THE

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

OF THE

ASSOCIATE REFORMED

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

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THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

PREAMBLE

God has, from all eternity, purposed to bring glory to Himself by redeeming sinners, through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, who are called out of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. This body of believers is the household of God, the Body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. An essential element of the Triune God's plan of salvation is growth in personal holiness. Without such holiness, the writer to the Hebrews tells us, "no man shall see God."

One of the necessary means by which God cultivates holiness in the life of believers is discipline. Discipline may be considered in a broad or narrow sense. Discipline, in the broad sense, is the grid through which the Christian life is to be lived. The life of both individual believers and the Church as a whole are to be disciplined by the word of God. Discipline, in the narrow sense, describes the formal judicial process in the courts of the Church. Formal discipline is given by God to the Church to protect the glory of God, the purity of the Church, and to help reclaim erring believers, bringing wayward saints to repentance and reconciliation with God and their fellow men. This Book of Discipline is the confessional document of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church that lays out the principles and steps of formal discipline within our branch of the visible Church.

Since Jesus Christ alone is the head and king of the Church, discipline must always be practiced according to His precepts, as found in God's inerrant Word, the Holy Scripture. King Jesus has delegated the authority to exercise discipline to those who hold the office of elder, to those who minister and declare Christ's word in the Church. Discipline is an aspect of ordained office that must be exercised jointly; that is, discipline in the Church of Christ is to be exercised when the elders are seated together as a court of the Church to deliberate and pass judgment according to the Law of God. When the elders of the church pass judgment in accordance with the revealed will of God, their actions are binding both on heaven and on earth.

An essential element of justice in all judicial proceedings is fairness and impartiality. "You shall do no injustice in court," Moses warns, "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor." The following chapters of the Book of Discipline are designed to ensure that all who stand before the courts of the Church receive fair, uniform, and impartial treatment. Procedural fairness, Biblical standards for evidence, and Scriptural censures are necessary to protect the Church from error, heresy, and moral degradation. Such proceedings, however, will never achieve their intended goal of holiness through repentance, reconciliation, and restoration without being motivated by the love of God, thoroughly grounded in the grace of Christ, and attended with the power of the Holy Spirit. Formal discipline is, therefore, a spiritual process that must be conducted in a spirit of prayer and dependence upon God and loving concern for the people of God.

CHAPTER 1
PRINCIPLES

1.1 The supreme standard by which all controversies and matters of discipline in the Church are to be judged is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

1.2 Scripture alone is the final rule of faith and practice in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, together with the *Form of Government*, the *Book of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Public Worship* as accepted by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church are the standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice and may be used in judicial process for the purpose of establishing offenses. Nothing shall be considered by any court as an offense or admitted as evidence for an accusation that cannot be proved to be such from Scripture.

1.3 The purpose of church discipline[1] is to promote the peace, purity, prosperity, and unity of the Church[2] by (A) reclaiming the erring offender;[3] (B) deterring others from similar offenses;[4] (C) exposing and removing detrimental elements from the body of Christ;[5] (D) vindicating the honor of Jesus Christ;[6] (E) promoting the truth of the gospel;[7] (F) preventing the wrath of God from coming upon the Church;[8] and (G) maintaining the sanctity of His ordinances.[9]

1.4 The responsibility to enforce discipline is committed to the courts of the Church.[10] Not exercising discipline or allowing discipline to fail for lack of an accuser[11] ignores a command of Christ and abdicates the authority He has given to the courts of the Church.[12]

1.5 Church discipline must always be exercised as Biblical shepherding.[13] It should not only seek to guide, to nurture, and to restore, but also to guard and defend.[14]

1.6 The Church must resist the notion that sin is a private matter between an individual and the Lord alone.[15] Sin prefers darkness to light, but the Church cannot allow unrepentant sinners to remain undercover. Sin that is ignored will bring destruction to individuals, families, and congregations.[16]

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[1] WCF XXX.3, 1 Corinthians 11:31-32.
[2] Acts 9:31, 1 Corinthians 14:33.
[3] 2 Corinthians 7:8-13; 13:9, Galatians 6:1-2.
[4] 1 Corinthians 5:7, Titus 1:10-11.
[5] 1 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 2:11-14.
[6] 1 Peter 1:7.
[7] Titus 1:9.
[8] WCF XXX.3, Matthew 5:13, 1 Corinthians 11:29-32.
[9] 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:17-26.
[10] WLC Q.129, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11-13, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5-10, 1 Peter 5:2-3.
[11] Deuteronomy 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1-3, 1Timothy 5:19.
[12] WCF XXX.2, WLC Q.130, 1Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7, 17.
[13] 1 Peter 5:1-5.
[14] Luke 15:1-7, John 10:1-18.
[15] Luke 21:1-3, 1 Corinthians 5:6-7.
[16] Matthew 16:11-12, 2 Peter 3:17, 2 Timothy 3:6-8.

CHAPTER 2
DEFINITIONS

2.1 ADMISSION.[17] The voluntary acknowledgment of having committed certain conduct. Admission differs from confession in that admission does not acknowledge the conduct to be an offense.

2.2 ADMONITION. An informal action calling an erring church member to repentance. Admonition is to be distinguished from Rebuke. Admonition is an informal action that elders may exercise, either jointly or severally, in order to call church members to repentance from their sins. Admonition does not rise to the level of censure, does not require a formal trial, and, therefore, anyone who is admonished is not under discipline.

2.3 ADVOCATE. An elder in good standing in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church who acts in support of an alleged offender or victim in the disciplinary proceedings. This person may act as a representative if the alleged offender is judged to be incapable of representing themselves (subject to the approval of the court).

A. The Advocate is not a replacement for an attorney nor to be treated as a replacement for an attorney.
B. The Advocate's assistance and representation of an alleged offender or victim in the disciplinary proceedings is to be guided by the principles of God's Word. He is to operate in the light rather than darkness, bring sin into the light rather than hide it, encourage the alleged offender or victim to do the same, and thereby glorify God (John 3:19-21).

2.4 ALLEGATION. A statement, ordinarily in writing, which raises the possibility of an offense.

2.5 APPEAL.[18] The transfer of a case from a lower court to the next higher court for review after a final decision by the lower court. (See Chapter 5)

2.6 CENSURE.[19] A formal application of discipline by a church court. There are four degrees of church censure, as set forth below. The appropriate censure shall be applied if an offense is confessed or otherwise confirmed, or if there is no repentance. Censures shall be put in writing, with a clear statement of the offense, and conveyed to the offender personally, if possible. Any censure may be imposed without first imposing a lesser censure. A censuring court shall advise its members of the imposition of censure; a Session shall advise the communicant members of the local congregation, when appropriate.[20]

The censures of Rebuke, Suspension, Removal from Office, and Excommunication are durational, which is to say that they continue in effect until the person censured has been restored, and the censure resolved or removed. Thus, a person who has been censured with Rebuke, Suspension, Removal from Office, or Excommunication is to be considered "under discipline."

A. Rebuke.[21] A formal reproof of an offender by a court of the Church, warning him of his guilt and the danger of his sin, exhorting him to repent. A rebuke shall be imposed only after disciplinary proceedings. A rebuke addresses specific conduct. The court having imposed that censure should be more attentive to the spiritual care of the person rebuked. In so doing, if the censure

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[17] Psalm 59:12, Acts 8:1-3, Romans 16:18, Philippians 3:19, 1 John 1:8.
[18] Acts 11:1-4; 25:11.
[19] WCF XXX, FOG 6.8C.
[20] The courts of the church should be guided by the principle that the extent of the offense determines the extent of the publicity; if the offense was private, the censure need not be publicized. However, if the offense was public and/or general, the court should consider publicizing the censure in a sensitive fashion, so that it might be known as widely as necessary and appropriate. Suspension, removal from office, and excommunication, by their very nature require some degree of publicity.
[21] Psalm 50:21; 14:5, Proverbs 17:10, Mark 8:33, Luke 17:3, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15.

has not had the intended effect, the court should continue the disciplinary process to address his lack of repentance.

B. Suspension.[22] A censure that excludes the offender from the privileges of the sacraments and/or exercising the duties of church office. Suspension from the sacraments excludes the offender from the sealing ordinances of the Church for an indefinite period of time. There shall be no definite suspension from the sacraments. Suspension from Office excludes the offender from the exercise of his office. Suspension from Office may be indefinite or definite. Definite suspension from office is appropriate when the glory of God, the honor of Christ, and the good of the offender requires it, even after the offender has repented of his sins to the satisfaction of the church court. Indefinite Suspension from Office is appropriate in order to bring an impenitent offender to repentance. When an offender is an officer, suspension from the sacraments shall also entail suspension from office, but suspension from office does not necessarily entail suspension from the sacraments. The court shall evaluate the offender's repentance and may remove the suspension when appropriate or may proceed to a greater censure. The suspension shall be made known to the communicant members of the local congregation and any church court of which he is a member, and may be made known more widely, as appropriate.

C. Removal from Office.[23] A censure which expels an ordained member from his office, which may be in addition to or apart from other censures. The removal must be made known to the communicant members of the congregation and to any courts of which he is a member; it may be made known more widely, as appropriate.

D. Excommunication.[24] A censure which excludes an offender from membership in the visible Church. Excommunication is imposed for offenses that are grossly inconsistent with the Christian profession or for obstinate persistence in offenses despite the application of lesser censures. The excommunicated person shall no longer be considered a brother or sister in Christ; members should then relate to the person with love and compassion as one who is outside the visible Church and in need of repentance and salvation. The excommunication shall be made known to the communicant members of the congregation of which he was a member and/or to any courts of which he was a member; it may be made known more widely, as appropriate.

2.7 CHARGE. The written statement of a specific offense when an investigation has determined that there is reason to believe that an offense warranting discipline has occurred. (See Appendix 1, Form 1)

2.8 CHURCH MEMBER.[25]

A. A communicant church member[26] is subject to the Book of Discipline.

B. A non-communicant church member[27] is primarily subject to the discipline of his or her parents or guardians under the oversight of the session. A non-communing member who reaches the age of 18 comes under the direct oversite of the session and is subject to the Book of Discipline.

C. An associate church member[28] is subject to the Book of Discipline; the associate member's home congregation shall be advised of any censures imposed.

2.9 CLERK.[29] The member of a court responsible for keeping records and performing administrative duties.

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[22] 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:15-16; 3:10-11, Matthew 3:8.
[23] (Formerly known as Deposition) FOG 10.3K, Acts 1:15-20, 1 Timothy 1:10-11.
[24] (Formerly known as Expulsion) 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, 1 Timothy 1:20, Titus 3:10-11.
[25] Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12.
[26] FOG 4.1; 4.4.F; 4.5A (7).
[27] FOG. 4.2.
[28] FOG. 4.3.
[29] FOG 6.12; 10.10; 12.11.

2.10 COMPLAINT. A complaint is a written representation made against some act or decision of a court of the Church.

2.11 CONFESSION.[30] The voluntary acknowledgment of having committed conduct which constitutes an offense, ordinarily accompanied by repentance.

2.12 CONTUMACY.[31] An unwillingness to cooperate with a lawful command of any church court, and any conduct which demonstrates contempt, dishonor, and disrespect for proper and legitimate authority. When alleged as an offense, disciplinary procedures shall be followed. When committed in the presence of a court of the Church, censures may be applied without any need for further investigation.

2.13 COURTS OF THE CHURCH.

A. SESSION.[32] The lowest court of the Church, comprised of actively serving Elders in a local congregation. The Session has original jurisdiction over church members, but not over ministers. It is specifically authorized to "[a]dmonish, rebuke, suspend, or exclude from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper any member of the congregation found delinquent . . . "

B. PRESBYTERY.[33] An intermediate court of the Church between the Session and the Synod, comprised of all the ministers and elder delegates from churches within a defined geographical region. A presbytery has original jurisdiction over ministers.

C. GENERAL SYNOD.[34] The highest court of the Church. The General Synod is comprised of all ministers and elder delegates from each congregation of the ARP Church. The Synod is "to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word."[35] The General Synod is the court with authority to change and give final interpretation to the Standards.

2.14 DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS.[36] The orderly process involved in commencing and concluding the question of whether a censure should be imposed. For the sake of maintaining the honor of Christ by providing a fair process to all, disciplinary proceedings require due process. Due process includes the following: (A) charges in writing; (B) the opportunity to be heard after notice to appear; (C) the opportunity to present evidence and arguments; (D) the cross-examination of witnesses; (E) the right to fairness and impartiality;[37] and (F) the right to a prompt resolution of the charges.[38]

2.15 DISQUALIFICATION.[39] A member of a court shall not participate in an action or decision of the court when that person cannot be fair and impartial. A member of the court shall be disqualified if he meets any of the following criteria:

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[30] Psalm 32:5; 51:3-4, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9.
[31] WLC Q.127; Q.128, Proverbs 16:18, Romans 13:1-2, Hebrews 3:15; 12:5-6.
[32] FOG 6; 6.8C, 1 Peter 5:1-5, I Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14.
[33] FOG 10, Acts 15:22, 1 Peter 5:1.
[34] FOG 12, Exodus 18:19-23, Joshua 24:1, 1 Samuel 8:3, Psalm 119:36, 1 Peter 5:2.
[35] WCF 31.3.
[36] Acts 15:19; 22; 28, 1 Corinthians 14:40.
[37] Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25.
[38] Ecclesiastes 8:11.
[39] 1 Samuel 8:3, Psalm 119:36, 1Peter 5:2.

A. A member of a court may disqualify (recuse) himself as a matter of conscience.
B. An elder who has served as the investigator shall not render judgment in a case in which he has served.
C. Any member of the lower court ordinarily should recuse himself from rendering judgment in a higher court in the same case in which he previously sat in judgment.
D. Any challenge to a member's participation must be made at the earliest opportunity (that is, the beginning of the trial or immediately after grounds for disqualification come to light) and decided by a majority of the remaining members of the court.

2.16 ELDER.[40] A man ordained to govern and discipline God's people. Ordained ministers are also elders who are members of a presbytery.

2.17 ENTITY. A collective body within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, e.g. session, presbytery, board, commission, committee.

2.18 EVIDENCE. Information used to establish or disprove charges during the trial. Evidence must meet the Biblical criterion as found in Deuteronomy 19:15, "A single witness shall not suffice against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established." But if, in addition to the testimony of one witness, corroborative evidence be produced, the offense may be considered to be proved.

2.19 EXHIBITS. Documents or other physical objects which, if ruled relevant and properly authenticated (that the exhibit is what it purports to be) by the presiding officer, may be admitted as evidence at any proceeding.

2.20 FAILURE TO ACT. A court of the Church has failed to act when it has either refused to take action in a judicial matter or has wrongly interpreted the Standards. Failure to act includes but is not limited to: refusing to investigate charges when there is a strong presumption of guilt; investigating charges but refusing to bring them to trial when a trial is warranted; holding a trial but failing to convict the accused offender in the presence of sufficient evidence; or when a court has failed to try a case or inflict censures due to a misinterpretation of the Standards of the ARP Church.

2.21 INVESTIGATOR.[41] An elder of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church appointed by a court to inquire into the particulars of an alleged offense. A court may appoint an elder from another Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church court, in which event the elder must submit himself to the jurisdiction of the court making the appointment. The investigator interviews persons and collects evidence to make a determination about the accuracy or validity of the alleged offense, and makes a report to the court which appointed him. As directed by the court, the investigator shall prepare written charges. The investigator shall be responsible for presenting the evidence supporting the allegations to the court at a hearing.

2.22 MINISTER.[42] A man who is called by God in the Lord Jesus Christ to a special ministry of the word, who is a member of a presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

2.23MODERATOR.[43] The presiding officer of a court of the Church.

2.24 OFFENSE.

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[40] FOG 6.1-4, Exodus 18:19-23, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5.
[41] Amos 7:7-8, Zechariah 2:1-2.
[42] FOG 91; 9.3; 9.5; 10.3K.
[43] WCF XXV.6, FOG 6.10-19; 10.10; 12.6; 12.9; 12.10; 12.11; 12.15, Acts 15:13-19.

A. Any conduct, in words, actions, or omission, which is contrary to the Holy Scriptures or the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.[44] Every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God; however, not every sin is an offense that requires discipline by the Church.[45] An offense requires discipline when it is detrimental to the faith, practice, witness, or spiritual condition of one or more members of the body, including the offender.

B. Offenses are classified as personal or general, and private or public.[46] Reporting an allegation of an offense to a court of the Church does not make the offense public.

1. A personal offense is committed against another person.[47]
2. A general offense is committed against more than one person or against no one person in particular.
3. A private offense is known only by the person(s) affected by the offense.[48]
4. A public offense is ordinarily known by more than one person in the Church or is known by people in the community, though not necessarily by large numbers of people.[49]
5. Personal offenses that are committed publicly, for example, could be considered as public offenses.[50]

C. Offenses fall under one of three categories: (1) heresy;[51] (2) violation of the moral law;[52] and (3) contempt for the courts of the Church (contumacy).[53] In determining whether a sin rises to this level, church courts shall:

1. consider the "aggravations" of the sin[54] and the nature and purpose of discipline;[55]
2. consider the kinds of offenses that traditionally have been subject to discipline in the Church;[56]
3. refrain from being overly burdensome or legalistic, being especially careful to avoid hypocrisy or partiality,[57] and
4. resist any temptation to minimize the seriousness of sin to escape the difficulty or discomfort of the duty to enforce discipline.[58]

D. Because sin and the contexts in which it occurs can take innumerable forms, there can be no rigid formula for determining when a sin becomes an offense requiring discipline. Church officers and courts shall exercise wisdom and discernment in this regard, knowing that they are in turn subject to the judgment of higher courts.

2.25 ORIGINAL JURISDICTION. Original jurisdiction describes the court that has primary jurisdiction over a member or officer of the Church. For members of churches and ruling elders, the court of original jurisdiction is the session of the Church where they hold their membership; for ministers, the court of original jurisdiction is the presbytery to which he belongs. In special circumstances, a higher court may assume jurisdiction over cases where the court of original jurisdiction was within its geographical bounds. Transfer of original jurisdiction may occur when:

A. an appeal is made, and the higher court chooses to assume original jurisdiction over the case.

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[44] Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) Q.14, 1 John 3:4.
[45] WLC Q.150-Q.152, WCF VI.6; XI.5, Psalm 89:30-33, Luke 22:31-32.
[46] 1Timothy 5:24.
[47] Matthew 18:15, 1 Corinthians 8:12.
[48] Matthew 18:15.
[49] Genesis 37:23-24, 1 Corinthians 1:11.
[50] 1 Corinthians 6:5-6.
[51] Galatians 1:8-9.
[52] WLC Q. 98, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.
[53] 2 Timothy 3:8.
[54] WLC Q.151.
[55] WCF XXX.3.
[56] Deuteronomy 32:7, Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11.
[57] Galatians 6:1-5.
[58] Jeremiah 6:14, Hebrews 12:5-6.

B. a complaint is made, and the higher court chooses to sustain the complaint and assume original jurisdiction over the case.
C. a session has failed to act, two sessions in the same presbytery may memorialize the presbytery to assume original jurisdiction. The memorials must lay out how the session has failed to act. If a majority of the presbytery determines that the session has failed to act, the presbytery shall proceed to try the case itself.
D. a presbytery has failed to act, two other presbyteries memorialize the General Synod to assume original jurisdiction. The memorials must lay out how the presbytery has failed to act. If a majority of the Synod determines that the presbytery has failed to act, the Synod shall proceed to try the case itself.

2.26 PRESIDING OFFICER. Ordinarily the moderator of a court of the Church, except when a court appoints another to preside over a disciplinary proceeding.

2.27 RECORD.[59] All materials gathered in the disciplinary procedures in any court of the Church, including but not limited to the following: written charges or complaint; the investigator's report; testimony, recorded or transcribed; exhibits; and the decision of a court.

2.28 REFERENCE.[60] A written request from a lower court to a higher court for advice or instruction on matters pending before the lower court, or the transfer of the entire matter to the higher court for action or decision. What may be referred includes matters that are delicate or difficult, that have not been resolved in the lower court, that involve such conflicts of interest as to make it improper for the lower court to sit in judgment, or that involve conflicts or disagreements between two or more lower courts. References may be either judicial or non-judicial. Non-judicial reference is when the lower court seeks advice from the higher court, while the judicial reference transfers original jurisdiction to the higher court. (See Chapter 6)

2.29 REPENTANCE.[61] The act of grieving for and hating the offense committed, such that the offender properly confesses, turns from the offense, and seeks to obey God in the future. Actions appropriate to repentance, such as reconciliation, restitution, and an evident change in heart must be demonstrated.

2.30 RESTITUTION.[62] A non-punitive remedy that a court may impose alone or in addition to any censure, for the purpose of reasonably restoring actual losses to a victim of an offense and/or as a condition of restoration. Willful failure to meet the requirements of a properly imposed restitution requirement may be considered an offense, so courts should impose restitution only after carefully considering an offender's ability to meet its conditions.

2.31 RESTORATION.[63] The reaffirmation of love and fellowship toward the person who has been suspended, removed from office, or excommunicated, and the commitment to pursue peace, reconciliation and restitution when appropriate, and the reinstatement of the full privileges of church membership including offices, when appropriate.

2.32 UNDER DISCIPLINE. A member of a church or presbytery is considered to be under discipline if he is in any of the following stages of formal discipline: a judicial investigation where an investigator is

[59] Psalm 102:18, 1 Chronicles 24:6.
[60] Acts 15:1-2, Galatians 1:15-2:2.
[61] WCF XV.5-6, WLC Q.76, 153, Matthew 3:8, Acts 26:20b, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11, James 4:8-10.
[62] WCF XV.6, Exodus 22:1, 3-6, 14, Leviticus 6:2-5, Luke 19:8.
[63] WCF XXX.2, Luke 15:6-7, 22-24, 32, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, Hebrews 4:11-12.

forming charges; when charges have been filed against him; during the process of his trial before a church court; while he is under a durational censure of the church court.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES FOR PERSONAL OR PRIVATE OFFENSES

3.1 If a member believes that another member has committed an offense against him,[64] or has committed an offense by straying into sin,[65] and the offense cannot be overlooked,[66] that member should follow the procedures found in Matthew 18 as outlined below in an attempt to resolve the perceived offense.

A. The member should go to the offender in a spirit of Christian love, seek to bring the offender to recognize and repent of his sin, and be ready to grant forgiveness.

B. If the offender refuses to repent or be reconciled, the member should take one or two other believers as witnesses and attempt again to bring about repentance, reconciliation, and correction.

C. If, after a reasonable time, the offender persists in refusing to repent or be reconciled, the member should report the matter to the appropriate church court for further action.

D. Personal or private offenses should not be reported to a church court until the attempts to resolve the offense as outlined above have occurred. Seeking the counsel and assistance of a church officer in attempting to resolve the matter privately does not constitute a report to the church court.

E. Unresolved personal or private offenses should be reported to a court of the Church and shall be dealt with as general or public offenses.[67] (See Chapter 4)

3.2 Church leaders should encourage members to be reconciled to one another before pursuing process.[68]

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[64] Matthew 18:15-18.
[65] James 5:19-20.
[66] Proverbs 19:11.
[67] Matthew 18:17.
[68] 1 Corinthians 6:7-8, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13.

CHAPTER 4
PROCEDURES FOR GENERAL OR PUBLIC OFFENSES

4.1 Allegations of general or public offenses should be submitted to the church court having original jurisdiction over the alleged offender. Any person bringing allegations against another person or entity should be strictly warned by the court that if the court finds the allegations to be unreasonable or frivolous, the accuser shall be subject to discipline.[69]

4.2 Investigation.

A. When a church court receives an allegation of a general or public offense, it shall appoint one or more investigators who shall, to the extent possible, do the following:

1. Interview all available witnesses on either side of the dispute, and identify all relevant documents and/or exhibits.[70]
2. Advise the alleged offender that he has the following rights:
   (a) to be supported by an advocate, who shall be a member in good standing of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church;
   (b) to be informed of the evidence against him;
   (c) to challenge the evidence against him;[71]
   (d) to present a defense against the allegations; and/or

B. The investigator(s) shall prepare a report for the court, which shall include the following: statements of witnesses, including the alleged victim, or summaries of the interviews with these witnesses; copies of documents or exhibits relevant to the alleged offense; the results of the interview with the alleged offender, including:

1. whether or not the investigator has reason to believe that an offense has been committed[72] (which is advisory only); and
2. whether or not the alleged offender has admitted or confessed to the alleged offense.[73]

4.3 Undisputed Cases. If the court concludes, before the appointment of an investigator(s) or based upon the report of the investigator(s), that there is reason to believe that the alleged offender has confessed and given evidence of repentance,[74] the court shall document the confession and proceed to administer censure, if appropriate.

4.4 Disputed Cases.

A. Appointing an investigator: If the court concludes, based upon the report of the investigator, that there is reason to believe that an offense warranting discipline was committed, charges shall be prepared and served on the alleged offender. As far as possible the charges shall include the time, place, and circumstances of each alleged offense. (See Appendix 1, Form 1)
If, after allowing a reasonable time for response, the alleged offender does not admit the offense or refuses to cooperate, the court shall commence formal process as hereinafter provided.[75]

B. Pre-Trial Hearing: The charges shall be delivered to the alleged offender along with a summons to appear before the court so that he may plead guilty or innocent to the charges. At this pre-trial hearing, if the alleged offender pleads "guilty," he shall be dealt as if it is an undisputed case. If the alleged offender admits that he committed the offense without any sense of repentance or confession, the court shall forego the trial and proceed to censure him. If

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[69] Exodus 20:16, Deuteronomy 5:20; 19:18-19, Proverbs 17:27.
[70] Genesis 11:5, Deuteronomy 19:15, Isaiah 43:9.
[71] Proverbs 18:13; 15; 17, Isaiah 50:8.
[72] Deuteronomy 13:14.
[73] Deuteronomy 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1.
[74] Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:8.
[75] Matthew 18:16-17.

the alleged offender pleads "not guilty," and the alleged offender has not requested or appointed someone to serve as his advocate, the court shall assign him an advocate and shall set a date for the trial. The trial date should be set so as to give the investigator(s) and the alleged offender and his advocate enough time to prepare for the trial. But the trial shall be held no less than 14 days from the date of the pre-trial hearing. If the alleged offender does not appear, the court may continue to pre-trial hearing at another date if the alleged offender was providentially hindered. If the alleged offender refuses to come to the pre-trial hearing, the court may declare him contumacious and impose censure upon him.

C. A Summons shall be sent to the accused and to each witness to appear at the trial. The Summons shall:
   1. be sent to the accused and to each witness no less than (14) days prior to the scheduled trial, requiring all to appear. (See Appendix 1, Form 8) Witnesses who are not members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church may only be requested to appear.
   2. be served personally, when possible, or by registered mail to the last known place of residence.
   3. be signed by either the clerk or the presiding officer.
   4. contain a warning that failure to obey a Summons to appear may result in discipline for a witness who is a member of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Witnesses shall attend court until excused by the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall reasonably consider excusing a witness who would voluntarily submit to recall.
   5. be for a time closely associated with the need for that witness' testimony and so as not to subject the witness to unnecessary inconvenience. The court and participants should be mindful of the schedules of summoned witnesses and make every effort to conduct hearings in a timely and efficient manner.

D. The court may continue the trial to another date, for any valid reason.

E. The court shall record the trial by audio tape, video tape,[76] or some other means, such as a court reporter. All participants shall be informed of such recording.[77]

F. The presiding officer shall insure that all is done properly and in an orderly manner.[78] He shall exhort all present to adhere faithfully to the word of God and to subordinate all human judgments and actions to God's infallible rule.[79] All proceedings shall begin and close with prayer. Prayer should be offered at other times, as appropriate.[80]

G. If the alleged offender does not appear, the court may:
   1. declare him contumacious and proceed to censure him; or
   2. continue the trial to another date. (Also see Section 4.6)

H. The presiding officer shall decide all questions concerning the order, relevance, and admissibility of evidence. If the presiding officer's ruling is challenged, the court shall decide by a majority vote without debate.

I. The presiding officer is authorized to administer oaths and shall instruct all witnesses to testify truthfully.[81] (See Appendix 1, Form 6)

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[76] In many cases, Video recording would be preferable given that it will provide more information for the higher court in the case of appeal than an audio recording would.
[77] Jeremiah 32:10-12.
[78] 1 Corinthians 14:40.
[79] James 4:7-12.
[80] Luke 18:1-8, 1 Thessalonians 5:18-22.
[81] WLC Q.144, Exodus 20:19, Job 27:1-4, Jeremiah 4:2, John 14:17.

J. All persons generally are competent to testify as witnesses, though the court shall make due allowance for age, intelligence, character, belief in God, possible bias, relationship to the parties involved, and other like circumstances.
   1. A witness who is a member of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and who refuses to appear or testify may be censured by the court.[82]
   2. The alleged offender shall be allowed, but not compelled, to testify, and no negative inference shall be drawn if he declines to testify.[83]
   3. A husband or wife, or parent or child, shall not be required to testify against one another.[84]
   4. If a member of the court sitting in judgment is called to testify, that member may be disqualified from continuing to sit in judgment if the court determines that such disqualification is appropriate.

K. The trial shall proceed in the following order:
   1. Opening prayer.
   2. Opening statements. First the investigator and then the alleged offender or his advocate may make an opening statement.
   3. Prosecution case. The investigator or his designee shall present his case by examining his witnesses and by introducing exhibits ruled admissible by the presiding officer. Witnesses are subject to cross-examination by the alleged offender or his advocate, or any member of the court.
   4. Defense case. The alleged offender or his advocate shall present his case by examining his witnesses and by introducing exhibits ruled admissible by the presiding officer. Witnesses are subject to cross-examination by the investigator, the victim or his advocate, or any member of the court.
   5. Closing statements. First the investigator or his designee and then the alleged offender or his advocate may make a closing argument concerning the facts, references to Scripture and the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and any appropriate censure.
   6. Deliberation. After all evidence has been considered, the court shall deliberate in private and reach a decision on each of the charges. A secret ballot is recommended when controversy or intimidation may be a factor.[85]
      a. If a majority of those sitting in judgment finds that the alleged offender did not commit the alleged offense, the charge shall be dismissed.
      b. If a majority of those sitting in judgment finds that the allegation itself was unreasonable or frivolous, the person making the allegation shall be subject to discipline.[86]
      c. If a majority of those sitting in judgment finds that the alleged offender did commit the alleged offense, the formal hearing may be adjourned for a time, and upon reconvening, the offender shall be afforded an opportunity to speak concerning the offense and an appropriate censure before it is imposed.[87]
   7. Announcement of decision and censure. Thereafter the court shall announce its decision and any censure.
   8. Closing prayer.

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[82] Leviticus 5:1.
[83] Isaiah 53:7.
[84] Genesis 2:24.
[85] FOG 3.25G.
[86] Proverbs 11:1; 30:12, Matthew 5:37.
[87] Romans 13:1-3, 2 Corinthians 2:6, 1 Peter 4:15-17.

L. No portion of the trial (including the pre-trial process, the trial, and the application of censure) may be held in closed or executive session.

M. The clerk of the court shall keep a detailed record of the hearing, including:
   1. the written charges;
   2. a list of all members and other persons in attendance at each session;
   3. A list of all witnesses, and a recording of their testimony;
   4. All papers, documents, or other exhibits received and considered during the hearing, which shall be identified and marked for reference;
   5. Any objections made during the hearing, and the ruling on the objections;
   6. The decision rendered by the court; and
   7. The censure imposed, if any, with any dissent or objections.

4.5 Evidence at Hearings shall be subject to the following rules:

A. Documents or exhibits may be introduced if properly authenticated.[88]

B. No person shall be found to have committed an offense except:
   1. on the testimony of two or more witnesses;[89]
   2. when the testimony of one witness is corroborated by independent evidence; or
   3. when other credible evidence is corroborated by independent circumstantial evidence.

C. The presiding officer normally should exclude hearsay, unless there are special reasons to consider it as reliable.[90]

D. The investigator or advocate may challenge the validity of evidence if he does not believe it meets the Biblical standards for evidence. Such challenges shall be decided by the presiding officer, subject to the majority vote of the court in the case of an appeal of the decision of the chair.

E. When it may not be convenient for a witness to appear at the formal trial, suitable arrangements may be made so that the evidence of this witness can be considered, so long as safeguards are in place to assure its reliability.[91]

F. Records of a church court, whether original or copied, when certified by the presiding officer or clerk of that court, shall be received as evidence in any other court. Private writings and printed publications, if genuineness of authorship is established, shall be received in evidence as exhibits.[92]

4.6 If an alleged offender is providentially hindered so that he is unable to appear at any stage of the disciplinary process, the court may continue the trial to another date.[93] If the alleged offender refuses to cooperate and does not appear at any stage in the disciplinary process, the court may vote to declare him contumacious and censure him without further trial.

4.7 Ordinarily a court shall try a case itself. A court may delegate primary responsibility for hearing the case to a committee that shall report its findings and recommendations to the court, which shall then review the report and render a decision. Alternately, a court may appoint a commission for that purpose, which shall render a decision and report it to the court. In cases where the court appoints a commission to render a decision, the commission's decision shall conclude the case with finality.

4.8 Any process contemplated by the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* shall be commenced as soon as reasonably possible. In the case of moral scandal, judicial process must begin within one year of

[88] Deuteronomy 19:15, Isaiah 43:9, Matthew 5:33-37.
[89] Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, John 5:31-40, 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1Timothy 5:19.
[90] Proverbs 26:20-23.
[91] Proverbs 18:17.
[92] Jeremiah 32:9-15.
[93] Romans 13:5.

either the alleged offense being committed or it being made known, unless the offense has recently become flagrant or aggravated[94]. In cases of heresy, there is no set time limit by which time charges must be filed. In the event of a potential disciplinary matter being considered by the secular authorities, a court of the Church may delay process: (1) if that process could compromise the position of an alleged offender before the secular magistrate; (2) to prevent the participants in the ecclesiastical process from being drawn into the secular courts; or (3) until the court determines when process would be in furtherance of the purposes of church discipline.[95]

4.9 Application of Censure. The application of censure shall be commensurate with the extent to which the offense was known. In other words, a rebuke may be applied privately, if the offense was private. If the offense was general or public, the censure shall be applied and announced publicly. The church court may determine which censure(s) are appropriate for the offense. In cases where an initial censure appears to fail to bring about repentance on the part of the offender, the court may impose a higher level of censure without the need for another trial. (See Appendix 1)

A. Rebuke.[96] A Rebuke shall be announced by the presiding officer of the court. (See Appendix 1, Form 2)
B. Suspension.[97] A Suspension shall be announced by the presiding officer of the court. (See Appendix 1, Form 3)
C. Removal from Office.[98] A Removal from Office shall be announced by the presiding officer of the court, who shall recount the steps taken, the necessity of the action, and the meaning of the censure. Removal from Office shall be announced to the congregation for cases at the level of the local church. If removal from Office is imposed upon a minister without the censure of excommunication, the presbytery shall assign him to membership in a local church that is willing receive him as a member of the congregation. (See Appendix 1, Form 4)
D. Excommunication.[99] An Excommunication shall be announced by the presiding officer of the court, who shall recount the steps taken, the necessity of the action, and the meaning of the censure. Excommunication shall be announced to the congregation for cases at the level of the local church. (See Appendix 1, Form 5)
E. In each case, the proceeding as a whole shall be concluded with prayer for the Church, the court, and the offender.

[94] In cases where there are mitigating circumstances (such as physical abuse, trauma, or child sex abuse) the court may proceed with the discipline process regardless of when the alleged offenses were committed.
[95] See Section 1.6
[96] Proverbs 17:10; 28:23.
[97] Titus 1:15-16; 2:15; 3:10-11.
[98] Titus 1:10-11.
[99] Matthew 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:5.

CHAPTER 5
APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

5.1 The decision of a lower court may be appealed[100] to the next higher court[101] by:
   A. the person or entity that has been censured;
   B. a victim of an alleged offense.

5.2 Any member participating in the decision or judgment rendered by any lower court is disqualified from rendering judgment as a member of the higher court.

5.3 An appeal shall suspend the censures of excommunication and removal from office by a lower court in the matter until a decision is made by the higher court. The censures of rebuke, suspension from office, or suspension from the Lord's Table shall stand during an appeal.

5.4 The grounds for an appeal include, but are not limited to, the following:
   A. The decision is not supported by the evidence (however, the credibility of witnesses may not be re-evaluated on appeal, as credibility should be determined by those having heard the testimony);
   B. Errors made during the hearing concerning the admission or exclusion of evidence, or the interpretation of doctrine or of the Standards of the Church;
   C. New evidence has come to light;
   D. Bias on the part of a member of the court;
   E. The censure imposed is more or less severe than warranted by the evidence; or
   F. Any other irregularity that affected the outcome of the hearing.

5.5 If the reviewing court determines that the error was harmless in that it did not affect the outcome, the reviewing court should affirm the judgment.

5.6 A higher court shall show great deference to the lower court on factual matters, which the lower court is more competent to determine because of its proximity to the events and witnesses involved, but shall not be required to show deference on matters of doctrine or the interpretation of the Standards.

5.7 Appeal Process[102]
   A. To appeal, the person appealing ("appellant") must give written notice of appeal to the clerk of the court which rendered the decision within 30 days after the judgment is pronounced, with a copy to the clerk of the higher court. The lower court shall send a copy of the full record of the case to the higher court as soon as reasonably possible but no later than 45 days after notice of appeal is given.
   B. If the lower court fails to send up the record of the case within 45 days of notice of the appeal, the higher court shall rebuke the lower court by written communication, and the censures inflicted by the lower court shall be suspended until the record of the case is delivered to the higher court.
   C. The higher court may hear oral arguments from the appellant and a person designated to defend the decision of the lower court, or in its discretion, it may decide the appeal on the record from the lower court.
   D. If in the course of the appeal, new evidence is offered which in the judgment of the appellate court has important bearing on the case and which was not previously known to the appellant, the appellate court may return the case to the lower court for a new trial, or it may receive the

[100] FOG 10.3B; 12.25C.
[101] Acts 15:2.
[102] Acts 11:1-4; 25:11.

new evidence and proceed with the appeal, making additional findings based on the new evidence that, in its discretion, it believes are proper.

E. After the opportunity for oral arguments, the court shall deliberate on the merits of the appeal. After debate has ended, the court shall vote for each specified ground of appeal "shall this specification be sustained." If none of the specifications of the appeal are sustained, then the appeal is denied. If any or all of the specifications of the appeal are sustained, then the higher court may either affirm, affirm in part, or reverse the decision of the lower court, either in whole or in part; it may return matters to the lower court for reconsideration; it may retry the case itself; or it may issue any other appropriate relief. The decision of the higher court, with its explanation, shall be recorded and a copy of it sent to the lower court and to the appellant.

5.8 A higher court shall hear an appeal that meets the procedural requirements for filing and may hear appeals where minor deviations from procedural requirements have occurred, if the interests of justice require it.

5.9 A higher court may, in its discretion, delegate its work to a committee or other subdivision of its body for all but final disposition.[103]

5.10 A higher court shall issue a written explanation detailing the rationale for its decision in the case of the appeal.[104]Failure to do so shall be deemed an irregularity in the proceedings.

5.11 If an appellant fails to pursue the appeal, the judgment of the lower court is affirmed. An appellant has failed to pursue his appeal if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has received proper notification. An appellant may, however, waive his right to appear before the court so long as he has submitted his request for waiver to the court in writing. Should the appellant fail to appear before the court, the decision of the lower court will stand unless the appellant gives satisfactory evidence that he was unexpectedly hindered from appearing before the court.

5.12 A complaint is a written representation made against some act or decision of a court of the Church. Unlike an appeal which may only be made by one who has been tried by a court, any communing member in good standing of an ARP Church or Presbytery has the right to make a complaint against any court to which he is subject, except in judicial cases that are in the appeals process.

5.13 Complaint Process

A. Before filing a complaint with a higher court, a complaint shall first be made to the court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error. The complaint shall be made in writing, specifying the errors of the court along with supporting reasons and evidence, and filed with the clerk of the court within 60 days following the meeting of the court where the alleged error occurred. The court shall consider the complaint at its next stated meeting or at a called meeting prior to its next stated meeting.

B. If the lower court votes to receive the complaint and reverses its alleged errors to the satisfaction of the complainant, then the matter shall be concluded. If the lower court votes the reject the complaint, the complainant may complain the action of the lower court to the next highest court. If the lower court fails to hear the complaint by or at its next stated meeting, the complainant may appeal to the next highest court. In cases where the complainant complains to a higher court, the complainant shall file his complaint with the clerk of the higher court and the clerk of the lower

[103] Acts 15:30-33.
[104] Acts 15:22-29.

court within 30 days of the lower court's last decision. The clerk of the lower court shall send up the response of the lower court to the complainant within 45 days of notice of complaint, along with any papers or minutes associated with the action or case. Should the lower court fail to send up any required material within 45 days, the higher court shall rebuke the clerk of the lower court in writing, and any actions complained against shall be suspended until the clerk of the lower court files the appropriate paperwork.

C. The higher court may hear oral arguments from the complainant and a person designated to defend the decision of the lower court.

D. After the opportunity for oral arguments, the higher court shall deliberate on the grounds of the complaint. After deliberation has come to a close, the court shall vote whether to concur with the complaint or to deny it. If the court concurs with the complaint, the higher court may annul the whole or any part of the action of the lower court against which complaint has been made, or to send the matter back to the lower court with instructions.

5.14 A higher court may, in its discretion, delegate the hearing of a complaint to a committee or other subdivision of its body for all but final disposition.

5.15 A higher court shall issue a written explanation detailing the rationale for its decision in the case of the complaint.[105]Failure to do so shall be deemed an irregularity in the proceedings.

5.16 If a complainant fails to pursue the complaint, the higher court shall deny the complaint. A complainant has failed to pursuit his complaint if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has received proper notification. A complainant may, however, waive his right to appear before the court so long as he has submitted his request for waiver to the court in writing. Should the complainant fail to appear before the court, the court shall reject his complaint unless the complainant gives satisfactory evidence that he was unexpectedly hindered from appearing before the court.

[105] Acts 15:22-29.

CHAPTER 6
REFERENCE

6.1 Reference is a written request from a lower court to a higher court for advice or instruction on matters pending before the lower court (non-judicial reference), or the transfer of the entire matter to the higher court for action or decision (judicial reference).[106]

A. The matter referred may be delicate or difficult, not previously resolved in the lower court, involve conflicts of interest that make it improper for the lower court to sit in judgment, or involve disagreements between two or more lower courts.

B. Matters shall not be referred as a means of avoiding hard decisions.[107]

6.2 Reference may occur at any time in a particular proceeding. Notice of reference must be given to the parties concerned in the case. All evidence and records shall be transmitted to the higher court, that the case may be heard with as little delay as possible.

6.3 The clerk of the higher court shall assume administrative duties concerning the matter referred.

6.4 Members of the lower court who are members of the higher court may participate in the decision of the higher court, subject to objections for conflict of interest.

6.5 The higher court normally shall give advice when requested, but it is within the discretion of the higher court to give or refuse to give advice, to take over the matter in its entirety, or to return the matter to the lower court with or without instructions.

[106] 1 Kings 12:6-19, Proverbs 1:1-7; 11:14; 15:22.
[107] Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6; 13:17.

CHAPTER 7
RESTORATION

7.1 Restoration is the reaffirmation of love and fellowship toward the person who has been suspended, removed from office or excommunicated, and the commitment to pursue peace, reconciliation and restitution where appropriate, and the reinstatement of the full privileges of church membership including offices, where appropriate.[108]

7.2 Restoration is the goal of church discipline; however, it shall not be granted hastily based on promises of contrition and penitence. A person under censure must demonstrate the fruit of repentance over a reasonable period of time, and regain trust before restoration can effectively take place.[109]

7.3 If in the course of disciplinary proceedings, the alleged offender acknowledges the offense in question and expresses a desire to repent, be reconciled, and make restitution where applicable, the court may halt proceedings and continue to provide pastoral support to resolve the matter before the court. Willingness to submit to the directives and counsel of the court is an indicator of the person's sincerity and readiness to pursue repentance and reconciliation.[110] Should the court conclude that the man's repentance is not sincere based on his failure to be restored and make restitution, the court may censure him without trial on the grounds of his previous confession of guilt.

7.4 Full restoration, after an appropriate season of healing and growth in grace, shall be a celebration of God's mercy and grace. If the matter is private, then restoration shall be equally private; if widely known and public, then restoration shall be widely acknowledged and celebrated.[111] Previously excommunicated persons shall be received with a reaffirmation of membership vows and the extending of the right hand of fellowship.[112]

7.5 Notwithstanding restoration, some offenses by their nature may prohibit an offender from holding office or performing certain Church functions.[113] An officer who has been suspended or removed from office and has had the privileges of the Church suspended is to be restored to the Church privileges on satisfactory evidence of repentance. He is not to be restored to the exercise of his office until such time as the witness of the Church will not be impaired by such restoration.

7.6 Restoration is the responsibility of the Church court that imposed the censure. Members under the discipline of any Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church court shall not be granted transfer to or membership in another body of the Church until restoration is accomplished.[114]

7.7 Because of sin, restoration may not always be possible. In such cases, it should be emphasized that the goal of church discipline is not only the restoration of the offender, but also the preservation of the peace, purity, prosperity, and unity of the body of Christ.[115]

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[108] WCF XV.4, Luke 15:7, 10; 11-32, Ephesians 2:13-19, Philemon 1:15-16.
[109] WCF XV.5, Psalm 51:3-12, Proverbs 28:13.
[110] WCF XV.6, Psalm 51:17.
[111] Psalm 32:1.
[112] James 5:19-20.
[113] Genesis 32:30-32, 2 Samuel 7:1-29.
[114] 2 Timothy 4:14-15.
[115] Galatians 6:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 14, James 3:16-18.

CHAPTER ~~8~~
WITHDRAWAL

8.1 The visible Church consists of all those who profess Christ throughout the world along with their children. As such, the Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the household and family of God, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Membership in the visible Church, therefore, is the duty and obligation of every believer. When a member wishes to withdraw his membership or ministerial credentials without transferring to another branch of the Church visible, the church court that has original jurisdiction shall solemnly warn him that his actions are tantamount to apostacy, and that he is, in effect, practicing self-excommunication by placing himself outside of the visible Church. The court shall act to remove his name from the roll if he persists with his request. When a member or minister is under discipline and wishes to withdraw his membership rather than face the censure of the Church, the church court shall act by removing his name from the roll which is the theological equivalent of excommunication without judicial process.

CHAPTER 9
OTHER MATTERS

9.1 Discipline is part of the complex life of the Church. Any matters of discipline or details of process not provided for in this Book are left to the judgment of the court having jurisdiction in the case. The court, however, is to be governed by the general principles and rules set forth in Scripture and in the Standards of the ARPC. (See Chapter I).

9.2 Church proceedings are conducted as before the Lord according to Scripture and the Standards of the ARPC, therefore church courts are not necessarily bound by the decisions of secular authorities in a particular matter, notwithstanding Romans 13: 1-7 and the Confession of Faith, Chapter XXIII.

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE-APPENDIX 1

FORMS

FORM 1: CHARGE

The following form may be used:

IN THE MATTER OF: BEFORE THE *[name of court or commission}*
{Alleged offender's name}

CHARGE:
YOU, *{alleged offender's name}*, ARE HEREBY CHARGED WITH HAVING COMMITTED THE OFFENSE OF *{name of alleged offense}* ON OR ABOUT *[date]* OR FROM ON OR ABOUT *[date]* THROUGH ON OR ABOUT *[date]*, IN THE FOLLOWING PARTICULARS: *[provide tactful or generic description of the alleged offense].*

YOU ARE HEREBY REQUIRED TO APPEAR ON *[date and time]* BEFORE *[name of court or commission}* AT *{address at which to appear]* FOR THE PURPOSE OF ANSWERING TO THIS CHARGE. YOU MAY BRING ANY WITNESS[ES] YOU HAVE, AND YOU MAY BE REPRESENTED BY AN ADVOCATE, WHO IS AN ELDER IN GOOD STANDING IN THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

DATE:

CLERK OF THE COURT

FORM 2: REBUKE:

The following format may be used:

IN THE MATTER OF: BEFORE THE *[name of court}*
{Offender's name}

REBUKE:
YOU, *{name of offender}*, BY YOUR CONTINUED NEGLECT OF YOUR CHRISTIAN DUTY AND BY THE OFFENSE OF *{name of offense}*, HAVE BROUGHT REPROACH ON YOURSELF, AND HAVE GIVEN OCCASION TO THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD TO MOCK HIM. YOU ARE HEREBY REBUKED FOR YOUR OFFENSE OF *{name of offense}*. YOU ARE COMMANDED TO GIVE EVIDENCE OF SINCERE REPENTANCE, AND TO BE MORE WATCHFUL, STUDYING TO KNOW AND TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.

FORM 3: SUSPENSION:

The following format may be used:

IN THE MATTER OF: BEFORE THE *[name of court}*
{Offender's name}

SUSPENSION:
YOU, *{name of offender}*, HAVE COMMITTED THE OFFENSE OF *{name of offense}*. THEREFORE, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE SUSPENDED FROM THE PRIVILEGES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRAMENTS, UNTIL YOU HAVE GIVEN SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE OF TRUE REPENTANCE, AND HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO GOOD STANDING BY THIS OR A HIGHER COURT OF THE CHURCH.

DATE:

CLERK OF THE COURT

FORM 4: REMOVAL FROM OFFICE:

The following format may be used:

IN THE MATTER OF: BEFORE THE *[name of court}*
{Offender's name}

REMOVAL FROM OFFICE:

YOU, *{name of offender*}, HAVE COMMITTED THE OFFENSE OF *{name of offense}*. THEREFORE, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE OF *{name of office}*, AND YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO PERFORM ANY OF THE DUTIES BELONGING TO IT, UNTIL YOU HAVE GIVEN SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE OF TRUE REPENTANCE, AND HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO GOOD STANDING BY THIS OR A HIGHER COURT OF THE CHURCH.

DATE:

CLERK OF THE COURT

FORM 5: EXCOMMUNICATION:

The following format may be used:

IN THE MATTER OF: BEFORE THE *[name of court}*
{Offender's name}

EXCOMMUNICATION:

YOU, *{name of offender}*, HAVE COMMITTED THE OFFENSE OF *{name of offense}*, AN OFFENSE DESERVING THE EXTREME PENALTY OF EXCOMMUNICATION. YOU HAVE GIVEN NO EVIDENCE OF REPENTANCE, DESPITE EFFORTS TO RESTORE YOU. THEREFORE, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE EXCOMMUNICATED FROM THE CHURCH. MAY GOD HAVE MERCY UPON YOU.

DATE:

CLERK OF THE COURT

FORM 6: OATH

The following oath or affirmation may be used:

Do you swear (or affirm) by the Living God that you will tell the truth, the complete truth, and nothing but the truth, as far as you know it, as you shall answer to God in the Judgment?

FORM 7: SUMMONS

IN THE MATTER OF:	BEFORE THE
	SUMMONS FOR ☐ PERSON ☐ DOCUMENT(S) OR OBJECT(S)
TO:	
☐ YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to appear at the place, date, and time specified below to testify in the above-entitled case.	
PLACE	
	DATE AND TIME
☐YOU ARE ALSO COMMANDED to bring with you the following document(s) or object(s).	
LIST DOCUMENT(S) OR OBJECT(S)	
This summons shall remain in effect until you are granted leave to depart by the court. **If you are a member of an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church or court, failure to obey this Summons to appear may result in censure.**	
CLERK OF COURT	DATE

PROOF OF SERVICE

SERVED	DATE	PLACE	
SERVED ON (PRINT NAME)			MANNER OF SERVICE
SERVED BY (PRINT NAME)			TITLE

DECLARATION OF SERVER

I certify that the forgoing information contained in the Proof of Service is true and correct.

Executed on

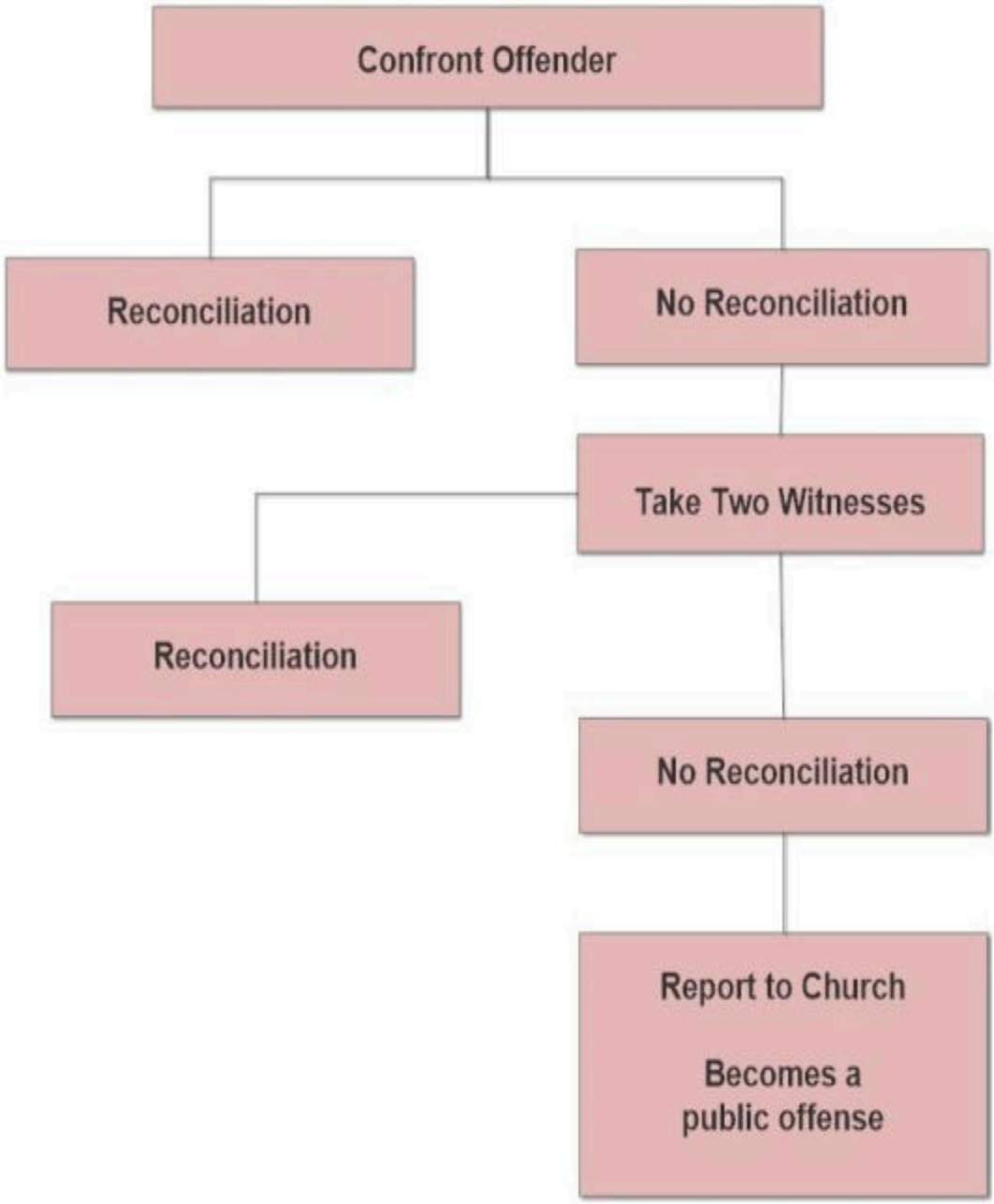
_____

SIGNATURE OF SERVER

ADDRESS OF SERVER

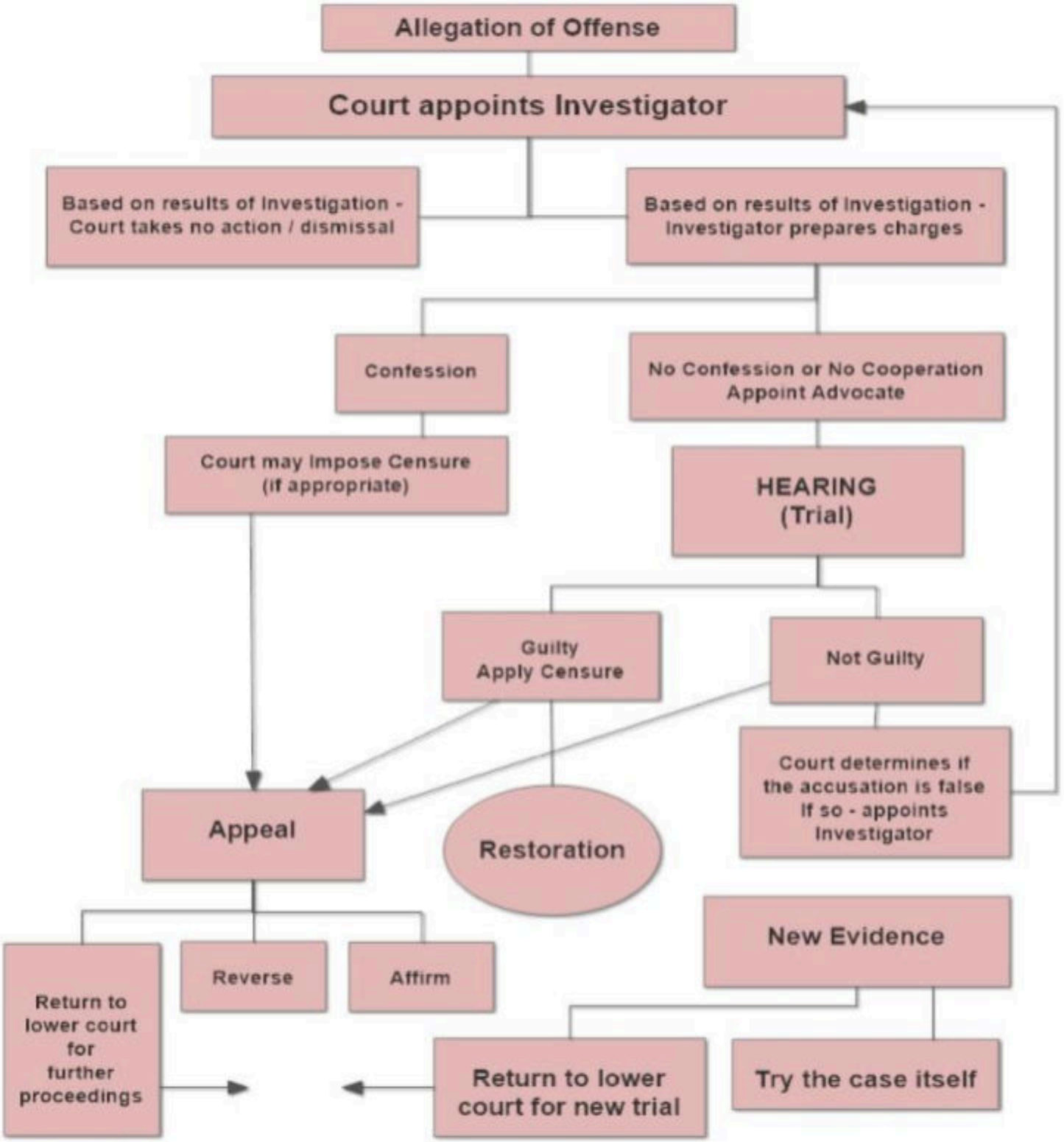
Book of Discipline - Appendix 2 - A
Flow Chart*

PRIVATE / PERSONAL OFFENSE (Matthew 18)



*Flow charts are provided as a tool to assist courts in working through biblical discipline. Ultimate confidence in biblical discipline rests in the work of the Holy Spirit, not in the process.

Book of Discipline - Appendix 2 - B
Flow Chart*
PUBLIC / GENERAL OFFENSE



*Flow charts are provided as a tool to assist courts in working through biblical discipline. Ultimate confidence in biblical discipline rests in the work of the Holy Spirit, not in the process.