THE

FORM OF GOVERNMENT
of the

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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CHAPTER 1
THE CHURCH

GOD THE FATHER AS SOURCE OF ALL AUTHORITY

1.1 God the Father is the source of all power and authority.[1] No authority, either civil or ecclesiastical, exists except that which God has established in His Word.[2] Civil authority is instituted by God the Father through civil offices.[3] Ecclesiastical authority is instituted through the officers of the Church in the name of Christ, Son of God and Redeemer.[4] God's authority is given to serve and build up others for His glory.[5]

JESUS CHRIST, THE KING AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH

1.2 God the Son is the wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace upon whose shoulders God the Father has placed His eternal government.[6] Jesus Christ has been granted authority over all people and all rule by the Father.[7] Therefore, Jesus Christ is the only King over all authority[8] and the only Head of the Church.[9] Jesus

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[1] Matthew 28:18; Job 37:23.
[2] Romans 13:1-2; see also Westminster Confession of Faith, I.
[3] John 19:11.
[4] John 5:26-27; 17:2; Revelation 2:27.
[5] Matthew 20: 25-28; 2 Corinthians 13:10.
[6] Isaiah 9:6-7; see also Westminster Confession of Faith, II.3.
[7] John 17:2; Ephesians 1:21.
[8] John 18:37; Revelation 17:14.
[9] Ephesians 1:10, 22.

Christ as King and Head has given the gift of Kingdom authority to the Church's officers to enforce God's laws and to establish God's reign.[10]

GOD THE SPIRIT, GUIDE INTO GOD'S WORD AND GOSPEL MINISTRY

1.3 God the Holy Spirit is the guide into the Scriptures[11] directing the use of authority in the ministry of the Church.[12] Church authority is exercised honorably and orderly through the proper use of God's Word.[13] Under the heavenly reign of the ascended Christ God's Spirit exercises authority by calling men to positions of authority in the Church.[14] Christ's functions of Prophet, Priest, and King are effectually applied by God's Spirit through human Gospel ministry.[15]

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

1.4 There is but one Church set forth in the Scriptures. This Church in all ages is one and the same, and consists of those who by faith are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1.5 The visible unity of the Church, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; and all of those maintaining the Word and sacraments of the Lord Jesus Christ in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as branches of this one visible Church.

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[10] Romans 12:6-8; Matthew 16:19; 18:18.
[11] Westminster Confession of Faith, I.2.
[12] John 14:26; 16:13.
[13] 1 Corinthians 14:40.
[14] Romans 1:1.
[15] Mark 13:11; 2 Peter 1:21.

1.6 The ministry, laws, worship, and sacraments of the New Testament Church were given either directly by Christ Himself, or by His Apostles after His ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit, or have been formulated by inference from and in agreement with their teachings.

MISSION AND MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

1.7 All that the Church says and does is to be a witness to Jesus Christ, God's living Word, as He is spoken of in the Holy Scriptures, God's written Word. God has sent His Church into the world to present Jesus Christ through preaching, witnessing, teaching, sacrament, worship, and corporate living. All of the Church's people, in every phase of their lives, are to be God's ministers to the world by being servants of His Son, the King of the Church.

1.8 God the Father has given the Holy Spirit through Christ to the world[16] to reveal and to make the ministry of the Church effective.

1.9 The message of the Church's ministry is the message of reconciliation. Through the varieties of its ministry, the Church is to bear witness that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself..."[17] to the end that all people might be reconciled both to God and to one another.

1.10 Within the provisions of this section on the Mission and Message of the Church, the General Synod, may from time to time, by a two-thirds vote adopt and publish more specific and concise mission statements.

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[16] Romans 5:5.

[17] 2 Corinthians 5:19.

CHAPTER 2
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

GENERAL STATEMENT - THE CHURCH'S NEED FOR GOVERNMENT

2.1 In order that the Church shall fulfill its calling as given by God, it is necessary that its ministry be directed in an orderly manner. Government rooted in and defined by Scriptural example and instruction is the means of accomplishing such necessary direction and order.[18] Leadership and authority, both of which are necessary to government1[9], are defined for the ARPC by this *Form of Government*.

2.2 While the Scriptures do not teach a detailed form of Church government, the Presbyterian form as adopted by the ARPC is agreeable to and founded upon the Old and New Testaments.[20] The Presbyterian form of Church government is government by presbyters (elders) assembled in Church courts.[21]

THE PRESBYTERIAN FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT - A HISTORICAL STATEMENT

2.3 The Presbyterian form of Church government was given its first modern form by John Calvin in Geneva in 1542. Church men from other countries, including Scotland's John Knox, studied under Calvin and developed a strong attachment to the principles of Presbyterianism. Knox, upon his return to Scotland in 1560, adapted Presbyterianism for Scottish purposes in the first "Book

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[18] 1 Corinthians 14:40; Colossians 2:5.
[9] Westminster Larger Catechism 127, 128.
[20] Exodus 18:13-26; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-5.
[1] 1 Timothy 4:14; Acts 15:1-2, 22-29.

of Discipline"-the basis for the government of the subsequent Church of Scotland, and for the government of all those denominations having their roots in the Reformation Church of that country. Andrew Melville's “Second Book of Discipline," ratified in 1581, brought Presbyterianism closer to its present form.

2.4 The Westminster Assembly, which met in London in 1643, wrote, in addition to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the "Form of Presbyterian Church Government," which was subsequently adopted in England, Ireland, and Scotland. The Associate Church (1733) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (1743) both continued to adhere to this document as the basis for their Church law in their separate organizations and later carried it with them to America. The union of these two bodies into the Associate Reformed Church in Philadelphia on November 1, 1782, accepted this Westminster "Form" as well, reserving the right "to adjust the circumstances of public worship and ecclesiastical policy to the station in which divine Providence may place us.”

2.5 In 1799, the book of Church government was revised and adopted, and included as a part of the one-volume "Constitution" of the ARPC (together with the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, a book of discipline, directories for public and private worship and several appendices). When the Associate Reformed Synod of the South withdrew from the parent Church in 1822 to form an independent denomination, it continued to subscribe to this document until, in 1903, prompted by the question of the use of musical instruments in Churches, a new revision was adopted, and printed first in 1908. In 1929, the Synod ordered a further revision which was completed and adopted in 1934, and printed first in

1937. In 1949, an additional revision was ordered, which became the "Constitution" of 1953. The next edition of the Church's government was ordered in 1965, adopted in 1971.

2.6 This present *Form of Government* was ordered by the General Synod of 2006, and was adopted in June 2014.

THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

2.7 Church government is to cultivate a spiritual climate whereby the work of Jesus Christ can be effectively accomplished. Church government primarily promotes order within the Church allowing the Church to fulfill its divinely appointed responsibilities. The disciplinary authority within the Church is also designed to promote order within the Church.

2.8 The government of the Church shall operate always in the spirit of Christian love, with a keen sense of responsibility to Him who is the Head of the Church.

THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

2.9 God in His word has instituted three permanent offices for the government, discipline, and guidance of the Church. These offices are the minister,[22] the elder,[23] and

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[22] Minutes of the Associate Reformed Synod, November 1, 1782, page 12. See The *Form of Government* of Presbyterian Church Government of the Westminster Assembly: "The officers which Christ hath appointed for the edification of his church, and the perfecting of the saints, are, some extraordinary, as apostles, evangelists, and prophets, which are ceased. Other ordinary and perpetual, as pastors, teachers, and other church-governors, and deacons."

[2] At times referred to in historic Presbyterian polity as "church governors" – see previous note.

the deacon.[24] It is our firm belief that the Presbyterian form of government whereby the Church is governed by a plurality of presbyters in ascending courts is that which most closely fits what the Scriptures prescribe for the governing of the Church.

2.10 Ministers and elders serve together in the courts of the Church as presbyters. While they hold different offices, they maintain, as presbyters, parity[25] of voice and authority in Church courts.

2.11 Those who seek to fill any of these offices should first have a clear sense of God's call to them to serve in that particular office. No one shall accept a call to a particular office who does not intend to fulfill the duties of that office with diligence, as working unto Christ and His Church.[26] At any time an officer finds he cannot fulfill the duties of his office effectively before his term expires, he should seek counsel from the appropriate court whether he should continue.

2.12 The offices of the church exist to complement one another for the sake of the ministry within the Body of Christ. No one office shall be construed to be of any less importance than another, nor a prerequisite to service in another office. Nor should they be seen as existing in a hierarchy.

THE CONSTITUTION

2.13 The Constitution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church consists of:

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[24] *Diakonia.* The office set forth in Scripture as that of sympathy and service after the example of Christ.

[25] Parity means equality in voice and vote, not exactly numbers in a court.

[26] 1 Timothy 4:14; I Peter 5:1-3; Colossians 4:17.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith
B. The Larger Catechism
C. The Shorter Catechism
D. The *Form of Government*
E. The Book of Discipline
F. The Directory of Public Worship
G. The Directory of Private and Family Worship

CHAPTER 3
THE CONGREGATION

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF AN ORGANIZED CONGREGATION

3.1 A congregation is a company of Christians, with their children, associated together according to the Scriptures for worship and ministry in the name of Christ, subscribing to a form of church government, and choosing and ordaining some to perform selected ministries.

3.2 The purpose of a congregation is to glorify God by conducting public corporate worship, bringing the lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, building them up in the Christian faith, and preparing them for Christian service.

OTHER MINISTRIES

3.3 In order to advance the Church, the Presbytery or Session may explore a particular location for a "chapel." [27]

A. At this place public worship services shall be conducted and the sacraments observed according to the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

B. Chapels, being exploratory works, do not need to maintain rolls.

C. The Session is not required to petition the Presbytery for mission status.

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[27] Historically the ARPC has used the term "preaching station" for a location for regular public worship which is not an established Church and may have no

intention of becoming one. The two terms “preaching station” and “chapel” are essentially synonymous.

THE STRUCTURE OF A CONGREGATION

3.4 The congregational structure consists of pastor(s), sufficient numbers of elders and deacons, and members.

3.5 Filling the pastoral office is not essential to the formal structure of a congregation.

3.6 The membership of a congregation shall consist of communicant and non-communicant members.

3.7 A congregation shall have such organizations as are necessary and desirable for the edification of the Church. Each organization shall be responsible to the Session of the congregation.

3.8 Congregations shall have the authority to elect or not elect a chairman from among the communicant membership. The chairman's office shall be for one year and he shall be eligible to succeed himself.

3.9 There shall be a congregational treasurer or treasurers elected by the congregation from among the communicant membership.

- A. The treasurer's term of office shall be for one year, and he shall be eligible to succeed himself.
- B. The treasurer shall be an advisory member of the Diaconate when not a regular member thereof.
- C. The treasurer shall keep an accurate accounting of all receipts and expenditures and furnish such records to the Diaconate and/or Session on a regular basis.

3.10 The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is an organization ruled by elders. Therefore, for legal matters, the members of the Session of the congregation shall be the trustees of the corporation unless otherwise designated by the congregation or restricted by civil law.

3.11 Title to the property of a congregation shall be held in the corporate form or by trustees, consistent with the

provisions of civil law in the jurisdiction where such property is located. A congregation shall, where permitted by civil law, hold title to various parts of its property by trustees and/or one or more corporations as long as the use thereof does not violate the obligation of the congregation to the Presbytery or the General Synod

A. If a congregation is incorporated under the laws of the civil jurisdiction in which it is located, the provisions of its charter and by-laws shall always be in accordance with the *Form of Government* of the ARPC. All the communicant members of the congregation shall be members of such corporation and its officers shall be elected from its membership.

B. If a congregation is unincorporated, it shall elect individual trustees from its membership.

C. The corporation or individual trustees, and their successors in office shall:

(1) hold title to all property belonging to the congregation and upon authority from and on behalf of such congregation buy, sell, lease, or mortgage property for the congregation.

(2) accept and execute deeds.

(3) hold and defend the same.

(4) manage any special fund so entrusted for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation.

D. The powers and duties of the officers of the corporation and of the individual trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the Session and the Diaconate.

3.12 Organized churches shall hold property as follows:

A. Title to real church property on which the

manse, sanctuary, and educational buildings are situated, together with parking lots, shall be acquired, mortgaged, held, transferred, and leased by the local congregation upon the approval of the Presbytery, with the local congregations paying all expenses incident or appurtenant thereto.

B. Title to all other real church property shall be acquired, mortgaged, held, transferred, or leased by the local congregation and shall not be subject to the approval of the Presbytery, subject only to the right of appeal of any member of the congregation.

C. All other property (personal property) shall be handled by the local congregation.

3.13 The withdrawal of congregations and church property is as follows:

A. If two-thirds or more of the membership of any local congregation, as certified by its Session, votes to withdraw, the Presbytery shall be so advised in writing at its next stated meeting.

B. At such meeting, the Presbytery shall appoint a commission to counsel, advise, and mediate with the local congregation in order to effect reconciliation or in the alternative an orderly withdrawal.

C. If the commission decides that it is in the best interest to proceed with the withdrawal, they shall conduct a second election and shall certify the results thereof to the stated meeting of the Presbytery, one year after the meeting upon which the application for withdrawal was received.

D. If the election results show that two-thirds or more of the membership of the local congregation as certified by its Session votes in favor of withdrawal, the Presbytery shall at such stated meeting approve the withdrawal of the congregation.

E. Upon withdrawal, the Presbytery shall require some equitable financial settlement from the withdrawing congregation in regard to property under its jurisdiction, taking into consideration such factors as:

(1) outstanding debts and liabilities

(2) previous contributions or support by the Presbytery or the General Synod

(3) the percentage of the membership of the local congregation voting in favor of withdrawal.

F. In particular, both the withdrawing body and the Presbytery will recognize their responsibility, both financial and spiritual, to the minority that remains in the denomination. The Presbytery shall have the authority to require that assets be divided when the minority is sizeable enough to continue ministry.

G. If a local congregation does not comply with the withdrawal procedures set forth above, then that congregation shall forfeit all its right, title, and interest in and to its property to the Presbytery within which it is located.

3.14 At any time in the future should the local congregation wish to change its name, this can only be done with approval of the Presbytery. The new name will be noted in the records of the Presbytery and reported to the General Synod by Presbytery's Stated Clerk.

PROCEDURE FOR UNITING TWO OR MORE ARPC CONGREGATIONS

3.15 The Presbytery shall have the authority to receive a request by two or more congregations to unite into one congregation when their Sessions make a united request to the Presbytery under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction for such action.

A. The motion to unite two or more congregations shall come from either of the Sessions of the congregations involved, their respective Presbyteries if the congregations being considered for unification are no longer constituted, or by the congregations requesting such an action.

B. The two or more congregations must each approve the plan for unification by at least a two-thirds vote of those present at duly called congregational meetings following all the requirements thereof.

C. If one or more congregations are under the jurisdiction of separate Presbyteries, each Presbytery must approve the unification plan.

D. If the churches requesting the unification are not organized, the Presbytery has the authority to act in the best interest of the Church to unify or deny unification of two or more congregations.

3.16 The Presbytery has the authority to act in the best interest of the Church to approve or deny the uniting of two or more congregations.

A. The Presbytery shall effect the union of two or more congregations if it determines and approves that the union serves the best interest of the Church.

B. After its approval, the Presbytery shall call a congregational meeting:
   (1) The Presbytery shall supervise this meeting;
   (2) The roll of the church shall be constituted with the affirmation or reaffirmation of membership vows;
   (3) The election of officers will be conducted;
   (4) The call to a pastor shall be voted upon.

C. Sometime following the congregational meeting a worship service will be held to acknowledge the union of the congregations.
   (1) The Presbytery shall conduct this service;
   (2) At this service the two or more congregations shall be announced as unified under the authority of the Presbytery;
   (3) At this service the pastor shall be installed pending approval of his call by the Presbytery.

3.17 The Presbytery shall encourage and/or direct two or more congregations to unite into one congregation if, in its judgment, such actions serve the best interests of the Church.

A. The action of unification shall be effected by a commission appointed by the Presbytery upon the passing of the motion to unify two or more congregations by their respective Presbyteries or governing bodies.

B. The Presbytery's commission shall conduct a worship service of unification.

(1) At this service the commission shall pronounce that the two or more congregations have been unified under the authority of the Presbytery;

(2) At this service the commission shall supervise a congregational meeting at which time elders shall be elected to serve on the Session;

(3) At this service the first action of the new Session shall be to call their first pastor, pending approval of his call by the Presbytery.

3.18 Presbytery shall have an advisory role in matters relating to properties, pastoral relationships, staff, ministries, and memberships.

3.19 All real property, assets and liabilities, belong to the united congregations, and are under the authority of the newly formed Session of the unified congregations.

PROCEDURE FOR FORMING OTHER CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

3.20 Presbytery shall encourage and/or direct two or more congregations to enter into a yoked pastorate or any other relationship, if in its judgment such action serves the best interests of the Church. The formation of all congregational relationships shall be upon approval by the Presbytery.

PROCEDURE FOR DISSOLVING A CONGREGATION

3.21 The dissolution of a congregation is an act within the authority of Presbytery. When a congregation becomes

so reduced in its membership and strength as to be unable to maintain the ordinances of regular public worship, or when for other reasons the interests of the members in particular and of the Church in general would be, in the judgment of Presbytery, best served by dissolving the congregation, Presbytery shall formally declare it dissolved.

3.22 Presbytery shall direct its stated clerk to issue certificates of transfer for the remaining members upon request by a receiving church. Such requests shall be sent directly to the receiving church and shall not be given to the individual member.

3.23 Upon the Presbytery action of dissolution, all properties and liabilities become the responsibility of Presbytery and are to be dealt with according to that Presbytery's Manual of Procedure.

THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

3.24 The purpose of a congregational meeting is to give spiritual and temporal direction in all matters not within the realm of duties assigned to the pastor, the Session, the Diaconate or the higher church courts. Matters to be considered at a congregational meeting include but are not limited to the:

A. Election and calling of a pastor or associate pastor.

B. Election of elders, deacons (the number determined by the congregation), and the congregational officers.

C. Determination of otherwise unspecified procedures of the congregation.

D. Adoption of the congregational budget as prepared by the Diaconate and approved and recommended by the Session.

E. Authorization of expenditures for the erection or alteration of any building.
F. Determining of salaries.
G. Purchase or selling of property.

3.25 The governing rules and procedure for a congregational meeting include but are not limited to:

A. A congregational meeting shall be called by the Session or the Presbytery. Presbytery shall, if it sees cause, call a congregational meeting by giving notice as required. It shall appoint one of its own members to preside.
B. Notice for all congregational meetings shall be given at least seven days beforehand. No meeting shall be regular and in order unless such notice is given to the pastor (or moderator in the absence of a pastor), associate pastor(s), the Session, the congregation, and the presiding officer.
C. A business meeting of the congregation shall be held at least once a year. The specific purpose of all other congregational meetings shall be stated in the notice and no other business other than that which is stated in such notice shall be transacted.
D. Adjourned meetings shall not be held without the required notice except when circumstances prevent completion of the business stated in the notice. In such cases the adjourned meeting shall be held no later than two weeks following the date of the original meeting.

E. No business shall be considered without a quorum. One-fourth of the communicant membership entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum. If a church has more than one thousand communicant members, the quorum shall be one-tenth of such members, but not fewer than two hundred and fifty. Members who are determined by the Session to meet the criteria set forth in section 4.17 shall not count against a quorum. Such determination shall be reviewed annually. {Synod 2024}

F. Only communicant members who are in good standing (not under discipline) and personally present at the meeting[28] shall be entitled to vote.

G. Voting shall be by voice, show of hands, standing, or secret ballot as determined by the Session when not designated in this *Form of Government*. Secret ballots are required when voting for a pastor and recommended where controversy or intimidation become a factor.

H. At all congregational meetings the congregational chairman or someone appointed by the Session shall preside, and the clerk of the Session or someone appointed by the Session shall serve as secretary.

I. Non-members do not have the privilege of the floor or vote. Accurate distribution of the ballots to the communicant members needs to be carefully controlled by the presiding officer.

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[28] The presiding officer of the meeting shall determine the meaning of "present" in light of electron

J. The following order of procedure shall prevail for all congregational meetings:

(1) The meeting shall be called to order by the presiding officer and prayer shall be offered.

(2) The presiding officer needs to recognize a quorum is present; it shall be so noted in the minutes.

(3) The minutes of the previous meeting shall be read for information if there is any unfinished business recorded in the minutes.

(4) Action shall be taken upon any unfinished business disclosed by the minutes.

(5) Committees shall report as necessary and said reports shall be acted upon.

(6) At a called meeting, other business shall be considered only if it was indicated in the notice of the meeting.

(7) The minutes of the current meeting shall be read and adopted before adjournment.

(8) After a motion to adjourn has prevailed, the meeting shall be closed with prayer.

CHAPTER 4
THE CHURCH MEMBER

DEFINITION OF A CHURCH MEMBER

4.1 A communicant church member is one who has made public his profession of faith in Jesus Christ, who has been baptized, and who has submitted to Christ's Lordship and to the authority of the Church. The communicant member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the congregation, including:

A. Voting in congregational meetings.

B. Holding office if qualified as defined in this document.

C. Participating in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

D. Presenting his children for the Sacrament of Baptism.

4.2 A non-communicant member is a baptized minor or dependent child of a communicant member of the church. All children of communicant members are entitled to the pastoral care, government, and nurture of the church with a view to entering communicant church membership.

4.3 An associate church member is one who expects to reside in the area of the church for a time or expects to make extended periodic visits to that area, but chooses not to transfer his church membership from his home congregation.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CHURCH MEMBERS

4.4 Church members are required to:

A. Make diligent use of the means of grace.

B. Share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church.
C. Give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them.
D. Render wholehearted service to Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world.
E. Continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God.
F. Submit to the authority of the elders.
G. Live so as to bear faithful witness to the Gospel.

PROCEDURES FOR RECEIVING COMMUNICANT CHURCH MEMBERS

4.5 Applicants received by a profession of faith into church membership shall be examined by the Session in private with regard to a knowledge of their spiritual need, their faith in Jesus Christ, and their intention to be obedient to Him.

A. The applicants shall give assent to the following or equivalent questions, by which they enter a solemn covenant with God and His Church:

(1) Do you confess that you are a sinner in the sight of God; that you deserve His punishment; that you are unable to save yourself; and that you are without hope of salvation except for God's love and mercy?

(2) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners; and do you receive and trust in Him alone for your salvation?

(3) Do you accept the Bible, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God; and

that it is the only perfect rule of faith and how to live?

(4) Do you promise to trust in the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit so that you can live all of life as a Christian, following the example set by Jesus Christ?

(5) Do you promise to exercise faithful stewardship of God's resources entrusted to you for the furtherance of God's Kingdom and purposes?

(6) Do you accept that the doctrines and principles of the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church are founded upon the Scriptures?

(7) In loving obedience, do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of this church, promising to seek the peace, purity, and prosperity of this congregation as long as you are a member of it?

B. Upon affirmative action by the Session, applicants shall then be received into communicant membership. The Session shall not impose additional conditions for membership.

C. The Session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of minor or dependent children.

D. Applicants who have not been baptized previously shall become communicant members and receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism shall be administered in

accordance with The Directory of Public Worship, 8.b.

E. New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.

4.6 Applicants for communicant church membership by the reaffirmation of their faith shall appear before the Session and reaffirm their faith according to the applicable questions in the preceding section. Upon affirmative action by the Session, such applicants shall then be received into communicant membership.

A. An applicant who received a non-Trinitarian baptism shall receive a Trinitarian baptism.[29]

B. Applicants shall be interviewed by the Session as to their testimony of faith.

C. The Session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of minor or dependent children.

D. New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.

4.7 The transfer of church members shall be seen not as a mere administrative act, but the transference of pastoral care of the member from one congregation to another.

A. Applicants for communicant membership from other Protestant Christian congregations shall be received:

(1) on presentation to the Session of certificates of good standing from the congregation to which they belong;

(2) and after being interviewed by the Session as to their testimony of faith.

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B. Applicants whose certificates raise a question of good standing, whose testimonials are defective, or whose motives appear unchristian, shall be received only after a satisfactory examination by the Session as to their personal faith in Jesus Christ and their reasons in seeking their transfer.

C. Transfer certificates of membership are only recognized when received directly from another church body.

D. The Session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of minor or dependent children.

E. New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.

4.8 Applicants for an associate church membership shall be received using the same criteria for a transfer of membership.

A. Associate members' names shall be entered into the records of the Session.

B. They shall be appropriately presented to the congregation and enjoy the ministry and worship of that church.

C. Associate members possess no rights and privileges at congregational meetings and cannot hold office.

PROCEDURES FOR TRANSFERING TO OTHER CONGREGATIONS

4.9 The order of the Church requires that members transferring from one Christian congregation to another shall present certificates of their good standing. Upon request from the receiving church only, the Session shall grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing. Certificates shall not be given to the member but sent directly to the receiving body.[30]

4.10 Certificates issued for ordained officers shall certify to their ordination; however, they shall not be transferred as officers.

4.11 Certificates issued for parents shall include the names of minor or dependent children, noting their baptismal status.

4.12 Certificates shall be signed by either the clerk or the moderator of the Session.

4.13 In the case of the dissolution of a congregation, membership shall be held and transferred by the stated clerk of the Presbytery.

4.14. A member's name shall be removed from the church roll when the Session has accurate information that the member has united with another congregation without having requested transfer.

ROLLS OF CHURCH MEMBERS

4.15 The Session shall keep and review annually separate rolls of membership.

A. The communicant roll shall consist of all who have been received by the Session, who have not been transferred, removed, or died.
B. The non-communicant roll shall consist of baptized minor or dependent children of the members of the church who have not yet entered into communicant membership of the church.
C. Churches who choose to have associate members shall keep records of such people on a separate roll.

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[30] Christian Education Ministries was dissolved in 2022. Some bookstore items are still available through Central Services.

4.16 No names of persons shall be removed from the roll until the Session has made diligent effort to restore such persons to good standing with the congregation.

4.17 Those who have previously been active in the life of the congregation but are prevented from activity by infirmity, or who are temporarily away in academic study, military service, or for other valid reasons, shall be maintained on the roll.

CHAPTER 5
DEACONS AND THE DIACONATE

DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON

5.1 The office of deacon as set forth in the Scriptures[31] is ordinary and perpetual in the Church. The office of deacon is one of sympathy and service after the example of Christ.

5.2 To this office should be chosen individuals who are faithful and diligent Christians of good character, of honest repute, exemplary life, brotherly love, sympathetic nature, and sound judgment, who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture.[32]

5.3 A deacon shall be a member in good standing of the congregation, actively sharing in the worship and service of the Church and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office.

5.4 Unless otherwise determined by the Session, the Diaconate shall be chosen from male members of that

congregation. The Session of each congregation shall determine whether women can serve as deacons in their own particular congregation. In either case, the Church shall not neglect the raising up of qualified men to serve in this position.

[31] 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
[32] 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

PURPOSE OF THE DIACONATE

5.5 It shall be responsible for the congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress and all such things as can be covered by the term "mercy ministry." The needs of those who are within the congregation shall be given first priority, and then those needs outside the congregation.

5.6 It shall also encourage practice of total stewardship among the members of the congregation, encouraging tithing in particular, a general spirit of liberality and hospitality towards their fellow saints as well as the world, and helping them to see that their possessions are a trust to keep before the Lord.

5.7 It shall plan, in collaboration with the Session, the causes toward which the offerings of the congregation shall be directed; devise effective methods for securing and receiving these offerings; secure and receive special offerings as directed by the Session and the higher courts of the Church; and see that all offerings are properly recorded and distributed.

5.8 It shall have the care of the general property of the congregation, both real and personal. In matters requiring extraordinary expenditure for acquisition, construction, or alteration of Church property, consent of the congregation is required.

5.9 The congregation shall seek to call those to be deacons who collectively demonstrate the gifts and calling necessary for such ministry.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DIACONATE

5.10 The deacons of a particular congregation shall be organized as a board, the Diaconate, of which the pastor and associate pastor(s) shall be advisory members, and of which the congregational treasurer shall be an advisory member when not otherwise a member thereof. The Diaconate shall elect a chairman and a secretary from among its own number. The secretary shall keep a record of the Diaconate's proceedings and shall submit its minutes to the Session in a timely manner.

5.11 The congregational treasurer, who is entrusted with the regular offerings of the congregation, shall be responsible to the oversight of the Diaconate. A monthly financial report of the congregational treasurer shall be included in the minutes of the diaconate. An objective and financially literate party, someone not directly connected to the maintenance of the financial records, or receipt and/or distribution of church funds, shall conduct an annual financial review[a]. Such a review shall be designed to provide at least limited assurance that (1) financial assets are properly safeguarded, and (2) the reported financial statements are complete and accurate. (2016 Synod)

(a) Robert's Rules of Order, Ch. 15, Section 47, "Action of Financial Report," p. 469 9th edition

PROCEDURE OF THE DIACONATE

5.12 The Diaconate shall normally hold one regular meeting each month (meeting no fewer than nine times per year).

5.13 The chairman shall call a meeting of the Diaconate at any time he deems necessary. He shall call a meeting upon the request of either two deacons or the Session. Adequate notice of such meetings shall be given to all members of the Diaconate as well as to the pastor(s) of the church.

5.14 The Diaconate of each congregation shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum, but it shall not be less than one half for a stated meeting or one quarter for a called meeting.

5.15 Only members who are personally present are entitled to vote.

5.16 Each meeting of the Diaconate shall be opened and closed with prayer.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE SESSION

5.17 In the discharge of its duties, the Diaconate is a board of, and under the supervision and authority of the Session. The congregational budget and other important financial decisions require the approval of the Session prior to presentation to the congregation.

5.18 The Session shall have the authority to void or amend any action of the Diaconate, or return it for further consideration.

5.19 The Diaconate and the Session shall have a joint meeting annually in conjunction with the budget process and at other times as necessary.

5.20 The joint meetings can take no official action, but the Session and Diaconate shall act separately on matters committed to the care of each respectively.

5.21 In a congregation in which it is impractical for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of that office shall devolve upon the elders.

CHAPTER 6
ELDERS AND THE SESSION

DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

6.1 The office of elder as set forth in the Scriptures is ordinary and perpetual in the Church. In both the Old Testament and New Testament church, God ordained elders to govern and discipline his people.

6.2 To this office of elder shall be chosen men of wisdom, discretion, sound faith and godly life, and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture.[33]

6.3 An elder shall be a member in good standing of the congregation, actively sharing in the worship and service of the Church and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office.

6.4 It is the responsibility of elders, both individually and jointly, to guard and promote the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Although ruling elders do represent congregations by election, they are to seek the will of God in all church court decisions.

PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

6.5 The lowest court of the Church, called the Session, is charged with spiritual oversight and governance of an individual congregation within the jurisdiction of a Presbytery.

AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SESSION

6.6 The Session shall have as its primary responsibility the spiritual oversight of the congregation.

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[33] 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9.

6.7 The Session shall plan, organize and administer programs designed to enable the congregation to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the community and also in the Presbytery, the General Synod and the whole world. In order to institute and supervise the general work of the congregation, the Session has the power to appoint boards, commissions, or committees of the congregation.

6.8 In order to carry out its responsibility, working under the proper jurisdiction of the higher courts, the Session shall:

A. Shepherd the members by visiting with them, especially the sick; praying with them; comforting the sorrowing, encouraging the weak, guiding the wayward and the careless, and, in general, discharging all other duties in Christian love.

B. Counsel with the members of the congregation and inquire into their Christian knowledge and conduct.

C. Admonish, rebuke, suspend, or exclude from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper any member of the congregation found delinquent, according to the Book of Discipline.

D. Encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism.

E. Receive applicants into communicant church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership.

F. Grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing upon proper request.

G. Instruct, examine, ordain, and install elders and deacons upon their election by the congregation.

H. Encourage the officers of the congregation to devote themselves to their respective responsibilities.

I. Supervise the work of the diaconate and examine the records of its proceedings.

J. Develop and supervise religious and educational programs of the congregation.

K. Employ and supervise any non-ordained church staff.

L. Exercise, in accordance with the Directory of Public Worship, authority over the time and place of the preaching and teaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, and over all other religious services.

M. Assemble the people for worship in the absence of the pastor.

N. To direct the securing, receiving, and distributing of special offerings.

O. Devise and encourage suitable measures for the spiritual advancement of the congregation and of the Church.

P. Observe and enforce the lawful injunctions of the higher courts.

Q. Select from among its elders delegate(s) to the meetings of the Presbytery and the General Synod to represent the church. Such delegates shall not be instructed as to how they shall vote on matters with one exception. The exception is in a case of a proposed plan of Church union; in such a matter the Session has authority to instruct their delegate(s) how to vote if they so

choose. Delegates are to report to their Session on the proceedings of the court.

R. Propose to the Presbytery measures of common advantage to the whole Church.

S. Establish, review, control, and dissolve any special groups within the congregation, and in its discretion to require stated reports.

T. Call a congregational meeting.

U. To exercise authority over the use of the church buildings and associated properties.

6.9 The Session shall:

A. Keep an accurate record of its proceedings and submit annually such records to the Presbytery for inspection and review.

B. Keep an accurate record of:

(1) The rolls of the members of the congregation according to the *Form of Government*.

(2) The names of persons receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

(3) Deaths and marriages of members of the congregation.

C. Report to the higher Church Courts and their agencies such information as requested.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

6.10 The pastor, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the Session. An associate pastor, if there is one, is also a member of the Session.

6.11 The mission developer of a mission congregation, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the provisional Session.

6.12 In addition to the moderator, the officers of the Session shall be a vice moderator and a clerk who shall be elected annually by the Session.

6.13 In cases where the pastor is, for any cause, disqualified from presiding, the vice moderator presides.

6.14 When a congregation is without a pastor, the moderator shall be a minister of the ARPC appointed by the Presbytery. When it is not feasible for such moderator to be present, the vice moderator shall preside. In judicial cases the moderator shall be the appointee of the Presbytery.

6.15 The Session shall normally hold one regular meeting each month (meeting no fewer than nine times per year). The moderator shall call a meeting of the Session at any time he deems necessary or upon the request of two ruling elders, or upon request of the Presbytery. Adequate notice of called meetings shall be given.

6.16 No meeting of the Session shall be held without the knowledge of the pastor.

6.17 Each Session shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum, provided such a quorum be not less than a pastor and an elder, or two elders without a pastor.

6.18 Only members who are personally present at the meeting are entitled to vote.

6.19 Each meeting of the Session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

CHAPTER 7
THE ACT OF ORDINATION

7.1 Ordination is that act of the ARPC in which ARPC members are publicly consecrated to specific Church offices to which they have been called by God and elected or appointed by the congregation or a court of the ARPC. The act of ordination is not valid apart from the prior calling of God.

7.2 In the Presbyterian system, the act of ordination is usually accompanied by the laying on of hands, a helpful and traditional symbol of the ARPC, though this is not necessary to effect the act. Such action is intended to give visible and tangible expression to the prior work of the Holy Spirit, and is not to be construed as conveying powers by one man to another. Further, the act of ordination shall be accompanied by intercessory prayer in which the participants seek divine blessing for those receiving ordination. Further specifics for such services shall be found in the Directory of Public Worship.[34]

7.3 Those participating in the act of ordination shall ordinarily be members of an ARPC or court; exceptions shall be approved in advance by the ordaining court so as to protect the witness of the Church.

7.4 The act of ordination is perpetual and as such it remains in effect unless the appropriate ARPC court suspends or removes it due to disciplinary matters or the individual dies.

[34] The Directory of Public Worship, Chapter 5.C.7.

7.5 The act of ordination does not convey or imply to the recipient a rank or position superior in status to any other church member, but a difference in calling and function.

7.6 Congregations, courts, or agencies of the ARPC shall have the authority to dedicate or consecrate members who are being called into a particular service for the ARPC which does not require ordination (such as missionary service). In such cases, a commissioning service shall be held within a congregation. The laying on of hands in prayer may be a part of such a service, but shall not be construed as conveying or implying ordination. Further specifics for such services shall be found in the Directory of Public Worship.[35]

[35] The Directory of Public Worship, Chapter 5.C.8.

CHAPTER 8
THE ELECTION, ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

ELIGIBILITY

8.1 Persons elected to the office of elder or deacon shall be:

A. Members in full and active communion in the congregation in which they are to exercise office;

B. Shall not be under any current or pending discipline;

C. The minimum age for holding these offices shall be determined by the Session;

D. Consideration shall be given so that recent converts are not called to an office prematurely;[36]

E. Nominations shall not be made to an office unless there is clear evidence that God is calling them to such an office. (2.11)

8.2 A church should prefer having fewer officers than to electing unqualified officers simply to fill a specified slot on the Session or Diaconate.

8.3 The Session shall be responsible for providing adequate training for all church offices.

TERMS OF OFFICE

8.4 Elders or deacons are elected and ordained for life unless deposed in the process of discipline. The congregation shall elect elders and/or deacons to active continual service or for a limited term, as herein provided.

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[36] 1 Timothy 3:6.

8.5 Any congregation in which the active term of office for the Session or for the Diaconate has been for life shall have the authority to elect elders, deacons, or both elders and deacons to actively serve a limited term in their respective offices. A change to the rotary system shall be adopted at a congregational meeting, provided the following points are observed:

A. The term of office as determined by the congregation for elder or deacon shall not be less than three (3) years.
B. Elders and deacons shall not be eligible to hold the same office until one (1) year has elapsed after the close of their terms of office.
C. Elders retired under the rotary system shall be eligible for election to the Diaconate.

8.6 Any congregation using the rotary system can revert to the non-rotary system only by action in a congregational meeting.

8.7 Any change from one system to the other shall be reported to the Presbytery.

8.8 Any elder or deacon who has served the church faithfully but whose ability to render active service is limited because of age, physical inability, or other legitimate cause, may be elected Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus or Emerita. Such election shall be by the action of the congregation upon condition that the said officer is willing to accept this title as one of honor, precluding the right to vote or to serve as a delegate on a court of the ARPC (in the case of an elder). An Elder Emeritus can be appointed by the Session as a delegate for the congregation to a higher court of the ARPC. (Synod 2022)

ELECTION PROCEDURE

8.9 The number of elders and deacons shall be determined by the congregation. The congregation shall decide how many elders and deacons it believes are necessary to serve the life of their congregation. The number of elders does not need to be identical to the number of deacons. A congregation shall give consideration to increasing or decreasing the numbers of officers as the size of the membership fluctuates.

8.10 The election of elders and deacons shall take place by action in a duly called congregational meeting.

8.11 The nomination procedure should have three parts: recommendations, certification, and election. Ample time is to be given to certify the eligibility of those nominated based upon standards set by the Session. Also, the congregation should take time for prayer to be offered for those nominated and for the election process. Nominations shall be made by the following method:

A. Nominating committee. The Session, or the Presbytery, in the case of a mission church, shall appoint a nominating committee at least 14 days prior to the election. The Session itself shall have the authority to constitute itself as the nominating committee. They shall provide a list of nominees to be certified by the Session. Representation on the nominating committee shall include at least one active ARPC elder.

B. Suggestions from the congregation for nominees shall be solicited by the committee. The committee shall give due consideration to all suggested nominees, though they are not bound to put forth any or all of the names given to them. The committee shall have the authority to choose names not suggested by the congregation. No vote on

nominees shall take place at a congregational meeting where nominees are solicited.

C. Certification of nominees. The nominees shall be conferred with privately by the Session, or Presbytery, as to their testimony of faith, qualifications and willingness to serve before being placed before the congregation for election. All those nominated to office shall be examined as to whether they affirm the questions of the "Formula for Ordination and Installation." The Session shall inquire if they have exceptions or scruples to the Standards, and whether these are acceptable or if they would be such as to prevent the nominee from being put forth for election.

8.12 Voting. The congregational meeting to elect officers shall take place only after those nominated have completed the nominating process started in 8.11.A-C, and shall take place at least one week after all nominations have been made. If there is only one nomination for an office, the name of the nominee shall be presented, and voting shall be by voice, the uplifted hand, or standing, or if deemed advisable, by ballot. If there is more than one nomination for an office, voting shall be by ballot. A congregation shall decide whether a majority or a plurality of the vote cast is necessary to constitute election to an office. If not otherwise specified, it shall be by plurality.

A. In the event a majority is required and more than one ballot is necessary, the number of names on the succeeding ballots shall consist only of twice the number to be elected.

B. In the event a plurality is required, those nominees receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected. Should anyone so elected decline or be unable to serve, the nominee receiving the next

greatest number of votes shall be substituted and regarded as duly elected.

8.13 When voting is by ballot, the Session shall provide suitable ballots and shall appoint a committee of at least three (3) active members of the congregation to distribute and collect the ballots. This committee shall count them and announce in alphabetical order the names of those elected without reporting the number of votes. The ballots shall then be destroyed.

8.14 The Session shall appoint a day for their ordination, when required, and installation or re-installation. This day shall be announced to the congregation soon after the election.

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

8.15 The pastor of the congregation shall preside over the service of ordination and installation of elders and deacons. If the congregation is without a pastor, the Session shall invite the presbytery-appointed moderator of the Session or another ARPC minister, or a non-ARPC minister as approved by the Presbytery to preside.

8.16 At the time of the ordination and installation service, the officers-elect shall present themselves before the congregation, and shall solemnly promise, according to the annexed formula, to maintain the doctrine, government, discipline, and worship of the ARPC.

8.17 **FORMULA FOR ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION**

(1) Do you believe in one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things for the Church, which is His Body?

(2) Do you reaffirm your belief in the Bible, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of the living God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts, and to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken at any time or upon any pretext?

(3) Do you accept the doctrines of this Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith and do you resolve to adhere thereto?

(4) Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church?

(5) Do you accept the office of elder (deacon) in this congregation; and do you promise to perform faithfully all the duties of the office; and do you promise to endeavor by the grace of God to live your life in Christian witness before the church and in the world?

(6) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the Session and to the higher courts of the Church?

(7) Do you promise in all things to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?

8.18 These questions having been answered in the affirmative, the presiding officer shall address the following question to the congregation:

Congregational vows to elders:
"Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive these fellow members as elders, and do you promise to give them all the honor,

obedience, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office, according to the Word of God and the Standards of this Church, entitles them?"

Congregational vows to deacons:
"Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive these fellow members as deacons, and do you promise to give them all the honor, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office, according to the Word of God and the Standards of this Church, entitles them?" (Synod 2021)

8.19 After the members of the congregation have signified their affirmative answer to this question by standing, the officers-elect shall kneel and be set apart to their office with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Session.

8.20 Following the ordination prayer, the minister shall say:

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, I now declare you duly ordained and installed in the sacred office of elder (deacon)."

The members of the Session shall take the new officers by the hand, saying:

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

The minister shall then charge both the officers and the congregation regarding their Christian responsibilities to each other and to the Church.

REINSTALLATION

8.21 An elder or deacon re-elected to office under the rotary system shall be installed into the same office without re-ordination.

8.22 An elder or deacon who transfers membership from one ARPC congregation to another and is elected to the same office shall be installed without re-ordination, though they shall give evidence to the Session of a credible profession of faith in Christ and that they have not changed their views in regard to the Standards of this Church since their initial ordination.

8.23 Officers being reinstalled shall be required to assume the obligations in Questions 5 through 7 of the "Formula for Ordination and Installation" during the installation, and shall then be declared formally installed by the presiding officer.

8.24 An elder or deacon who transfers membership from another denomination and is nominated to the same office shall be required to assume the obligations for the full "Formula for Ordination and Installation" both in private examination by the Session and during the installation service, and if elected, shall be installed without re-ordination. They also must not be under any pending discipline from their previous congregation or any other Church court.

RECORD AND REPORT

8.25 A record of the service of ordination and installation shall be entered in the minutes of the Session, and the names of the officers shall be reported to the Presbytery.

CHAPTER 9
THE MINISTER

DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A MINISTER

9.1 A minister is a man who is called by God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, to a special ministry of the word. Only those who give evidence of being called and qualified by the Lord Jesus Christ shall be set apart by the ARPC to this ministry.

9.2 The call to ministry begins with the individual seeking to determine whether or not he has been called as a minister. Yet, as Christ fits His servants for this ministry, they must also evidence the necessary qualifications for this work.

9.3 The qualifications of a minister consist of such gifts as fit him for service as a teacher and leader in this ministry, and of such character and reputation as will continue honor to this office.

A. Spiritual Maturity. A minister must be mature in his faith, with absolute certainty of his own saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Belief. A minister must accept the doctrines, government and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church as agreeable to and founded upon the Word of God.

C. Knowledge. A minister must give evidence of his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines, government, and worship of our ARPC, and the duties of a minister.

D. Compassion. A minister must serve as Jesus Christ, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

E. Personality. A minister must be one who will attract persons to Christ and His Church.
F. Intelligence. A minister must be capable of meeting the education requirements essential for ordination.
G. Education. A minister must present evidence of having obtained the following:
   1. A baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent. (Synod 2024)
   2. A master of divinity degree (or its equivalent) from a seminary approved by the Presbytery; (Synod 2024)
   3. Biblical language studies (Hebrew and Greek). (Synod 2021)

9.4 The Scriptures acknowledge no degrees of rank or dignity among ministers, they being equal in office and authority. The names of pastor, teacher, bishop and presbyter are used simply to set forth different duties and responsibilities.

9.5 The office of minister includes the office and authority of elder. For this reason the minister is also referred to as a presbyter.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MINISTER

9.6 A minister as a pastor (or associate pastor) of a particular congregation

A. Public Responsibilities. A minister shall pray for and with his people; read the Scriptures; preach the Word; teach, reprove, exhort and comfort; administer the sacraments; pronounce the blessings of God upon the people; officiate at weddings and funerals; and serve with elders in all matters pertaining to the government, discipline, worship, and education of the congregation. He shall serve as an advisory member of all committees in the

congregation. A minister shall also serve, with elders, in the higher courts of the Church.

B. Private Responsibilities. A minister shall visit with and be available to his people as their pastor, counsel with and instruct them in spiritual things, and pray for and with them; visit especially the sick, the afflicted, and the aged; advise, comfort, and pray with those who have need; admonish those who are guilty of conduct unbecoming their Christian profession or who are indifferent to their religious duties; and, in general, assume the spiritual oversight of his people.

9.7 A minister as a teacher

A. Some ministers are especially qualified by their gifts to be teachers and are called to teach in seminaries, colleges, and other schools, provided such teaching is in keeping with their calling as ministers and has the approval of the Presbytery of which they are members to labor "outside the bounds" of the Presbytery.

B. A minister is no less a pastor as a teacher. He is to take pastoral oversight of those under his charge, to be diligent in promoting the work of the Kingdom, and to seek to win the lost to Jesus Christ.

9.8 A minister as an evangelist

A. A minister can serve as an evangelist as long as he is a member in good standing of some Presbytery.

B. He shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and perform the duties of a pastor in specific fields under the authority of the Presbytery, or devote himself entirely to preaching the Word in special evangelistic services under the supervision and direction of the pastor in whose charge he is laboring.

9.9 A minister as a missionary

A. The Church shall ordain and send forth ministers as missionaries in obedience to the command of Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.
B. The minister, as a missionary, has the authority to perform the duties of pastor, teacher, and evangelist.
C. A minister, as a missionary in fields where there is no organized Presbytery, has the authority to exercise Presbyterial authority under the direction of the General Synod in organizing congregations, in receiving students of theology and directing their studies, and in ordaining and installing them as ministers. In such instances, the minister is still bound by the Standards of the church in all other areas of his ministry.

9.10 A minister as a church planter

A. A Presbytery has the authority to call a minister to serve as a church planter in a work that is not organized into a congregation.
B. The main task of the church planter is to build up the "congregation" so that it becomes an organized church.
C. A church planter will serve as the pastor for the people who become a part of the mission church work.
D. The church planter will be the moderator of the Provisional Session.
E. The church planter is to be training men for leadership so that there will be qualified elder leadership in the group at the time of organization.

9.11 A minister as a bi-vocational or part-time pastor of a particular congregation.

A. A minister can be called to enter into a bi-vocational role with a congregation and some other employment as approved by the Presbytery.
B. The bi-vocational pastor shall split his time between his employment responsibilities and the pastoral duties of the congregation according to a preset plan with the Presbytery.
C. Presbytery determines the criteria for bi-vocational or part-time pastors. The Presbytery and the individual pastor shall have a good understanding of the guidelines from the Board of Benefits in regard to the requirements to qualify for insurance and retirement benefits.

9.12 A minister as a chaplain

A. A minister can serve as a Christian chaplain in the military or as an institutional chaplain as approved by the Presbytery.
B. A minister serving as a chaplain shall exercise his call to the ministry of the word and sacraments with the same diligence as he would in serving as the pastor of a church. He is under the authority of the Presbytery which approves him as well as the board, agency, or institution for which he works when necessary.
C. He, as authorized by the Presbytery, shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and perform the other pastoral duties required in his field of labor.
D. A minister serving as chaplain shall give preference to the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church even when the standards of the organization he serves differ.

9.13 A minister as in other positions

The varied work of the Church makes it necessary and proper for ministers to engage in ministries other than

those specified. Ministers who are already ordained and wish to engage in such a ministry must receive approval from their Presbytery for any such work outside the normal pastoral call, and shall give an annual report to his Presbytery in order to be re-certified each year in that ministry which is "outside the bounds" of the Presbytery. Ministers shall not normally be ordained initially to such non-traditional ministries (especially if the position does not require ordination), but a Presbytery shall do so by a two-thirds majority vote in a regular stated meeting after considering the call. Ministers engaged in such ministries should discharge their duties faithfully and diligently, seeking to serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

STUDENTS UNDER CARE OF PRESBYTERY

9.14 Students under care of a Presbytery are those pursuing ordination and shall be referred to either as Students of Theology or Students of Divinity preparing for the gospel ministry.

9.15 Any student wishing to come under care of a Presbytery must have a letter of recommendation from the Session of the church where he is a member. Ordinarily, students will be under care for at least a year prior to ordination.

9.16 The Minister and His Work Committee, or its appropriate Presbytery committee, is to examine the candidate before presenting him to the Presbytery. He is to be examined in the following areas:

A. Saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ
B. Christian character
C. Conviction of being called by God to the ministry

9.17 Upon acceptance of the student, the Presbytery shall enroll and counsel with him.

A. The Presbytery shall communicate and counsel the student concerning his studies, family life, financial needs, and spiritual growth.

B. The student shall be kept informed of all Presbytery business.

C. Assist the student in the steps moving towards ordination.

9.18 The student shall:

A. Be regular in his attendance at meetings of Presbytery and the General Synod

B. Preach trial sermons before the Presbytery as directed

C. Communicate with the Presbytery through its committee any needs or changes in his status

D. Be given opportunities to preach in churches under the direction of the Presbytery

9.19 The Presbytery, with or without his request, has the authority to remove his name from the roll of students under its care. After a candidate has been under the care of a presbytery for five (5) years his name shall automatically be removed from the roll unless he has requested in writing an extension. The Presbytery committee shall evaluate the request in light of his evidence of good faith in continuing his preparation. The committee shall make a recommendation to the Presbytery for action.

9.20 A candidate shall be received under the care of the Presbytery in an appropriate service of recognition in which he shall be asked to stand before the Presbytery and answer the following questions:

(1) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a character consistent

with your Christian profession and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for your ministry?

(2) Do you promise to submit yourself to the supervision of the Presbytery in matters concerning your preparation for the ministry of the Word?

9.21 When these questions have been answered in the affirmative, the moderator or his appointee shall briefly address the candidate and shall close the service with prayer.

PROCEDURES FOR LICENSURE

9.22 It is agreeable to the Scriptures, and for the best interests of the Church, that trial be made of those who are to be ordained to the gospel ministry in order that this office not be committed to unworthy men and that churches have an opportunity to judge the qualifications of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. To this end Presbyterians are to license candidates for the ministry as probationers to preach the gospel, who, after a competent trial of their gifts and a good report from the churches, are to be ordained to the office of the ministry.

9.23 As a rule no one shall be licensed to preach the gospel without the following:

A. Master of Divinity degree (or its equivalent) and

B. Biblical language studies (Hebrew and Greek).

This, however, shall not prohibit students of theology from preaching under the direction of Presbytery, during their theological course. (Synod 2021)

9.24 Every candidate for licensure, whether or not he has a diploma from a seminary, shall be examined by the Presbytery. The trials for licensure shall consist of:

A. A sermon to be delivered in public immediately before licensure

B. After the trials, the Presbytery shall proceed to consider it and also to offer suggestions and criticisms.

C. If the Presbytery is not satisfied with his trials and refuses to sustain them, they shall be appointed to him again, "all or in part," or he shall be directed to resume his studies, as the Presbytery deems best.

D. If his trials gives convincing evidence that he is lacking in the essential qualifications for the ministry, the Presbytery should kindly suggest to him to seek some other calling.

E. In open session, he shall be examined as to his soundness in the faith, and belief in, and adherence to the distinctive principles of the ARPC.

F. If his trials for licensure be sustained, he shall present himself before the Presbytery in public meeting and take the obligations in the prescribed formula of questions:

(1) Do you believe in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body?

(2) Do you affirm that the Bible alone, being God-breathed, is the Word of God Written, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts?

(3) Do you accept the doctrines of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church,

contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and
Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith, and do you resolve to adhere thereto?

(4) Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God?

(5) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the Presbytery in subordination to the General Synod, and to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?

(6) Do you sincerely resolve to fulfill all your responsibilities in your home life and in all your relations with your fellowman, following after righteousness, faith, and love?

(7) Do you accept and enter upon your ministry with a desire to glorify God and to be instrumental in strengthening His Church?

G. The moderator shall then declare him licensed by the Presbytery, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel as a licentiate for the holy ministry; and shall, in a few words, remind him of the importance, the difficulties and the excellence of that work on which he is about to enter, and exhort him to devote himself to it in faith and zeal. The licentiate's membership remains with the local congregation until he is ordained.

H. Licentiates shall be given certificates of licensure signed by the moderator and the stated clerk of the Presbytery.

I. Such license shall expire at the end of two (2) years unless the licentiate shall request in writing an extension and such extension be recommended by the Committee/Commission on the Minister and His Work for approval by the Presbytery.

J. Licentiates as they are commonly called, shall labor under the direction of their respective Presbyteries. The Presbytery, in assigning them fields of labor, is to consult, as far as possible, their circumstances and inclinations, always bearing in mind, however, that the interests of the Church are more to be considered than the personal wishes of any laborer.

K. It is their duty to attend the meetings of their respective Presbyteries and of the Synod, in which they shall have the right to deliberate and advise, and shall always be consulted in matters pertaining to their particular work and appointments.

L. Licentiates, not being ministers, shall not administer the sacraments, pronounce the benediction, officiate in marriage ceremonies, ordain officers, or act as moderator or vote in any church court.

PROCEDURE FOR ORDINATION

9.25 When a candidate has completed his academic training as required by the General Synod and the Presbytery of which he is a candidate, the Presbytery shall take steps for his ordination.

Requirements for ordination, in addition to academic standards, shall consist of the following:

A. A review and examination of the candidate's personal Christian religious experience.

B. An examination of his knowledge of the English Bible.
C. An examination of his knowledge of theology and his doctrinal positions.
D. An examination of his knowledge of the history of the catholic Church in general and the history and government of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in particular, and the determination of his approval of the form of government, discipline and worship of the ARPC.
E. A sermon in manuscript form preached before the Presbytery and shall be subjected to constructive criticism by the Presbytery. The Presbytery can assign or approve the text for this sermon.
F. A call either to a congregation or to another Presbytery approved ministerial labor.

9.26 The Presbyteries shall strive for uniformity in their examination for ordination and shall not omit any of these requirements for ordination. It is strongly encouraged that each Presbytery provide both an extensive written exam to then be followed by an oral exam, both in committee, prior to the oral exam before the full Presbytery.

9.27 If a minority of one-fourth or more of the members of the Presbytery disapprove a candidate's examination, the Presbytery shall require a further examination in writing on questions proposed by the Presbytery, which questions and answers shall become a part of the official records of the Presbytery.

9.28 When the Presbytery has approved a candidate's examination and is furnished evidence of a candidate's call, the Presbytery shall appoint a time and place for the ordination of the candidate. Usually the ordination shall

be held before a called meeting of the Presbytery in the church of which the candidate is to be pastor.

9.29 On the day appointed, the Presbytery shall be convened and a minister shall preach an appropriate sermon. The presiding officer shall review all that the Presbytery and candidate have done in preparation for this ordination. He shall stress the nature and importance of ordination and shall impress upon the congregation the solemnity of the occasion.

9.30 The presiding officer shall then propose to the candidate the following Formula of Questions for Ordination:

(1) Do you believe in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body?

(2) Do you affirm that the Bible alone, being God-breathed, is the Word of God Written, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts?

(3) Do you accept the doctrines of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith, and do you resolve to adhere thereto?

(4) Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God?

(5) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the Presbytery in subordination to the General Synod, and to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?

(6) Do you sincerely resolve to fulfill all your responsibilities in your home life and in all your relations with your fellowman, following after righteousness, faith, and love?

(7) Do you accept and enter upon your ministry with a desire to glorify God and to be instrumental in strengthening His Church?

(8) Do you promise to preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity, declaring the whole counsel of God, and to perform all your official duties with zeal and faithfulness, seeking the salvation of sinners?

9.31 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.

9.32 After the ordination prayer, the members of the Presbytery shall take him by the hand saying, "We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us."

9.33 If the ordination is not in connection with his installation as pastor, the presiding officer shall declare the candidate set apart to the ministry, emphasizing the importance, the difficulties, and the excellence of the ministry which he now enters.

9.34 The newly ordained minister shall be given a Certificate of Ordination signed by the moderator and clerk of the Presbytery.

9.35 A full report of the ordination service shall be recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery and a copy forwarded to the congregation of which he was formerly a member so that his name be removed from the membership roll.

PROCEDURE FOR INSTALLATION

9.36 A minister shall be a member of the Presbytery having jurisdiction over the congregation of which he is to be pastor and shall have a valid call properly executed by the Presbytery before he shall be eligible for installation.

9.37 The Presbytery or its commission shall conduct the installation service. A complete report of the service shall be submitted to the Presbytery and recorded in its minutes.

9.38 A minister can be installed as the pastor or associate pastor of one or more congregations. The procedure shall be adapted as needed for the specifics of the call.

9.39 When the installation service is being held in connection with his ordination, the pastor elect shall give affirmative answer to the Formula of Questions for Ordination, after which he shall give affirmative answer to the installation questions.

9.40 When the pastor elect has been previously ordained, he shall renew his ordination vows by giving affirmative answer to the full Formula of Questions of Ordination, after which he shall answer the following installation questions:

(1) Do you accept the office of pastor of the congregation, and do you promise to perform faithfully all the duties of this office, both public and private, to the best of your ability as you are led by the Holy Spirit?

(2) Do you make these promises in the presence of Him to Whom you must ultimately give an account?

9.41 When affirmative answers have been given to these questions, the following question shall then be addressed to the congregation:

> "Do you, the members of this congregation, now acknowledge and receive *[insert name]* as your pastor, and do you promise to give him all the honor, obedience, encouragement, cooperation, and support in the spirit of love to which this office entitles him and as you promised him in the call?"

9.42 When the members of the congregation have signified their affirmative answer to this question by standing, the presiding officer shall say:

> "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of the Church, I now declare *[insert name]* duly (ordained) (installed) as pastor of this congregation."

9.43 The pastor and congregation shall then be addressed by those appointed or invited by the Presbytery as to their respective duties in the solemn relation into which they have now entered. Following the benediction, the members of the congregation shall come forward and give him the right hand of fellowship, indicating their acceptance of him as their pastor.

9.44 The installation service of ministers in other approved ministries shall be carried out in a manner similar to that of a pastor.

9.45 A Presbytery has the authority to refuse to install a minister. He shall be informed of the reasons and he, or the congregation who has called him, has the authority to appeal the decision of the Presbytery to the General Synod.

PROCEDURE FOR CALLS TO PARTICULAR CONGREGATIONS

9.46 No person shall be chosen for pastor of a congregation who has not been regularly ordained, or examined by the Presbytery and approved for ordination.

9.47 The relationships between a minister and a congregation include those of a pastor, associate pastor, stated supply or occasional supply. Each of these shall be a minister except the Presbytery can approve a student of theology or a layman as an occasional supply.

9.48 The procedure for a call to an associate pastor shall be the same as a call to a pastor.

9.49 A pastor or associate pastor shall be elected by the congregation in the manner outlined below.

9.50 The relationship is established by installation and is dissolved only by action of the Presbytery.

9.51 The terms of the call for an associate pastor shall specify the particular function which he is to fulfill in the life of the congregation. His work shall be under the supervision of the pastor and the session. Upon dissolution of a pastor's relationship, the relationship of the associate pastor shall be reviewed carefully by the congregation and Presbytery.

9.52 A stated supply is called by the Session to perform the functions of a pastor in a congregation.

A. The relationship shall be established by permission of the Presbytery only after it has given careful consideration to the qualifications of the individual and to all other factors involved.
B. The term of a stated supply shall be for no more than twelve months. It is renewable.
C. No formal call shall be issued by the congregation.

9.53 An occasional supply is a minister, a student of theology, or a layman secured by the Session to conduct services

during periods when a congregation is without a pastor or when its pastor is unable to perform his duties.

A. The Session shall not secure any person as occasional supply, except in an emergency, without the approval of Presbytery or the installed pastor.

B. The Presbytery shall keep a list of those who are available for immediate service as occasional supplies, including ministers, students of theology, and laymen who give evidence of outstanding abilities as Christian leaders.

9.54 The procedure for a call of a pastor or associate pastor shall be:

A. The Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastoral search committee. At least half of the committee shall be composed of elders who are either on the Session or who have recently rotated off. Others chosen for the committee should display mature Christian faith and wisdom and be well acquainted with the life and polity of the ARPC.

B. When the pastoral search committee is ready to report, it shall submit the name of its nominee to the Session for approval or rejection. If the Session approves the candidate, it shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of nominating that individual and approving his call. This meeting shall be presided over by the moderator of the Session appointed by the Presbytery, who shall be responsible for having a properly drafted call.

C. It is desirable that the choice be unanimous, or nearly so. If the minority persists in its rejection of the nominee, the congregation shall be asked to reconsider its vote. A full account of the voting shall be given to the Presbytery along with the call.

D. If the candidate is not approved by a significant majority, no other candidate shall be considered at that meeting and the pastoral search committee shall subsequently reconvene to consider another candidate for a future meeting.

E. After the pastor or associate pastor is elected, the call shall be signed, first by the elders and deacons, then by the other voting members.

F. The signed call shall be confirmed in writing by the moderator.

G. The signed call shall be delivered to the Presbytery for approval. Every call is pending until the successful completion of the requirements of the Presbytery and the Presbytery's approval.

H. The call shall:

(1) Clearly state the amount of salary and other allowances.

(2) Include information as to manse, vacation, moving expense, medical and hospitalization insurance.

(3) Include provision for the church to make contributions to the General Synod in support of a retirement/pension plan/fund, approved by the presbytery according to the guidelines approved by the General Synod (except for calls to new fields or congregations which are unable to support a pastor). (Synod 2021)

(4) Provide for an annual review of the terms of the call by the Session.

(5) Meet all requirements of the Presbytery before approval.

(6) Be presented to a pastor-elect by the Presbytery in which the congregation issuing the call is located.

[Where provisions of the call respecting contributions for the retirement/pension plan/fund have not been made for a period of one (1) year, due notice shall be given by the Board of Benefits to the minister, clerk of Session, clerk of Presbytery, and chairman of the Presbytery's Committee/Commission on Minister and His Work that the terms of said minister's call have been breached. The failure to meet the terms of a call within a period of one year from date of notification shall constitute the termination of the call for Retirement Plan purposes.] (Synod 2021)

I. If a call is issued to a member of another Presbytery, the pastor-elect shall secure a letter of transfer to the Presbytery in which the congregation issuing the call is located, where he shall then be presented with the call.

J. If the pastor-elect accepts the call, the Presbytery shall appoint a commission to conduct the installation service.

K. The Presbytery can decline to present a call which is regular in all aspects if, in its judgment, the best interests of the ARPC so require.

L. A minister who is serving as a church planter can be installed as a pastor of the ARPC at its organizational service, if he has been called as a pastor prior to the service at a called meeting of the petitioners and the Presbytery or its Commission on the Minister and His

Work has approved him for this call and the terms of the call. (FOG 11.24)

M. The procedure for calls to other ministries shall be similar to that of a call to a pastor.

N. Any changes made in the terms of the call as a result of the annual review shall be submitted for approval to the Presbytery at its first stated meeting of the year.

PROCEDURE FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

9.55 The dissolution of the pastoral relationship shall be by action of the Presbytery. Such action can be initiated by the pastor, the Session, the congregation, or the Presbytery.

9.56 When a pastor desires to dissolve his pastoral relationship:

A. He shall first inform the Session in writing of his desire and send a copy of the request to the Presbytery.

B. The Session shall then call a congregational meeting to act on the request.

9.57 When a Session desires to dissolve the pastoral relationship:

A. They shall first inform the pastor in writing of their desire and send a copy of the request to the Presbytery.

B. They shall then notify the congregation of their desire by calling a congregational meeting to act on the request.

9.58 When a congregation desires to dissolve the pastoral relationship:

A. Communicant members shall request of the Session in writing to call a congregational meeting to act upon their desire to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

B. The Session shall determine if the request is appropriate.
C. If the Session determines the request is appropriate, they call a congregational meeting to act on the request.
D. The Session shall notify the pastor and the Presbytery in writing of the desire to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

9.59 When a congregation acts on a request for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship:

A. The action of the congregation shall be presented in writing to the Presbytery.
B. If the congregation concurs with the request to dissolve the pastoral relationship, the Presbytery shall dissolve the pastoral relationship unless the Presbytery determines that it is in the best interest of the congregation and the pastor to deny the request.
C. If the congregation does not concur with the request to dissolve the pastoral relationship, the congregation shall submit its reasons in writing to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall give careful consideration to all such reasons along with the desires of the Session, if different from the congregation, and take action in the best interests of the congregation and the pastor.

9.60 When a Presbytery desires to dissolve a pastoral relationship, it has the authority to do so without formal application from any party when, acting on good information, and it has determined it is in the best interest and welfare of the congregation and pastor to dissolve the relationship.

9.61 The Presbytery has the authority to request an installed pastor to take up the work in another field of labor, but cannot require him to do so. Any pastor so requested

shall give prayerful consideration to such a request for an indication of the will of God.

PROCEDURE FOR TRANSFERRING MINISTERS FROM ANOTHER PRESBYTERY

9.62 Transfer within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

A. The Presbytery has the authority to transfer a minister or a student of theology from one Presbytery to another. Such transfers are initiated by the minister, licentiate, or student, by informing his Presbytery of his desire to be transferred, and securing a letter of standing which shall be presented to the receiving Presbytery prior to any examination and approval for reception.

B. The Presbytery receiving a minister from another Presbytery shall examine him as to his beliefs, his Christian character and his qualifications to perform the duties of his office. After examination the Presbytery has the authority to decline to receive the minister, or postpone his reception until he has engaged in further preparation. The Presbytery shall strive for uniformity in the examinations given.

C. A minister transferring from one Presbytery to another shall present a certificate of transfer indicating his good standing in the dismissing presbytery. A certificate of transfer shall be issued only after the pastoral or other relationship has been dissolved. He shall be a member of the dismissing Presbytery until he has been officially received by the Presbytery to which he is transferring, and an official notice of his reception has been sent to the dismissing Presbytery.

D. The Presbytery shall record the dates of the certificates and other vital information in its minutes.

9.63 Transfer from another denomination.

A. The Procedure for transferring ministers from another denomination shall follow in substance the procedure for transfer from one Presbytery to another within the ARPC.

B. The minister must present an acceptable certificate of transfer from the Presbytery or other Church body of which he was a member.

C. The minister applying for membership in one of the Presbyteries shall be examined as to his beliefs, his Christian character, his qualifications, and his knowledge of and adherence to the doctrines and principles of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

9.64 The minister requesting transfer from another denomination shall furnish evidence of an education equal to that required of ministers trained under the care of the Presbyteries of the ARPC. (Chapter 9.3.G)

9.65 Transfer to another denomination.

The procedure for transferring ministers to another denomination shall follow in substance the procedure for transfer to another Presbytery within the ARPC.

PROVISIONS FOR CALLS TO OTHER MINISTRIES

9.66 The procedure for calls to ministries other than those involving pastoral relationship shall be essentially the same as for calls to the pastorate. The court or agency issuing the call shall present to the Presbytery of which he is a member, which shall retain primary jurisdiction, a call appropriate to the service involved.

9.67 When a minister desires to accept work not under the jurisdiction of any ARPC court or agency:

A. He shall request permission of his Presbytery.

B. The Presbytery shall grant permission upon determination that the particular work serves the best interests of the ARPC and the minister.

C. If permission is not granted and the minister persists in accepting such work, he shall request that he be divested of his office without censure.

D. If he does not so request, the Presbytery shall charge him with violation of his ordination vows and institute judicial process against him.

CHAPTER 10
THE PRESBYTERY

THE PURPOSE OF PRESBYTERY

10.1 The court of the ARPC next higher than the Session is the Presbytery, which has the oversight of a group of congregations within a specific geographical area as determined by the General Synod. In the expansion of the Church, there are times when Presbyteries need to go beyond their geographical boundaries in order to establish churches, "chapels," "preaching stations," "ethnic ministries," or "mission congregations" in other areas. The Presbytery is the essential court of the Presbyterian system in administering its general order, the higher courts being constituted simply by a wider application of the general principles of the Presbytery. The name is scriptural, derived from the Greek of the New Testament.

PRESBYTERY'S AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.2 The Presbytery shall have as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization, and administration of programs designed to enable it to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the Presbytery and also in the local congregations, the General Synod and the whole world.

10.3 In order to carry out its responsibilities, the Presbytery has power to:

A. Enforce the lawful injunctions of the higher courts.

B. Receive, hear, resolve, and decide references, appeals, and complaints according to

constitutional procedures, including questions of doctrine or discipline.

C. Advise and to assume original jurisdiction for adjudication on matters from church Sessions where their authority cannot be exercised.

D. Review and approve or censure the records of Sessions and to require their correction, to redress anything contrary to order, and to take effectual care for the observance of the Standards of the ARPC.

E. Unite, divide, organize, dissolve, receive, dismiss, and transfer congregations.

F. Hold, dispose, and apply the properties of dissolved congregations at its discretion.

G. Approve or disapprove the buying, selling, mortgaging, or leasing of any real property by a congregation over which the Presbytery has jurisdiction.

H. Inquire into the condition of the congregations under its care, correcting, and advising in any matter and taking special oversight of congregations without pastors by appointing moderators of Sessions, supplying preaching and other ordinances of worship for congregations without pastors.

I. Receive under its care students of theology as candidates for the ministry.

J. Examine and approve candidates for the ministry.

K. Ordain, install, receive, dismiss, remove, and try pastors of the Gospel, requiring pastors to devote themselves diligently to their sacred calling and censuring the delinquent.

L. Examine and approve calls and changes in terms of calls.

M. Establish the pastoral relation, and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or at its own discretion.

N. Direct the labors of pastors who have no pastoral charge.

O. Establish and direct mission work within its bounds.

P. Institute and superintend the agencies necessary for its work and to concert measures for the enlargement of the ARPC within its bounds.

Q. To consider and pass upon all proposed measures referred to it by the General Synod which would change the established order of doctrine and government of the ARPC.

R. Propose to the General Synod such measures as are of common advantage to the whole ARPC.

S. Take whatever actions necessary for the spiritual welfare of the congregations under its care and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.

10.4 The Presbytery shall:

A. Keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and submit annually such records to the General Synod for inspection and review.

B. Report annually its proceedings to the General Synod with details in reference to:

(1) Students of theology received.

(2) Ordinations, installations, and dissolutions of pastoral relations.

(3) Formations, organizations, dissolutions, unions, and divisions of congregations, and the receiving and transferring of

congregations within the General Synod.

(4) Ordination and receiving of elders.

(5) Deaths of ministers, elders, and deacons.

(6) Through the Annual Statistical Report of its churches, the receiving, dismissing and death of members and, as determined by the General Synod from time to time, organizational membership and summary financial information.

(7) Condition and progress of work within its bounds.

(8) In general all of the important business that has been transacted and changes that have taken place during the year.

D. Issue a certificate of standing to a minister upon valid application. Such certificate shall not be valid for more than one year.

ITS COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

10.5 Those entitled to sit as members of this court shall include:

A. All pastors of congregations, active or retired.

B. Every minister engaged in full-time service of the foreign missions, Presbyteries, institutions, boards and agencies of the denomination, or who were retired while engaged in such full-time service.

C. Ministers involved in Presbytery-approved Christian ministries.

D. Military chaplains, active or retired.

E. Other ministers approved and certified annually by their Presbyteries to be in a ministry appropriate to their ordination or calling. Each year, they must submit written application showing, to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, that the minister is, in compliance with 9.13, devoting himself diligently to his sacred calling.

10.6 Those entitled to sit as members of this court also shall include at least one elder from each congregation.

10.7 Congregations having more than three hundred communicant members are entitled to send two elder representatives, the basis for representation continues in this proportion. The stated clerk of each Presbytery shall submit to the principal clerk of the General Synod a statement stating the Presbyters are duly certified.

10.8 The vice-moderator, if he should be an elder, and the retiring moderator, should he be an elder.

10.9 The term of membership of an elder in the Presbytery shall continue until his successor is duly elected and qualified by presenting credentials of his appointment from the Session of the congregation which he represents.

A. Only those members of the Presbytery who are personally present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.

B. Ministers in good standing in other Presbyteries or in other Christian denominations being present at any meeting of the Presbytery can be invited by the Presbytery to sit as consultative members. Such members can deliberate and advise, but shall not vote.

10.10 The officers of the Presbytery shall be a moderator, a vice moderator, a stated clerk, and such other officers as

are necessary. The method of selection and terms of office and duties shall be determined by the Presbytery.

10.11 The Presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice a year. Such meetings shall ordinarily be opened with a sermon by the retiring or incoming moderator or in case the moderator is an elder, by an appropriate address or a sermon by a minister of the Presbytery appointed by the moderator, and every particular session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

A. A quorum for stated meetings of Presbytery shall be one-third (1/3) of the ministers of the Presbytery and duly elected elders from one-third (1/3) of the congregations. The Presbytery shall determine whether retired ministers are counted in the determination of a quorum.

B. A Presbytery that adjourns to a meeting during the sessions of the General Synod, shall do so only at a time when the General Synod is in recess.

10.12 If any matters which require immediate attention arise between the stated meetings, meetings shall be held upon the call of the moderator, or, in his failure to act, of the stated clerk, or upon the request of three (3) members of the Presbytery from at least two (2) congregations. At least one week's notice of called meetings shall be given to all members of the Presbytery specifying the time and place of meeting and the particular business for which the meeting is called. No other business shall be transacted at called meetings except that specified in the notice.

A quorum for called meetings of the Presbytery shall be two (2) ministers and the duly elected elders from at least two (2) congregations.

10.13 The Presbytery shall convene when directed to do so by the General Synod for the transaction of designated business only.

10.14 A Presbytery or any of its committees or agencies have authority to incorporate under the laws of any state in which it functions; however, the provisions of its charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with the *Form of Government* of the ARPC.

A. The members of the Presbytery or the members of its committees or agencies shall be members of such corporation, and the directors or trustees and officers of such corporation shall be elected from its members in the manner prescribed in the by-laws.

B. If a Presbytery or any of its committees or agencies are unincorporated they have the authority to elect individual trustees from their members.

C. The corporation or individual trustees and their successors shall hold title to all property belonging to the Presbytery or any of its committees or agencies.

D. Title to all Presbytery property shall be acquired, mortgaged, held, and transferred by the Presbytery in which such property is located.

E. If a Presbytery is dissolved or otherwise ceases to exist and no disposition has been made of its property, the holder of the title to such property shall deliver, convey, and transfer same to the General Synod or to the authorized agent or agents of the General Synod. The receipt of the General Synod or its proper agent or agents shall be a full and complete discharge of all liability of the holder of such Presbytery property.

CHAPTER 11
THE MISSION CHURCH

DEFINITION OF A MISSION CHURCH

11.1 A mission is a fellowshipping congregation of Christians, with their children, who are meeting together with the intention of forming an organized congregation of the ARPC. It is distinguished from an organized congregation in that it is not governed by its own Session, but is governed through a Provisional Session appointed by the Presbytery.

THE GOAL OF A MISSION CHURCH

11.2 The goal of a mission congregation is to provide worship, pastoral care, and fellowship for a group of believers in a specific geographical area. It is also part of the goal to become an organized congregation with its own Session.

FORMING A MISSION CHURCH

11.3 In the expansion of the Church, there are times when Presbyteries need to go beyond their geographical boundaries in order to establish churches, chapels, preaching stations, ethnic ministries, or mission congregations in other areas.

11.4 A presbytery may grant mission status to a group of believers who wish to meet together for worship, fellowship, and ministry and with the intent of becoming an organized church.

11.5 A sponsoring church may start a separate group for worship. This group will be under the jurisdiction of the sponsoring church's Session. The Presbytery of the sponsoring church is to be made aware of the work.

11.6 Until a mission is organized and officers are elected in the regular manner, the Presbytery shall:

A. Appoint the Provisional Session of the sponsoring church to oversee the work on behalf of Presbytery in the case found in 11.5

B. Appoint a provisional session of ARPC elders from neighboring congregations, wherever possible, or elders who meet the Standards of the ARPC,[37] and

C. Appoint an ordained minister to serve as moderator, or

D. Issue a call to an ordained minister to serve as church planter. Such a call shall be issued in accordance with the provisions for calls to particular congregations.[38] The church planter shall serve as moderator of the provisional session. The Presbytery shall consider input from the sponsoring church in the selection of the church planter.

11.7 Either the Presbytery or the sponsoring church has the primary oversight responsibility for the mission church. When the mission church is under a Presbytery, the responsibility is usually exercised through the Presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development.

EXPLORATORY WORK

11.8 Prior to being formed as a mission, a Presbytery may start an exploratory work. An exploratory work may last

[37] *Form of Government*, 6.1 – 6.4.
[38] *Form of Government*, 9.46 – 9.53.

for up to one year (renewable for an additional year). An exploratory work may receive mission status only by action of the Presbytery.

MEMBERSHIP ROLLS

11.9 Mission congregations shall maintain membership rolls consisting of communicant and non-communicant members as well as the names of those receiving the Sacrament of Baptism and the marriages and deaths of members, the mission shall maintain members on behalf of the Presbytery or sponsoring church until such time as the mission becomes an organized congregation with its own session.

MISSION PROPERTY

11.10 Mission Churches

A. Title to real church property of missions shall be acquired, mortgaged, held, and transferred by the Presbytery in which such property is located.

B. The Presbytery shall use its discretion as to when to transfer the title of all church property to the local congregation. This transaction is to take place within a two-year period after organization.

C. At the point of a congregation reverting to mission status, the congregation shall have twelve months to transfer the title to all church property to the presbytery.

MISSION LEADERSHIP

Provisional Session

11.11 Because of the transitional nature of work, the Presbytery initiating a mission church shall appoint a Provisional Session. The Provisional Session shall:

A. Exercise oversight of the mission on behalf of the Presbytery
B. Report to the appropriate committee of the Presbytery that is charged with the responsibility for new church development

11.12 The Presbytery shall appoint for the mission a Provisional Session of Associate Reformed Presbyterian elders from neighboring congregations, wherever possible, or elders who meet the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

11.13 If an organized ARPC congregation is sponsoring a mission, the sponsoring Church's Session will serve as the Provisional Session to oversee the work. The sponsoring Church Session may choose to exercise its oversight through a subcommittee of the Session.

11.14 The Provisional Session has the same responsibility as a session, but is a transitory authority aimed at preparing the mission to be governed under its own Session.

11.15 The Provisional Session has secondary oversight and is accountable to the Presbytery committee. Elders on the Provisional Session must be careful to allow the mission to develop its distinct identity and direction.

11.16 The church planter of a mission congregation, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the Provisional Session.

Responsibilities

A. To receive applicants into communicant church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership;
B. To encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism;

C. To grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing upon proper request;

D. To admonish, rebuke; suspend, or exclude from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper any member of the congregation found delinquent, according to the Rules of Discipline;

E. To instruct and examine potential ruling elders and deacons;

F. To work with the Session in setting the time and place of the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and over all other religious services;

G. To ensure that the mission is submitting required reports to presbytery and synod;

H. To encourage and advise the church planter. It is important that mutual trust be established between the church planter and the Session. He should look to the Session as his strong supporters and encouragers. He should feel free to share his concerns and frustrations with them. The Session should advise and counsel him concerning his work and ways to most effectively develop the mission;

I. Each elder serving on a Provisional Session shall visit the work at least once a month;

J. In the case of a remote work, the Presbytery will make adjustments as necessary for the best of the mission work.

The Church Planter

11.17 The Presbytery shall call a minister to serve as church planter of a mission. The Presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development will serve as the nominating committee to submit the name

of a nominee to the Presbytery, along with terms of call, for approval or rejection by the Presbytery.

11.18 The Presbytery shall issue a call to an ordained minister to serve as the church planter. Such a call shall be issued in accordance with the provisions for calls to organized churches.

Public Responsibilities

The church planter shall:

A. shall pray for and with his people;
B. read the Scriptures;
C. preach the Word;
D. teach, reprove, exhort and comfort;
E. administer the sacraments;
F. pronounce the blessings of God upon the people;
G. officiate at weddings and funerals;
H. and serve with elders in all matters pertaining to the government, discipline, worship, and education of the congregation;
I. serve as an advisory member of all committees in the congregation;
J. serve, with elders, in the higher courts of the Church.

Private Responsibilities

The church planter shall:

A. visit with and be available to his people as their pastor, that he may counsel with and instruct them in spiritual things and pray for and with them;
B. visit especially the sick, the afflicted, and the aged;
C. advise, comfort, and pray with those who have need;

D. admonish those who are guilty of conduct unbecoming their profession or who are indifferent to their religious duties;

E. and, in general, assume the spiritual oversight of his people.

Evangelist

11.19 A Presbytery may, upon its own initiative or at the request of Synod's Board of Outreach North America, call a minister to be an evangelist.

11.20 The Presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development, church revitalization, or evangelism will serve as the nominating committee to submit the name of a nominee to the Presbytery, along with the terms of call, for approval or rejection by the Presbytery.

11.21 When a Presbytery calls an evangelist to develop missions outside the bounds of the Presbytery, the evangelist shall work only with the approval of General Synod and in close cooperation with the Presbytery's committee charged with new Church development and Synod's Board of Outreach North America.

11.22 The Presbytery shall specify in writing the authority given to the evangelist, and shall also specify the particular field and the time period in which this authority shall be exercised.

Responsibilities

The Presbytery may give an evangelist authority to have as his primary duty the faithful sowing of the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A. To preach the Word and administer the sacraments without the oversight of a Session;

B. To entrust the evangelist, in special cases, with authority to examine, receive, and dismiss members in a mission;

C. To train and examine potential elders and deacons;

D. To do preparatory work within the bounds of the Presbytery toward establishing new missions;

E. To develop missions outside the bounds of the Presbytery with the approval of the Presbyteries affected and approval from the General Synod;

F. To perform the duties of a pastor, without being installed as pastor, in a congregation that is unable to support a pastor;

G. To devote himself entirely to preaching the Word in special evangelistic services under the supervision and direction of the Presbytery, or of the pastor in whose charge he may be laboring.

ORGANIZATION OF A MISSION INTO A CHURCH

11.23 ONA guidelines for incorporating an organized church shall be followed.

11.24 A minister who is serving as a church planter can be installed as a pastor of the church at its organizational service, if he has been called as a pastor prior to the service at a called meeting of the petitioners and the Presbytery or its Commission on the Minister and His Work has approved him for this call and the terms of the call. (FOG 9.54L)

CHAPTER 12
THE GENERAL SYNOD

Purpose

12.1 The General Synod is the highest court of the ARPC and represents all of its Presbyteries. It bears the title of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and constitutes the bond of union, peace, and correspondence among all of its congregations and courts.[39]

12.2 In order to institute and supervise the general work of the ARPC, the General Synod has the power to appoint boards, commissions, and committees.

12.3 The General Synod has as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization, and administration of programs designed to enable it to carry out the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the congregations, the Presbyteries, the General Synod, and the whole world.

COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

12.4 The General Synod shall meet at least once in every year.

12.5 Those entitled to sit as members of this court shall include ARPC:

A. Pastors of congregations, active or retired;

B. Ministers engaged in full-time service of the foreign missions, Presbyteries, institutions, boards and agencies of the denomination, or

[39] Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 31.

who were retired while engaged in such full-time service;

C. Ministers involved in Presbytery-approved Christian ministries;

D. Military chaplains, active or retired;

E. Ministers who deem their vocation to be an appropriate exercise of their call and ordination to the ministry may be certified annually by vote of their Presbyteries as being members of the General Synod, after written application each year by such ministers, showing, to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, that the minister is, in compliance with 9.13, devoting himself diligently to his sacred calling.

12.6 All elders who have served as moderator of the General Synod and are still a communicant member of an ARPC are members of the court. The vice moderator is a member of the court.

12.7 Those entitled to sit as members of this court also shall include at least one elder from each congregation.

12.8 Congregations having more than three hundred active communicant members are entitled to send two (2) elder representatives, the basis for representation continues in this proportion. The stated clerk of each Presbytery shall submit to the principal clerk of the General Synod a statement stating the Presbyters are duly certified.

12.9 The meeting of the General Synod shall be held at the time and place designated at the preceding meeting. The moderator shall designate an alternate time and/or place of meeting in the event that such a change should be necessary. Notice of any change shall be given to each Session not less than thirty days in advance of the meeting.

12.10 A called meeting of the General Synod may be held only at a time of urgency or in the matter of special importance. The meeting shall be initiated in the following manner: The moderator, or in his failure to act, the principal clerk, shall issue an announcement for a called meeting at the official request of at least three (3) Presbyteries or, upon his own initiative with the official concurrence of at least three (3) Presbyteries.

A. Notification of a called meeting shall be given at least thirty days in advance.

B. The purpose of the meeting shall be as stated in the notice and no other business shall be transacted.

C. An agenda for the meeting shall be distributed to all ministers and Sessions at least fourteen days prior to the start of the meeting.

D. Enrollment or certification for the meeting shall follow the rules of a stated meeting.

12.11 The officers of the General Synod shall be:

A. Moderator
B. Vice Moderator
C. Principal Clerk
D. Reading Clerk
E. Bill Clerk
F. Assistant Clerk
G. Treasurer of Synod's Funds
H. Historian
I. Parliamentarian

12.12 The method of selection and the terms of office and duties shall be according to the *Manual of Authorities and Duties*. The Executive Board will see that the terms in office will be staggered.

12.13 One-fourth of the ministers of the General Synod, from three (3) or more Presbyteries, with elders from at least one-fourth of the congregations, from three (3) or more Presbyteries, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

12.14 Congregational elder-representatives shall provide proof of representation, signed by the Session's moderator and clerk, to the principal clerk. The Session shall make a record of the appointment. No representative shall have the right to deliberate or vote in the General Synod until he has been enrolled by the principal clerk. Only those elders who are personally present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.

12.15 On the day appointed, the retiring moderator shall open the meeting with a sermon or, if he is an elder, with an appropriate address, and he shall preside until the moderator-elect is presented. In the absence of the retiring moderator, or in his inability to act, the retiring vice moderator shall perform the duties specified.

12.16 Each session of the General Synod shall be opened and closed with prayer. The business of the General Synod having been completed and the vote having been taken for final adjournment, the moderator shall state:
"By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, I now declare the _____ meeting of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is adjourned, to meet next at _____ on the ___ day of ____."
The session of the General Synod shall be closed with a song of praise, after which the moderator shall offer a prayer and pronounce, or cause to be pronounced, a scriptural benediction.

12.17 The General Synod shall maintain an accurate and permanent record of its proceedings.

12.18 The General Synod or any of its boards or agencies may incorporate under the laws of any state in which it or they function; however, the provisions of the charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with the *Form of Government* of the ARPC. The members of the General Synod or the members of any of its board or agencies shall be members of such corporation, and the directors or trustees and officers of such corporation shall be elected from its membership in the manner prescribed in the by-laws.

12.19 If the General Synod or any of its boards or agencies are unincorporated, they may elect individual trustees from their membership.

12.20 The corporation or individual trustees and successors:

A. Shall hold title to all property belonging to the General Synod or any of its boards or agencies;

B. Shall upon authority from and on behalf of the General Synod buy, sell, lease, or mortgage property for the General Synod or any of its boards or agencies;

C. Shall accept and execute deeds and shall hold and defend the same;

D. Shall manage any permanent special fund so entrusted for the furtherance of the work of the General Synod;

E. Shall facilitate the management of its civil affairs in such a manner as the General Synod may direct.

12.21 Title to institutional General Synod property shall be acquired, mortgaged, leased, held, and transferred by the appropriate board, corporation, or agency of the General Synod.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

12.22 The General Synod shall advise Presbyteries in its processes, but not the outcome, of the actions of the Presbyteries, in order to:

A. Organize, receive, divide, unite, transfer, dismiss, and dissolve Presbyteries in keeping with the advancement of the Church and

B. Review the Presbytery records, provide counsel and advice when requested.

12.23 The General Synod has the authority to coordinate activities:

A. To communicate with individual congregations existing inside or outside the geographical boundaries of existing ARPC Presbyteries with the intention to explore the possibility of that congregation's reception into the ARPC.

(1) Requests from congregations seeking admittance into an ARPC Presbytery shall be handled in the manner prescribed in the Standards.

(2) The Executive Board, upon requesting the congregation's completion of all requirements for admittance, may request an existing Presbytery to receive this congregation, pending a Synod waiver if the requesting congregation is located outside the current Presbytery geographical boundaries.

(3) A congregation newly received into an ARPC Presbytery shall be expected to become an active part of that Presbytery in a timely manner.

B. To communicate with individual congregations outside the geographical areas of existing ARPC Presbyteries.

(1) Requests from such congregations to be received into the ARPC shall be handled as prescribed in the Standards.

(2) When all requirements have been met, the Executive Board may request an existing ARPC Presbytery to consider receiving the petitioning congregation, with the understanding that such reception shall not be final until the General Synod has granted a waiver to the geographical area rule.

12.24 In its denominational administrative functions the General Synod has the power to:

A. Establish measures for strengthening and advancing the ARPC;

B. Institute, create operating rules, and supervise agencies in the work of the General Synod;

C. Appoint or employ personnel to carry out the work that falls under its jurisdiction;

D. Require all lower courts, institutions, and special ministries to observe the Standards;

E. Advise and instruct all lower courts, institutions, and special ministries in how to conform to the Standards;

F. Organize particular Synods in keeping with the advancement of the ARPC;

G. Communicate with other ecclesiastical bodies on such terms as may be agreed upon by the General Synod and the other bodies;

H. Receive other ecclesiastical bodies;

I. Oversee the affairs of the entire denomination,

directing such measures as are necessary for the promotion of the peace, purity, and prosperity of all congregations under its care.

12.25 The General Synod will hear appeals to:

A. Receive and decide upon all appeals, references, and complaints properly brought before it from the lower courts;

B. Rectify lower courts' decisions deemed contrary to the Standards and bear testimony against civil and ecclesiastical error in doctrine and against immorality in practice, both of which injuriously affect the ARPC;

C. Make final decisions in all controversies respecting doctrine, order, and discipline;

D. Resolve schismatic contentions and disputes according to the Standards.

12.26 The General Synod shall oversee over special ministries.

A. General Synod may establish and/or recognize such ministries that do not fall under the existing committees, commissions, boards, and agencies as are beneficial for the advancement of the Kingdom.

B. Such ministries shall function as independent auxiliaries/companions of the General Synod.

C. Such ministries will operate under the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

D. The organizational and operating guidelines of these ministries shall be outlined in the *Manual of Authorities and Duties*.

CHAPTER 13
BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

BOARDS

13.1 **Purpose**

A board is a body appointed and empowered by a court of the ARPC to take management of certain specified duties in advancing the mission of the ARPC.
The specified duties shall be set forth and published in a manual of authorities and duties or other document of the appointing court.

13.2 **Authority and Responsibility**

A. A board shall perform special work entrusted to it without particular instructions from the appointing court but shall follow the general instructions of the court.

B. A board shall be empowered to study, initiate, administer programs and funds within its specific area of responsibility, and hold title to properties within its specific area of responsibility.

C. A board is empowered to create and staff an administrative entity for the purpose of carrying out its specified duties. A position description of an administrative office of a board of the General Synod shall be submitted to the General Synod for inclusion in a manual of authorities and duties. The administrative officer shall report to the board on the basis of his position description.

D. A board shall make an annual report to the appointing court, giving full statement of all business transacted, actions taken during the year, and newly initiated and/or planned

programs. The report shall address the specified duties as set forth in a manual of authorities and duties of other documents of the appointing court.

E. Any action of a board may be approved, amended, or set aside by the appointing court.

F. A board shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings in a permanent form which shall be available for review and inspection as required by the appointing court.

13.3 **Composition and organization**

A. Members of a board shall be appointed, and their terms of membership shall be fixed by the appointing court.

B. A board shall elect its own officers.

C. A board shall adopt a constitution and by-laws subject to the approval of the appointing court.

D. A board may incorporate; however, the provision of its charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with the Standards of the ARPC.

13.4 A newly elected member of any board or a newly appointed administrative or teaching employee of any board shall have given satisfactory evidence of his belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity.

13.5 Any employee of any board who changes his belief shall report such change to the board.

COMMISSIONS

13.6 **Purpose**

A commission is a body appointed and empowered by a court of the ARPC to examine, consider, and conclude certain designated business.

13.7 **Authority and responsibilities**

A. A commission may be formed to take testimony in judicial cases, to install ministers in particular ministries, to consider and seek solutions for problems of disorder within congregations, to effect the organization or merger of congregations, and to perform similar ecclesiastical functions. The action of a commission may be amended or reversed by a majority vote of the appointing court.

B. A commission may be formed to interpret, construe, and apply the constitution and laws of the ARPC to all matters involving constitutionality referred to it by the appointing court.

C. After consultation with both parties, a judicial case brought before a court of the ARP may be committed to the judgment of a commission. The decision of a commission appointed for judicial purposes may be appealed to the appointing court.

D. Commissions need to be aware of matters of confidentiality.

13.8 **Composition and organization**

A. Each commission shall elect a chairman and secretary.

B. The commission shall report at the time designated by the court. Full and complete records of the commission's proceedings shall be kept and submitted to the appointing court. Such report shall be entered into the minutes and shall be regarded as an action of that court. The commission shall then be dissolved.

C. Persons appointed to commissions shall be members of the court making the appointment.

D. A quorum for each commission shall be a majority of its total membership.

E. Size of membership:

(1) A commission appointed by a Session shall be not fewer in number than three (3) members, consisting of at least one minister.

(2) A commission appointed by a Presbytery shall be not fewer in number than three (3) members, consisting of at least two ministers and one elder.

(3) A commission appointed by a Presbytery to hear a judicial case shall be not fewer in number than five (5) members, of which at least three (3) shall be ministers and two (2) shall be elders.

(4) A commission appointed by the General Synod shall be not fewer in number than seven (7) members, consisting of at least four (4) ministers and three elders.

(5) A commission appointed by the General Synod to hear a judicial case shall consist of not fewer than nine (9) members of which at least five (5) shall be ministers and four (4) shall be elders.

13.9 A newly appointed member of a commission shall have given satisfactory evidence of his belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity.

13.10 Any member of any commission who changes his belief shall report such change to the commission.

COMMITTEES

13.11 **Purpose**

A committee is a body appointed by a court or agency of the ARPC to study matters committed to it, to recommend appropriate action, and to carry into effect specific directions or decisions made by the appointing court or board.

13.12 **Authority and Responsibility**

A. A committee shall perform its designated work according to the specific instructions of the appointing court or board.

B. The recommendations of a committee require action by the appointing court or board.

C. A committee report of its actions implementing the instructions and orders of the court or agency may not require further action.

D. All written reports shall be signed by the chairman and secretary.

13.13 **Composition and Organization**

A. The appointing court or board shall determine what committees are necessary for its work, the number of members of each committee, and the terms of membership.

B. Committees shall be classified as follows:

(1) Moderator's Committees. A moderator's committee shall be a temporary committee appointed by the moderator to serve at his pleasure. The first named member of a moderator's committee shall be the chairman.

(2) Special Committees. A special committee shall be appointed whenever the work of the court or board requires it. The moderator, chairman or

nominating committee shall appoint its members whenever authorized by the court or board. The committee shall be convened by its first named member and shall organize at its first meeting.

(3) Standing Committees. A standing committee shall be a permanent committee to study and implement specific orders of the court or board. The court or board shall appoint the members of its standing committee in any manner it may determine for a specified term. The committee shall report to the appointing court or board at each meeting or as otherwise directed. Such committees shall reorganize annually.

13.14 A newly elected member of any committee shall have given satisfactory evidence of his belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity.

13.15 Any member of any committee who changes his belief shall report such change to the committee.

CHAPTER 14
REGULATIONS GOVERNING AMENDMENTS

14.1 Any proposed amendment to the Standards shall be presented to the Presbyteries at their regular fall meeting and shall be voted upon at their regular spring meeting.

A. ***The Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*:**
Amendments to the *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* shall be proposed by the General Synod to the Presbyteries for the vote which will be reported to the principal clerk. An accumulative three-fourths "yea" vote of all the votes cast is required for ratification. The General Synod shall certify the vote at its next meeting.

B. **The *Form of Government*, the *Book of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Public Worship*:**
Amendments to the *Form of Government*, the *Book of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Public Worship*, shall be proposed by the General Synod to the Presbyteries for the vote which will be reported to the principal clerk. An accumulative two-thirds "yea" vote of all the votes cast is required for ratification. The General Synod shall certify the vote at its next meeting.

C. **The provisions contained in this CHAPTER** can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* (14.1.A).

14.2 The stated clerk of each Presbytery shall record and submit the official count of the vote to the principal clerk of the General Synod.

14.3 The General Synod shall stipulate the exact manner in which the Presbyteries shall vote upon a proposed amendment. If the proposed amendment includes more than one item, such stipulation shall state whether the vote shall be upon the amendment as a whole or item-by-item. The Question shall be so stated that the vote shall be "yes" and "no."

14.4 Proposed amendments shall not be specifically presented to congregations for discussion or decision.

14.5 Only those members personally present at the meeting of Presbytery shall be entitled to vote.

14.6 After the results of the vote are announced, the question shall be closed and shall not be reconsidered.

14.7 The General Synod has the power, without resubmitting the proposal, to make verbal changes which do not affect the essential meaning of the proposal.

14.8 All amendments of substance shall be sent to a standing Committee on Revisions for review. This committee shall report on how the material affects other provisions throughout the *Form of Government*.

14.9 This review by the Committee on Revisions will take place before the material comes to the floor for approval. Material presented on the floor will be referred to the committee before being acted upon by the court.

14.10 Such matters and details of ARPC government not expressly provided in the *Form of Government* shall be determined by the respective courts according to the general principles of the *Form of Government* and the established order of the ARPC.

14.11 All matters not addressed in the constitutional documents of the ARPC shall be governed by *Roberts' Rules of Order* (current edition).

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