employed for their recovery. Moreover, when persons are sick, their minister, or some officer of the church, should be notified, that the minister, officers and members may unite their prayers in behalf of the sick. It is the privilege and duty of the pastor to visit the sick and to minister to their physical, mental, and spiritual welfare. In view of the varying circumstances of the sick, the minister should use discretion in the performance of this duty.

**CHAPTER 61 The Burial of the Dead.**

**61-1** The services proper for such an occasion are:

- a. The singing of appropriate psalms or hymns;
- b. The reading of some suitable portion or portions of Scripture, with such remarks as it may seem proper to the minister to make;
- c. Prayer, in which the bereaved shall be especially remembered, and God's grace sought on their behalf, that they may be sustained and comforted in their sorrow, and that their affliction may be blessed to their spiritual good.

**61-2** The funeral services are to be left largely to the discretion of the minister performing them, but he should always remember that the proper object of the service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living.

## **CHAPTER 62 Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving.**

**62-1** The observance of days of fasting and of thanksgiving, as the dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, is both scriptural and rational.

**62-2** Fasting and thanksgiving may be observed by individual Christians; by families; by particular congregations; by a number of congregations contiguous to each other; by the congregations under the care of a Presbytery; or by all the congregations of our Church.

**62-3** It should be left to the judgment and discretion of every Christian and family to determine when it is proper to observe a private fast or thanksgiving; and to the church Sessions to determine for particular congregations; and to the Presbyteries, to determine for larger districts. When it is deemed expedient that a fast or thanksgiving should be general, the call for it should be issued by the General Assembly. If at any time the civil power should appoint a fast or thanksgiving, in keeping with the Christian faith, it is the duty of the ministers and people of our communion to pay all due respect to it.

**62-4** Public notice should be given a sufficient time before the appointed day of fasting or thanksgiving, that persons may so order their affairs as to allow them to attend properly to the duties of the day.

**62-5** There should be public worship upon all such days; and the prayers, psalms or hymns, the selection of Scripture, and sermons, should all be in a special manner adapted to the occasion.

**62-6** On days of fasting, the minister should point out the authority and providences calling for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in solemn prayer, particular confession of sin, especially for the sins of the day and place; and the whole day should be spent in prayer and meditation.

**62-7** On days of thanksgiving, he should give information respecting the authority and providences which call for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in giving thanks, agreeably to the occasion, and in singing psalms or hymns of praise. On these days, the people should rejoice with holy gladness of heart; but their joy should be tempered with reverence, that they indulge in no excess or unbecoming levity.

## **CHAPTER 63 Christian Life in the Home.**

**63-1** In addition to public worship, it is the duty of each person in secret, and of every family in private, to worship God.

**63-2** Secret worship is most plainly enjoined by our Lord. In this duty everyone, apart, should spend some time in prayer, reading the Scriptures, holy meditation, and serious self-examination. The many advantages arising from a conscientious performance of these duties are best known to those who are found in the faithful discharge of them.

**63-3** Family worship, which should be observed by every family, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises; or in some briefer form of outspoken recognition of God.

**63-4** Parents should instruct their children in the Word of God, and in the principles of our holy religion. The reading of devotional literature should be encouraged and every proper opportunity should be embraced for religious instruction.

**63-5** Parents should set an example of piety and consistent living before the family. Unnecessary private visits on the Lord's Day and indulgence in practices injurious to the spiritual life of the family, should be avoided.

**63-6** In the supreme task of religious education, parents should co-operate with the Church by setting their children an example in regular and punctual attendance upon the sessions of the church school and the services of the sanctuary, by assisting them in the preparation of their lessons, and by leading them in the consistent application of the teachings of the Gospel in their daily activities.

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## APPENDIX A - THE DANVERS STATEMENT

The "Danvers Statement" of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

*Adopted by the General Assembly, 2004.*

### A. Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unravelling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardised and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

## **B. Purposes**

Recognising our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby
  - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
  - to help both men and women realise their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
  - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

## **C. Affirmations**

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).

- In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
- In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
  - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a

fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

## **APPENDIX B - A STATEMENT ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

*Adopted by the General Assembly, 2019*

This statement has been written as an attempt to provide a harmonisation of love and truth in our context regarding gender and sexuality so that our people may have some pastoral guidance in dealing with these issues.

### **I Introduction**

Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. Our society has become increasingly post-Christian and has begun to reinterpret what it means to be human. By and large the society we live in does not discern God's design for human life nor delights in the beauty of being image-bearers of God.

Our societies' unbelieving worldview denies God created human beings for his glory, and denies that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. Therefore the Church once more must strive to declare to the world, "that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his." (Ps. 100:3)

This unbiblical worldview contends that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preference. At its root, this view believes that the pathway to satisfaction is found in the 'self' and not in God. In contradistinction, Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (GPCNZ) declares that the only pathway to true joy and satisfaction in this life and the next is by understanding God's good design for his creatures and seeking a personal relationship with the Creator.

### **II A Humble Loving Attempt at a Scriptural Response**

As we (GPCNZ) speak truth into this situation we acknowledge that we must do so with love. We must have hearts full of compassion and empathy as we dialogue together on the issues of sexuality, gender, and the humanness that is common to us all. We commit ourselves as a denomination to hold together in our speech both truth and love, in glad submission to the Word of God and in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures declare that God created Adam and Eve. That they were the first human beings, and that God created them in his own image. Therefore, they were equal before God in dignity and worth, but distinct from each other as male and

female. As children of Adam and Eve all humans share in the great privilege of being image bearers of God, the true definition of what it means to be human.

Unfortunately this beautiful God-given privilege of image bearing has been marred by the fall into sin. Therefore, the glorious differences between men and women – relationally and creationally – has been negatively impacted. The desire of the fallen human heart for immorality and sexual sin is not a fulfilment of our humanness but rather a denial of it and a violation of what it means to be sexually male and sexually female in God's image. However – praise be to God – through redemption in Christ, and the transformational work of the Holy Spirit, our position as image bearers of God, the outworking of our gender differences, and our celebration of sexuality can be restored even while we may continue to struggle with unlawful sexual desires.

We acknowledge that because of the fallen world we live in there are irregularities in the created order. However, the differences between male and female reproductive structures are an integral part of God's design. This difference is a vital part of our self-identity as male and female. When there are irregularities, they do not undermine our worth as humans, rather those born with a physical or psychological disorder are nevertheless still created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image bearers. Our Lord Jesus himself acknowledges this when he said that some people are "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." They – like all image bearers – are welcomed as faithful followers of Jesus Christ to embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known. Therefore they are fully able to live a fruitful Christian life in joyful obedience to Jesus Christ.

Male and female sexual relationships are clearly defined, bounded and celebrated by the Scriptures. The sins of homosexuality and transgenderism are no worse than any other sin, yet they are still sinful. They are a result of being part of a broken world where all of our sexuality has been damaged by sin. In a world labouring under the curse of God and the sin of humankind we are not free to do with our bodies as we wish. Therefore this is not primarily a clinical issue, but rather a moral one. Sin has affected us all in different ways and homosexuality and transgenderism are just two of the ways that some people struggle. Some of these struggles we may wrestle with until the redemption of our bodies at the return of Christ. Until that time we all must strive to celebrate sexuality and gender within a heterosexual marriage union or live a celibate life. Life-long celibacy in Christ for a Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction should not be understood as a punishment, but just like all believers who wrestle against sinful temptations, should be seen as an opportunity to display God's glory for our joy and growth in holiness.

Given that we live in a world which was created according to God's specific design and yet has been marred and broken by the fall, what hope does the Church

have to offer for those whose brokenness is expressed in the specific areas of gender and sexuality? The only hope the Church can offer is that which itself has tasted, the good news of great joy for all people that is centred in Jesus Christ.

In Christian communities we strive together to adhere faithfully, and consistently, to the requirements to be holy in our sexuality in accordance with God's standards. Thus, we fulfil our human identity and display our Christ-like image bearing to a watching and confused culture. We join the infinite creator in celebrating human sexuality the way God celebrates it to his glory and our joy. In such a community of the Lord's people the one struggling with homosexual desires will find opportunity to develop God-glorifying relationships with both men and women as they experience the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ continually set before them by word and example.

We confess that at times we have failed in communicating that message faithfully to those who struggle with gender identity and sexual dysfunction. The Church of Jesus Christ should be the place where hope, restoration and peace are found and where all people can find love, support and help. As the Lord's people we are committed to reach out with care, understanding and compassion as we struggle and groan together until the redemption of our bodies.

## **APPENDIX C - STATEMENT ON RULING AND TEACHING ELDER DISTINCTIONS**

*Adopted by the General Assembly, 2014*

The pastor (also known as the teaching elder) is authorised to preach and administer the sacraments. Ordinarily the teaching elder also sets the order of worship, leads the congregation in prayer, song, and readings from the Bible. The teaching elder may also delegate these tasks to those suitably gifted. He should inform the Session of his general plans on these matters. As a matter of pastoral and practical wisdom he should gain Session's approval if he intends to make a change to an existing pattern or to involve new people in leading the worship service.

A ruling elder, while not called to preach or administer the sacraments may occasionally be asked by the pastor or the Session to do so (BCO 8-5). Regular preaching by a ruling elder requires licensure (BCO 19-1).

The parity of elders within a Presbyterian system of church government is primarily a 'parity of authority' not a 'parity of function'. To that end the parity of teaching and ruling elders in the various church courts allows for an equal say in judicial matters. They are to work together as one body (whether as a Session, Presbytery, or Assembly), therefore they are to seek agreement in their rulings whenever possible. Their oversight of the congregation includes the edification and discipline of members.

## **APPENDIX D - RULES OF ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS**

### **I Organisation of a General Assembly's Meeting**

**I-1** The General Assembly shall be called to order at the designated time by the Moderator, and shall begin with a worship service, including a season of prayer, a sermon or exhortation by the retiring Moderator, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

**I-2** Stated Clerk shall present a report on the enrolment of Commissioners, and declare if a quorum is present. If it is present, then the Assembly shall be declared to be properly constituted for the transaction of business.

**I-3** The first order of business shall be the election of a Moderator. The outgoing Moderator shall put the motion that "The Moderator-Elect be confirmed as Moderator". Upon the motion passing, the incoming Moderator shall take the chair.

**I-4** In the event of the motion failing, the procedure for electing a Moderator shall be as follows:

- a. There shall be only one nominating speech not to exceed five minutes for each nominee. No seconding speeches shall be permitted.
- b. If more than one Commissioner is nominated, election shall be by ballot, on ballots provided by the Stated Clerk. Tellers appointed by the Stated Clerk shall gather and count the ballots, and report the tabulation to the Stated Clerk. If no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast, a second ballot shall be called on the two nominees who received the highest number of votes on the first ballot. The Moderator shall declare an election when a nominee receives a majority of the votes cast by the commissioners present and voting.

**I-5** As soon as a Moderator shall have been declared elected he shall assume his constitutional duties as Moderator.

**I-6** Once the new Moderator has taken the chair, an election shall be held following the procedure above to elect his successor, who shall be known as the Moderator-Elect.

**I-7** In the event of the Moderator being unable to perform any of his duties during the period between Assemblies they shall fall to the Moderator- Elect.

## II The Moderator

**II-1** The Moderator shall preside at all sessions of the Assembly except when he may invite another Commissioner to act temporarily as the presiding officer.

**II-2** The Moderator shall call the succeeding Assembly to order and preside over its sessions until a successor has been elected. Ordinarily he shall present a retiring Moderator's sermon or exhortation. If the Moderator is unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall call the Assembly to order and preside over its sessions until a Moderator has been elected.

**II-3** Any former moderator attending a General Assembly shall have the privilege of the floor.

**II-4** Role Title: Moderator of General Assembly.

**II-5** Reports To: General Assembly and Administration and Finance Committee of Assembly.

**II-6** Position Summary: The Moderator serves as the presiding officer of the General Assembly, providing spiritual and administrative leadership to the denomination. This role involves guiding discussions, ensuring orderly conduct of meetings, and representing the denomination in various capacities.

**II-7** Position Parameters: Scripture, the *Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ*, and the *Rules of Assembly Operations*.

**II-8** Key Responsibilities:

a. Preside Over Meetings:

- 1) Chair sessions of the General Assembly and the Administration and Finance Committee.
- 2) The Moderator will also preside over any official denominational gatherings.
- 3) Ensure meetings are conducted in accordance with The Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ, the Rules of Assembly Operations, and Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

b. Spiritual Leadership:

- 1) Provide pastoral care and spiritual guidance to the denomination in times of crisis or conflict.

- 2) Lead worship services and deliver sermons at denominational events.
  - 3) Be an example of spiritual health and growth for the denomination.
- c. Representation:
- 1) With the Stated Clerk, function as the official representative of the denomination in ecumenical and inter-church activities. The Stated Clerk can stand in for the Moderator as needed.
  - 2) With the Stated Clerk, engage with media and public on behalf of the church. The Moderator gains input from the Stated Clerk before making any public statements.
  - 3) Where possible, be available to attend and speak at significant congregational and presbytery events when invited.
- d. Administrative Duties:
- 1) Oversee the implementation of General Assembly decisions through the Administration and Finance Committee.
  - 2) Collaborate with church officers and committees to ensure effective governance.

**II-9** Qualifications:

- a. Ordained minister (TE) or elder (RE) within the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- b. Experience in church leadership and administration.
- c. Strong understanding of Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ theology, polity, history, and ethos.
- d. Clear communication skills and good people skills.
- e. Ability to lead with compassion, integrity, and wisdom.

**II-10** Term of Office: Typically, the Moderator serves a two-year term, with the possibility of re-election.

**II-11** Reimbursement & Remuneration:

- a. All expenses relating to the fulfilment of the Moderators office such as travel, and accommodation will be paid from the national budget. Costs over \$500 must be approved by the Administration and Finance Committee in advance.

- b. Up to \$6,000 is available as a part time funded position. The allocation of these funds must be pre-approved by the Administration and Finance Committee.
- c. Five pulpit supply honoraria of \$120 per service per year to cover the Moderator's absences from his local church where he is the minister.

### III The Stated Clerk

**III-1** The Stated Clerk shall perform the duties assigned by the *Book of Church Order*, the *Rules of Assembly Operations*, and the *Bylaws of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*. The Stated Clerk shall serve as chief administrative officer of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly. As such, he shall be responsible, under the supervision and subject to the direction of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly, for carrying out and executing the appropriate duties and responsibilities of said Committee. The Stated Clerk shall be authorised to employ, with the approval of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly, a Business Administrator. All other staff personnel for said Committee shall then be employed by the Business Administrator with the approval and consent of the Stated Clerk.

**III-2** The Stated Clerk shall have the following responsibilities to the General Assembly:

- a. In his office as an elder he may, as appropriate, advise and counsel, and upon invitation, preach and teach.
- b. His duties are clerical, and as an ordained elder in the denomination he has no special role as spiritual leader or teacher to the denomination.
- c. He shall be responsible for the recording of the transactions of each General Assembly.
- d. He shall carefully preserve all of the records of each General Assembly.
- e. He shall obtain and grant abstracts from the Assembly records whenever properly required or requested.
- f. He shall prepare and distribute a *Commissioner Handbook for Commissioners* so as to reach commissioners one month prior to the convening of each General Assembly.
- g. He shall gather and assemble the items of business that come before each Assembly and refer such items of business to the proper committee or committees.
- h. He shall be responsible for publishing the minutes and statistical reports of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and periodically updating the digest of the minutes.
- i. He shall be the Parliamentarian of the General Assembly but may fulfil this function through the use of Assistant Parliamentarians whom he recommends to the Moderator for his appointment.

- j. He shall be an ex officio member of the Committee on Interchurch Relations.
- k. He shall be available to give advice to the boards and agencies of the Grace Presbyterian Church in New Zealand if, as, and when so requested.
- l. He shall be responsible for the oversight of the preservation of the archives of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- m. Under the supervision of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly, he shall propose the docket of the General Assembly and shall be available to advise the General Assembly on means to expedite and complete the business of the General Assembly.
- n. He shall be responsible for notifying all appropriate persons of the decisions of the General Assembly.
- o. He shall serve as the secretary of Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- p. He shall receive progress reports and/or minutes from the committees appointed by the General Assembly, including special committees.
- q. He shall have the privilege of the floor in all matters pertaining to his office at the General Assembly, to present necessary information on business before the meeting concerning the work and report of any committee on which he serves, and at such times when the moderator, the coordinators, the executive directors, chairmen of Assembly committees and agencies (or their designated representative), or any commissioner may request that he clarify matters before the court.
- r. He shall serve as custodian of the rolls of each General Assembly.
- s. He shall be the correspondent with the lower courts of the church.
- t. He shall be authorised to make public statements for and on behalf of the denomination only insofar as such statements are warranted on the basis of specific actions of the General Assembly.

**III-3** The Stated Clerk shall have responsibility to the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly as follows:

- a. He shall work under the supervision of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly between the meetings of General Assembly.
- b. He shall perform such duties as the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly shall direct.

- c. He shall recommend a person to fill the office of Business Administrator, such recommendation to be made to the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly. He shall employ such Business Administrator, with the prior approval of this Administrative Committee. The person filling the office of Business Administrator shall be responsible directly to the Stated Clerk, and through the Business Administrator the necessary personnel and equipment shall be obtained and utilised -- all under the overall oversight of the Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly.

**III-4** The Administration and Finance Committee of General Assembly has the responsibility of nominating to the General Assembly the person to fill the office of the Stated Clerk. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Assembly through the regular process for additional nominations.

**III-5** The qualifications for the person to fill the office of the Stated Clerk shall be as follows:

- a. He must be either a Teaching or Ruling Elder in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- b. He must be conversant with the history and distinctives of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition and in particular of the history and distinctives of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- c. He must possess a competent knowledge of the Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- d. He must have demonstrated managerial and organisational skills.
- e. He must be loyal to the standards of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and be able to fairly represent the actions of each General Assembly. He must be conversant with the breadth of Reformed thinking in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and able to communicate with the members of Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and with representatives of other Reformed denominations.
- f. He must be able to work in a capable, sensitive manner with persons who are in positions of responsibility in the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand organisation structure.

- g. He must understand and be committed to the proposition set out in BCO 14-1.3 "The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work ...". Therefore, such person must recognise and be committed to implementing the important principle of the interdependency of each Court, Committee and Agency of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- h. He must have an appreciation of the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ as defined in BCO 1-3 and thus be able to work with the leaders of all branches of this true Church.

## **IV Committees and Agencies**

**IV-1** The affairs and programs of the General Assembly shall be conducted primarily through its Permanent Committees and Agencies.

**IV-2** The Permanent Committees are those specifically created by the Book of Church Order:

- Administration and Finance (AFC)
- Christian Education and Publications (CE&P)
- Overseas Missions (OM)
- Home Missions (HM)

The Administration and Finance Committee shall function as a service committee to the General Assembly and the denomination. The Committees on Christian Education, Home Missions and Overseas Mission shall be known as Program Committees.

**IV-3** Permanent Committees may appoint subcommittees for specific tasks or areas of responsibility assigned by the General Assembly, according to the following guidelines:

- a. Membership of subcommittees may include persons not elected to the permanent committee, provided the subcommittee chairman is a permanent committee member.
- b. All policies and procedures of a subcommittee must be approved by the permanent committee prior to implementation.

## **V Communications and Overtures**

**V-1** A communication to the General Assembly is formal correspondence received by the Stated Clerk from other churches, from interchurch agencies to which this Church may be related, from committees of this Church on matters which cannot be included in regular reports, and from organised bodies outside the Church proper having business with the General Assembly.

**V-2** Ordinarily, communications from individuals shall not be received by the General Assembly, unless they originate with persons who have no other access to the Assembly. If the Assembly desires to receive and consider any such communications, other than as information, the Stated Clerk shall recommend reference to the proper Assembly committee. Letters, telegrams, or telephone calls from communicants or congregations of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand are not proper communications, and are not to be received by the Assembly.

**V-3** The Stated Clerk shall recommend to the Assembly reference for all proper communications.

**V-4** An overture ordinarily is the request of a presbytery for action by the General Assembly upon a specific matter.

**V-5** Upon receipt the Stated Clerk shall refer to the Finance & Administration Committee all overtures requesting amendment of the Book of Church Order and all overtures concerning presbytery boundaries or a new presbytery. All other overtures shall be referred by the Clerk to the appropriate Committee of Commissioners. All overtures shall be printed in the *Commissioner Handbook* with reference for consideration indicated.

**V-6** All overtures concerning matters of Constitutional Business shall be delivered by at least sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly to the Stated Clerk.

**V-7** All other overtures shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly in order to be included in the *Commissioner Handbook* for the next meeting of the General Assembly.

**V-8** Overtures received after the *Commissioner Handbook* is printed, and at least one (1) month (31 days) prior to the opening of the General Assembly shall be reported to the Assembly by the Stated Clerk, together with reference.

**V-9** No overtures received by the Stated Clerk less than one month prior to the opening of the meeting of the General Assembly shall be referred to or considered by the General Assembly convening in that year. No bill or overture shall be accepted for consideration upon the floor of General Assembly subsequent to the final published date set by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly for publication of the *Commissioner Handbook* for the General Assembly unless said matter receive two-thirds vote of the assembled commissioners.

**V-10** No overture will be considered by the General Assembly until it first has been presented to a presbytery. If approved by the presbytery, it will come before the Assembly as the overture of that court. An overture requested by an individual communicant, a teaching elder, or a session, but rejected by the presbytery, may be presented to the Assembly, provided the fact that it was rejected by the presbytery is clearly stated with the overture.

## **VI Reports to the General Assembly**

**VI-1** The permanent committees, agencies, special committees and ad interim committees of the Assembly shall make annual reports, which shall be transmitted to the Stated Clerk by at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly.

**VI-2** Informational presentation of some special aspects of the work reported by a Committee of Commissioners shall be limited to fifteen minutes, unless the Assembly approves some other time limit.

**VI-3** All other business brought to the General Assembly shall ordinarily be referred to a Committee of Commissioners except reports of the Assembly Standing Committees.

**VII New Business**

**VII-1** Any matter presented in any form which has not been received by the Stated Clerk prior to the opening of the General Assembly shall be treated as new business.

**VII-2** New business must be presented to the Assembly before the close of the second day of business.

**VII-3** The Finance & Administration Committee shall be available as a reference committee, to assist the Clerk in referring all new business coming to the Assembly.

**VII-4** The appropriate committee shall receive and consider all such references, deliberate and report to the Assembly in compliance with the directions of these Rules.

**VII-5** All matters introduced as new business, if received, and touching on constitutional matters, including requested rulings by the Moderator on questions of order involving constitutional questions, shall be referred in writing to the Finance & Administration Committee for consideration.

**VII-6** The Finance & Administration Committee shall consider each such constitutional matter referred to it, and make recommendation directly to the Assembly.

## **VIII Review of Presbytery Records**

**VIII-1** It is the right and duty of the General Assembly to review, at least once a year, the records of the presbyteries of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (BCO 40-1 and 40-2).

**VIII-2** General Assembly carries out this review through its Finance & Administration Committee. The operation of this Committee shall be considered a General Assembly expense.

### **VIII-3 Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes:**

- a. The Stated Clerk of each Presbytery is responsible for the custody of the Minutes of Presbytery.
- b. The Minutes should be neat and legible. Minutes should be dated, and the pages numbered. An official copy of the Minutes should be printed and either bound or kept in a good binder.
- c. The Minutes should contain the following information:
  - 1) The kind of meeting: stated, called, adjourned stated, or adjourned called. In the case of a called meeting the portion of the call stating the purpose of the meeting should be recorded verbatim in the Minutes.
  - 2) The name of the Presbytery.
  - 3) The date, time and place of the meeting.
  - 4) The name of the Moderator, and if someone other than the regular Stated Clerk served as a Clerk Pro-tem, his name should be indicated.
  - 5) That sessions were opened and closed with prayer (BCO 10-5).
  - 6) The names of those present at the meeting, indicating whether they were teaching elders, or ruling elders and the church they represented. The names of alternate ruling elders and their respective churches should also be included, and the names of visitors may be included.
  - 7) Teaching elders not attending and churches not represented should be listed as excused or unexcused.
  - 8) Approval of current or previous Minutes.
- d. The Minutes should be signed by the Clerk.
- e. Additional guidelines:

- 1) Points of order ruled against by the chair and appeals from the decision of the Chair, whether sustained or lost, together with the reason given by the Chair for his ruling, should be included for the sake of any case that may be carried to a higher court and for the protection of a minority. The record of the Presbytery's actions should be recorded.
  - 2) When a count has been ordered, or the vote is by ballot, the number of votes on each side should be entered.
  - 3) The proceedings of a committee of the whole should not be entered in the Minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into the committee as a whole. The committee report should be recorded.
  - 4) When a commission is charged with carrying out a task prescribed in the Constitution (such as organising a church or ordaining or installing a teaching elder), the Minutes of Presbytery should reflect the completion of each action prescribed in the respective constitutional provision. This may be accomplished by reporting the work of the commission using a form provided by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, which should be included in or appended to the Minutes.
  - 5) Minutes of presbytery relating to examinations must list all specific requirements and trials for licensure and/or ordination which have been accomplished. This does not mean that a separate vote on each item must be recorded.
  - 6) Minutes of executive sessions are not exempt from the general requirement that Presbytery's actions shall be recorded in the Presbytery's Minutes and that these Minutes (even if kept in a separate section on executive sessions) shall be submitted to the General Assembly for review (BCO 13-11; 14-6,c; 40-1). Presbytery may ask that the Finance & Administration Committee deal with these Minutes confidentially. However, any exceptions to these Minutes must be submitted to the General Assembly through the normal procedures.
  - 7) Minutes of Presbytery dealing with judicial cases shall not be dealt with by the Finance & Administration Committee (BCO 40-3) when notice of appeal or complaint has been given the lower court, but still must be submitted for review as part of the record.
- f. The following suggestions are made to clerks and Presbyteries for the keeping of Minutes:

- 1) The Minutes should record the actions of the Presbytery, including all motions adopted and business transacted, together with such additional information as the Presbytery deems desirable for historical purposes.
- 2) Ordinarily in Church Courts motions that are lost are not included in the record, unless an affirmative vote for the lost motion is recorded, in which case the lost motion must be shown.
- 3) Each main motion should normally be recorded in a separate paragraph. Subsidiary and procedural motions may be recorded in the same paragraph with the main motion to which it pertains.

**VIII-4 Guidelines for Submitting of Presbytery Records:**

- a. The Stated Clerk of each Presbytery is to provide the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly with three (3) copies of all minutes to be reviewed, or an electronic copy by email.
- b. The minutes to be reviewed shall include the unreviewed minutes of all Presbytery meetings that have been held through the end of the previous calendar year (BCO 40-1).
- c. In addition to the minutes themselves, the Presbytery shall submit three (3) copies of the following items:
  - 1) A current Directory of Presbytery, including (1) a list of all teaching elders, with their addresses; and of all churches and missions with the address of the church, and the name and address of the Clerk of Session, (2) a listing of all officers and committee members of the regular committees of Presbytery, and (3) a list identifying all candidates under care, interns and licentiates of the Presbytery with their addresses.
  - 2) An up-to-date copy of the Standing Rules of the Presbytery.
  - 3) A letter stating Presbytery's response to the Assembly concerning disposition of any exceptions of substance taken by the past Assembly.
- d. The Minutes are to be reviewed and the items listed under VIII-4.c shall be mailed physically or electronically to the office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly not less than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the Assembly.
- e. If a presbytery repeatedly fails to submit its minutes, or its responses to exceptions of substance, the Committee may recommend to the General Assembly that the provisions of BCO 40-1, 40-4 & 40-5 be applied.

**VIII-5** The Stated Clerk of each Presbytery, or his representative, should be prepared to meet with the Committee to answer questions and to clarify any possible discrepancy. The Committee should make every reasonable effort to consult with the Clerk of the Presbytery (or his designee) on any questions before finalising the report to the General Assembly.

**VIII-6 Guidelines for Examining Presbytery Records:**

- a. Presbytery Minutes shall be examined for conformity to:
  - 1) The Scriptures and the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as to the substance of the actions recorded (BCO 40-2), and
  - 2) The Assembly Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes, as to form, structure, and minimum content (RAO VIII-3).
- b. Each set of Presbytery Minutes and other materials submitted under RAO VIII-4c should be read by at least two members of the Finance & Administration Committee. The findings of the committee with respect to the Minutes of each Presbytery shall be noted under the following categories as appropriate:
  - 1) Exceptions of substance: Apparent violations of the Scripture or serious irregularities from the Constitution of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, actions out of accord with the deliverances of the General Assembly, and matters of impropriety and important delinquencies, should be reported under this category.
  - 2) Exceptions of form: Violations of the Assembly's Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes (RAO VIII-3), rules of order, etc. should normally be reported under this category. When a minor irregularity from a BCO provision or requirement is noted, it may be treated as an exception of form (BCO 40-3). If subsequent minutes continue to reflect the same particular exception of form, it may become an exception of substance.
  - 3) Notations: The Committee may report to the Clerk of Presbytery any typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation and other minor variations in form and clarity. These are to be given as advice for the respective clerks.

**VIII-7 Guidelines for Reporting on Presbytery Records:**

The report of the Committee shall be concise. It shall include the following:

- a. A list of the Minutes, by Presbyteries, received by the Committee.
- b. A list of the Presbyteries which have not submitted Minutes, if any.
- c. A recommendation concerning the Minutes of each Presbytery which shall include:
  - 1) Minutes approved without exception,
  - 2) Minutes approved with exceptions of form, which shall be reported directly to the presbytery,
  - 3) Minutes approved with exceptions of substance which shall be presented to the General Assembly, which presentation shall include citation of any relevant Scriptural and/or Constitutional references, and provide the Committee's rationale for finding the exception of Substance.
  - 4) Responses to exceptions of previous assemblies, if any.
  - 5) Recommendations concerning all responses to exceptions taken by previous assemblies that have not been disposed of suitably.
- d. Any other recommendation to the Assembly.
- e. A statement of the division of the vote on each recommendation.
- f. Any recommendation which may affect the budget of the Assembly shall be referred to the Committee of Commissioners on Administration.
- g. A list of members present.

**VIII-8** The report of the Committee shall be prepared and handled in the same manner as reports of Committees of Commissioners as set forth in RAO 13-11.

**VIII-9** No partial report of the Committee shall be presented without the consent of the Assembly.

**VIII-10 Guidelines for Responding to General Assembly:**

- a. Presbyteries shall be advised of exceptions of form; however, they shall take note in their minutes of exceptions of substance taken by the Assembly, together with the responses adopted by the presbytery.
- b. Presbyteries shall correspond with the next General Assembly the disposition they have made of the exceptions of substance (including general), with specific reference to presbytery's action as recorded in its minutes. Responses shall be in one of the following forms:

- 1) Presbytery agrees with the exceptions and corrects its record (if possible), corrects its actions (if possible) and promises to be more careful in the future. Or,
- 2) Presbytery respectfully disagrees with the exception, states its grounds and refers the exception back to the Assembly.

## **IX Parliamentary Procedure**

**IX-1** Except as otherwise specifically provided in these Rules, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure.

**IX-2** The Chairman shall lead the Assembly in a brief prayer before making his report. The entire report of each Committee of Commissioners, including narrative, shall be read before any comment. The Assembly may waive the reading of any particular report by a majority vote of the commissioners present and voting.

When a minority of a Committee wishes to present a minority report, the member reporting for the minority shall have the privilege of presenting the minority report and moving it as a substitute for the portion of the majority report affected.

**IX-3** Recommendations in a report may be voted upon as block, unless any commissioner objects, in which case each recommendation in that report must be read, considered, and acted upon separately.

- a. The Chairman moves the adoption, no second is necessary for a committee recommendation.
- b. The Moderator asks: "Is there objection or question?"
- c. Hearing no objection or question, the Moderator states: "I will put the motion".
- d. When it is necessary to postpone action on the completion of a report for some subsequent action of the Assembly, such as the approval of the budgets, or other special items, the report shall be approved as a whole pending the completion of these other items. At the time that the other items come to the floor, only these matters may be considered by the Assembly, since the report as a whole will have already been adopted.

### **IX-4 Procedure in debating a question:**

- a. The Chairman or his designate may answer questions concerning the report addressed to him through the Moderator.
- b. The Chairman or his designate shall have an opportunity to make the final statement in debate.
- c. No Commissioner may speak on the same question more than once until all desiring to speak have done so.

- d. Debate on the main motion shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes unless extended. When a main motion has been debated for fifteen (15) minutes, the Moderator shall put the question to the Assembly: "Does the Assembly desire to extend the time an additional five (5) minutes?" A simple majority will decide the question. If the majority decides not to extend debate, the Moderator will call the question. If an amendment or a substitution is on the floor, the question of extending time on the main motion shall be repeated after the vote on the amendment or substitute. If time is extended, the question of extension will again be put every succeeding five (5) minutes until the motion is concluded. Each Commissioner may be limited to three (3) minutes on the same question unless the Court by a simple majority grants additional time.
- e. Debate shall be free and open, with equal time being given to proponents and opponents in so far as possible.

**IX-5 Special Provisions**

- a. The Assistants to the Stated Clerk shall have the privilege of the floor when requested by the Moderator to render some specific service to the court.
- b. All motions shall be presented in writing and read before being voted upon.

**X Amendment or Suspension of Rules**

**X-1** The *Rules of Assembly Operations* may be amended or suspended only by a two-thirds vote of those voting which must also be a majority of the total enrolment of commissioners. A motion to amend is debatable. A motion to suspend is not debatable.

## **APPENDIX E - GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NZ ECUMENICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **I Introduction.**

The Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is a part of Christ's Global Church. As one part of Christ's Church, we welcome and desire fellowship with all those who proclaim the evangelical Gospel and seek to pattern their lives and conduct to please God. We look forward to the day when ethnic, national, cultural, and doctrinal differences are finally and completely reconciled in Christ at his return.

In the meantime, we desire to recognise as best as we can those fellowships of believers with whom we share a common faith, fulfilling our Lord's commands in Ephesians 4 and Christ's High Priestly Prayer for the unity of his people in John 17. We do this by entering into fellowship with other churches which faithfully proclaim the Gospel and bear the marks of the Church, whether in New Zealand or around the world.

### **II Ecclesiastical Fellowship Framework**

Our fellowship with other churches is established by a framework of three categories. Fellowship with other churches is approved by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Administration and Finance Committee.

Fellowship with other denominations shall be administered according to the following three categories.

#### **II-1 Ecclesiastical Contact**

Open to churches that we recognise as bearing the following criteria, including those churches that we are initiating contact with to mutually learn more about each other:

- a. Recognisable commitment to the evangelical Christian faith, such as through membership in the World Reformed Fellowship or World Evangelical Alliance, or adoption of a recognisably evangelical Confession or Statement of Faith.
- b. Expressed commitment to evangelism and discipleship.
- c. Commitment to ecumenical cooperation.

#### **II-2 Ecclesiastical Collaboration**

This category represents those churches with whom we share significant common belief and practice. We may collaborate on Church Planting or Revitalisation projects and ministries with these churches.

This category is open to churches that we recognise as bearing the following criteria:

- a. Adherence to a reformed Confession or Statement of Faith (e.g., Westminster Confession, Three Forms of Unity, 39 Articles, Savoy Declaration) where there may be some differences in theological distinctives with the Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ.
- b. Commitment to Biblical discipleship.
- c. Evangelistic commitment at the local, regional, and national levels of the Church.
- d. Commitment to some, but not necessarily all, GPCNZ distinctives.

### **II-3 Ecclesiastical Fellowship / Sister Churches**

This category represents those churches with whom we share the most in common. We commit to working together and thoughtfully engaging in outreach and evangelism which complements the labours of our sister churches wherever possible.

Transfer of Ministers/Teaching Elders between the GPCNZ and churches in this category would be as if transferring between one part of our denomination and another.

Accordingly, fellowship in this category requires the following:

- a. Adherence to the Reformed Faith through a committed subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort).
- b. Commitment to a Presbyterian form of Church Government.
- c. Evangelistic commitment at the local, regional, and national levels of the Church.
- d. Similar commitment to other GPCNZ distinctives, such that there is no undue binding of conscience on these distinctives of Ordained Ministers/Teaching Elders transferring into our denomination.

### **III Ecclesiastical Partners.**

In addition to our fellowship with other denominations through the framework above, we also recognise special relationships that we have to individual churches,

agencies, and ecumenical bodies which are dear to the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

These Ecclesiastical Partners are:

- Briarwood Presbyterian Church, PCA
- World Reformed Fellowship
- Grace Theological College
- Mission to the World, PCA

#### **IV Other Relationships**

Other Ecclesiastical relationships may be identified and added (or removed) by the General Assembly, by way of overture by a Presbytery or by request of a GPCNZ denominational committee.