

THE CHURCH ORDER

of the

Protestant Reformed Churches
in America



and

Constitutions of
Standing Synodical Committees,
Rules and Regulations,
By-laws,
Forms,
Declaration of Principles

2020 Edition

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Church Order Book

PREFACE

This little book contains more than the title indicates. In harmony with the decisions of the synods of 1943-1946, we have included also the decisions made by our classis (before we had synods) and later by our synods relative to some of the articles of the Church Order, which decisions we have placed under the articles to which they refer; the constitutions of the standing committees of synod; the Rules for Synodical Procedure; the Articles of Incorporation and its By-laws; Rules for Synodical Delegates *ad examina*; Questions for Church Visitation; and various formulas. Also included is the "Declaration of Principles," as adopted by Synod 1951.

Foremost among the contents of the book, however, is the Church Order. Essentially, this is the Church Order of Dordrecht, adopted by the great Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-1619. At the very beginning of our independent history we adopted the Keegstra and VanDellen 1915 edition of the Church Order of Dordrecht, which had been adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1914. In 1920 the Christian Reformed Church adopted an English translation of that Dutch version. This translation was adopted by our

synod of 1944. At the Synod of 1946, however, changes were made as follows: the word “church” was changed to “churches” in Article 86, second instance; and the word “consent” was changed to “advice” in Articles 76 and 77. The ground for this change was given as follows: “The choice of the words indicated (that is, the singular ‘church’ and the word ‘consent’) reveals a hierarchical church polity.” We might have added to this ground the observation that the translation indicated was a corruption of the original Dutch edition, instead of a faithful translation.

Since that time, our synods have appended to some of the articles the various decisions referred to above, and have also made a few changes in the articles themselves, thus giving us our own published edition of the priceless Church Order of Dordrecht!

It is our humble prayer that the only King of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ, will bless our use of it unto the obedience of love. May this obedience be always to the praise and adoration of His and our Father above, whose injunction resounds in the churches from age to age: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40).

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THE CHURCH ORDER

of the
Protestant Reformed Churches

— Article 1 —

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.

Of the Offices

— Article 2 —

The offices are of three kinds: of the ministers of the Word, of the elders, and of the deacons.

(Revision of Article 2: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, A.)

— Article 3 —

No one, though he be a professor of theology, elder, or deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.

— *Article 4* —

The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office consists:

First, in the ELECTION by the consistory and the deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance that only those can for the first time be called to the ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of classis or of the counselor appointed for this purpose by the classis.

Secondly, in the EXAMINATION both of doctrine and life, which shall be conducted by the classis to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three delegates of synod from the nearest classis.

Thirdly, in the APPROBATION by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the minister having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objection arises; which approbation, however, is not required in case the election takes place with the cooperation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made.

Finally, in the public ORDINATION in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers, and imposition of hands by the officiating minister (and by other ministers who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose.

Decisions pertaining to Article 4

- A. The election of a minister of the Word shall be conducted in the following manner:
 1. The consistory shall make a nomination consisting usually of a trio of eligible ministers or candidates.

2. The nomination shall be submitted to the approbation of the congregation and unto that end publicly announced to her on two successive Sundays.
 3. From the nomination the male members assembled on a congregational meeting which has been announced on two successive Sundays shall elect by secret ballot. The majority of votes cast shall be decisive. No members under censure nor adult baptized members have the right to vote. Blank votes must be subtracted from the total votes cast in order to determine how many votes a candidate must receive to have the majority which is required to his election.
- B. Advice to classis and counselor. The following usage obtains:
1. That a counselor shall be designated for a vacant congregation to serve her with advice in case of difficulty, and to represent the classis in the process of the election.
 2. That the nomination made by the consistory be submitted to the counselor for approval, who must see to it that the nomination does not conflict with the ecclesiastical regulations pertaining thereto. Further, that without this approbation being obtained the election cannot proceed.
 3. That the congregational meeting upon which the election takes place shall be presided over, if at all possible, by the counselor. Likewise, the calling issued by the consistory, the composition of the call-letter, and the signing thereof by all the consistory members shall be under his supervision.
 4. That also the counselor himself shall sign the call-letter as token of his approbation in the name of the classis.
- C. Peremptoir examination of candidates:
1. Examination shall be conducted in:
 - a. Dogmatics.
 - b. Practical qualifications, among which the following:
 - 1) Personal spirituality.

2. Motives for seeking the office of minister.
 - 3) Evidence of insight into pastoral practical labors.
 - c. Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, treating specifically of:
 - 1) The nature of Holy Scripture.
 - 2) The contents of Holy Scripture.
 - d. Knowledge of the confessions:
 - 1) Meaning and purpose of the confessions.
 - 2) The contents of the confessions.
 - 3) The application of the confessions to our life.
 - e. Controversy.
 - f. Specimen of preaching:
 - 1) Preaching before the congregation in the presence of classis.
 - 2) Critical discussion of the sermon preached.
2. Further usage prevailing is as follows:
- a. Voting by secret ballot regarding his admittance.
 - b. In case of a favorable outcome the applicant shall sign the formula of subscription.
 - c. Finally, that he be provided with written proof signed by president and clerk, wherein classis declares that it judges him qualified for the ministry of the Word.
- D. Candidates:
1. To the final theological school examination there has been added a praeparatoir examination, which is conducted by the synod.
 2. Candidates may not be called within one month after this praeparatoir examination.
 3. For the consideration of calls received, the candidate is allowed the time of six weeks.
 4. In case the candidate should not give satisfaction in the peremptor examination, and the congregation nevertheless continues to desire him, he shall at the following classis be given opportunity for reexamination in those branches in which he appeared unsatisfactory.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

— *Article 5* —

Ministers already in the ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the aforesaid manner by the consistory and the deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches and for the repeated calling of the same minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the classis or of the counselor appointed by the classis, and with the approval of the classis or of the delegates appointed by the classis, to whom the ministers called show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeably to the form for this purpose.

Decisions pertaining to Article 5

- A. Consistories of vacant churches shall not place on nomination names of such ministers who have not yet served their present congregation two years, unless there be preponderant considerations; and a counselor who deems it his calling to approve in the name of classis such a nomination shall be required to give an account of his reasons to classis.
- B. A minister shall not be called more than once within a year by the same vacant church without advice of classis.
- C. In case of difference of opinion between a counselor and a consistory regarding the legality of a call, the consistory shall not proceed without the consent of classis.
- D. When a minister shall accept a call to another congregation

before he has served his present congregation two full years, the congregation to which he moves shall repay one-half of the moving expenses incurred at the time of securing him by the congregation he is vacating.

- E. The "Procedure" appended to Article 9 is understood to fulfill the "general ecclesiastical ordinance for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches."

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67; Synod of 1993, Art. 36.)

— *Article 6* —

No minister shall be at liberty to serve in institutions of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.

— *Article 7* —

No one shall be called to the ministry of the Word without his being stationed in a particular place, except he be sent to do church extension work.

(Cf. Constitution of the Domestic Mission Committee, pp. 47-52, and of the Foreign Mission Committee, pp. 56-60.)

— *Article 8* —

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in preparation for the ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible according to Article 4, shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense, and discretion, as also gifts of public address. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the classis (if the synod approve) shall first examine them, and

further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches.

(Revision of Article 8, Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 9* —

Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the ministry of the church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination by the classis, with the approval of synod.

Decision pertaining to Article 9

**Procedure for admission of ministers
from other denominations:**

- A. A minister from another denomination desiring entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches under Article 9 of the Church Order shall apply to the Protestant Reformed classis nearest to which he resides.
 1. The minister making application shall have publicly resigned his ministry and his membership in his former congregation and denomination and become a member of a local Protestant Reformed Church.
 2. The minister making application shall meet with and seek the advice of a nearby Protestant Reformed consistory.
 - a. The consistory shall interview the minister sufficiently to make recommendations to the classis concerning the applicant's qualifications for the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches and to determine whether they would be willing to hold his ministerial credentials until he accepts a call, should classis approve his examination and declare him eligible for a call.
 - b. The advice of the consistory shall be forwarded to the Classical Committee along with the applicant's formal request for entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

3. The minister making application shall furnish the following documentation:
 - a. A declaration of his reasons for desiring entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches and an account of his background in the ministry.
 - b. A testimonial from the consistory or session under which he previously labored concerning his purity of doctrine and sanctity of life. If this is not possible because his leaving makes him a *persona non grata*, the classis shall make investigation of the applicant's previous labors.
 - c. A diploma, or statement of credits, from an accredited college and recognized seminary, to show the scholastic attainment of the applicant.
 - d. A statement of health from a physician.
- B. Classis shall act upon the applicant's request, with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies, taking into consideration the following:
 1. All the documents listed under A, 3 above are found to be in good order.
 2. The need for ministers in the Protestant Reformed denomination at the time of the application.
- C. If the applicant's request is approved, classis shall set a date for convening another classis for the purpose of examining the applicant, and shall instruct the Classical Committee to draw up an examination schedule. The examination shall commence with a specimen sermon, which sermon must be approved by classis and the Synodical Deputies before classis shall proceed to the rest of the examination. The examination shall follow the regular adopted schedule for the classical examination of candidates for the ministry (cf. Article 4) with two additions: Protestant Reformed distinctives, and Knowledge of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In addition, the applicant must express a willingness to abide by any past decisions of the Protestant Reformed synods concerning doctrine and practice.

- D. After classis approves his examination, with the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies, the classis shall declare the applicant eligible to receive a call into the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches, without further need of examination.
- E. The newly accepted minister shall be required to sign the Formula of Subscription before the meeting of classis adjourns and shall be presented with a classical diploma.
- F. His eligibility for a call shall be announced to the churches.
- G. Until the newly approved minister accepts a call, his ministerial credentials shall be held by a Protestant Reformed consistory appointed by classis.
 - 1. This consistory shall supervise the interim labors of the minister and shall see to the needs of his financial support. Financial assistance may be sought from sister congregations, if this is deemed necessary.
 - 2. If the minister does not receive a call after three years, he, with the advice of his consistory, shall request Classis to renew his eligibility.

(Adopted by Synod of 1993, Art. 36; amended by Synod of 1994, Art. 55.)

— *Article 10* —

A minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the consistory, together with the deacons, and knowledge on the part of the classis; likewise no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the church and the classis where he served.

Decisions pertaining to Article 10

- A. When a minister accepts a call he shall ask of the consistory dismissing him to grant him a fitting testimonial bearing wit-

ness of faithful service performed, according to Article 5 of the Church Order, and expressing acquiescence in his departure, according to Article 10 of the Church Order. This testimonial shall be sent to the Classical Committee for examination and approval; thereupon it shall be delivered to the counselor who, upon finding it in good order, shall only thereupon proceed with the installation.

- B. A minister who moves to another congregation becomes the charge of that congregation (for salary, etc.) immediately after he has preached his farewell to the congregation he is leaving (unless other arrangements have been made, e.g., for the taking of a vacation).

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.) (Cf. Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial, pp. 142-143.)

— *Article 11* —

On the other hand, the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its ministers, and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the classis and of the delegates of the synod.

(Revision of Article 11: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 12* —

Inasmuch as a minister of the Word, once lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the classis.

— *Article 13* —

Ministers who by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their of-

office shall nevertheless retain the honor and title of a minister, and the churches which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need (likewise for the orphans and widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter.

(Revision of Article 13: Synod of 1995, Art. 62, Suppl. 21.)
(Cf. Constitution of the Emeritus Committee, pp. 52-56.)

Decisions pertaining to Article 13

- A. In the case of ministers who through no fault of their own have been deprived of a congregation, it is both possible and mandatory that, pending the reception of a call to another congregation, such ministers be temporarily declared emeriti.

Procedure:

1. The minister who through no fault of his own has been left without a fixed charge may apply to a consistory of the classis in which he resides for emeritation, and such consistory may declare him emeritus.
2. This shall not be done, however, without the approbation of the classis and of the deputies of the synod.

Responsibility for Support:

1. Since the minister becomes emeritus not of his own congregation but of a congregation he has not served, the obligation to support him and to provide honorably for him “in [his] need” shall not rest upon the local congregation but upon the churches in common, and he is to be supported out of the common Emeritus Fund of the churches.
 2. In such cases, if the abandoning church has been subsidized from the Needy Churches Fund, the amount of such subsidy shall be transferred to the Emeritus Fund, pending the next meeting of synod.
- B. If an emeritus minister transfers his membership to another congregation in the denomination, his ministerial credentials

are also to be transferred to that congregation. This transfer is to be made in the following manner: The consistory of the church which the emeritus minister served last formally requests the consistory of the church which the emeritus minister wishes to join to exercise supervision over him.

(Adopted by Synod of 1956, Art. 177, Suppl. XVIII; Synod of 1995, Art. 62, Suppl. XXI.)

— *Article 14* —

If any minister, for the aforesaid or any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time, which shall not take place without the advice of the consistory, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

— *Article 15* —

No one shall be permitted, neglecting the ministry of his church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of synod or classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church.

Decision pertaining to Article 15

In case any one of our candidates has not received a call after three years and still desires that his candidacy remain in effect, he shall address himself to synod, who shall treat his case as may be proper.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

— *Article 16* —

The office of the minister is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, to dispense the sacraments, to

watch over his brethren, the elders and deacons, as well as the congregation, and finally, with the elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

— *Article 17* —

Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of the classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the elders and the deacons.

— *Article 18* —

The office of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

— *Article 19* —

The churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the ministry of the Word. (Cf. Constitution of the Student Aid Committee, pp. 60-64.)

— *Article 20* —

Students who have received permission according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the congregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship.

(Cf. Art. 13 of the Constitution of the Theological School, p. 71.)

— *Article 21* —

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

— *Article 22* —

The elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed, that they may, after they are approved by it, unless any obstacle arise, be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one-half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeably to the form for this purpose.

Decision pertaining to Article 22

Nominations and congregational meetings shall be announced upon two successive Sundays.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

— *Article 23* —

The office of the elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the minister of the Word, is to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification

of the churches, to visit the families of the congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian religion.

— *Article 24* —

The deacons shall be chosen, approved, and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the elders.

— *Article 25* —

The office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit.

— *Article 26* —

In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them, to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the board of directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the diaconates assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions.

— *Article 27* —

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years

according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Articles 22 and 24, render a reelection advisable.

Decision pertaining to Article 27

In case of difficulties in the congregation, the officebearers then serving shall continue to function until their chosen successors can be installed.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

— Article 28 —

The consistory shall take care that the churches, for the possession of their property and the peace and order of their meetings, can claim the protection of the authorities; it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may never suffer the royal government of Christ over His church to be in the least infringed upon.

Of the Ecclesiastical Assemblies

— Article 29 —

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and the general synod.

(Revision of Article 29: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 30* —

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.

— *Article 31* —

If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by the general synod.

Decision pertaining to Article 31

Appeal to a major gathering against any decision of an ecclesiastical body must be made upon the immediately following meeting of the body to which appeal is directed, at the same time giving notification to the secretary of the body by whose decision he is aggrieved. Of every judgment rendered in the case, those concerned shall receive a notification.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.)

— *Article 32* —

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.

— *Article 33* —

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those

sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters except such as particularly concern their persons or churches.

Decisions pertaining to Article 33

- A. To promote uniformity the credential letter for delegation to major assemblies shall end in the following form: "With instruction and authority to take part in all deliberations and transactions regarding all matters coming legally before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony with the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches."
- B. The major assemblies shall also have a Stated Clerk, who however shall not hold the position of permanent secretary, and who shall not be a member of the assemblies' officers, but that of a deputy to serve the classis or synod with services which would otherwise constitute the task of such a functionary.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67; revised by Synod of 1946, Art. 19. See also formulas for classical and synodical credentials, pp. 145, 146.)

— Article 34 —

In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters.

— Article 35 —

The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in speaking; and properly to discipline them

if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises.

(Cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, pp. 81, 82.)

— *Article 36* —

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the general synod has over the classis.

(Revision of Article 36: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 37* —

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the ministers of the Word and the elders, who shall, as a rule, meet once a month, or more frequently as the need arises. The minister of the Word (or the ministers, if there be more than one, in turn) shall preside and regulate the proceedings. Whenever the number of the elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local regulation; this shall invariably be the rule where the number is less than three.

(Revision of Article 37: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, D.)

Decisions pertaining to Article 37

- A. The president and the secretary of the consistory shall function as such on the congregational meeting; the minutes shall be entered in the consistory's minute book and confirmed by the consistory.
- B. No matters shall be treated on the congregational meeting which are not brought there by the consistory.
- C. When members desire to have a matter treated on the congregational meeting, they shall previously have requested of the consistory the right thereto, and it shall be the prerogative of the consistory to determine the extent and the manner in which their request shall be granted.

- D. Consistories shall every year furnish the exact count of the families comprising their membership to classis. The following shall be counted as families:
1. When the husband or wife is a confessing member.
 2. Where either widower or widow functions as head of the family.
 3. Further, three individual members shall be counted as one family. Confessing members residing at home are not tallied as separate individuals for determining number of families.
 4. Financial ability to pay does not enter into the picture when determining number of families.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67; clarified by Synod of 1970, Art. 107, Suppl. XXVI.)

— *Article 38* —

In places where the consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall not take place except with the advice of the classis.

Decisions pertaining to Article 38

- A. A letter of request is directed to the classis, expressing the desire to organize a congregation in a certain named locality, and signed by the heads of families or by adult single persons who live in that locality. In the case of a group formed by the mission work of the churches in common, this request shall come to classis by way of a favorable decision of the local calling church with the advice of the Mission Committee.
- B. The classis shall thereupon deliberate whether such organization is possible or desirable, observing whether there be, among the signators, persons suitable for consistory members, at the same time taking into account the neighboring churches. In case classis, with the concurrence of the delegates *ad examina*, decides to grant the request, it appoints a committee to carry out the organization.

- C. In order to organize the congregation the committee of the local church meets with the persons concerned, who have meanwhile requested their certificates of membership, or if it be impossible to have their certificates transferred, those present shall give testimony one of another that they were members in full communion and of good report in the congregation from which they are now separating. After a service of worship shall have been conducted under the guidance of the committee, the latter shall request those present to tender their certificates, in as far as possible. The committee having found the certificates in good order and having accepted them, they shall proceed to election of officebearers, who shall immediately upon their election be installed in their respective offices.
- D. The election of officebearers shall be from a nomination made by the local calling church council (or by the church council appointed by a classis to supervise the organization of a new congregation). The church council shall make a nomination from the male membership of those who signed the letter requesting organization. This election shall take place in harmony with Articles 22 and 24 of the Church Order. Those chosen by majority vote at the organizational meeting shall be considered elected.
- E. It is recommended that at this same meeting, in the presence of a notary public, the documents pertaining to the incorporation of the new congregation be brought in order.

(Adopted by the Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67; amended by Synod of 1977, Art. 74; Synod of 1994, Art. 54.)

— *Article 39* —

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighboring consistory.

Decision pertaining to Article 39

If possible the organization of a congregation shall precede the administration of the sacraments. However, if the conditions are not ripe for the organization of a congregation, such members are to be enrolled in an adjoining congregation, and thus the sacraments can be administered under the supervision of that consistory. However, this shall not be without the accompanying preaching of the Word, nor without sufficient representation of the consistory to have supervision of the administration.

(Adopted by the Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67; explanation by Synod of 2005, Arts. 30, 31.)

— *Article 40* —

The deacons shall meet monthly, or more frequently as the need arises, to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the name of God; whereunto the ministers shall take good heed, and if necessary they shall be present.

(Revision of Article 40: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, E.)

— *Article 41* —

The classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder to meet at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting. Such meetings shall be held at least once in three months, unless great distances render this inadvisable. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church:

1. Are the consistory meetings held in your church?
2. Is church discipline exercised?
3. Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?
4. Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?

And finally, at the second to the last meeting and, if necessary, at the last meeting before the synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend said synod.

(Revision of Article 41: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, F.)

— *Article 42* —

Where in a church there are more ministers than one, also those not delegated according to the foregoing article shall have the right to attend classis with advisory vote.

— *Article 43* —

At the close of the classical and other major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of punishment, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

— *Article 44* —

The classis shall authorize at least two of her oldest, most experienced, and most competent ministers to visit all the churches once a year and to take heed whether the minister and the consistory faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation, in particular of the youth, to the end that

they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the churches. And each classis may continue these visitors in service as long as it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the classis shall judge.

Decisions pertaining to Article 44

Church visitation, which is required to be done in the congregations, requires for its efficient prosecution the following:

- A. Each classis shall appoint from her midst at least two ministers and their alternates.
- B. The visitors shall give the congregations at least eight days' notice of the day and hour of their proposed visit.
- C. The consistory shall see to it that all the consistory members are present at the meeting which is appointed for church visitation. Any member failing to be present shall be required to give the meeting good reason for his absence. If one-half of the members are absent, the visitation cannot be carried out.
- D. The consistory shall see to it that the record books are at hand for the inspection by the visitors.
- E. Of the visitors, one shall function as chairman and the other as secretary. They shall record their findings and actions in a book which can be consulted at the next visitation, and which can be kept in the classical archives.
- F. After completing the visitation of all the congregations, the visitors shall with requisite discretion compose a report of their activities to be delivered at the next following classis.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.) (Cf. Questions for Church Visitation, pp. 133-136.)

— *Article 45* —

It shall be the duty of the classis and the general synod to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.

(Revision of Article 45: Synod of 2000, Art. 31.)

— *Article 46* —

Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary.

— *Article 47* —

(Every year [or if need be oftener] four or five or more neighboring classes shall meet as a particular synod, to which each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. At the close of both the particular and the general synod, some church shall be empowered to determine, with advice of classis, the time and place of the next synod.)*

— *Article 48* —

(Each synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring synod or synods in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.)*

*Articles 47 and 48 are retained in the body of the Church Order because they belonged to the original *Church Order of Dordrecht*. They are, however, put in parentheses because the Protestant Reformed Churches do not have particular synods. (Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 49* —

Each synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by synod, both as to what pertains to the government and to the respective classes resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future ministers. And, moreover, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. Also they shall keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to synod, and, if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until synod itself discharges them.

— *Article 50* —

The general synod shall ordinarily meet annually. To this synod an equal number of elders and ministers out of every classis shall be delegated as determined by synod. If it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least two classes to call a special meeting of synod, the local church designated for this purpose shall determine time and place.

(Revision of Article 50: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, H.) (Cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, p. 79.)

— *Article 51* —

The missionary work of the churches is regulated by the general synod in a mission order.

(Revision of Article 51: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, I.) (Cf. synodical mission committee constitutions and related synodical decisions, pp. 47-52 and 56-60.)

— *Article 52* —

When different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies and in the publication of recommendations, instructions, and decisions.

(Revision of Article 52: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, J.)

Of Doctrines, Sacraments, and Other Ceremonies

— *Article 53* —

The ministers of the Word of God and likewise the professors of theology (which also behooves the other professors and school teachers) shall subscribe to the three formulas of unity, namely, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and the ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.

Decision pertaining to Article 53

The formula for subscription for ministers, etc., shall be transcribed in the minute books of both consistory and classis.

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; Synod of 1944, Arts. 66, 67.) (Cf. Formula of Subscription, pp. 136-138.)

— *Article 54* —

Likewise the elders and deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid formulas of unity.

— *Article 55* —

To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

— *Article 56* —

The covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.

Decision pertaining to Article 56

Adopted children shall be baptized only when their legal adoption shall have been made final.

(Adopted by the Synod of 1960, Arts. 24, 28.)

— *Article 57* —

The ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for baptism.

— *Article 58* —

In the ceremony of baptism, both of children and of adults, the minister shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this sacrament.

— *Article 59* —

Adults are through baptism incorporated into the Christian church, and are accepted as members of the church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.

— *Article 60* —

The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded.

— *Article 61* —

None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which those who come from other churches shall not be admitted.

— *Article 62* —

Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed, and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.

— *Article 63* —

The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months.

— *Article 64* —

The administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of elders, according to the ecclesiastical order, and in a public gathering of the congregation.

— *Article 65* —

Funerals are not ecclesiastical, but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.

(Revision of Article 65: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, L.)

— *Article 66* —

In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches, it is fitting that the classes proclaim a day of prayer.

— *Article 67* —

The churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.

— *Article 68* —

The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism, so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the catechism itself for that purpose.

— *Article 69* —

In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung.

— *Article 70* —

The consistories shall see to it that those who marry, marry in the Lord, whether it be in a private ceremony or in an official worship service. When the solemnization of marriage takes place in an official worship service, the adopted form for that purpose shall be used.

(Revision of Article 70: Synod of 2000, Art. 33.)

Of Censure and Ecclesiastical Admonition

— *Article 71* —

As Christian discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from civil trial or punishment by the authorities, so also besides civil punishment there is need of ecclesiastical censures, to reconcile the sinner with the church and his neighbor and to remove the offense out of the church of Christ.

— *Article 72* —

In case anyone errs in doctrine or offends in conduct, as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.

— *Article 73* —

Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be laid before the consistory.

— *Article 74* —

If anyone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the consistory.

— *Article 75* —

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it in the consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring churches or of the classis.

— *Article 76* —

Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with advice of the classis. (Concerning the discipline of non-confessing members, cf. overture treated by Synod 2008, Arts. 67, 68.)

— *Article 77* —

After the suspension from the Lord's table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommuni-

cation, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation; the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition; and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of the classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

— *Article 78* —

Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church in the way of repentance, it shall be announced to the congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the form for that purpose.

— *Article 79* —

When ministers of the divine Word, elders, or deacons have committed any public, gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately, by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall

only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office shall be subject to the judgment of the classis, with the advice of the delegates of the synod mentioned in Article 11.

(Revision of Article 79: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

— *Article 80* —

Furthermore, among the gross sins which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication.

— *Article 81* —

The ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

— *Article 82* —

To those who remove from the congregation, a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the consistory, signed by two; or, in the case of letters which are given under the seal of the church, signed by one.

— *Article 83* —

Furthermore, to the poor, removing for sufficient reasons, so much money for traveling shall be given by the deacons as they deem adequate. The consistory and the deacons shall, however, see to it that they be not too much inclined to relieve their churches of the poor, with whom they would without necessity burden other churches.

— *Article 84* —

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.

— *Article 85* —

Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.

— *Article 86* —

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent that they (if the profit of the churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished. However, no particular congregation or classis shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod.

(Revision of Article 86: Synod of 2000, Art. 28, M.)

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References relative action by the synods on translation of the Church Order, compilation of by-laws, gathering of related material, and publication of same:

Synod of 1943 — Articles 61, 64, 65, 71, 75, 76;
Agenda, p. 81.

- Synod of 1944 — Articles 59, 61-68, Suppl. XIV.
Synod of 1945 — Articles 41, 51-57, 66.
Synod of 1946 — Articles 17, 19.
Synod of 1959 — Article 23, Suppl. V.
Synod of 1960 — Articles 23, 27, 28, Suppl. XII.
Synod of 1961 — Article 18, Suppl. VI.
Synod of 1977 — Article 79.
Synod of 1981 — Article 47.
Synod of 1983 — Article 37.
Synod of 1987 — Article 41.
Synod of 1996 — Article 69.
Synod of 1999 — Article 48.
Synod of 2002 — Article 51.
Synod of 2006 — Article 54.
Synod of 2010 — Article 78.

Appendixes

**Constitutions of
Standing Synodical Committees**

Rules for Synodical Procedure

By-laws

Forms

Declaration of Principles

Constitution of the Catechism Book Committee

I. Name

The name of the committee shall be the “Catechism Book Committee.”

II. Constituency

- A. The committee shall consist of three ministers and two elders or ex-elders from the Chicago-area churches.
- B. The members shall be appointed by the synod for a term of three years and are eligible for reappointment.

III. Officers

A president and a secretary shall be chosen annually from the constituency of the committee.

IV. Duties

- A. Make recommendations to synod regarding the improvement of existing catechism material and the addition of new catechism material.
- B. Review existing material for factual errors, and correct the errors, before reprinting.
- C. Review catechism materials submitted to the committee and make recommendations to synod.
- D. Make an annual report to synod of the activities of the committee.

V. Procedure

- A. Those who write new catechism materials or who make

suggestions for changing/correcting our present materials shall submit these to the Catechism Book Committee.

- B. The Catechism Book Committee shall make a preliminary review of those materials and make a recommendation to synod.
- C. Synod shall then decide whether further action is necessary and instruct the Catechism Book Committee as to its mandate with regard to those materials.
- D. After provisional synodical approval of new materials, the Catechism Book Committee shall request some of our ministers/churches to make use of such materials on an experimental basis and suggest changes for their improvement. This shall be done before the final review by the committee and final approval by synod.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1995, Art. 30, Suppl. 12; Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 40.)

Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches

Preamble

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, in obedience to Scripture as interpreted in our three forms of unity, confess that there is one holy, catholic church. They believe, further, that it is their sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible, not only in their de-

nominal fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign.

With a view to the achievement of this calling, the synod shall maintain a Committee for Contact with Other Churches; and for said committee the following constitution is hereby ordained and established.

Constitution

I. Name

This committee shall be called “Committee for Contact with Other Churches.”

II. Constituency and Tenure of Service

This committee shall be composed of eight members: three elders, three ministers, and two professors. The committee shall be elected by synod for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election. Vacancies which occur between synods shall be filled by the next succeeding annual synod.

III. Functionaries

At its first meeting after the annual synod, the committee shall choose from its membership a president, a vice-president, a secretary, and a vice-secretary, who shall carry out the usual functions of such officers.

IV. Principles

In negotiating and arriving at any official relationships with other churches, the following principles shall be determinative for the committee:

- A. In general, Holy Scripture, together with the subordinate standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.
- B. Specifically, the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and

Answer 54; the Belgic Confession of Faith, Articles 27-29; the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Article 85.

V. General Mandate

In laboring toward the establishment of official relationships with other denominations, the committee shall observe the following guidelines:

- A. A full official relationship with other domestic churches (i.e., in the United States and Canada) would imply organic union. Less complete ties may be established as circumstances may require and indicate.
- B. A full sister-church relationship with foreign churches implies:
 1. Mutual acknowledgment of offices, so that ministers of sister churches are allowed preaching privileges in one another's congregations and are eligible to be called by congregations in sister churches. However, if ministers from a sister church who have not met the requirements for candidacy in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America accept a call from a Protestant Reformed congregation, they shall submit to an examination by the classis in which the congregation resides, which examination shall also receive the approval of the synodical deputies from the neighboring classis.
 2. Mutual acknowledgment of membership attests.
 3. The delegation and reception of delegates to the broadest assemblies of such sister churches.
 4. Taking heed to one another's life as churches; constantly acquainting one another with decisions of their broadest assemblies; mutual decisions as to revisions of and additions to the creeds, the Church Order, and liturgical forms.

Such a full sister-church relation shall be established only with those foreign churches of whom we are assured not only that they accept the Reformed standards* as their basis, but that they indeed maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.

(*“Reformed standards” has been interpreted by synod [Acts 1985, Art. 23] to include the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.)

- C. Corresponding Relationships with Other Churches.
1. Where significant and broad agreement exists between the Protestant Reformed Churches and other churches, and yet differences are important enough to preclude a sister-church relationship, a corresponding relationship may be established.
 - a. These relationships may be arranged as circumstances may dictate provided:
 - 1) That whatever relationship be arranged, the stipulations thereof shall be clear and unambiguous.
 - 2) That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.
 - b. These relationships shall be established only with those churches that not only accept the Reformed standards, or confessions consistent with the Reformed standards, but also maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.
 2. That activities of corresponding relationships shall consist of:
 - a. Exchange of information which shall enable the

churches to become better acquainted with each other. This exchange shall be implemented in the following ways:

- 1) Exchange of observers at the broadest assemblies, if it is feasible.
 - 2) Exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies.
 - 3) Exchange of denominational yearbooks and/or church directories.
 - 4) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Church Order or Constitutions.
 - 5) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards.
 - 6) Exchange of songbooks used in public worship, including the forms used for various occasions in public worship.
- b. Discussion (in areas of agreement and matters of difference) by means of correspondence, committee visits, and conferences in order to confirm and strengthen our unity in Christ.
- D. No relationship shall be considered as established until it has been approved by the broadest assemblies of the churches concerned.

VI. Meetings

The committee shall meet as often as its labors require. The time and place of meetings shall be decided by the committee; however, any member who desires a special meeting may ask the secretary to call such a meeting, and this request shall be honored.

The committee shall be required to meet twice annually: once as soon as possible after the annual synod, for the purpose of reorganization; and once in sufficient time before the annual

synod to prepare and adopt an annual report for inclusion in the synodical agenda.

VII. Task

- A. The committee shall carry out all mandates of synod with respect to the investigation and negotiation of contacts with other churches.
- B. The committee shall study the advisability of seeking official relationships with other churches, even without any specific synodical mandate; and when it deems this proper, it shall put forth every effort to contact such churches, in harmony with the principles and requirements set forth in this constitution.
- C. The committee shall diffuse our Protestant Reformed literature to churches or groups of believers with whom we have no official relationship either on a limited or a full basis, for which financial provision shall be made by synod.
- D. This committee shall serve synod when that body shall deem it necessary:
 1. to negotiate a conference of delegates of our own and other churches in the interests of seeking, establishing, and maintaining official ties with other churches.
 2. to implement projects of mutual interest, such as translations of literature, publication of literature, preaching tours, visiting professorships, etc. for the edification and instruction of sister churches and other churches should they request this.
- E. The Committee shall participate in ecumenical councils.
 1. **Definition**
 - a. A Reformed ecumenical council is:
 - 1) A gathering of churches each of which holds formal membership in the council based on a firm

commitment to the authority of Scripture and either the Reformed confessions (Three Forms of Unity) or the Presbyterian confessions (the Westminster Standards).

- 2) A gathering of churches that acknowledge one another as true churches of Jesus Christ, yet have significant differences in doctrine and practice that keep them from forming into one denomination.
- 3) A gathering of churches that meets regularly in order to:
 - a) Facilitate the discussion of those doctrines and practices that divide them as well as those they have in common.
 - b) Facilitate discussion for the purpose of closer relationships (corresponding or sister church) with other denominations.
 - c) Facilitate the discussion of current heresies and practices that threaten Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
 - d) Facilitate discussions so that member churches can learn from each other. An example of this would be learning about missions from the experiences of the member churches.
- b. A Reformed ecumenical council is not:
 - 1) An ecclesiastical assembly (synod, classis, presbytery, etc.) that has binding authority to determine doctrine or practice for the member churches. It is not a body that cooperates in missions, seminary training, or other work belonging to the sphere of a denomination (instituted church).
 - 2) A sister-church or corresponding relation-

ship with other denominations, as defined in the Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches.

2. Procedure

a. The Contact Committee, upon reception of an invitation to participate in an ecumenical council of Reformed and/or Presbyterian churches, shall inform synod of the invitation and come with advice about the advisability of attending the meeting of said council of churches.

b. Should synod deem accepting the invitation advisable, the CC will be authorized to send a delegation to attend the conference to represent our churches at the council and participate in its discussions as allowed.

3. Considerations for determining participation as observers or members

a. As observers: Whether or not synod on behalf of our churches shall accept an invitation to participate in an ecumenical council as observers shall be determined by the following considerations:

1) It is a gathering of churches that are based on the historic Reformed and/or Presbyterian creeds.

2) It can be established that attending such conference will not bind us as churches to anything that would compromise our distinctive Reformed identity as churches.

3) Such attendance as observers gives our delegates the opportunity to address the assembly according to our convictions.

b. As members: Whether or not synod on behalf of the churches shall petition to become a member of a council of churches that meets on an annual or regular

basis shall be based upon the following considerations in addition to those stated in “1)” above:

- 1) It is a council of churches that not only speaks of being committed to faithfulness to the historic Reformed and/or Presbyterian confessions (per its constitution) but shows evidence of holding its members to commitment to the confessions.
 - 2) It is a council of churches that discusses both those things that divide them as denominations as well as issues that are a threat to the Reformed faith.
 - 3) As a denomination, we can agree with the obligations of membership in the council without compromising any of our Reformed distinctives (the distinctives of the PRCA).
- F. The committee shall present a complete report of all its activities to the annual synod, and it shall advise synod on all matters reported on or referred to it.
- G. The committee shall have the right to call to the attention of consistories any emergency financial needs toward which the benevolence of our congregations should be directed.
- H. The committee shall annually submit a proposed budget to the synod. No money not specifically budgeted shall be expended by the committee without consultation with and approval of the synodical Finance Committee.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1972, Art. 157, Suppl. XXXVII; Acts of Synod, 1980, Art. 57; Acts of Synod, 1987, Arts. 25, 40; Acts of Synod, 1998, Art. 38; Acts of Synod, 1999, Art. 26; Acts of Synod, 2000, Arts. 20, 30; Acts of Synod, 2001, Art. 37; Acts of Synod, 2009, Art. 15; Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 23; Acts of Synod 2016, Art. 26.)

Constitution of the Domestic Mission Committee

Preamble

The Protestant Reformed Churches believe that, in obedience to the command of Christ, the King of the church, to preach the blessed gospel to all creatures, baptizing, and teaching them to observe all things which Christ has commanded, it is the explicit duty and sacred privilege of said churches to carry out this calling according to the measure of our God-given ability.

We believe that this missionary activity includes the work of church extension and church reformation, as well as the task of carrying out the gospel to the unchurched and heathen. However, we are convinced that our present duty lies primarily in the field of church extension and church reformation.

With a view to this persuasion the here following constitution has been drawn up, and any enlargement of the scope of labors would imply changes and enlargements of the present constitution.

Constitution

I. Definition

Although mission work is the calling of the local church, by virtue of the voluntary church federation some mission work may also become the work of the churches in common. The Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches is a committee chosen by synod to regulate and supervise all mission activity of the churches in common as prescribed by synod. Hence this committee is a synodical committee and responsible only to synod for all its actions.

II. Constituency

The Mission Committee shall consist of ten members from Classis East, five of which shall be ministers and five elders or ex-elders. The committee shall be elected by synod for a term of three years and are eligible for reelection.

III. Officers and Tenure of Office

The Committee shall elect its own functionaries, who shall hold office for one year. The officers are eligible for reelection.

IV. Duties of the Committee

The duties of the Mission Committee are:

- A. To carry out all mandates of synod that pertain to mission activity of the churches in common.
- B. To find possible fields and recommend them to the churches.
- C. As part of its regulation of the mission work of the churches in common, to advise a calling church with regard to all matters concerning the labor and field of activity connected with the appointment and maintenance of a missionary. In case of disagreements which cannot be resolved, the final disposition shall be left to synod.
- D. To supervise all matters of finances in connection with the mission activity of the churches in common.
- E. To approve through a committee of two chosen from its own midst all statements of the missionary expenses, which are to be submitted to it by the calling church, prior to their payment by the Synodical Treasurer.
- F. To advise the calling church with regard to the organization of a new congregation.
- G. To submit to synod a written annual report of its work and findings, together with the recommendations it may have to make to synod regarding mission work of the churches in common.

V. Relation Between the Committee and the Missionary

- A. The committee shall at all times keep in close touch with the missionary, and the missionary with the committee. With this in view the missionary shall keep the committee informed as to his work and its results by presenting a bimonthly report.
- B. This report shall contain the following:
 - 1. A statement of the number of calls made.
 - 2. A statement of the number of speeches delivered, and radio broadcasts, if any.
 - 3. Figures as to the number of pieces of literature mailed and personally distributed.
 - 4. The number of miles traveled, how traveled, and why.
 - 5. An opinion as to the progress made, and the prospects of the field, together with the motivation for such an opinion.
 - 6. Requests for information, advice, and assistance deemed necessary.

VI. The Calling of a Missionary

- A. Synod shall request one of the churches to function as the calling church. It shall be the duty of said church to call a missionary from a list of suitable candidates provided by the Mission Committee. The calling church shall then proceed to call a missionary for the work. The call letter shall, among other things, contain information as to salary, and also contain a statement of the duties expected of him, together with the promise of an annual vacation.
- B. The Missionary's Term of Service
 - 1. The missionary's initial term of service shall be for four years. Consistories of vacant churches shall not place on nomination a missionary during this initial term of service, except there be preponderant con-

siderations. After this initial term, the missionary's service shall continue indefinitely.

2. During the initial term of service and subsequently, the calling church and the denominational mission committee shall regularly evaluate the missionary's labors, primarily to help him develop the gifts necessary for mission work, and secondarily to determine whether the missionary's work should be continued.

VII. Relation Between the Committee and the Calling Church

Although the local church has the calling to perform the work of missions, synod regulates the mission work of the churches in common through its Mission Committee, working closely with the local consistory.

The relationship between the local calling church and the Mission Committee will mean:

- A. That the local church and the Mission Committee will work closely together to determine a field of labor, the time of labor, and the method of labor to be employed.
- B. That the decision of the local calling church regarding the field of labor, the time of labor, and the method of labor is to receive the approval of the Mission Committee. In no case shall the field of labor, the time of labor, and the method of labor be determined without the advice of the Mission Committee.
- C. That all matters of finances connected with the missionary and his work is to be decided by the local calling church upon the advice of the Mission Committee.
- D. The missionary shall send a copy of his bimonthly report to the calling church.
- E. A missionary receiving and accepting a call to another field of labor than the one he occupies as missionary shall under all circumstances give both the calling church and

the Mission Committee two months' notice before he leaves his field of labor.

- F. The place of residence of the missionary shall be determined by the local calling church upon the advice of the Mission Committee.

VIII. The Missionary's Status

- A. The missionary and his family shall have their membership in the calling church. The missionary shall retain his ministerial status by virtue of being a minister sent out by the calling church.
- B. The missionary has ex-officio an advisory vote at all synodical meetings dealing with the missionary work in which he is engaged, or in all matters that may affect him and his work.

IX. Changes in the Constitution

This constitution may be altered, amended, and revised as synod decides.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1940, Art. 52; Acts of Synod, 1941, Art. 33, Suppl. IV-3; Acts of Synod, 1942, Arts. 14, 20, Suppl. II, Append. V; Acts of Synod, 1946, Art. 17, 31; Acts of Synod, 1966, Arts. 93-98; Acts of Synod, 1977, Arts. 73, 75; Acts of Synod, 1988, Art. 11; Acts of Synod, 2007, Art. 36; Acts of Synod, 2013, Art. 30.)

Constitution of the Emeritus Committee

- I. The Protestant Reformed Churches wish to conform themselves to the stipulations of Article 13 of the Church Order of Dordt which reads as follows:
“Ministers who by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office, shall nevertheless retain the honor and title of a minister, and the churches which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need (likewise for the orphans or widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter.”
- II. In order that this article (of the Church Order) be properly adhered to, procedure shall be in harmony with the following stipulations.
- III. The minister shall present his request for emeritation to his consistory, who shall decide upon his request with approbation of classis and synod. A professor of theology shall retire when he reaches the age of 70 and shall be declared emeritus.
- IV. If sickness is the cause of his inability, he must furnish proof of this by a statement from two competent physicians.
- V. The minister of the Word (or professor) who legally has been declared emeritus in accordance with Section III shall qualify for support when the cause of his emeritation is either old age or continual sickness or ailment which hinders him in attending to the duties of his office.

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- VI.** The support granted to the emeriti ministers (or professors) and to the widows and orphans of ministers (or professors) is not a dispensing of mercy but an administering to which the above-mentioned have qualified because of their long-term devotion to service in our churches, except in cases wherein, according to the judgment of ecclesiastical gatherings, one has not qualified for such support.
- VII.** The support of the emeritus minister or professor shall come from the “common fund of the churches” in harmony with Article 13 of the Church Order. The last congregation served by the minister must apply for the initial support at the classis under which it resorts, which application will include a recommendation concerning the financial needs of the minister.
- VIII.** The supervision over the support of an emeritus minister or professor shall be the responsibility of the consistory in the church where he is a member.
- IX.** The classis, having taken cognizance of the request, shall place it in the hands of the Emeritus Committee.
- X.** The synod shall elect the Emeritus Committee, which shall consist of three elders, who will serve for three years. Each member shall have his secundus. Annually one member shall retire, who shall be eligible for reelection. The committee shall choose a president and secretary out of its midst.
- XI.** The committee, having received the necessary information from the consistory involved, shall temporarily determine the amount of support to be given until the next synod. In the case of a professor of theology the committee shall follow

the recommendation of the Theological School Committee as to the amount of support to be given until the next synod.

- XII.** The synod shall determine the assessment for this fund and stipulate the amount per family.
- XIII.** The Synodical Treasurer shall regularly send the promised support to the emeritus minister or professor concerned.
- XIV.** To persons who qualify for this support, the amount to be given shall be according to the need.
- XV.** A minister (or professor) who has been declared emeritus by reason of sickness or weakness, but later has regained his health, shall no longer have claim to support but is morally obliged to provide for his own needs.
- XVI.** A minister (or professor) who has regained his health shall declare himself eligible for a call or follow another pursuit of life. The churches which have supported him shall then be free from this obligation.
- XVII.** When an emeritus minister (or professor), being a widower, again marries, he shall have no claim to increased support, and if he dies, his widow shall not be entitled to support, unless she was a minister's (or professor's) widow previous to her last marriage and was receiving support.
- XVIII.** When a minister's (or professor's) widow remarries, she loses her right to support.
- XIX.** The orphans of widows shall receive support until their training for some vocation has so far advanced that they can be

regarded as being capable of providing for their own needs, provided they conduct themselves in a manner becoming to the children of the congregation.

- XX.** The committee shall annually audit the financial statement of the treasurer and compare it with the record of the secretary who functions as comptroller, and give a report to the synod. Moreover, the committee shall submit to synod an annual report of all its activities, receipts, disbursements, and balance on hand.
- XXI.** This constitution may be amended or revised by synod whenever it deems this necessary.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1940, Art. 52; Acts of Synod, 1941, Art. 39, Suppl. VIII; Acts of Synod, 1942, Arts. 26, 33, 53; Acts of Synod, 1943, Arts. 61, 63, Agenda, pp. 87-90; Acts of Synod, 1960, Art. 78, Suppl. XXI; Acts of Synod, 1964, Art. 197; Acts of Synod, 1978, Art. 42; Acts of Synod, 1985, Art. 40, Suppl. XI; Acts of Synod, 1995, Art. 62, Suppl. XXI; Acts of Synod, 1999, Art. 72.)

Constitution of the Foreign Mission Committee

I. Definition

Foreign mission work is that work of God through His church whereby He sends forth His gospel unto the ends of the world and gathers into His church those who in their generations have not belonged to the covenant.

II. Constituency

This committee shall consist of ten members from the churches in the Iowa/Minnesota/South Dakota Tri-State area, five of which, when possible, shall be ministers and at least five of which shall be elders or ex-elders. Committee members shall be elected by synod for terms of three years and are eligible for reelection.

III. Officers

The committee shall elect its own functionaries, who shall serve for one year and shall be eligible for reelection.

IV. Meetings

Meetings of the committee shall take place at least three times a year and as occasion demands, and a report of the work transacted at these meetings shall be presented annually to the synod.

V. Duties of the Committee

- A. The committee shall carry on such investigation, study, correspondence, and propaganda as may prove beneficial in locating a field of labor.
- B. Once a field of labor has been located, the committee shall present to synod a concrete plan, along with an estimation of expenses, whereby this field may be opened and a missionary called to labor within it.
- C. The committee shall be responsible to see that all plans and instructions authorized by synod shall be carried out in the field of labor.

VI. The Calling of a Missionary

- A. After a suitable field of labor has been determined, the committee shall have power to:

1. designate a calling church.
2. determine the missionary's salary and expense allowance.
3. make any other provisions necessary to the maintaining of the designated field.

Such arrangement shall be subject to the final approval of synod.

- B. The committee shall provide the calling church with a list of suitable candidates from which a nomination may be made and a missionary called.
- C. The committee shall work in conjunction with the consistory of the calling church so that the letter of calling may contain:
 1. a listing of financial provisions.
 2. a statement of duties expected in the field of labor.
 3. provisions for vacations or leaves in accord with the place and manner of labors.
 4. a statement concerning the missionary's term of service.
- D. The Missionary's Term of Service
 1. The missionary's initial term of service shall be for four years. Consistories of vacant churches shall not place on nomination a missionary during his initial term of service, except there be preponderant considerations. After this initial term, the missionary's service shall continue indefinitely.
 2. During the initial term of service and subsequently, the calling church and the denominational mission committee shall regularly evaluate the missionary's labors, primarily to help him develop the gifts necessary for mission work, and secondarily to determine whether the missionary's work should be continued.

VII. Relation Between the Committee and the Missionary

- A. The committee, in conjunction with the consistory of the calling church, shall determine all matters concerning place, extent, and method of labor within the field stipulated by synod, and the missionary shall be bound to abide by these decisions unless they are changed by the synod.
 1. In cases of disagreement the missionary has the right of appeal to synod after giving due notice to the bodies under which he labors.
 2. Until such a time as the synod has supported his position, the missionary shall labor in accord with the decisions of these bodies.
- B. The committee shall have final authority in dispensing of synodical mission funds, subject to the provisions made by the synod.
- C. The committee shall receive a monthly report from the missionary concerning the details of his labors and the expenses incurred. The committee shall authorize all payment of expenses.

VIII. Relation Between the Committee and the Calling Church

- A. All details concerning place, extent, and method of labor within the field stipulated by the synod shall be determined by the committee in conjunction with the consistory of the calling church.
 1. A delegation from the consistory shall be present at all committee meetings, or the committee shall meet with the consistory when matters are treated pertaining to the missionary and his activities.
 2. All decisions made by the committee relating to the missionary shall be approved by the consistory of the calling church.

- B. The consistory of the calling church shall receive a copy of the monthly report of the missionary.

IX. The Missionary's Status

- A. The missionary and his family shall have their membership in the calling church.
- B. The missionary shall retain his ministerial status by virtue of being a minister sent out by the calling church.
- C. When present at synod, the missionary holds ex-officio an advisory vote at all meetings dealing with the work in which he is engaged, or in all matters that affect him and his work.

X. Changes in the Constitution

This constitution may be altered, amended, and revised as synod determines.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1966, Arts. 114-122, Suppl. XIII; Acts of Synod, 1982, Art. 33; Acts of Synod, 2004, Art. 53; Acts of Synod, 2013, Art. 30; Acts of Synod, 2014, Art. 35.)

Constitution of the Student Aid Committee

I. Name

The name of the committee governed by this constitution shall be the Student Aid Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this committee shall be to care for the distribution of funds from the Student Aid Fund (supported by synodical assessments) and the Seminary Student Assistance Fund (supported by collections and private donations) of the Protestant Reformed Churches in accord with Article 19 of the Church Order, which states: “The Churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the ministry of the Word.”

III. Constituency

The committee shall consist of five members appointed by the synod from Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

- A. The length of each term shall be three years.
- B. The appointments shall be made to staggered terms.
- C. A president and secretary shall be chosen annually from the constituency of the committee.

IV. Functions

- A. The committee shall interview all applicants to the Student Aid Fund and the Seminary Student Assistance Fund so as to determine the reality and extent of the students’ needs.
- B. The committee shall have the power to decide on all applications for support. Granting of support and determination of the amount shall be only by affirmative vote of four of the five members of the committee. In case the committee cannot gain a four-fifths vote, the advice of the Theological School Committee shall be sought; and only if the Theological School Committee concurs shall support then be granted.
- C. The committee shall make an annual report to synod of its

activities for the past year and requests for the coming year. This report will include:

1. Statement of disbursements made from the funds.
 2. Requested amount to be given per student from the Student Aid Fund.
 3. Projected amount to be given per student from the Student Assistance Fund.
 4. Requested number of collections to be taken by the churches.
- D. The committee shall be empowered to investigate any possible misuse of the Student Aid Fund and the Seminary Student Assistance Fund.
- E. The committee, after consultation with the Theological School Committee, shall have power to terminate the distribution of these funds should it be determined that any applicant is no longer conforming to the conditions of application cited under “V” below. This action shall be subject to the final determination of synod.
- F. The committee shall meet at least once a year. The time and place of this meeting shall be publicly announced, along with a notice that support is available to qualified seminary students.

V. Applications (Limitations and Regulations)

- A. All applicants for aid from the Student Aid Fund and Seminary Student Assistance Fund must be enrolled in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.
- B. Each student must give an estimated statement of his needs for the coming school year, including all assets, anticipated income, and disbursements.
- C. Each applicant must agree to furnish to the committee and to synod all requested information concerning his financial

needs and assets so long as he is receiving assistance from the fund(s).

- D. Each applicant shall sign an agreement:
1. That he will repay in full whatever money he has received from the Student Aid Fund or Seminary Student Assistance Fund should he refuse to enter the service of our churches or transfer to another school or church prior to his installation as a minister. (For synod's interpretation of V, D, 1, cf. Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 49.)
 2. That he will submit himself to the decision of synod regarding the necessity of repayment should he discontinue his studies for other reasons.
- E. The support that may be granted from the Student Aid Fund to any student shall be determined annually by the synod upon the recommendation of the Student Aid Committee.

VI. Distribution from the Student Aid Fund and Seminary Student Assistance Fund is to be made directly by the Synodical Treasurer as authorized by this committee.

VII. The activities of this committee are at all times to be kept confidential, and synodical treatment of particular cases is to be handled only in executive session.

Agreement Between Our Synod and Student Aid Fund Beneficiary

The undersigned hereby declares that, since synod has acted favorably upon his request for assistance from its Student Aid Fund and Seminary Student Assistance Fund so

that he may continue his studies for the gospel ministry in our Churches, he agrees and solemnly promises:

- A. That he will repay in full whatever money he has received from the Student Aid Fund and Seminary Student Assistance Fund should he refuse to enter the service of our churches or transfer to another school or church prior to his installation as a minister.
- B. That he stands ready to explain to the committee any irregularities that may develop in his conduct, belief, or academic status.
- C. That he will submit himself to the decision of synod regarding the necessity of repayment should he discontinue his studies for other reasons (Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 49).
- D. That he will keep this agreement confidential.

Signature: _____ Witness: _____

Date: _____

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1959, Art. 121, Suppl. XXX, XXX-A; Acts of Synod, 1964, Arts. 98-105; Acts of Synod, 1974, Arts. 155-157, Suppl. XXX; Acts of Synod, 1980, Art. 44; Acts of Synod, 1984, Art. 38; Acts of Synod, 1991, Art. 40; Acts of Synod, 1993, Art. 31; Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 49; Acts of Synod, 2015, Art. 59.)

Constitution of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

- I. The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches has for its purpose the training of future ministers of the Word for the aforesaid churches. The Theological School will also train others for the ministry who intend to serve in other churches. These latter shall, however, meet the academic requirements of Article 10. Special or unclassified (non-diploma) students intending to enter the ministry in other churches may be admitted by the Theological School Committee with the approval of synod.
- II. The supervision and administration of the institution belongs to synod itself. However, synod shall appoint a committee consisting of no fewer than ten members to do the work of synod in the interim between synodical meetings.
- III. At this institution, the following branches of study shall be taught: the basic scriptural languages, Hebrew and Greek, and such other languages as synod may decide upon; Hermeneutics, Exegesis, Isagogics, Sacred History, Typology, Church History, Church Polity, History of Dogma, Dogmatics, Concepts, Homiletics, Catechetics, Poimenics, and other subjects which may be agreed upon by faculty and synod.
- IV. The professors are appointed on salaries determined by the synod and for definite departments. The rule shall be to appoint only such men who have especially prepared themselves for the particular branch or branches they are to teach. With a view to orderly transition in the seminary,

a new professor shall be appointed when any of the active professors reaches the age of 65.

- V. Whenever a professor is to be appointed, the Theological School Committee shall propose names at the meeting of the synod. The aggregate shall be discussed at this meeting, and in this discussion the advice of the theological faculty shall be sought. After this discussion and consultation, the synod shall proceed to make a nomination from the aggregate. From this nomination synod elects a professor. In electing professors, synod shall give preference to one already a minister of the gospel.
- VI. The installation of professors of theology shall take place according to the form, after they shall have signed the Formula of Subscription in the presence of the Theological School Committee.
- VII. A professor shall serve four years, and after that three years if reappointed. If after this he be reappointed, such appointment shall be permanent. Thereafter his services at school can be terminated only through the synod formally retiring, expelling, or deposing him and for reason urgent, cogent, and legitimate. When a professor reaches the age of 65, and on a yearly basis thereafter, the professor shall be consulted by the Theological School Committee about his capability to continue teaching or possible emeritation. Whether a professor shall continue to teach all or some of his subjects after the age of 65 shall be decided by the synod on a yearly basis, upon the recommendation of the Theological School Committee. A professor shall retire when he reaches 70 years of age and shall be declared emeritus.
- A. The following criteria shall be used to judge the com-

petence and development of a professor when he is up for reappointment:

1. He shall demonstrate in all his work a continuing commitment to the truth of Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed creeds and as taught in our churches.
 2. He shall give evidence of the ability to teach, being fresh and lively.
 3. He shall show the ability to do theological research and scholarly study in his department.
 4. He shall be a godly example to the students and denomination.
 5. He shall exhibit a willingness to contribute to the well-being of the denomination in the areas of preaching, writing, lecturing, serving on standing or special committees of synod.
 6. He shall, before his first reappointment, have completed and received approval of his Master's Thesis.
- B. The process: The TSC shall present to synod a recommendation concerning reappointment.
1. The TSC must exercise careful oversight of the professor's instruction and of his work in light of the criteria given above.
 2. The judgment of the faculty concerning the man's work shall be given to the TSC and become a part of their recommendation.

VIII. Professors emeriti who are honorably retired and who had received an appointment are qualified to receive support from the churches, since they, just as the ministers, devoted all their gifts and talents entirely and exclusively to the service of the churches.

Arrangements for retirement shall be in charge of the

Theological School Committee, subject to final determination by synod. All support of emeriti professors shall be directly from the Emeritus Fund.

If retirement proves necessary by reason of sickness or other disability during the school year, the Theological School Committee shall temporarily determine the amount of support to be given and shall notify the Emeritus Committee. The latter shall then authorize payment of the support determined upon from the Emeritus Fund.

- IX.** The instruction shall be given by the professors and, if need be, by assistants appointed by the faculty in conjunction with the Theological School Committee with the approval of synod. In case of emergency the approval of synod shall be sought at its next meeting.
- X.** Permission to pursue the theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who comes supplied with a letter of recommendation from his consistory explaining that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister. Such recommendation ought to contain the consistory's evaluation of the applicant's spiritual and intellectual gifts, as well as any areas of concern. The applicant shall also provide a certificate from a reputable physician showing him to be in good health.

A complete high school education and a bachelor level degree (B.A. or B.S.) from an accredited college or university are required for entrance into the seminary. Moreover, each entrant must produce evidence that he has credit for the following college courses:

- Latin — 4 semesters, intermediate-level proficiency
 Greek — 4 semesters, intermediate-level proficiency
 English Composition — 2 semesters, one of which must be beyond the freshman composition level
 Philosophy — the *history* of philosophy: must include ancient, medieval, and modern
 History — a minimum of 2 semesters of history of western civilization
 Psychology — 1 semester: Introductory Psychology
 Speech — 1 semester: public speaking
 Logic — 1 semester

A B- cumulative average shall be required for entrance into the seminary department. If such average is not maintained, a student may be received on probation by consent of the Theological School Committee in conjunction with the faculty.

The student shall furnish the faculty with a transcript of credits earned at other colleges, and these shall be included in the academic record of the student and in the annual report of the grades to synod.

- XI.** Promotion to a higher grade shall take place after the student has successfully passed his courses.

Moreover, it is required of every seminary student that he maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative average in each of the four major divisions, viz., Biblical-Exegetical Studies, Dogmatical Studies, Church-Historical Studies, and Practical-Theological Studies. In addition, a minimum GPA of 2.0 for the two and a half years of Practice Preaching (ten sermons) and a minimum of 2.5 for the last year and a half of Practice Preaching (six sermons) are required. The diploma pre-licentiate student will not be allowed to enter the internship program unless he has a minimum GPA of 2.5 in Practice Preaching for the year previous to the internship (four sermons, ordinarily during the third

year). A student shall be forbidden to take a final examination before synod having less than a 2.5 cumulative average. The final examination before synod of the student having a failing grade in any branch shall be forbidden. Arrangements, however, may be made for a reexamination of any student having a failing grade in any branch; but in case a student should fail in such reexamination, he shall be forbidden to proceed to the next subject until he shall take the course anew in which he has failed and shall show a passing grade therein.

- XII.** The examinations at the end of each semester shall be written. The final examinations of those students graduating in theology and intending to enter the ministry in the churches shall be oral. The only exception shall be a written examination in translation and exegesis on passages from the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament assigned by the Theological School Committee, said examinations to be submitted to synod for approval. There shall be oral examinations in: Dogmatics, Old Testament History, New Testament History, Church History, Church Polity, and Practica. In addition, each student shall preach a sermon before the synod on an assigned text.

Written examinations for those students intending to enter the ministry in other churches shall be administered by the faculty and must be successfully passed before a diploma is granted.

- XIII.** The faculty shall license a student to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship when it deems him ready.
- XIV.** The school year shall be divided into two semesters, with the months of June, July, and August set apart for summer vacation. There shall be a two-week Christmas vacation and a one-week spring vacation.

XV. The student shall conduct himself in and out of school as a Christian. Failing in this, he shall be admonished by the faculty in conjunction with the Theological School Committee. If after these repeated admonitions the student remains obstinate, he shall be expelled from school. In case a gross sin has been committed, he shall, with the approval of the Theological School Committee, be expelled immediately.

XVI. The student shall pursue the course of study at the school with diligence. He shall regularly attend the classes and conduct himself in accordance with the rules of this institution.

XVII. The constitution, drafted upon the instruction of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches, accepted by that of June 1 and 2, 1938, and amended by the Synod of 1941 and the Synod of 1973, remains in force until another Synod shall have amended it.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1941, Art. 68, Suppl. XXVIII; Acts of Synod, 1949, Arts. 31, 38; Acts of Synod, 1957, Arts. 93-94; Acts of Synod, 1960, Art. 78, Suppl. XXI; Acts of Synod, 1973, Arts. 68-87, Suppl. VIII; Acts of Synod, 1983, Art. 41; Acts of Synod, 1985, Art. 40, Suppl. XI; Acts of Synod, 1989, Art. 26, Suppl. XIII; Acts of Synod, 1991, Art. 38; Acts of Synod, 1999, Art. 72; Acts of Synod, 2003, Art. 50; Acts of Synod, 2005, Art. 48; Acts of Synod, 2009, Art. 53.)

Constitution of the Theological School Committee

- I. While the synod itself shall care for all matters that pertain to the proper administration of our theological school, there shall be a Theological School Committee whose duty it is to supervise the school in the interim between synodical meetings, and to advise synod on matters pertaining to the welfare thereof.

- II. The Theological School Committee shall consist of no fewer than ten members. There shall be an equal representation of elders or ex-elders and of ministers on this committee at all times. They shall be elected by synod for a term of three years and are eligible for reelection. Because their duty is the proper administration of the school in the interim between synodical gatherings, the brethren appointed shall be chosen from the midst of those that live within a reasonably short distance from the school.

- III. This committee shall choose from its own midst a president, vice-president, secretary, and assistant secretary. This election shall take place annually, although retiring officers are eligible for reelection.

- IV. The duties of this Theological School Committee shall be as follows:
 - A. To appoint delegations of two brethren each to visit the classes, so that the school receives a monthly visit from the committee. The object of these visits is:
 1. To observe whether the instruction given is in

full accord with Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity and in harmony with the constitution of the school.

2. To bring written reports to the committee of these visits, which reports shall contain suggestions for the improvement of the school that the visiting delegation thinks necessary and advisable.
 - B. To meet with the faculty and students together or separately, in case of difficulties among the students themselves, among the faculty, or between the students and the faculty. In such instances, such a meeting shall only take place at the request of the faculty or the students, or both.
 - C. To cooperate with the faculty, in case the latter deems this necessary, in the exercise of discipline. No students shall be expelled permanently from the school without the approval of the committee.
 - D. To make the necessary arrangements and preparations for the final examination of the student or students, which takes place before the synod.
 - E. To approve all extra financial disbursements during the course of the school year. The committee shall appoint a delegation of two, residing near the school, to approve such disbursements.
 - F. To submit to synod any recommendations it may have for the improvement of our school administration.
 - G. To submit an annual, written report of its work to synod.
 - H. To interview aspirants to our school, and to advise synod as to their admission to the school.
- V. The Theological School Committee may meet as often as circumstances require, but it shall meet prior to synod

to adopt its report and at the beginning of the school year.

VI. This constitution as ratified by the Synod of 1941 can be altered by synod.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1941, Arts. 68, 71, Suppl. XXIX; Acts of Synod, 1966, Arts. 45-47, Suppl. III, IV.)

Rules for Synodical Procedure

Rules for Synodical Procedure

I. Convening of Synod

- A. Synod shall convene on the second Tuesday of June each year (unless otherwise designated by the preceding synod.)
- B. When a classis desires an early synod, it shall apply to the convening church, whose consistory in turn shall seek the approval of the other classis.
(Cf. Article 50 of the Church Order.)
- C. Each synod shall appoint a convening consistory, whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod to the churches in a synodically designated publication at least one month before the date of meeting. It shall also provide all facilities needed for the synodical meetings, make arrangements for the lodging of delegates, etc. Expenses thus incurred shall be paid by the Synodical Treasurer.
- D. On the Monday evening preceding the opening of synod a prayer service, in the charge of the convening consistory, shall be held in the city in which synod is to meet. The members of synod are expected to attend this service in a body.
- E. The sessions of synod shall extend from 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon and from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M., unless otherwise determined by the synod.
(Cf. Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 51, Acts of Synod 2016,

Art. 11.)

II. Constitution of Synod

- A. To this synod five ministers and five elders out of each classis shall be delegated.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1992, Art. 50.)

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- B. The president or vice-president of the previous synod shall officiate as president pro-tem at the opening of synod. (In case neither is available, the pastor of the calling church shall do so.) At the appointed time and place he shall call the delegates to order; he opens with prayer and the reading of Scripture, and presides over the acceptance of the credentials and the election of officers.
- C. The officers of synod shall be elected from among the ministerial delegates in the following order: president, vice-president, first clerk, and second clerk. The Stated Clerk shall serve as secretary pro-tem until the first clerk and second clerk have been elected.
- D. After the elected officers have taken their place, the president shall read the prescribed “Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity,” to which every member of synod shall rise to give heed and respond by expressing assent. The Declaration is to be presented to each delegate who assumes his seat at a later time, and he shall be asked to voice his approval thereof.
- E. At the opening session of synod the following procedure shall then be followed:
1. The president shall appoint a committee for advisory committees of four members, two ministers and two elders. The duties of this committee shall be:
 - a. To propose the necessary number and constituency of the advisory committees, and to apportion the synodical material.
 - b. To propose the constituency of a committee

of advice whose sole duty shall be to advise synod on all financial matters.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1950, Art. 19.)

2. Synod then adjourns until a specified time to enable this committee to meet. Meeting again at the specified time, synod will consider the report of the committee for advisory committees, and then adjourn until a specified time to enable these advisory committees to prepare their reports.
3. Each advisory committee shall see to it that its report is neatly copied and distributed to all the delegates when synod reconvenes.
4. Synod shall treat the advisory reports in order.

III. Duties of the Officers of Synod

Besides the duties mentioned elsewhere in these rules, the officers of synod shall have the following duties:

- A. President
 1. He shall call the meeting to order at the proper time and shall see that each session is properly opened and closed.
 2. He shall enforce the rules of order, must rule at once on any point of order presented, and shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible.
 3. He shall place before the synod every motion properly made, may make suggestions as to the proper formulation of motions, and shall clearly state every motion before a vote is taken.
 4. Being a duly chosen delegate to synod, he retains

all the rights and privileges of a delegate. As such he has:

- a. The right to take part in the deliberation of synod. In case, however, he wishes to express himself on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-president and not resume it until the question has been disposed of. This does not apply when the president speaks to elucidate a motion, to present matters of fact, or to inform synod regarding points of order.
 - b. The right to vote on any question before the gathering. He invariably votes when the vote is taken by ballot, in case of a tie, or in cases where a voice vote is so close that a raising of hands is called for.
- B. Vice-president
1. He shall function in the absence of the president, whether the absence be temporary or permanent.
 2. When not occupying the chair, he shall assist the president in enforcing the rules of debate.
(Cf. Art. VII, Rules of Synod.)
- C. First clerk and second clerk
1. The first clerk shall conduct roll call at the opening of each session.
 2. The first clerk shall keep an exact record of the proceedings of synod. This record shall contain:
 - a. Opening and closing of sessions and roll call; all motions, whether carried or defeated; and all points of order and appeals to the floor that synod determines should be recorded.

- b. All reports by committees, duly marked as supplements, with the supplement numbers appended to the pertinent motions.
 - c. All committee appointments, whether by the chair or by vote of the synod.
 - d. All documents treated by the synod and any part of debate or address which the synod by a majority vote decides to insert in the minutes.
3. The second clerk is not a vice-clerk, but the synod shall have at all times two clerks. The duty of the second clerk is to keep a parallel record of all the decisions of synod, so that in case of difference of opinion between the first clerk and the members of synod, synod may have greater certainty.
 4. At the close of each day's sessions, the first clerk, with the cooperation of the second clerk, shall read the script minutes for synod's approval and/or correction.

IV. Advisory Members of Synod

- A. The professors of the theological school shall be accorded a seat at synod, and shall have advisory vote in all matters.
- B. The missionary(ies) shall have advisory vote in matters concerning directly his (their) labors. Whether, however, any missionary shall leave his field of labor to attend synod is not within the scope of this rule.
- C. Reporters of delegations and committees, even though not delegated to synod, shall be advisory members of the committee of pre-advice treating the

matters they report on, and also advisory members of the synod while their reports are being treated by the synod.

- D. The Stated Clerk shall be present to furnish information from the archives upon request, and the Synodical Treasurer shall make himself available for consultation by the committee of pre-advice on finances and by synod when financial matters are discussed.

V. Synodical Functionaries

A. Stated Clerk

1. The synod shall elect a Stated Clerk, elected for a term of three years, from among the ministers, elders, or ex-elders and shall designate his salary.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1994, Art. 57.)
2. His duties, besides those designated elsewhere in these rules, shall be:
 - a. To prepare and publish the Agenda.
(Cf. Article VI, Rules of Synod.)
 - b. To prepare and publish the Acts.
(Cf. Article XII, Rules of Synod.)
 - c. To inform those individuals, consistories, classes, committees, and organizations addressed or affected by a synodical decision of that decision. This shall be done within one month after synod adjourns.
 - d. To remind synod's committees that their reports are due.
 - e. To inform synod concerning any committee that has been negligent in reporting.
 - f. To receive and acknowledge all correspon-

dence addressed to synod without entering into its contents.

- g. To carry out all correspondence specifically charged to him by synod.
- h. To maintain the archives of synod.
- i. To be present at all synodical meetings in order to furnish synod, upon request, with any needed information from the archives.
- j. To report to the synod annually in writing.
- k. To furnish a list of committee vacancies to be filled.
- l. To transcribe the minutes of the synod in a separate book, which shall serve as the permanent record.
- m. To keep a record of the decisions of synod affecting the material in the Church Order Book, for the immediate information of all affected parties, and for periodic updating of the pages of the Church Order Book.
- n. To update the cumulative index of the Acts of Synod annually.
- o. To gather and compile the statistics for the annual Yearbook.
- p. To maintain synod's inventory of catechism books and Psalters.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1968, Art. 186, Suppl. XXIV; Acts of Synod, 1977, Art. 79; Acts of Synod, 1995, Art. 60; Acts of Synod, 1996, Art. 69; Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 51; Acts of Synod, 2006, Art. 56; Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 60.)

- B. Assistant Stated Clerk: Synod shall elect an assistant Stated Clerk for a term of three years, who

shall function in case it becomes impossible for the Stated Clerk to function.

C. Treasurer

1. The synod shall elect a Synodical Treasurer for a term of three years, and shall designate his salary. This treasurer shall be a member of our churches. The treasurer shall be duly bonded.
2. His duties shall be:
 - a. To administer the finances of the denomination according to synodical mandate.
 - b. To pay synodical and classical expenses as authorized.
 - c. To submit by May 1 to the Stated Clerk an annual financial statement (reviewed by public accountants), which the Stated Clerk can distribute to the synodical delegates.
 - d. To notify synod of any consistories who are delinquent in paying their assessments.
 - e. To serve as advisory member of the committee of pre-advice on finances, and as advisory member of synod when financial matters are treated.
 - f. To consult the synodical Finance Committee concerning any question or problem arising in the interim between synodical gatherings in regard to the execution of his mandate. (Cf. Article VIII, Rules of Synod.)
 - g. Accounts Receivable
 - 1) Correspond annually with each church, requesting membership information and computing annual assessments.
 - 2) Maintain records monthly for church assessments payments.

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- h. Accounts payable
 - 1) In conjunction with synodical committees, determine cash requirements and issue checks on a bimonthly basis.
 - 2) Issue Form 1099's to individuals and the United States government after the end of the calendar year.
 - i. General ledger
 - 1) To issue income statements monthly to each synodical committee.
 - 2) To submit quarterly financial statements (balance sheet and detailed income statement) for review by the Board of Trustees within thirty days from each quarter's end.
 - 3) To provide complete financial statements (balance sheet and income statements, both detailed and combined) for the public accountants at the end of each fiscal year.
 - 4) To account for and maintain Special Fund balances.
 - j. Budgeting
 - 1) To prepare, with the assistant Synodical Treasurer and the Stated Clerk, a forecast for the current year for the annual meeting of synod.
 - 2) To prepare a proposed budget for synod based on the recommendations of synodical committees appearing in the synodical agenda.
 - k. Banking
 - 1) To maintain cash receipts records, making deposits on a weekly basis.

- 2) To transfer funds as necessary, to maximize interest income.
- 3) To reconcile all bank accounts each month.
1. Other
 - 1) To correspond when necessary with the churches, ministers, and other related individuals and organizations, pertaining to financial matters.
 - 2) To meet with the synodical Finance Committee when required.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1988, Art. 47, Suppl. XIV; Acts of Synod, 1997, Art. 69; Acts of Synod, 2007, Art. 58.)

D. Assistant Treasurer

1. Synod shall elect an assistant Synodical Treasurer, who shall assist in the preparation of financial data for synod, and shall assume all the duties of treasurer in case it becomes impossible for the treasurer to function.
2. The duties of the assistant Synodical Treasurer shall be:
 - a. To provide a preliminary year-end review of the cash receipts/disbursements journals and the bank/broker statements, in order to identify any obvious misclassifications and/or to make any necessary adjustments in the financial data before they are turned over to our accountants.
 - b. To assist in the year-end financial review and preparation of financial reports.
 - c. To prepare, with the Synodical Treasurer and

the Stated Clerk, a forecast for the current year for the annual meeting of synod.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 56.)

VI. Matters Legally Before the Synod

A. The Agenda

1. The synodical agenda shall be published and mailed to all consistories not later than the fifth day of May.
2. It shall include as much as possible all matters for synod, including material forwarded by the classes, reports of committees, appeals (in harmony with Article VI, A, 5), and correspondence.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1972, Art. 148.)
3. All material for the Agenda must be sent to the Stated Clerk on or before April 15, and the Stated Clerk shall not include in the Agenda material that does not comply with this rule.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 2007, Art. 62.)
4. The Stated Clerk shall ordinarily publish all material intended for the Agenda. He shall, however, have the right to exercise his discretion on matters which are clearly not ecclesiastical (Article 30 of the Church Order), but shall nevertheless list them in the Agenda and send them to synod for final adjudication. He shall not assume synod's prerogative to decide whether material is legal or illegal.
(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1972, Art. 143.)
5. Protests and appeals which deal with discipline cases, excluding those dealing with public deviation in doctrine, shall not be included in the Agenda, but shall be sent to the *primi* and

secundi delegates to synod at the time the Agenda is mailed. Such protests and appeals shall be listed in the Agenda.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1972, Art. 144.)

B. Rules

1. The fundamental rules of Articles 30, 31, and 46 of the Church Order shall be decisive in all judgments concerning the legality of matters before synod, and shall in no wise be considered abrogated by any rule hereinafter stated.
2. No proposals of importance shall be presented to synod that have not appeared on the Agenda, so that consistories and classes may have opportunity for previous deliberation. All matters appearing in the Agenda must be dealt with by synod before its adjournment.
3. The following matters shall be considered by synod:
 - a. All overtures forwarded by the classes.
 - b. All overtures rejected by the classes, but which are forwarded by their authors without classical approval.
 - c. All appeals from classical decisions by individuals and consistories, provided the rule concerning the Agenda and the rule under Article 31 of the Church Order have been followed.
 - d. All protests against decisions of synod.
 - e. All reports by synodically appointed committees, including supplemental reports which could not be published in the Agenda.
 - f. Correspondence received from individuals or bodies outside our denomination or from

bodies within our denomination other than ecclesiastical assemblies.

- g. All material from our sister churches.
- 4. Decision as to the legality of any matter treated by synod shall be taken by majority vote.

VII. Rules for Parliamentary Procedure

A. A main motion

A main motion is one that presents a certain subject to synod for its consideration or action.

- 1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. If the mover has been recognized by the chair and his motion has been seconded.
 - b. The chair may request that any motion be presented in writing.
- 2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. If another motion is before synod.
 - b. If it conflicts with any decision already made by synod.
 - c. If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod or if it interferes with the freedom of action of synod in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no disposal was made.
- 3. A main motion, as soon as passed, becomes a decision of synod. (Note: Motions to receive for information are not necessary. The material of the Agenda, of synodically appointed committees, and of correspondence addressed to synod is received for information by virtue

of the very fact that it is heard and it need only be filed in the record. This, however, does not preclude the necessity of deciding whether such material is legally before synod.)

B. A motion to amend

A motion to amend is a proposal to change a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on that motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose the following: to strike out, to insert into, or to substitute for certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs, but all such motions must be specific and presented before the vote on the main question is taken.
2. A motion to amend must be pertinent to the main motion; that is, no new matter may be introduced to synod under the guise of an amendment. In case the president is unable to determine whether or not a proposed amendment is pertinent, he shall ask the judgment of synod, which shall decide by a majority vote.
3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion.
4. All motions may be amended except the following:
 - a. to adjourn
 - b. to amend an amendment
 - c. to lay on the table, to take from the table
 - d. to reconsider, to rescind
 - e. to take up a question out of its regular order
 - f. appeals to the floor from the decision of the chair

- g. calls for the order of the day, requests or questions of any kind
- h. points of order

(Note: So-called substitute motions are not recognized under these rules.)

C. Motions to defer action

Circumstances may arise which render immediate action on certain matters unwise. Therefore, means must be at synod's disposal to defer action. These are:

1. A motion to postpone action to a definite time
 - a. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
 - b. If a motion to postpone definitely has been passed, no other motion similar in word or in thought to the postponed motion may appear before synod.
 - c. The matter postponed may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of synod.
 - d. If a motion to amend has been postponed definitely, the main motion to which the postponed amendment is related is likewise deferred.
 - e. Any number of matters may be postponed to the same time. When that time arrives, the matters deferred are taken up in the order of their postponement.
 - f. When the hour to which such matters have been deferred arrives, and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consider-

- ation of postponed matters if these can wait until the question then before synod has been disposed of.
2. A motion to postpone indefinitely. Motions to postpone action indefinitely shall not be entertained.
 3. A motion to lay on the table
 - a. This motion should be made only when more urgent business presents itself than is before synod.
 - b. This motion is undebatable, may not be amended, and requires only a majority for passing.
 - c. A matter that has been tabled may be called from the table by any member of synod, subject to the consent of the majority. All tabled matters must be taken from the table before synod adjourns.
 - d. A matter called from the table may not be re-tabled unless material progress has been made in debate on that matter.
 4. Objection to the consideration of a question. When a member rises to make such objection, the president shall ask him to state his objection. The president, having heard his objection, either sustains or overrules it and states his reason for so doing. If the objector is not satisfied with the ruling of the chair, he may appeal to synod. When he does so, the objection becomes debatable and requires a majority to be sustained.
- D. Privileged motions
Privileged motions are so designated because they have precedence over all other motions.

1. A motion to adjourn. This motion cannot be made unless all matters legally before the synod have been acted upon.
2. A motion to recess. A recess is any pause synod may choose to take during the course of its business. (As soon as it is properly constituted, synod shall decide as to the time, the duration, and the frequency of recesses.) However, circumstances may arise which render recesses desirable on other than the specified occasions. Then a motion to recess has its place. The following rules apply:
 - a. A motion to recess takes precedence over all motions excepting a motion to adjourn.
 - b. A motion to recess is debatable and amendable only insofar as the time and duration of the recesses are concerned.
3. Calls for the order of the day
When any member of synod believes that the regular business of synod is being obstructed or interrupted by irrelevant or unimportant material, he has the right to rise and call for the order of the day. This means that he desires synod to return to the regular course of business. The following rules apply:
 - a. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and while another member is speaking.
 - b. Such a call is undebatable, needs no seconding, and must be put to a vote.
 - c. It has precedence over every motion excepting a motion to adjourn or to recess.

4. Points of order

It is the duty of the president to apply the rules of order and to prevent infractions. Should a member believe that the rules have been misinterpreted or misapplied, he may rise, stating that he wishes to make a point of order. Asked by the chair to state the point, he does so and the president renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:

- a. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the president.
- b. It needs no seconding and is undebatable.
- c. In case the maker of the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chair, he may appeal to the floor. When this is done, the point of order becomes debatable and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain or to overthrow the president's decision.

5. Call for a division of the question

At the demand of any member of synod a motion consisting of several parts must be divided into component parts and each part must be voted on separately.

E. Motions to bring matters once decided again before synod

After synod has decided a certain matter, it may not be annoyed by the same matter being brought up again unless someone voting in favor of the question when it was decided has undergone a change of mind. For such to bring matters once decided again before synod, three motions are available:

1. To reconsider

The intent of this motion is to propose a new debate and a new vote on the question once passed.

 - a. A motion to reconsider must be made the same day on which the motion in question was passed (or the next day synod is in session).
 - b. It is unacceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
 - c. The following decisions may not be reconsidered:
 - 1) to adjourn or to have recess
 - 2) to lay on the table any decision once reconsidered
 - 3) to make or to close nominations
 - 4) to reconsider
 - 5) to suspend rules
 - 6) to take from the table
 - 7) to take up a question out of its proper order
 - d. A motion to reconsider may be definitely postponed or tabled but may not be amended, postponed indefinitely, or referred to committee.
 - e. A motion to reconsider is debatable only insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned and requires only a majority vote to be passed.
2. To rescind

The purpose of a motion to rescind is to annul and to reverse a decision.

- a. A motion to rescind shall require only a majority vote to prevail.
- b. See also Article 46 of the Church Order.
- c. A motion to rescind is debatable, not only so far as the reasons for rescinding are concerned, but also as to the merits of the original question.

3. To renew a motion once defeated

This may be made only if there are brought to the attention of synod new facts which were not at the disposal of synod when the motion was defeated. Such a motion may be brought by any member of the synod.

F. Requests

All requests not governed by these rules may be granted by the president, subject to the approval of synod.

G. Debate

1. To obtain the floor for debate, a member addresses the president, waits to speak until the president mentions his name. If not thus recognized, he may address the president again.
2. When a member is speaking, no other member may seek to draw the president's attention for the purpose of being recognized.
3. If a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks only to the president, and never to any member of synod.
4. A speaker may be interrupted only by a call to order by the president, a call for the order of the day, and by a point of order.
5. A speaker may not wander from the subject under debate, nor may he call in question any member's motives or character.

6. No member shall be permitted to speak more than three times on the same question without the leave of synod unless he is the mover, proposer, or introducer of the matter pending, in which case he shall be permitted to reply, but not until every member who chooses to speak and is recognized by the chair shall have spoken.
7. No member shall speak longer than ten minutes unless synod, by a majority vote, permits him to extend his remarks.
8. No speaker shall be permitted to speak a second time on the same question until all other members of synod desiring to speak and who have not spoken before have been given an opportunity to do so.
9. The president, when he believes that a measure has been sufficiently debated, shall have the right to propose cessation of debate. Should a majority of synod sustain this proposal, debate shall end at once, and the main motion and the pending amendments shall be voted on.
10. Any member, when he deems a matter to have been sufficiently debated, may move to close the debate and call for the question. This motion is undebatable and requires a majority. It is not acceptable when a motion to table, to commit, to recommit, or to postpone definitely is before synod.

H. Voting

The various methods of voting are:

1. By yeas and nays. This is the ordinary method of voting. The president judges by the volume

of voices whether the affirmative or the negative opinion has prevailed. Those who are silent are held to acquiesce in the result of the vote.

2. By rising or raising the right hand. Whenever the chair is unable to determine from the yeas and nays which opinion has prevailed, or if the president's judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the president shall call for rising or raising of hands.
 3. By roll-call. Names and votes to be recorded in the minutes. This method is to be employed only when so decided by a majority vote.
 4. By ballot. Synod must vote by ballot whenever persons are concerned. In other cases, synod may vote by ballot if the majority so decides.
- I. Revision

These rules may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority vote of synod.

(Adopted by Synods, 1957 and 1958; revisions, Synod 2002, Art. 51.)

VIII. Standing Committees

The synod shall appoint the following standing committees for the administration of synodical business:

- A. These committees are:
1. **Board of Trustees**—Constituency: Stated Clerk and Synodical Treasurer, whose terms shall be concurrent with their terms of office, and two ministers and two elders (or ex-elders) from the West Michigan area elected for 3-year terms.

2. **Catechism Book Committee**—Constituency: 3 ministers and 2 elders from the Chicago-area churches. Term: 3 years.
3. **Catechism Book Distribution Committee**—Constituency: 3 lay members. Term: Permanent tenure, terminated only by resignation or synodical decision.
4. **Contact Committee**—Constituency: 3 ministers, 2 professors, and 3 elders elected for 3-year terms.
5. **Domestic Mission Committee**—Constituency: 5 ministers and 5 elders from Classis East. Term: 3 years.
6. **Emeritus Committee**—Constituency: 3 members, elders only. Term: 3 years, overlapping tenure of office.
7. **Finance Committee**
 - a. Constituency: 2 members (ministers) from the vicinity of treasurer’s residence.
 - b. Term: 1 year.
 - c. Function:
 - 1) The Finance Committee shall advise the Synodical Treasurer.
 - 2) The Finance Committee is empowered to act in adjustment of assessments or of subsidy in cases of proven need or emergency nature upon the request of the consistory involved, and provided the request had been approved by the appropriate classis or classical committee. The following limitations shall apply to all such emergency action:

- a) The Finance Committee shall not act to adjust assessments or subsidy on the ground of a reduction in number of families unless such reduction exceeds ten percent.
 - b) No action by the Finance Committee shall be retroactive beyond one quarter (3 months).
 - c) The Finance Committee shall not act in cases which clearly can be delayed until the meeting of synod. It shall be the duty of the consistory involved to show that a delay would work a severe hardship.
 - d) All such actions of the Finance Committee shall be clearly understood to be subject to the approval of the next synod, so that if such approval is not granted, the financial responsibility rests upon the consistory involved.
8. **Foreign Mission Committee**—Constituency: 3 ministers and 6 elders from Classis West. Term: 3 years, overlapping tenure.
 9. **Student Aid Committee**—Constituency: 5 members. Term: 3 years, overlapping tenure of office.
 10. **Theological School Committee**—Constituency: 5 ministers and 5 elders. Term: 3 years.
- B. The brethren who are chosen to be members of these standing committees need not be elders at the time of their election.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1959, Art. 121, Suppl. XXX; Acts of Synod, 1962, Art. 72, Suppl. X; Acts of Synod, 1965, Arts. 259, 263,

Suppl. XX; Acts of Synod, 1966, Arts. 45-47, Suppl. VII; Arts. 93-98, Suppl. X; Arts. 114, 122, Suppl. XIII; Arts. 147-149, Suppl. XVII; Acts of Synod, 1980, Art. 57, Suppl. VIII; Acts of Synod, 1982, Art. 33; Acts of Synod, 1987, Art. 25; Art. 44; Acts of Synod, 1988, Art. 11; Acts of Synod, 1995, Art. 30, Suppl. XII; Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 40; Acts of Synod, 2004, Art. 53; Acts of Synod, 2017, Art. 53; Acts of Synod, 2017, Art. 53.)

IX. Reports

- A. The reports of all committees, special and standing, shall be included in the Agenda, so that all churches may be duly informed.
- B. Standing committees may make supplemental reports of matters arising after the deadline for the Agenda. Such reports, however, shall be copied and distributed to all members of synod at the opening session, and the committee concerned shall be responsible for this.

X. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall coincide with the calendar year, i.e., it shall run from January 1 through December 31.

XI. Auditing

The books of the Synodical Treasurer shall be reviewed annually by public accountants.

XII. Acts of Synod

- A. The Acts of Synod shall be published annually not later than October 1. Free copies shall be provided, through the consistories, to each family head in the Protestant Reformed Churches.
- B. The compilation of the Acts is the duty of the first

clerk and second clerk of synod, in consultation with the other officers if their advice is needed.

- C. It is the duty of the Stated Clerk to prepare the Acts for publication, to arrange for printing, and to distribute them.
- D. Content of the published Acts of Synod:
1. All of the proceedings and decisions of synod shall be recorded in the Minutes. An exception to this rule shall be the proceedings and decisions of closed sessions, when synod so decides. The reports of advisory committees (Information and Recommendations) shall be incorporated in the body of the Acts in their proper place.
 2. All material of the Agenda, including reports of standing and special committees; protests and appeals; correspondence; and reports of the Stated Clerk and Synodical Treasurer shall be included in a section of Supplements. Exceptions to this rule shall be all material declared not legally before synod, and all appeals and protests pertaining to private censure cases.
 3. The published Acts shall include also:
 - a. The sermon delivered at the pre-synodical prayer service.
 - b. The denominational Yearbook, including:
 - 1) The correspondence addresses of synodical functionaries and of the committees of synod and of classes.
 - 2) A record of committee members and their terms.

XIII. An Extended Recess

- A. An extended recess shall be only for very weighty

reasons.

- B. No synod shall recess to a time later than the end of the calendar year.
- C. In case of an extended recess, it shall be understood that the calling consistory remains responsible for providing all facilities needed for synodical meetings, arrangements for lodging of delegates, etc.

Explanation of the rules for Protests, Appeals, and Overtures

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America cherish the important Reformation principle that all believers share the anointing of Christ, according to which they are prophets, priests, and kings under Him (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 12). By virtue of their office—the office of believers—they have a right to speak in ecclesiastical matters. This includes the right of protest, the right of appeal, and the right to submit overtures. These are rights that members of the church have, not only with respect to ecclesiastical decisions that involve themselves personally, but also with respect to any issue touching the spiritual welfare of God’s people.

The Church Order of Dordt, particularly Article 31 and the “decision” appended to it, addresses this right and the proper procedure to be followed in exercising it. So also do our own “Rules of Synod” and the Rules of Order adopted by each of the classes. A concise explanation of the ecclesiastical rules involved is the burden of what follows.

I. Definition of Terms

Protest, appeal, and overture, though not sharply distinguished in the Church Order, can be defined as follows:

- A. A *protest* is an objection brought directly to an assembly (consistory, classis, or synod) against a decision of that assembly.

- B. An *appeal* is an objection brought to a “major assembly” against a decision of a “minor assembly.” The order here is consistory to classis to synod—that is, one may appeal a decision of consistory to classis, and a decision of classis to synod.
- C. An *overture* is a request made to an assembly (consistory, classis, or synod) to initiate an action that is of importance to the church (if to consistory) or churches (if to classis or synod).

Overtures are intended to be the vehicle for initiating something new, i.e., something that has not before been part of the life of the church; or for requesting modification or elimination of an already existing practice, or alteration or nullification of a previous decision of an assembly.

II. Rules

A. Protests

1. The C.O. speaks of “protest” only by *implication*. Article 30 requires that every effort be made to “finish” (i.e., *settle*) matters in the minor assemblies before they are brought to the major assemblies. One who objects to an action of his consistory, therefore, may not begin by bringing that objection to classis. He must protest to his consistory. Only after it becomes clear that the matter *cannot be settled* in that minor assembly may he appeal to a major assembly. Likewise, one who is aggrieved by a decision of a classis must take up that matter directly with classis [cf. Rules of Order of Classes, V, 2, c, 3)], and if his objection is against a synodical decision he must protest

directly to synod (cf. Rules of Synod, VI, B, 3, d).

2. One who wishes to protest an action of a “major gathering” (classis or synod) must do so at the “immediately following meeting of the body to which appeal is directed” (cf. decision under Art. 31). This decision has been understood to apply, and has been made to apply, both to *appeals* and to *protests* (cf. Acts 1971, Art. 148 and Acts 1992, Art. 43). The point, here, is that one who wishes to protest an action of synod, or an action of classis, ordinarily has *one* opportunity to do so, viz., at the immediately following meeting of the assembly to which his protest is directed.
3. It is understood, of course, that protests (appeals and overtures, too) may be made only by *members of the church*. One who has been excommunicated from or has left the churches loses his right of protest in them (cf. Acts 1971, Art. 148). In addition, one who is under discipline has the right to protest and appeal only his own discipline case.

B. Appeals

1. The right of appeal is addressed in Article 31 of our Church Order. One who has protested a decision of his consistory, and has failed to convince that minor assembly, may appeal to the appropriate classis. In turn, if one is convinced that the decision rendered by the classis conflicts with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order, he may appeal it to synod.
2. If one decides to appeal a decision of classis to synod, he must do so to the immediately following meeting of that assembly (cf. decision pertaining to Art. 31).

“The immediately following meeting” should be understood to mean “the *first possible* synod” (cf. Acts 1971, Art. 148). Accordingly, an appeal against a decision of a May classis would not be expected to reach synod that same year, since the deadline for submission of material for the agenda of synod is April 15.

3. The deadline for material in the synodical agenda is April 15 (Rules of Synod, VI, A, 3). This deadline has been strictly enforced with regard to appeals (cf. Acts 1983, Art. 11). Careful attention must also be given to the deadline for classical agendas, viz., 30 days prior to their convening (cf. Rules of Order for Classes, V, 1, b).
4. An appellant must give “notification to the secretary of the body by whose decision he is aggrieved” (cf. decision pertaining to Art. 31). This includes more than a statement of intention. The concerned body must “receive an exact copy of the document going to the major gathering” (cf. Monsma and VanDellen, p. 203). Care should be taken by the appellant to provide this “exact copy” in a timely manner—i.e., far enough in advance of the April 15 deadline (if the appeal is to synod) to allow the classical clerk time to make reference to the appeal in his own report to synod, should he deem such reference necessary.
5. Article 31 declares that whatever is decided by a major assembly by majority vote, relative to an appeal, must be considered settled and binding—“unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order.” The implication here is that one may indeed attempt to demonstrate to an ecclesiastical assembly that its decision conflicts with

the Word of God or the Church Order, but during the process of protest and appeal he must submit to the decision by which he is aggrieved.

6. The stipulation of Article 46, requiring the reading of previous pertinent synodical decisions, though perhaps intended especially for the making of *overtures*, applies also to matters of *appeal* (cf. Acts 1985, Art. 33).

C. Overtures

1. The Rules of Order of the classes (V, 2, c) require that overtures directed to a classis come through a consistory. And the Rules of Synod (VI, B, 3, a and b) require that overtures reach synod only after being first examined by a classis. The author of an overture need not gain the *approval* of the minor assemblies, but synod will not treat an overture that has not first been evaluated at the consistorial and classical levels (Arts. 38 and 44 of Acts 2003).

An overture that is *approved* by a consistory must be forwarded to classis *by the consistory*. And if classis approves the overture, the overture must be forwarded to synod *by classis* (cf. Rules of Synod, VI, B, 3, a). When an overture is *rejected* by the consistory or by the classis, and the one making the overture remains convinced that he must press this issue, it becomes his responsibility to forward it [with the decision(s) of the body(ies) that rejected it] to the next broader assembly (cf. Rules of Order of both classes and Rules of Synod VI, B, 3, b).

2. Before a broader assembly decides a matter, consideration must be given to previous decisions that have a bearing on the matter at hand. The chief responsibil-

ity for observing this requirement (when it is applied to appeals and overtures) rests, not with the broader assembly, but with the appellant and with the author of the overture (cf. Art. 46 of the Church Order, and Acts of Synod 1985, Art. 33).

III. Summary

In summary, for a protest/appeal/overture to be declared “legally before classis or synod,” the following requirements apply:

- A. The deadline for material in the Agenda must be met:
 1. Synod: April 15 (Rules of Synod, VI, A, 3).
 2. Classes: 30 days before the convening of the assembly.
- B. The issue being addressed must be an “ecclesiastical matter” (Church Order, Art. 30).
- C. There must be evidence that a matter being appealed to classis or synod “could not be finished” in minor assemblies (Church Order, Art. 30).
- D. Protest/appeal must be made to the next possible gathering of the ecclesiastical body addressed (Church Order, Art. 31).
- E. Timely notification must be given to the secretary of the body whose decision is being appealed (Church Order, Art. 31).
- F. Proper channels, when applicable, must be followed: consistory to classis to synod (Rules of Synod VI, B, 3, a, b).
- G. Previous classical and synodical decisions must be researched and referenced (Church Order, Art. 46).

IV. Recommended Form

- A. A protest should include:

1. Verbatim decision (including grounds and references) to which one objects.
 2. A statement declaring precisely why the protestant believes the decision to be in error.
 3. Confessional and biblical grounds for the objection.
- B. An appeal should include:
1. Copy of the protest, with supporting documentation.
 2. Copy of the assembly's decision with regard to it.
 3. A brief explanation of the reason for appealing, and/or a brief summary of the case for synod's benefit. The emphasis, here, is on *brevity*. Nothing new may be introduced. The already existing protest is *the appellant's case*.
 4. A request that the broader assembly judge between the two.
- C. An overture should include:
1. A statement of the action requested, with grounds.
 2. Consideration of any and all previous decisions pertinent to the case.

Brevity is ordinarily in the best interests of the party protesting, appealing, or overturing.

Above all else, it should be clear on the very surface that the process is characterized by humility and mutual respect and motivated by love of the church and honor of its King.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 2003, Art. 74; Acts of Synod, 2004, Arts. 27, 29, Suppl. 17; Acts of Synod, 2010, Art. 78.)

**Articles of
Incorporation
and
By-laws of the
Protestant Reformed
Churches in America**

**Articles of Incorporation
under the
General Not For Profit Corporation Act**

[filed 11/15/61; adopted by Synod 1961

(special session, Nov. 8, Art. 9)]

We the undersigned, being natural persons of the age of twenty-one years or more and citizens of the United States, for the purpose of forming a corporation under the “General Not For Profit Corporation Act” of the State of Illinois, do hereby adopt the following Articles of Incorporation:

1. The name of the corporation is: Protestant Reformed Churches in America.
2. The period of duration of the corporation is: Perpetual.
3. The address of its initial **Registered Office** in the State of Illinois is: 9402 South 53rd Court Street in the village of Oak Lawn, County of Cook and the **name** of its initial **Registered Agent** at said address is: Rev. Gerald VandenBerg.
4. The first Board of Directors shall be 16 in number, their names and addresses as follows:

[Here are listed, in the official “Articles,” the names and addresses of the 16 minister and elder delegates to the special November 8 session of Synod 1961.]

5. The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is organized are: To promote the religious faith of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, and in furtherance of same but not in limitation thereof, and, moreover, in harmony with the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, as well as the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America:
 - a. To regulate the mission activities of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America;
 - b. To maintain a theological seminary;
 - c. To regulate all doctrinal, polity, and property matters pertaining to the member churches of the denomination in common;
 - d. To do each and every thing necessary, suitable, or proper, for the accomplishment of any one of the purposes or the attainment of any one or more of the objects herein enumerated.
6. The voting membership of this corporation shall at all times be confined to the duly delegated members of the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, according to the regulations prescribed in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, as from time to time amended by said Synod.
7. This corporation shall have and exercise all the power and general purposes permitted by the laws of the State of Illinois to corporations incorporated under the "General Not For Profit Corporation Act" of said State of Illinois.

w.s. Rev. Marinus Schipper

w.s. Rev. John A. Heys

w.s. Rev. Gerald VandenBerg

**Article of Amendment
to the
Articles of Incorporation**

[filed 1/30/92; adopted by Synod 1992 (Acts, Art. 56)]

BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED the following language shall be added to the purpose clause:

Said organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the organization shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on

- a. by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or

b. by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

BY-LAWS of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America

[adopted by Synod 1962 (Acts, Arts. 63-75, Suppl. X)]

I. Name

The name of the denomination organized under these by-laws shall be: Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

II. Doctrinal Basis

All the congregations of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America believe all the books of the Old

and New Testaments to be the Word of God and confess as the true expression of their faith the Thirty-seven Articles of the Confession of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Dordrecht Synod against the Remonstrants (Arminians). They believe that all articles and expressions of doctrine contained in the three above-named confessions, jointly called the Three Forms of Unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, and reject all doctrines repugnant thereto. Specifically, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America have, from their inception, rejected and do reject the Three Points of Common Grace, adopted by the Synod of 1924 of the Christian Reformed Church, as being in direct conflict with our Reformed confessions and principles. They desire to receive into their church communion everyone who agrees to their confession.

III. Governmental Basis

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America accept as their governmental basis the eighty-six articles of the Church Order of Dordrecht, 1618-19, as from time to time revised, amended, and interpreted by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. These articles, together with all regulations appended thereto, and together with the section entitled “Appendixes,” and as published under the title the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches [revised and reprinted 2010], are hereby made a part of the by-laws of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and are incorporated herein and made a part hereof by specific reference thereto.

IV. Purposes

The purposes of the corporation as stated in its certificate of incorporation are: To promote the religious faith of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, and in furtherance of same but not in limitation thereof, and, moreover, in harmony with the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, as well as the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America:

- A. To regulate the mission activities of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.
- B. To maintain a theological seminary.
- C. To regulate all doctrinal, polity, and property matters pertaining to the member churches of the denomination in common.
- D. To do each and every thing necessary, suitable, or proper, for the accomplishment of any one of the purposes or the attainment of any one or more of the objects herein enumerated.

V. Offices

The corporation shall have and continuously maintain in the State of Illinois a registered office and a registered agent whose office is identical with such registered office. Without prejudice to the corporation, other offices may be established in other states for the conduct of church business.

If the Stated Clerk is a resident of Illinois, he shall be the registered agent, and his office the registered office of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

If, in the interim between the annual meetings of the synod, the Stated Clerk removes from the State of Illinois, it shall be the duty of the Stated Clerk to

notify the Board of Trustees immediately, and the Board of Trustees shall designate as registered agent either the pastor or the clerk of one of the Illinois churches and shall file the necessary notice of change of registered agent with the Secretary of State. Said appointment shall be subject to the approval of the synod at its next meeting.

VI. Membership

Membership shall be of three classes:

A. Congregational

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America shall consist of the congregations that compose the denomination when these by-laws are adopted and of any future congregations which may be organized and received into the denomination in harmony with the regulations prescribed in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

B. Classical

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America shall further consist of congregations represented in various classes, according to the regulations prescribed in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. At the organization of this corporation, there shall be two such classes, Classis East and Classis West, the boundary between them being the eastern boundary of the State of Illinois. The constituting of new classes, as well as the fixing of classical boundaries, shall at all times be subject to the final determination of the synod.

C. Synodical

The synodical members shall be those ministers and elders, or their alternates, duly delegated

by their respective classes, according to the regulations prescribed in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The voting membership of this corporation shall at all times be confined to the duly delegated members of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, in harmony with the provisions of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches and as provided in Article 6 of the Certificate of Incorporation.

VII. The Synod

An annual meeting of the synod shall be held in accord with the provisions of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Said meeting shall be conducted according to the rules set forth in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Special and early meetings of the synod may be called in accord with the provisions of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches and of the by-laws.

Notice of the regular annual meeting or of special and early meetings shall be given to the churches by the consistory of the calling church, in harmony with the provisions of the Church Order. In case such notice in a synodically designated publication is impossible, the consistory of the calling church shall give notice by first-class mail to the consistory of every member congregation.

All affairs of the corporation shall be governed by the synod, except where the synod specifically authorizes any agent or agents to act in its behalf, either by regulations appended to the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, in these by-laws, or by special resolution.

VIII. Board of Trustees

A. Constituency

The Board of Trustees shall consist of six trustees. The Stated Clerk of synod and the Synodical Treasurer shall have terms that are concurrent with their terms of office. Also two ministers and two elders or ex-elders from the West Michigan area shall be elected for three-year overlapping terms. All terms shall begin immediately upon the adjournment of the annual meeting of the synod at which the trustees are elected and shall continue until their successors are elected.

All trustees shall be communicant members in good standing of a member congregation. Any trustee who during this term of service becomes disaffiliated from a member congregation or is disciplined either as a member or as an officebearer shall automatically lose his position as a trustee and his position, should he hold one, as an officer of the corporation.

B. Meetings

The Board of Trustees shall meet regularly

within thirty days after the adjournment of the annual synod at a time and place designated by the president and Stated Clerk. Of this meeting one week's written notice shall be given to all trustees. At this meeting the Stated Clerk shall direct the attention of the Board of Trustees to any matters decided upon by the synod which require the attention of the Board of Trustees.

Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called as necessary by the president and the Stated Clerk, or, in case of the inability of either officer to act, by the president or the Stated Clerk. If any two trustees address a written request to the Stated Clerk or to the president, a special meeting shall be called. At least one week's written notice shall be given of any special meeting.

A majority of the trustees shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Board of Trustees.

C. Officers and their duties

The president and vice-president of the Board of Trustees shall be elected by the Board of Trustees.

The president shall preside at all meetings of the board. At the direction of the board he shall sign, with the Stated Clerk, any deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments that the synod has authorized, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the synod or by statute to some other officer or agent of the corporation.

The vice-president shall act in the absence of the president or in case of the president's inability to act.

The secretary shall be known as the Stated Clerk of synod. In addition to the duties prescribed in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, he shall keep the permanent minutes of the synod and the minutes of the Board of Trustees in one or more books provided for that purpose; be custodian of the corporate records and of the seal of the corporation, and see that the seal of the corporation is affixed to all documents, the execution of which on behalf of the corporation under its seal is duly authorized in accordance with the provisions of these by-laws; sign, with the president and at the direction of the board, any deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments which the synod has authorized, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the synod or by statute to some other officer or agent of the corporation; and in general perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the synod.

The treasurer shall be known as the Synodical Treasurer. If required by the synod, he shall give a bond for the faithful discharge of his duties in such sum and with such surety as the synod shall direct. He shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the corporation; receive and give receipts for monies due and payable to the corporation; and deposit all such monies in the name of the corporation as directed by the synod. He shall sign all checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money,

notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the corporation as authorized by the synod and as directed by the Board of Trustees. He shall consult the synodical Finance Committee concerning any question or problem arising in the interim between synodical gatherings in regard to the execution of his duties. And in addition to the duties set forth here and in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, he shall perform such other duties as from time to time determined upon by the synod.

D. Powers and duties

The Board of Trustees shall manage the affairs of the corporation for all legal purposes. The Board of Trustees shall be limited in its powers by the provisions of these by-laws, except where other specific mandates are given it by the resolution of the synod.

The board shall make a detailed report, through its Stated Clerk, of all its official actions at the annual meeting of the synod.

Should the Stated Clerk remove from the state of Illinois, it shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to designate a new registered office and registered agent, in accord with the provisions of Article V of these by-laws.

The Board of Trustees shall, in case of the death, disaffiliation, or disability of the Stated Clerk or the treasurer, notify the alternate

designated by the synod, in order that said alternate may assume his duties and his position as member of the Board of Trustees. In case of the death, disaffiliation, or inability of said alternates, it shall have the power to appoint temporary replacements until the next annual or special meeting of the synod.

The Board of Trustees shall be empowered to employ legal counsel for the protection of the corporation's interests in the possession, purchase, sale, or mortgaging of any real or personal property, and in the execution of any contract or other legal instrument in which the corporation has an interest.

The Board of Trustees shall have the right, acting through the consistory of the calling church, when it becomes necessary for the protection of the corporation's interest in the possession and enjoyment of any real or personal property of the corporation:

1. To reconvene the synod of any given year at any time prior to the end of the calendar year in which the synod convened.
2. To convene an early meeting of any annual synod. Such special meetings may be called only upon four weeks' written notice to all consistories, and said written notice shall include an agenda of special matters to be considered.

The Board of Trustees shall have the right, in case the synod should fail to designate a calling

church, or in case the calling church should dissolve, disaffiliate, or be unable to fulfill its duties, to designate a calling church for the convening of the annual synod.

IX. Committees

The synod may designate one or more standing committees, or boards, each of which shall consist of ministers and/or elders, which committees or boards, to the extent provided for in their synodically approved constitutions, or in further mandates given them by resolution of the synod, shall have and exercise the authority of the corporation in the management of the affairs of the corporation. These boards or committees, upon the determination of the synod, shall secure articles of incorporation which must be in harmony with the purposes of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America; but no board shall apply for incorporation until its proposed charter shall have received the approval of the synod.

X. Strife and Division in Member Congregations

- A. In cases of strife and division, should any part of a congregation belonging to the denomination reject the faith set forth in Articles II and III of these By-Laws, or revolt against the constitutional provisions of the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and repudiate its obligations as a member church of the denomination, that part of the congregation, whether majority or minority of its membership, which, according to the provisions of the Church Order and upon appeal properly made and adjudication of classis and, if need be, of

synod, is found to be in unity with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and their faith, shall be recognized as the lawful congregation.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1963, Art. 133.)

- B. Should any member congregation, by unanimous vote of its membership, decide to withdraw from the denomination, it shall have the right to do so without penalty as to the corporate property of said congregation.

XI. Termination

In the event of a dissolution of this corporation, all of its assets shall be the property of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, an unincorporated association, and shall be subject to the control of the synod.

**Questions
for
Church Visitors**

Forms

**Rules for Synodical Delegates
*Ad Examina***

Questions for Church Visitation

Questions to the Full Consistory

1. Is the Word administered at least twice on the Lord's Day?
2. Is the Heidelberg Catechism regularly explained in the services for divine worship, so that no doctrine is left untreated?
3. In the reading services, are sermons used as much as possible which are produced in our own circle?
4. Is the Lord's Supper celebrated at least four times a year, preceded by a preparatory sermon, and followed by an applicatory sermon?
5. Does the consistory see to it that catechism classes are regularly conducted? Does the consistory determine the material for instruction? And does it see to it that the classes are regularly attended?
6. Are consistory members chosen in agreement with the rules of the Church Order?
7. Does the consistory meet regularly in accord with the needs of the congregation, at least once a month?
8. Are all matters coming before the consistory treated according to our Church Order, and are the minutes properly recorded and kept?
9. Is *censura morum* conducted among the members of the consistory before each Lord's Supper?
10. Is family visitation conducted faithfully, so that each family receives an official visit once a year?
11. Is church discipline faithfully exercised according to God's Word and the Church Order?

12. Is the consistory aware whether there are members of secret organizations in the congregation, and if so, is church discipline applied to them?
13. What is the spiritual condition of the congregation? Is there unity, peace, and love?
14. Do the children of the congregation, when they come to years of discretion, seek admission to the Lord's Supper? And if they are remiss, are they pointed to their obligation and treated as the need requires?
15. Is the congregation busy in the extension of God's kingdom, especially in the promotion of missions, to the best of its ability?
16. Are the synodical assessments faithfully paid, in agreement with the stipulated regulations?
17. Are the funds of the church and the poor fund and all proofs of possessions kept in a safe place so that no occasion is given for mistrust nor difficulties can arise on leave of office or death, and is the congregation properly incorporated with the State? Are the archives in order?
18. Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?
19. Are the Forms of Unity signed by all the members of the consistory, the ministers, elders, and deacons?

Questions to the Elders and Deacons in the Absence of the Minister

1. Does the minister in the preaching and in the administration of the sacraments do his work faithfully according to the Word of God, the Forms of Unity, and the Church Order?

2. Does the minister faithfully explain God's Word so that the congregation is built up through his preaching?
3. Does he regularly conduct the catechism classes, visit the sick faithfully, and take part in family visitation?
4. Does the minister reveal himself as a worthy example?
5. Is he devoted as much as possible to the exercise of his office?
6. Does he receive sufficient income to take care of the needs of his family, taking in consideration the character of his work?

Questions to the Minister and the Deacons in the Absence of the Elders

1. Do the elders regularly attend the services for divine worship as well as the consistory meetings?
2. Do they at set times attend the catechism classes to see how they are conducted and attended; and do they assist the minister when the need requires it in catechizing?
3. Do they see to it that Christian discipline is exercised, and that everything is done honorably and in good order?
4. Do the elders visit the sick and others in agreement with the calling of their office?
5. Do they try to prevent and remove all offense in the congregation, and try to comfort and instruct the members?
6. Do they conduct themselves as examples to the congregation in their family and outward walk of life?

**Questions to the Minister and Elders
in the Absence of the Deacons**

1. Do the deacons attend regularly the services for divine worship as well as the consistory meetings; and in case such meetings are held, do they also attend deacons' meetings?
2. Are they diligent in the collecting of the alms, and do they faithfully realize their calling in the care and comfort of the poor and oppressed?
3. Are the collections counted in the presence of the minister or one or more of the elders?
4. Do they administer the finances wisely, in consultation with the minister and the consistory?
5. Do they, in their family and outward life and walk, reveal themselves as exemplary Christians?

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1941, Arts. 40, 74-75, Suppl. IX; Acts of Synod, 1942, Arts. 26, 35, Suppl. I.)

FORMULA OF SUBSCRIPTION

We, the undersigned, professors of the Protestant Reformed Churches, ministers of the gospel, elders and deacons of the Protestant Reformed congregation of _____, of Classis _____, do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded

that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which were condemned by the above-mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis, and synod, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the consistory, classis, or synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion, and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of

our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above-mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the classis, or the synod, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 55; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

PUBLIC DECLARATION OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FORMS OF UNITY

Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place. The Savior therefore said, John 8:31: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." And again: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). In obedience to the Lord and for the instruction of all, the assembly of elders, delegated by the congregations of the Protestant Reformed Churches, deem it proper that they publicly declare what the confession is of the churches here mentioned and of every one of these churches.

All the congregations of these churches believe all the books of the Old and of the New Testaments to be the Word of God and confess as the true expression of their faith the Thirty-seven Articles of the Confession of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, formulated by the Synod of 1618-'19, together with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of the Dordrecht Synod against the Remonstrants (Arminians).

In conformity with the belief of all these congregations, we, as members of their synod, declare that from the heart we feel and believe that all articles and expressions of doctrine contained in the three above-named confessions, jointly called the Three Forms of Unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, whence we reject all doctrines repugnant thereto; that we desire to conform all our actions to them, agreeably to the accepted Church Order of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession.

May the King of the church work this faith in the hearts of many and increase it, and those that have received a like-precious faith with us show the grace shown them in fellowship to the glory of Him who prayed that all His own shall be one in Him.

FORM FOR CALL-LETTER

The Rev. _____

Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord!

Dear and Esteemed Brother:

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church at _____ herewith has the honor and the pleasure to inform you that, from a previously made nomination of _____, you, Rev. _____, have been chosen by _____ vote at a legal congregational meeting, held on the day of _____, 20____, to be their minister of the Word and of the sacraments.

On behalf of said congregation we therefore extend to you the call and come to you with the urgent request: “Come over and help us.”

The labors that we expect of you — should it please God to send you to us — are: preaching twice on the Lord’s Day, attending to catechetical instruction, to family visiting and calling on the sick, and furthermore to all things that pertain to the work of a faithful and diligent servant of the Lord—all these agreeably to the Word of God, as interpreted by our Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordrecht as amended by the rules of our churches.

Convinced that the laborer is worthy of his hire, to encourage you in the discharge of your duties, and to free you from all worldly cares and avocations while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us, we, the elders and deacons of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church, do promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum

of _____ dollars, in _____ payments, yearly, and every year as long as you continue the minister of this church, together with free use of parsonage, free use of a telephone, and: _____.

Moreover, we promise free transportation of yourself, your family, and your belongings (under provisions as stipulated in Articles 5, 10, and 11 of our Church Order).

Now, dear Reverend Brother, may the King of His church so impress this call upon your heart and give you light, that you may arrive at a decision that is pleasing to Him, and, if possible, for us mutually gratifying.

Done in consistory, this _____ day of _____, 20____, and subscribed with our names.

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of _____,

Deacons

Elders

_____, Counselor

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

**MINISTERIAL CERTIFICATE
of
DISMISSAL AND TESTIMONIAL**

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of _____ declares by these presents that the Rev. _____, in this church from _____ 20 _____ to _____ 20 _____, has ministered in the office of minister of the Divine Word faithfully and diligently, adhering in doctrine and life to the Word of God, as interpreted by our Forms of Unity and the Church Order.

And considering that sufficient reasons have been adduced for the consistory to acquiesce in his acceptance of the call of the church of _____, we unhesitatingly recommend him to the Classis _____ and to the church of _____, with the prayer that the great King of the church, who says to this one of His servants “go” and he goeth, and to that one “come” and he cometh, may make him there also a rich blessing.

Resolved to give him this testimonial of dismissal at our meeting of _____, 20_____.

The consistory of the above-named church,
_____, President
_____, Clerk

(The following section is to be used when a minister is called from a church in one classis to a church in the other. After completion, this certificate should be sent to the Classical Committee of the other classis.)

The Classical Committee of Classis _____, to which the church of _____ belongs, approves the above credential and transfers our beloved brother in the

ministry to Classis _____, in whose midst our brother expects to serve the church of _____ as pastor and minister.

On behalf of said classis,

Done this _____ day of _____, 20____.

The classical committee of Classis _____, having examined the above credentials, approves them and herewith authorizes the counselor of the church of _____ to proceed to the installation.

The above-named classical committee,

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

**MINISTERIAL CERTIFICATE
OF TESTIMONIAL
FOR EMERITI MINISTERS**

The Consistory of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____ declares that the Rev. _____, who has been declared emeritus from faithful service in the ministry, desires to transfer his membership to _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____.

We hereby transfer his ministerial credentials, with his membership, to said church (and to the Classis of which this church is a part) in order that they might supervise his support and work in emeritation.

Resolved to give him this testimonial of dismissal at our meeting of _____.

The consistory,
_____, President
_____, Clerk

Classis _____, of which the congregation of _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____ is a part, approves the transfer of the ministerial credentials of the Rev. _____, to Classis _____, in which is the _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____, because our brother desires to have his membership in this congregation as an emeritus minister.

On behalf of said classis,

Done this _____ day of _____, 20____.

The classical committee of Classis _____, having examined the above credentials, approves them and herewith authorizes the _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____ to supervise his support and work in emeritation.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 51.)

CLASSICAL CREDENTIALS

L.S.

To the Classis _____
of the Protestant Reformed Churches,
to convene _____, 20____,
at _____

The Consistory of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church has appointed the brethren _____ and elder _____ as delegates to represent said church at the meeting of classis above referred to. The alternate delegates are: elder _____ and elder _____.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all the deliberations and transactions of classis regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony with our Church Order.

Instructions: _____

By order of the consistory,

_____, President
_____, Clerk

Done in consistory _____, 20_____

(Cf. Minutes of Classis, June 6, 7, 1934; Acts of Synod, 1944, Arts. 66, 67; Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

SYNODICAL CREDENTIALS
L.S.

To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches,
to convene _____, 20_____,
at _____

Classis _____ of the Protestant Reformed
Churches has appointed the brethren:

MINISTERS		ELDERS	
<i>Primi</i>	<i>Secundi</i>	<i>Primi</i>	<i>Secundi</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

as delegates to represent said classis at the meeting of synod
above referred to.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in
all the deliberations and transactions of synod regarding all
matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in
agreement with the Word of God according to the conception
of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant
Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony with our Church
Order.

By order of the classis,

_____, President
_____, Clerk

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1941, Art. 81; Acts of Synod, 1942, Arts.
26, 34, Suppl. I, p. XI.)

**TRANSFER OF BAPTIZED MEMBERS
L.S.**

The Consistory of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church hereby certifies that _____ and _____ are (is a) baptized member(s) of the above congregation, and therefore are (is) subject to the instruction and discipline of that church.

At _____ request we hereby transfer our brother (sister) to the Protestant Reformed Church of _____, commending him (her) (them) to your Christian fellowship and requesting the consistory to take him (her) (them) under their supervision and in all cases to serve him (her) (them) with Christian counsel.

Date of birth: _____.

Date of baptism: _____.

Done in consistory _____,
_____, President
_____, Clerk

To be returned at the earliest possible moment:

The certificate of _____ from the _____ Protestant Reformed Church has been duly received and accepted.

Dated _____

_____, President
_____, Clerk

Notice: The above-mentioned shall be considered still a member of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church until this receipt is returned properly signed.

The certificate of _____
Sent to _____

Date sent _____

Receipt returned _____

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

TRANSFER OF CONFESSING MEMBERS

L.S.

The Consistory of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____ hereby certifies that _____ are/is a member(s) of the above congregation and, as far as known to us, are/is sound in faith and upright in walk.

At _____ request, we hereby transfer our brother/(and) sister to the _____ Protestant Reformed Church of _____, commending them/him/her to your Christian fellowship and requesting the consistory to take them/him/her under their supervision and in all cases to serve them/him/her with Christian counsel.

Membership Record

Last Name: _____ Phone No.: _____
Address: _____

	Given Name	Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Date of Profession
Single	_____	_____	_____	_____
Husband	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wife	_____	_____	_____	_____
Children	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

Done in consistory _____

_____, President

_____, Clerk

Membership Receipt

please return as soon as possible

The certificate of _____ from the
 _____ Protestant Reformed Church has been
 duly received and accepted.

_____, President

_____, Clerk

Dated _____ Church: _____

Notice: The above-mentioned shall be considered still
 member(s) of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church
 until this receipt is returned properly signed.

The certificate of _____
 was sent to the _____ Protestant
 Reformed Church.

Date sent _____

Receipt returned _____

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946,
 Arts. 17, 19; Acts of Synod, 2002, Art. 51.)

CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL
L.S.

This is to certify that _____ and _____ has (have) been (a) member(s) of the _____ Protestant Reformed Church _____ until the date specified below.

Upon _____ request this certificate was given him (them).

Done in consistory _____, President
_____, Clerk

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Arts. 40, 51; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

Rules for Synodical Delegates
Ad Examina

- I. At the conclusion of the examination, at which they shall have the privilege to cross-question the candidate, these delegates shall submit a joint report and their reason for their advice.
- II. If the vote of the classis is contrary to the advice of the delegates, and no agreement can be reached, the question of admission shall be decided by synod. Until such time the ordination of the candidate shall be postponed, and in the meanwhile no congregation of another classis shall have the right to extend a call to him and no classis shall be permitted to examine him.

III. The delegates for examination shall submit a report of all their activities to synod.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Art. 57; Acts of Synod, 1946, Arts. 17, 19.)

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
of the
PROTESTANT REFORMED
CHURCHES

A Brief Exposition of the Confessions
Regarding Certain Points of Doctrine
As Maintained by the
Protestant Reformed Churches

*Adopted by the
Synod of 1951*

**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
of the
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES**

Preamble

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, *to be used only by the Mission Committee and the missionaries for the organization of prospective churches on the basis of Scripture and the confessions as these have always been maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches and as these are now further explained in regard to certain principles.*

The Protestant Reformed Churches stand on the basis of Scripture as the infallible Word of God and of the Three Forms of Unity. Moreover, they accept the liturgical forms used in the public worship of our churches, such as:

Form for the Administration of Baptism, Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, Form of Excommunication, Form of Readmitting Excommunicated Persons, Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word, Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons, Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology, Form of Ordination of Missionaries, Form for the Confirmation of Marriage Before the Church, and the Formula of Subscription.

On the basis of this Word of God and these confessions:

- I. They repudiate the errors of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, 1924, which maintain:
 - A. That there is a grace of God to all men, including the reprobate, manifest in the common gifts to all men.
 - B. That the preaching of the gospel is a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all that externally hear the gospel.
 - C. That the natural man through the influence of common grace can do good in this world.
 - D. Over against this they maintain:
 1. That the grace of God is always particular, i.e., only for the elect, never for the reprobate.
 2. That the preaching of the gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, nor a conditional offer to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith.
 3. That the unregenerate man is totally incapable of doing any good, wholly depraved, and therefore can only sin.

For proof we refer to **Canons I, A, 6-8:**

Article 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). According to

which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

Article 7. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy and for the praise of His glorious grace; as it is written: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be

holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

Article 8. There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which He hath ordained that we should walk therein.

Canons II, A, 5:

Article 5. Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

The Canons in II, 5 speak of the preaching of the promise. It presents the promise, not as general, but as particular, i.e., as for believers, and, therefore, for the elect. This *preaching* of the particular promise is promiscuous to all that hear

the gospel, with the *command*, not a condition, to repent and believe.

Canons II, B, 6:

Article 6. Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching, that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace.

Rejection: For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

For further proof we refer to the Heidelberg Catechism III, 8 and XXXIII, 91:

Q. 8. Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Q. 91. But what are good works?

Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and

to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations or the institutions of men.

And also from the **Belgic Confession, Article XIV:**

Article XIV. We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life which he had received he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life; having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God, and retained only a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us, saying: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not: where St. John calleth men darkness.

Therefore we reject all that is taught repugnant to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin, and has nothing of himself, unless it is given from heaven. For who may presume to boast that he of himself can do any good, since Christ saith, No man can come to Me except the Father, which hath sent Me, draw him? Who will glory in his own will, who understands that to be carnally minded is enmity against God? Who can

speak of his knowledge, since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God? In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God? And therefore what the apostle saith ought justly to be held sure and firm, that God worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. For there is no will nor understanding conformable to the divine will and understanding but what Christ hath wrought in man, which He teaches us when He saith, Without Me ye can do nothing.

Once more we refer to **Canons III/IV, A, 1-4:**

Article 1. Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy. But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts, and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

Article 2. Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature.

Article 3. Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable

of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation.

Article 4. There remain, however, in man since the fall the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

II. They teach on the basis of the same confessions:

- A. That election, which is the unconditional and unchangeable decree of God to redeem in Christ a certain number of persons, is the sole cause and fountain of all our salvation, whence flow all the gifts of grace, including faith. This is the plain teaching of our confessions in the Canons of Dordrecht, I, A, 6, 7. See above.

And in the **Heidelberg Catechism XXI, 54**, we read:

Q. 54. What believest thou concerning the “holy catholic church” of Christ?

That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof.

This is also evident from the doctrinal part of the **Form for the Administration of Baptism**, where we read:

For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

- B. That Christ died only for the elect and that the saving efficacy of the death of Christ extends to them only. This is evident from the **Canons, II, A, 8:**

Article 8. For this was the sovereign counsel

and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and, having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

This article very clearly teaches:

1. That all the covenant blessings are for the elect alone.
2. That God's promise is unconditionally for them only: for God cannot promise what was not objectively merited by Christ.
3. That the promise of God bestows the objective right of salvation not upon all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, not upon all that are baptized, but only upon the spiritual seed.

This is also evident from other parts of our con-

fessions, as, for instance, **Heidelberg Catechism XXV, 65, 66:**

Q. 65. Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed?

From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.

Q. 66. What are the sacraments?

The sacraments are holy, visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.

If we compare with these statements from the Heidelberger what was taught concerning the saving efficacy of the death of Christ in Canons II, A, 8, it is evident that the promise of the gospel which is sealed by the sacraments concerns only the believers, that is, the elect.

This is also evident from **Heidelberg Catechism XXVII, 74:**

Q. 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes; for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian

church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

That in this question and answer of the Heidelberg not all the children that are baptized, but only the spiritual children, that is, the elect, are meant is evident. For:

- a. Little infants surely cannot fulfill any conditions. And if the promise of God is for them, the promise is infallible and unconditional, and therefore only for the elect.
- b. According to Canons II, A, 8, which we quoted above, the saving efficacy of the death of Christ is for the elect alone.
- c. According to this answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to the little children no less than to the adult. And God surely fulfills His promise. Hence, that promise is surely only for the elect.

The same is taught in the **Belgic Confession, Articles XXXIII-XXXV**. In Article XXXIII we read:

Article XXXIII. We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities, hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us His promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith, which He hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses both that which

He signifies to us by His Word and that which He works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which He imparts to us. For they are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God worketh in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the signs are not in vain or insignificant, so as to deceive us. For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them, without whom they would be of no moment.

And from Article XXXIV, which speaks of holy baptism, we quote:

Article XXXIV. We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath made an end, by the shedding of His blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin; and that He, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, hath instituted the sacrament of baptism instead thereof, by which we are received into the church of God and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to Him whose ensign and banner we bear, and which serves as a testimony to us that He will forever be our gracious God and Father.

Therefore He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with pure water, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” thereby signifying to us that, as water washeth away the filth of the body when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled upon him, so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath

unto children of God. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Therefore the ministers, on their part, administer the sacrament and that which is visible, but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of His fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds.

Article XXXIV speaks of holy baptism. That all this, washing and cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness, the renewal of our hearts, is only the fruit of the saving efficacy of the death of Christ and therefore is only for the elect is very evident. The same is true of what we read in the same article concerning the baptism of infants:

Article XXXIV. And indeed Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the "circumcision of Christ."

If, according to Article 8 of the Second Head of Doctrine, A, in the Canons, the saving efficacy of the death of Christ extends only to the elect, it follows that when in this article of the Belgic Confession it is stated that “Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for the adult persons,” also here the reference is only to the elect children.

Moreover, that the promise of the gospel which God signifies and seals in the sacraments is not for all is also abundantly evident from **Article XXXV** of the same **Belgic Confession**, which speaks of the holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. For there we read:

Article XXXV. We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper to nourish and support those whom He hath already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His church.

In the same article we read:

Further, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men. The ungodly indeed receives the sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of the sacrament—as Judas and Simon the sorcerer both indeed received the sacrament but not Christ who was signified by it, of whom believers only are made partakers.

It follows from this that both the sacraments, as well as the preaching of the gospel, are a savor of death unto death for the reprobate, as well as a savor of life unto life for the elect. Hence, the

promise of God, preached by the gospel, signified and sealed in both the sacraments, is not for all but for the elect only.

And that the election of God, and consequently the efficacy of the death of Christ and the promise of the gospel, is not conditional is abundantly evident from the following articles of the Canons.

Canons I, A, 10:

Article 10. The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election, which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation; but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil,” etc., it was said (namely to Rebecca): “the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:11-13). “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

In **Canons I, B, 2**, the errors are repudiated of those who teach:

Article 2. That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute....

And in the same chapter of **Canons I, B, 3**, the errors are repudiated of those who teach:

Article 3. That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith, which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life....

Again, in the same chapter of **Canons I, B, 5**, the errors are rejected of those who teach that:

Article 5. ... faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.

Finally, we refer to the statement of the **Baptism Form**:

And although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ....

That here none other than the elect children of the covenant are meant and that they are unconditionally, without their knowledge, received unto

grace in Christ, in the same way as they are under the condemnation of Adam, is very evident.

- C. That faith is not a prerequisite or condition unto salvation, but a gift of God, and a God-given instrument whereby we appropriate the salvation in Christ. This is plainly taught in the following parts of our confessions:

Heidelberg Catechism VII, 20:

Q. 20. Are all men then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?

No, only those who are ingrafted into Him, and receive all His benefits, by a true faith.

Belgic Confession, Article XXII:

Article XXII. We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or, if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works

which He has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

Confer also Belgic Confession, Articles XXXIII-XXXV, quoted above.

In **Canons III/IV, A, 10** we read:

Article 10. But that others who are called by the gospel obey the call and are converted is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son, that they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and may glory, not in themselves, but in the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

Again, in the same chapter of **Canons III/IV, A, 14**, we read:

Article 14. Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by

the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

III. Seeing then that this is the clear teaching of our confession,

A. We repudiate:

1. The teaching:

- a. That the promise of the covenant is conditional and for all that are baptized.
- b. That we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true.

For proof we refer to Canons I, A, 6-8; and the doctrinal part of the **Baptism Form:**

The principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism are these three:

First. That we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God except we are born again. This the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, whereby the impurity of our souls is signified, and we admonished to loathe and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves.

Secondly. Holy baptism witnesseth and

sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Thirdly. Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore are we by God, through baptism, admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old

nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God.

The Thanksgiving after baptism:

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism. We beseech Thee, through the same Son of Thy love, that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they then may acknowledge Thy fatherly goodness and mercy, which Thou hast shown to them and us, and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee, and Thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the one only true God. Amen.

The prayer refers only to the elect; we cannot presuppose that it is for all.

2. The teaching that the promise of the covenant is an objective bequest on the part of God, giving to every baptized child the right to Christ and all the blessings of salvation.
- B. And we maintain:
1. That God surely and infallibly fulfills His promise to the elect.
 2. The sure promise of God which He realizes in us as rational and moral creatures not only makes it impossible that we should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness but also confronts us with the obligation of love, to walk in a new and holy life, and constantly to watch unto prayer.

All those who are not thus disposed, who do not repent but walk in sin, are the objects of His just wrath and excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

That the preaching comes to all; and that God seriously commands to faith and repentance; and that to all those who come and believe He promises life and peace.

Grounds:

- a. The Baptism Form, part 3.
- b. The **Form for the Lord's Supper**, under "thirdly":

All those, then, who are thus disposed, God will certainly receive in mercy and count them worthy partakers of the table of His Son Jesus Christ. On the contrary, those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Therefore, we also, according to the command of Christ and the apostle Paul,

admonish all those who are defiled with the following sins to keep themselves from the table of the Lord, and declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ; such as all idolaters, all those who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures; all those who worship images; all enchanters, diviners, charmers, and those who confide in such enchantments; all despisers of God, and of His Word, and of the holy sacraments; all blasphemers; all those who are given to raise discord, sects, and mutiny in church or state; all perjured persons; all those who are disobedient to their parents and superiors; all murderers, contentious persons, and those who live in hatred and envy against their neighbors; all adulterers, whoremongers, drunkards, thieves, usurers, robbers, gamesters, covetous, and all who lead offensive lives.

All these, while they continue in such sins, shall abstain from this meat (which Christ hath ordained only for the faithful), lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier.

c. **The Heidelberg Catechism XXIV, 64; XXXI, 84; XLV, 116:**

Q. 64. But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

By no means; for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

Q. 84. How is the kingdom of heaven

opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?

Thus: when according to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted; according to which testimony of the gospel God will judge them, both in this and in the life to come.

Q. 116. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them.

Canons III/IV, A, 12, 16, 17:

Article 12. And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that after God has performed His part it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not,

to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received.

Article 16. But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign, in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work wrought in us, man could have no hope of recovering from his fall by his own free will, by the abuse of which, in

a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

Article 17. As the almighty operation of God whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural life does not exclude, but requires, the use of means, by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence, so also the before mentioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory, and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, sacraments, and discipline; so, even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what He of His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both of means and of their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.

Canons III/IV, B, 9:

Article 9. Who teach that grace and free

will are partial causes, which together work the beginning of conversion, and that grace, in order of working, does not precede the working of the will; that is, that God does not efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves and determines to do this.

Rejection: For the ancient church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians, according to the words of the apostle: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy” (Rom. 9:16). Likewise: “For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7). And: “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Canons V, A, 14:

Article 14. And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

Belgic Confession, Article XXIV:

Article XXIV. We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true that this

justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that, on the contrary, without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith which is called in Scripture a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word.

These works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace; howbeit they are of no account towards our justification. For it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works; otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good before the tree itself is good.

Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?), nay, we are beholden to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Let us therefore attend to what is written: When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do. In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.

Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although

we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus, then, we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed, if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior.

3. That the ground of infant baptism is the command of God and the fact that according to Scripture He established His covenant in the line of continued generations.

IV. Besides, the Protestant Reformed Churches:

Believe and maintain the autonomy of the local church.

For proof we refer to the **Belgic Confession, Article XXXI**:

Article XXXI. We believe that the ministers of God's Word, and the elders and deacons, ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teacheth. Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by indecent means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him, that he may have testimony of his calling and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord.

As for the ministers of God's Word, they have equally the same power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all ministers of Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the church. Moreover, that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or slighted, we say that every one ought to esteem the ministers of God's Word and the elders of the church very highly for their