

THE  
FORM OF  
GOVERNMENT  
OF THE  
ASSOCIATE REFORMED  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



As Approved by the General Synod in 1972  
With Amendments Effective To June 2007



## FORM OF GOVERNMENT

- I. CONCERNING THE CHURCH
  - A. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church..... 177
  - B. Nature of the Church. .... 177
  - C. Mission and Message of the Church..... 177
  
- II. CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH
  - A. General Statement—The Church’s Need for Government..... 179
  - B. The Presbyterian Form of Church Government —A Historical Statement ..... 179
  - C. The Nature and Extent of the Power of Church Government..... 180
  
- III. CONCERNING A PARTICULAR CONGREGATION OF THE CHURCH
  - A. Definition and Purpose of a Congregation .... 181
  - B. Definition and Purpose of a Mission Congregation ("Mission") ..... 181
  - C. The Structure of a Congregation ..... 181
  - D. Procedure for Organizing a New Congregation..... 184
  - E. Procedure for Uniting Two or More Congregations ..... 187
  - F. Procedure for Forming Other Congregational Relationships ..... 187
  - G. Procedure for Dissolving a Congregation..... 187
  - H. The Congregational Meeting
    - 1. Purpose..... 187
    - 2. Procedure and Governing Rules..... 188
  
- IV. CONCERNING THE TOTAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH
  - A. Biblical Use of the Word “Ministry” ..... 189
  - B. Preparation for this Ministry ..... 189
  - C. Use of the Word “Minister” ..... 189

V.	CONCERNING THE CHURCH MEMBER	
	A. Definition of a Church Member .....	190
	B. Responsibility of a Church Member .....	190
	C. Procedures for Individuals Being Received into Communicant Church Membership	
	1. By Profession of Faith in Jesus Christ .....	190
	2. By Reaffirmation of Faith in Jesus Christ	191
	3. By Transfer of Membership .....	192
	4. Associate Members.....	192
	D. Procedures for Members Transferring to Other Congregations.....	192
	E. Rolls of Church Members.....	193
VI.	CONCERNING THE ACT OF ORDINATION.....	195
VII.	CONCERNING DEACONS	
	A. Description and Qualifications of a Deacon ....	196
	B. Individual Responsibilities.....	196
	C. The Diaconate	
	1. Its Purpose .....	196
	2. Its Organization.....	196
	3. Its Procedure.....	197
	4. Its Relationship to the Session.....	197
VIII.	CONCERNING RULING ELDERS	
	A. Description and Qualifications of a Ruling Elder.....	198
	B. Individual Responsibilities.....	198
IX.	CONCERNING THE ELECTION, ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS	
	A. Eligibility.....	199
	B. Terms of Office .....	199
	C. Election Procedure.....	200
	D. Ordination and Installation.....	201
	E. Reinstallation.....	203
	F. Record and Report.....	203

X.	CONCERNING MINISTERS	
	A. Description and Qualifications of a Minister ..	204
	B. Responsibilities of a Minister	
	1. As a Pastor of a Particular Congregation....	205
	2. As a Teacher .....	205
	3. As an Evangelist .....	206
	4. As a Missionary .....	206
	5. In Other Positions.....	207
	C. Procedure for Licensure.....	207
	D. Procedures for Ordination and Installation	
	1. Candidate for the Ministry .....	208
	2. Procedure for Ordination.....	209
	3. Procedure for Installation .....	212
	E. Procedure for Calls to Particular Congregations .....	213
	F. Procedure for the Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships .....	216
	G. Procedure for Transferring Ministers from One Presbytery to Another	
	1. Transfer Within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church .....	217
	2. Transfer from Another Denomination .....	217
	3. Transfer to Another Denomination .....	218
	H. Provision for Calls to Other Ministries.....	218
XI.	CONCERNING THE SESSION	
	A. Its Purpose .....	219
	B. Its Authority and Responsibilities.....	219
	C. Its Organization .....	222
XII.	CONCERNING THE PRESBYTERY	
	A. Its Purpose .....	224
	B. Its Authority and Responsibilities.....	224
	C. Its Composition and Organization.....	226
XIII.	CONCERNING THE GENERAL SYNOD	
	A. Its Purpose .....	229
	B. Its Authority and Responsibilities.....	229
	C. Its Composition and Organization.....	234
	D. The Ministry of Women.....	237

XIV.	CONCERNING BOARDS, ECCLESIASTICAL COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES	
	A. Boards	
	1. Purpose.....	238
	2. Authority and Responsibility.....	238
	3. Composition and Organization .....	239
	4. Any Elected Member.....	239
	B. Ecclesiastical Commissions	
	1. Purpose.....	239
	2. Authority and Responsibilities .....	239
	3. Composition and Organization .....	240
	C. Committees	
	1. Purpose.....	240
	2. Authority and Responsibility.....	241
	3. Composition and Organization .....	241
	4. Any Elected Member.....	241
XV.	CONCERNING AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND CHURCH UNION	
	A. The Constitution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church .....	242
	B. Church Union .....	242
	C. Regulations Governing Amendments and Church Union .....	243
XVI.	CONCERNING MATTERS UNPROVIDED FOR.....	245

## CHAPTER I

### CONCERNING THE CHURCH

#### A. JESUS CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

1. The only King and Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been given by God the Father, who "...raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand..., far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:20-23)

2. Christ, being "...ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things," (Ephesians 4:10) gave gifts to His Church. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, He is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit. From His throne of glory, He rules the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men, and the benefits of all His functions of prophet, priest and king are effectually applied by His Holy Spirit.

#### B. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

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

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

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

#### C. MISSION AND MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

1. The mission of the Church is a mission of witness and ministry. Christ called the people of the Church "witnesses."

Paul saw God as giving gifts to equip the Church's people for the work of ministry.

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

3. God the Father has given the Holy Spirit through Christ to the world to reveal and to make the ministry of the Church effective.

4. The message of the Church's ministry is the message of reconciliation. Through the varieties of its ministry, the Church is to bear witness that "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself..." (2 Corinthians 5:19) to the end that all people might be reconciled both to God and to one another.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

#### A. GENERAL STATEMENT—THE CHURCH'S NEED FOR GOVERNMENT

1. In order that the Church shall achieve desired goals as given to it by God, it is necessary that its efforts and its energies be directed in an orderly manner. Government based on Scriptural example and instruction is logically the means of accomplishing such necessary direction and coalescence of energy. Leadership and authority, both of which are necessary to government, are defined for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church by this *Form of Government*.

2. While the Scriptures do not teach a detailed form of church government, the Presbyterian form—that which governs the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church—is agreeable to and founded upon Old and New Testament principles. The Presbyterian form of church government is government by presbyters (elders) assembled in church courts.

#### B. THE PRESBYTERIAN FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT—A HISTORICAL STATEMENT

1. The Presbyterian form of church government was given its first modern form by John Calvin in Geneva in 1542. Church men from other countries, including Scotland's John Knox, studied under Calvin and developed a strong attachment to the principles of Presbyterianism. Knox, upon his return to Scotland in 1560, adapted Presbyterianism for Scottish purposes in the first "Book of Discipline"—the basis for the government of the subsequent Church of Scotland, and for the government of all those denominations having their roots in the Reformation Church of that country. Andrew Melville's second "Book of Discipline," ratified in 1581, brought Presbyterianism closer to its present form.

2. The Westminster Assembly, which met in London in 1643, wrote, in addition to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the "Form of Presbyterian Church Government," which was subsequently adopted in England, Ireland, and Scotland. The Associate Church (1733) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (1743) both continued to adhere to this document

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

3. In 1799, the book of church government was revised and adopted, and included as a part of the one-volume "Constitution" of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (together with the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, a book of discipline, directories for public and private worship and several appendices). When the Associate Reformed Synod of the South withdrew from the parent Church in 1822 to form an independent denomination, it continued to subscribe to this document until, in 1903, prompted by the question of the use of musical instruments in churches, a new revision was adopted, and printed first in 1908. In 1929, the Synod ordered a further revision which was completed and adopted in 1934, and printed first in 1937. In 1949, an additional revision was ordered, which became the "Constitution" of 1953.

4. This present *Form of Government* was ordered by the General Synod of 1965, and was adopted in 1971.

### C. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE POWER OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. Church government is not intended to serve an arbitrary or dictatorial function. Its primary purpose is to promote order within the Church so that the Church may best fulfill its divinely appointed responsibilities. The disciplinary authority within the Church is also designed to promote order within the Church and to cultivate a spiritual climate in which the work of Jesus Christ can be effectively accomplished for the glory of God.

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

\*Minutes of the Associate Reformed Synod—November 1, 1782—Page 12.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCERNING A PARTICULAR CONGREGATION OF THE CHURCH

#### A. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF A CONGREGATION

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

2. The purpose of a particular congregation is to place corporate worship within the reach of all, to bring the lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to build them up in the Christian faith and to prepare them for Christian service.

#### B. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF A MISSION CONGREGATION (“MISSION”)

1. A mission is a company of Christians, with their children, who are meeting together with the intention of forming an organized congregation of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. It is distinguished from an organized congregation in that it is not governed by its own session, but is governed through a provisional session appointed by the presbytery.

2. The goal of a mission congregation is to become an organized congregation with its own session.

3. Mission congregations shall maintain membership rolls consisting of active, inactive, and non-communicant members as well as the names of those receiving the Sacrament of Baptism and the marriages and deaths of members. The mission shall maintain members on behalf of presbytery until such time as the mission becomes an organized congregation with its own session.

#### C. THE STRUCTURE OF A CONGREGATION

1. Each congregation should have a pastor (minister) and a sufficient number of ruling elders and deacons. In a congregation in which it is impossible or impracticable for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.

2. A pastor is necessary to the edification of a congregation, but he is not essential to a formal organization.

3. The membership of a congregation shall consist of com-

municant and non-communicant members. (see Chapter V.A)

4. A congregation may have such organizations as are necessary and desirable for the edification of the Church.

5. There shall be a congregational treasurer elected by the congregation. His term of office shall be for one year and he shall be eligible to succeed himself. He shall be an advisory member of the diaconate when not a regular member thereof and shall be entrusted with the regular offerings of the congregation. He shall keep an accurate accounting of all receipts and expenditures.

6. There may be a congregational chairman elected by the congregation. His term of office shall be for one year and he shall be eligible to succeed himself.

7. Title to the property of a particular congregation may be held in the corporate form or by trustees, consistent with the provisions of civil law in the jurisdiction where such property is located. A congregation may, where permitted by civil law, hold title to various parts of its property by trustees and/or one or more corporations as long as the use thereof does not violate the obligation of the congregation to the Presbytery or the General Synod.

If a congregation is incorporated under the laws of the state in which it is located, the provisions of its charter and by-laws shall always be in accordance with the *Form of Government* of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. All the active communicant members of the congregation shall be members of such corporation and its officers shall be elected from its membership.

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

The corporation or individual trustees, and their successors in office, shall hold title to all property belonging to the congregation and upon authority from and on behalf of such congregation may buy, sell, lease or mortgage property for the congregation; shall accept and execute deeds; shall hold and defend the same; and shall manage any special fund so entrusted for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation. The powers and duties of the officers of the corporation and of the individual trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session and the diaconate.

**Self-Supporting Churches:**

(a) Title to local church property on which the manse, sanctuary and educational buildings are situated, together with adjacent parking lot, shall be acquired, mortgaged, held and transferred by the local congregations under the jurisdiction and control of the Presbytery, with the local congregations paying all expenses incident or appurtenant thereto.

(b) Title to all other local church property shall be acquired, mortgaged, held and transferred by the local congregations and shall not be subject to the control or jurisdiction of the Presbytery, subject only to the right of appeal of any member of the congregation.

(c) Title to church property which is presently leased to a local congregation shall not be affected by these property rules; however, such congregation shall be subject to the two-year limitation withdrawal rule.

**Missions and Non-Self-Supporting Churches:**

(a) Title to local church property of missions and congregations that are non-self-supporting shall be acquired, mortgaged, held and transferred by the Presbytery in which such property is located.

(b) The Presbytery shall use its discretion as to whether to continue to hold title to such property and when to transfer same to the local congregation.

**Withdrawal of Congregations and Church Property:**

If sixty-five per cent (65%) or more of the active membership of any local congregation, as certified by its session, votes to withdraw, the Presbytery shall be so advised in writing at its next stated meeting. At such meeting, Presbytery shall appoint a commission to counsel, advise and mediate with the local congregation in order to effect reconciliation or in the alternative an orderly withdrawal. Upon the expiration of two years from the date of the stated meeting of Presbytery at which such withdrawal notice was received, the commission shall conduct a second election and shall certify the results thereof to the next stated meeting of Presbytery. If the elections results show that sixty-five (65%) per cent or more of the active membership of the local congregation as certified by its session voted in favor of withdrawal, the Presbytery may at such stated meeting approve the withdrawal of such congregation. Upon withdrawal, the Presbytery may require some equitable financial settlement from the withdrawing congregation in regard to property theretofore under its jurisdiction and control, taking into consideration such factor

**Amendment No. 6 effective June 15, 1982 (III. B. 7 - Withdrawal)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (III.C.7-Missions and Non-Self Supporting Churches (a))**

as previous contributions or support by the Presbytery or the General Synod; previous contributions or support by the local congregation to the Presbytery or the General Synod; and the percentage of the active membership of the local congregation voting in favor of withdrawal. In particular, both the withdrawing body and the Presbytery will recognize their responsibility, both financial and spiritual, to the minority that remains in the denomination.

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

#### D. PROCEDURE FOR ORGANIZING A NEW CONGREGATION

1. It is lawful and expedient to organize a new congregation wherever a sufficient number of Christians of the same faith and order are found, if said organization will add to the efficiency of the Church. It is also lawful and expedient to spread the Gospel by developing new congregations in geographical areas that lack a sufficient witness to the Gospel

2. Prior to organization, a presbytery may upon its own initiative establish a mission, or grant mission status at the request of a group of Christians who are working toward developing an organized congregation. Until such time as the group is organized and officers are elected in the regular manner and a pastor is elected and installed, the presbytery shall

a. appoint for the mission a provisional session of Associate Reformed Presbyterian ruling elders from neighboring congregations, wherever possible, or ruling elders who meet the standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and

b. appoint an ordained minister to serve as moderator, or

c. issue a call to an ordained minister to serve as the mission developer. Such a call shall be issued in accordance with the provisions for calls to particular congregations, chapter X.E, sections 11-16. The mission developer shall serve as moderator of the provisional session.

3. A presbytery may, upon the request of an organized congregation within the presbytery, grant mission status to a group that this sponsoring church is developing. Until the mission is organized and officers are elected in the regular manner the presbytery shall

a. Appoint the session of the sponsoring church to oversee the work on behalf of presbytery, or

b. Appoint a provisional session of Associate Reformed Presbyterian ruling elders from neighboring congregations, wherever possible, or ruling elders who meet the standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and

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

d. Issue a call to an ordained minister to serve as mission developer. Such a call shall be issued in accordance with the provisions for calls to particular congregations, chapter X.E, sections 11-16. The mission developer shall serve as moderator of the provisional session. The Presbytery shall consider input from the sponsoring church in the selection of the mission developer.

4. A presbytery may, upon its own initiative or at the request of Synod's Board of Outeach North Amereica, call an evangelist to:

a. do preparatory work within the bounds of the presbytery toward establishing new missions, or

b. develop missions outside the bounds of the presbytery with the approval of the presbytery, provided that this work receives prior approval from General Synod, and provided that any work within the bounds of another presbytery must receive the prior approval of that presbytery.

5. A congregation can be organized only by the authority of the Presbytery, which shall consult the General Synod, or the proper agency thereof, before organizing a congregation requiring financial aid from the General Synod.

6. A congregation can be organized only when the Presbytery has assurance of adequate leadership.

7. Those desiring to organize a new congregation shall make application to the Presbytery within whose bounds they reside, submitting a full statement of all the facts, such as the number of persons desiring it, their ability and willingness to support the work and worship of the Church, the religious condition of the community, etc., showing the necessity or propriety of such organization, and when appropriate, the name and terms of call of the person whom the petitioners desire to call as the pastor as described in Chapter X.E. The Presbytery shall consult with the session of any congregation which may be affected by the new organization before approving the application.

**Amendment No. 1 effective June 3, 1975 (III.C.2) (Now III.D.2)**

**Amendment No. 25 effective June 9, 1998 (III.C.2) (Now III.D.2)**

**Amendment No. 26 effective June 9, 1998 (III.C.5) (Now III.D.7)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (III, D.3)**

**Amendment No. 47 effective June 6, 2007 (III, D.4)**

8. The congregation shall be organized by the Presbytery or a commission of Presbytery.

9. When the Presbytery has approved the application for a new congregation, it shall appoint a day and hour for its organization.

10. At the time agreed upon, after public worship, the Presbytery or its commission shall form an active membership roll of the proposed congregation, either by certificate of transfer or by reaffirmation or profession of faith in Jesus Christ, those desiring to become members, and by entering their names on the roll.

11. The members shall then be required to enter into covenant by answering affirmatively the following question, either by voice, by uplifted hand or by standing: "Do you in reliance on God's grace, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as an organized congregation, according to the Constitution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, working toward the purity and unity of the Church?"

12. The presiding minister shall then say: "By the authority of Presbytery, I now declare that you are constituted a congregation of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

13. Ruling elders shall immediately be elected in the regular manner. These officers shall immediately be ordained and installed by the presbytery or its commission. Deacons may be elected in the regular manner.

14. If both the provisional session and the members of the mission desire the mission developer to be installed as the pastor on the day of organization of the mission as a particular congregation, then they shall follow the same procedure to call a pastor as outlined in chapter X. E, 6-11. If the mission developer is not being called at this time as pastor, then the presbytery shall appoint a moderator of the session until such time as a pastor is called.

15. The Presbytery shall record the name and organization date, the number of members and the names of the officers elected. Where applicable, the addresses of the pastor, the clerk of the session and the chairman of the diaconate shall be included in the report.

**Amendment No. 7 effective June 10, 1985 (III.C.11) (New III.D.13)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (III.D.12-renumbered to 13)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (III. D.13-renumbered to 14)**

### E. PROCEDURES FOR UNITING TWO OR MORE CONGREGATIONS

1. When two or more congregations desire to unite into one congregation they shall make application to the Presbytery, and on determining that the union serves the best interests of the Church, it shall authorize their union. This action shall be effected by a commission appointed by the Presbytery. This commission shall conduct a service of worship at the conclusion of which it shall declare the congregations united and shall then proceed to the election of officers.

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

3. The Presbytery shall advise and assist the congregations involved in matters relating to properties and to pastoral relationships.

### F. PROCEDURE FOR FORMING OTHER CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Presbytery shall encourage and/or direct two or more congregations to unite into a joint pastorate, a larger parish or any other relationship, if in its judgment such action serves the best interests of the Church. The formation of each such congregational relationship shall be conditioned upon approval by the Presbytery.

### G. PROCEDURE FOR DISSOLVING A CONGREGATION

The dissolution of a congregation is an act within the authority of the Presbytery. When a congregation becomes so reduced in its membership and strength as to be unable to maintain the ordinances of religious worship, or when for other reasons the interests of the members in particular and of the Church in general would be, in the judgment of the Presbytery, best served by dissolving the congregation, the Presbytery shall formally declare it dissolved, and shall direct the principal clerk to issue certificates of transfer for the remaining members.

### H. THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

#### 1. Purpose:

The purpose of a congregational meeting is to give spiritual and temporal direction in all matters not within the realm of duties assigned to the pastor, the session, the diaconate or higher church courts. Such matters as the election and calling of a pastor or associate pastor, the election of ruling elders, deacons, and congregational officers, the determination of certain proce-

dures of the congregation, the adoption of the congregational budget as proposed by the diaconate and approved by the session, the authorization of expenditures for the erection or alteration of any building, the fixing of salaries, or the purchase of property are to be considered at a congregational meeting.

2. Procedure and Governing Rules:

a. Notice for all congregational meetings shall be given at least seven days beforehand. No meeting shall be regular and in order unless such notice is given to the pastor, the session and the congregation, or congregational chairman where there is no pastor.

b. A business meeting of the congregation shall be held at least once a year. The specific purpose of all other congregational meetings shall be stated in the notice and no other business other than that which is stated in such notice shall be transacted.

c. Adjourned meetings shall not be held without the required notice except when circumstances prevent completion of the business stated in the notice. In such cases the adjourned meeting shall be held no later than two weeks following the date of the original meeting.

d. One-fourth of the active membership entitled to vote, as determined by the session, shall constitute a quorum. No business shall be considered without a quorum. If a church has more than one thousand members on the active roll, the quorum shall be one-tenth of such members, but not less than two hundred and fifty.

e. Only members who are personally present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.

f. Voting shall be by any convenient method except as otherwise designated in this *Form of Government* or as determined by the session.

g. If a congregational meeting of considerable length is anticipated, a congregation is encouraged to conduct such meeting at some time other than immediately following the morning worship service.

h. At all congregational meetings, the pastor, or the congregational chairman, shall preside and the clerk of the session shall serve as secretary. If neither is able to preside

i. The Presbytery shall, if it sees cause, call a congregational meeting by giving notice as required. It shall appoint one of its own members to preside.

**Amendment No. 8 effective June 10, 1985 (III.G.2.d)**

j. Only communicant members in full standing are entitled to vote.

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

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

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

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

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

(5) Other business shall be considered as indicated by the notice of the meeting.

(6) The minutes of the current meeting shall be read and adopted.

(7) After a motion to adjourn has prevailed

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCERNING THE TOTAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

## A. BIBLICAL USE OF THE WORD "MINISTRY"

1. "Ministry" as used in the Bible designates the whole body of believers. We are all to be ministers of the One who came not to be served, but to serve.

2. Every member of the Body of Christ has a ministry to fulfill as the church seeks to realize its mission in the world. The Christian's total life should be regarded as the exercise of his ministry.

3. Certain members are chosen to specific tasks for which they may be particularly suited. They are to labor as the Church and for the Church. This division of labor, while necessary to maintain orderliness, does not create a difference in status, but a difference in function only.

## B. PREPARATION FOR THIS MINISTRY

1. Preparation for this ministry involves both provision of the necessary equipment and recognition of the divine call. It is Christ's plan in the Church that some should be "...apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry,..." (Ephesians 4:11-12). It is thus the function of the clergyman to assist the congregation in performing its ministry.

2. There is in the Church as a whole, and there should be in each particular congregation, evidence of a variety or diversity of spiritual gifts whereby God has provided for the perfecting of the saints.

3. The call of God comes to every Christian and, if he is willing to hear, directs him into that vocation in which he may best serve God and his fellow man. There are ministries within the "gathered church" as it assembles for corporate worship, study and fellowship. There are also ministries within the "scattered church" wherever Christians go.

## C. THE WORD "MINISTER" IN POPULAR USAGE

The word "minister" in popular usage and in this *Form of Government* refers to a clergyman who is especially qualified, called, educated, and ordained by the Presbytery.

**CHAPTER V****CONCERNING THE CHURCH MEMBER****A. DEFINITION OF A CHURCH MEMBER**

1. The communicant church member is one who has been baptized, who has made public his profession of faith in Jesus Christ and who has submitted his life to His Lordship and to the ministry of the Church. He is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the congregation, including the right to vote in congregational meetings, the right to hold office unless restricted by a minimum age limit set by the session, the right to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the right to present his children for the Sacrament of Baptism.

2. The children of believers by right of being born into covenant relationship are non-communicant members of the Church. They are entitled to the Sacrament of Baptism and to the pastoral care, government and nurture of the Church with a view to their entering communicant church membership.

3. An associate church member is one who expects to reside in the area of the church for a limited time or expects to make extended periodic visits to such area and does not want to transfer his or her church membership from their home church, but wants to be a part of the visiting church communicant membership while temporarily residing in that area.

**B. RESPONSIBILITY OF CHURCH MEMBERS**

Church members are required to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church, to give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them, to render wholehearted service to Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world, to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God, and to so live as to bear faithful witness to the Gospel.

**C. PROCEDURES FOR INDIVIDUALS BEING RECEIVED INTO COMMUNICANT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

1. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

a. Applicants for communicant church membership shall be examined by the session in private with regard to a knowledge of their spiritual need, their faith in Jesus Christ, and their intention to be obedient to Him. The applicants shall

give assent to the following or similar questions, by which they enter a solemn covenant with God and His Church:

(1) Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His love and mercy?

(2) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners, and do you receive Him\* and trust in Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

(3) Do you believe the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the written Word of God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice?

(4) Do you now promise, in humble reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

(5) Do you accept the doctrines and principles of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, so far as you understand them, as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God?

(6) Do you promise, with the Lord's help, to be faithful in the performance of your Christian duties, both in private life and in the work of the Church?

(7) Do you submit yourself in the spirit of love to the government and discipline of this Church, and seek the peace, purity and prosperity of this congregation so long as you are a member of it?

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

b. The session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of any baptized children.

c. Applicants who have not been baptized previously shall become communicant members upon receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, which shall ordinarily be administered before the congregation. In cases of exigency a pastor may hear the profession of faith of a penitent sinner and administer to him the Sacrament of Baptism. He shall then report his action to the session.

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

2. By reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ.

a. Applicants for communicant church membership by

the reaffirmation of their faith shall appear before the session and reaffirm their faith according to the applicable questions in the preceding section. Upon affirmative action by the session, such applicants shall then be received into communicant membership. Baptism shall not be re-administered.

b. The session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of any baptized children.

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

3. By transfer of membership.

a. Applicants for communicant membership from other Christian congregations shall be received on presentation to the session of certificates of good standing from the congregation to which they belong.

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

c. No certificate of church membership older than one year shall be valid. One presenting an invalid certificate shall be received by reaffirmation of faith.

d. The session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of any baptized children.

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

4. Associate members.

a. Applicants for an associate church membership may be received by a certificate of good standing from the congregation to which they belong.

b. Associate members' names shall be entered into the records of the session; be appropriately presented to the congregation; shall have the rights, privileges and duties of regular communicant church members when residing in the area of the church except they shall not have the right to vote in congregational meetings nor the right to hold office in the congregation or church.

#### D. PROCEDURES FOR MEMBERS TRANSFERRING TO OTHER CONGREGATIONS

1. The order of the Church requires that members transferring from one Christian congregation to another shall present

certificates of their good standing. Upon request the session shall grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing. See Forms.

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

3. Certificates issued for parents shall include the names of any baptized children.

4. In all ordinary cases, certificates shall be signed by the moderator and the clerk of the session, and in other cases by either.

5. Members shall be dismissed only to specific church bodies except in the case of the dissolution of a congregation.

6. Members of one congregation transferring to another shall remain as members of the dismissing congregation without voting privileges until they are received by that congregation to which they are dismissed.

7. A form by which the receiving session shall give prompt notification of reception shall be attached to the certificate of transfer.

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

#### E. ROLLS OF CHURCH MEMBERS

The session shall keep and review annually three separate rolls of members of the congregation: Active, Inactive and Non-communicant.

1. The active roll shall consist of the names of communicant members who attend worship services at least quarterly and have some methodical system of contributing, or who have previously been active in the life of the congregation but are prevented from activity by infirmity, or who are temporarily away in academic study, military service, or for other valid reasons.

2. The inactive roll shall consist of the names of persons removed from the active roll by the session because of their failure to meet the requirements of an active member. No names of persons, however, shall be thus removed from the active roll until the session has made diligent effort to restore such persons to active membership. The session shall encourage non-resident members to transfer membership to another congregation and if membership has not been transferred within a period of one year their names shall be placed on the inactive roll.

3. The Session may remove from the inactive rolls of the church, the names of persons who remain on the inactive roll for a period of three years. No names of persons, however, shall be thus removed from the inactive roll until the Session has made diligent effort to restore such persons to active membership.

4. The non-communicant roll shall consist only of the names of those who are baptized children of communicant members of the congregation but who have not yet made public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ.

\*The words in question number 2 "Do you receive him" are not applicable to reaffirmation.

**Amendment No. 3 effective June 9, 1981 (V. E. 3)**

**Amendment No. 9 effective June 10, 1986 (V. E. 1)**

**Amendment No. 11 effective June 9, 1987 (V. E. 1)**

**Amendment No. 16 effective June 9, 1992 (V. E. 4)**

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCERNING THE ACT OF ORDINATION

Ordination is that act of the Church in which Church members are publicly consecrated to specific Church functions to which they have been called by God and elected or appointed by the congregations or agencies of the Church. The act of ordination is not valid apart from the prior calling of God.

In the Presbyterian system, the act of ordination is usually accompanied by the laying on of hands, a helpful and traditional symbol of the Church. Such action is intended to give visible and tangible expression to the prior work of the Holy Spirit, and is not to be construed as a conveying of powers by one man to another. Further, the laying on of hands is accompanied by intercessory prayer in which the participants seek divine blessing for those receiving ordination.

The act of ordination does not convey or imply to the recipient a rank or position superior in status to any other church member, but a difference in function only. Although some Christians by virtue of their service may assist the total witness of the Church more significantly than others the various ministries of the church are fundamentally equal.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCERNING DEACONS

#### A. DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON

1. The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy and service after the example of Christ.

2. To this office should be chosen persons\* of good character, honest repute, exemplary life, brotherly love, sympathetic nature, and sound judgment, and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture.

#### B. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the duty of a deacon to be a faithful and diligent Christian, actively sharing in the worship and service of the Church and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office.

#### C. THE DIACONATE

##### 1. Its Purpose

The diaconate shall be responsible for the congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress. It shall also encourage practice of total stewardship among the members of the congregation. It shall plan, in collaboration with the session, the causes toward which the offerings of the congregation shall be directed; devise effective methods for securing and receiving these offerings; secure and receive special offerings as directed by the session and the higher courts of the Church; and see that all offerings are properly distributed. It shall have the care of the general property of the congregation, both real and personal. In matters requiring extraordinary expenditure for acquisition, construction, or alteration of church property, consent of the congregation is required.

##### 2. Its Organization

The deacons of a particular congregation shall be organized as a board, the diaconate, of which the pastor and associate pastor shall be advisory members, and of which the congregational treasurer shall be an advisory member when not otherwise a member thereof. The diaconate shall elect a chairman and a secretary from among its own number. The secretary shall keep a record of the diaconate's proceedings, and shall submit its minutes to the session at least once a year

and at other times upon request of the session. The congregational treasurer, who is entrusted with the regular offerings of the congregation, shall be responsible to the diaconate. A monthly financial report of the congregational treasurer shall be included in the minutes of the diaconate.

### 3. Its Procedure

a. The diaconate shall hold one regular meeting each month.

b. The chairman may call a meeting of the diaconate at any time he deems necessary and shall call a meeting upon the request of either two deacons or the session. Notice of such meetings shall be given.

c. The diaconate of each congregation shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum.

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

e. Each meeting of a diaconate shall be opened and closed with prayer.

### 4. Its Relationship to the Session

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

b. The session may void or amend any action of the diaconate, or return it for further consideration.

c. It is recommended that the session and the diaconate meet once a quarter in joint session to confer on matters requiring mutual attention. At such meetings the moderator of the session shall preside and the clerk of the session shall serve as secretary. The joint meeting can take no official action, but the session and diaconate shall act separately on matters committed to the care of each.

\* Circumstances of the local congregation shall require each session to determine the meaning of the word "persons."

**CHAPTER VIII****CONCERNING RULING ELDERS****A. DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF  
A RULING ELDER**

1. There were elders of the people for the government of the Old Testament Church. Likewise in the New Testament Church, besides the apostles and the ministers, there were elders who ruled.

2. To the office of ruling elder shall be chosen men of wisdom, discretion, sound faith and Godly life, and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture.

**B. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Ruling elders are chosen by voting members of the congregation and are their immediate representatives. Together with the ministers, they exercise government and discipline. They oversee the spiritual interests both of the particular congregation and of the Church generally when appointed to represent the congregation in the higher courts. In all the courts of the Church ruling elders possess the same authority and the same eligibility to office as ministers.

2. It is the responsibility of ruling elders, both individually and jointly, to guard and promote the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They are required by their office to visit the people, especially the sick, and pray with them, to comfort the sorrowing, encourage the weak, guide the wayward and the careless, and, in general, to discharge all other duties in Christian love. Although ruling elders do represent congregations by election, they are to seek the will of God in all church court decisions.

**CHAPTER IX**  
**CONCERNING THE ELECTION, ORDINATION AND**  
**INSTALLATION OF RULING ELDERS**  
**AND DEACONS**

**A. ELIGIBILITY**

Persons elected to the office of ruling elder or deacon shall be members in full communion in the congregation in which they are to exercise office. The minimum age for holding these offices shall be determined by the session.

**B. TERMS OF OFFICE**

1. Ruling elders or deacons are regularly elected and ordained for life unless deposed in the process of discipline. In any particular congregation they may be elected to active service for life or for a limited term, as herein provided.

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

a. The term of office for ruling elders shall be not less than four (4) nor more than six (6) years. The classes of ruling elders serving on the session shall be as nearly equal in number as possible.

b. The term of office for deacons shall be not less than three (3) nor more than six (6) years. The classes of deacons serving on the diaconate shall be as nearly equal in number as possible.

c. Ruling elders and deacons shall not be eligible to hold the same office until one (1) year has elapsed after the close of their terms of office.

d. Ruling elders retired under the rotary system shall be eligible for election to the diaconate.

3. Any congregation using the rotary system may revert to the non-rotary system by action in a congregational meeting.

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

**Amendment No. 2 effective June 3, 1975 (IX. B. 2. c.)**

**Amendment No. 2B effective June 8, 1976 (IX. B. 2. c.)**

**Amendment No. 14 effective June 11, 1991 (IX. B.2. b.)**

to the Presbytery.

5. Any ruling elder or deacon who has served the church faithfully but whose ability to render active service is limited because of age, physical ability, or other cause, may be elected Ruling Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus or Emerita. Such election shall be by the action of the congregation upon condition that the said officer is willing to accept this title as one of honor.

### C. ELECTION PROCEDURE

1. The election of ruling elders and deacons shall take place in a congregational meeting. The number of ruling elders and deacons shall be determined by the congregation.

2. Nominations may be made by one of the following methods as determined by the session, or by the Presbytery in the case of a new congregation:

a. The session, or the Presbytery in the case of a new congregation, may appoint a nominating committee which shall provide a list containing at least one name for each office to be submitted to the congregation. At the time of the election opportunity shall be given for additional nominations.

b. A congregational meeting may be held to select nominees by ballot. A list of names of all persons eligible for nomination shall be provided, and at least twice the number of persons to be elected shall be nominated. The nominees shall be conferred with privately by the session, or Presbytery in the case of a new congregation, as to their qualifications and willingness to serve before being placed before the congregation for election. Any nominee receiving a majority of votes cast shall be declared elected.

3. If there is only one nomination for an office, the presiding officer shall propose the name of the nominee, and voting shall be by voice, the uplifted hand, or standing, or if deemed advisable, by ballot. If there is more than one nomination for an office, voting shall be by ballot. A congregation may decide whether a majority or a plurality of the vote cast is necessary to constitute election to an office.

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

b. In the event a plurality is required, those nominees receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected.

Should anyone so elected decline or be unable to serve, the

nominee receiving the next greatest number of votes shall be substituted and regarded as duly elected.

4. When voting is by ballot, the session shall provide suitable ballots and shall appoint a committee of at least three to distribute and collect the ballots. They shall count them and announce in alphabetical order the names of those elected without reporting the number of votes. The ballots shall then be destroyed.

5. The session shall arrange for the instruction and examination of the officers-elect, and shall appoint a day for their ordination, when required, and installation. This day shall be announced to the congregation soon after the election.

#### D. ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

1. The session shall meet before the service of ordination and installation to confer with the officers-elect and to hear any objections to the ordination and installation of such officers-elect.

2. The pastor of the congregation shall preside over the service of ordination and installation of ruling elders and deacons. If the congregation is without a pastor, the session shall invite some minister to preside.

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

#### FORMULA FOR ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

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

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

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

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

(5) Do you accept the office of ruling elder (deacon) in

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

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

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

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

Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive these fellow members as ruling elders (deacons), and do you promise to give them all the honor, obedience, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles them?

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

6. Following the ordination prayer, the minister shall say:

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

The members of the session shall take the new officers by the hand, saying: “We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us.”

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

## E. REINSTALLATION

1. A ruling elder or deacon re-elected to office under the rotary system shall be installed into the same office without reordination.

2. A ruling elder or deacon who transfers membership from one congregation to another and is elected to the same office shall be installed without reordination.

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

4. A ruling elder or deacon who transfers membership from another denomination and is elected to the same office shall be required to assume the obligations for the full "Formula for Ordination and Installation" and shall be installed without reordination.

#### F. RECORD AND REPORT

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

## CHAPTER X

### CONCERNING MINISTERS

#### A. DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A MINISTER

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

2. It rests primarily with the individual to determine whether or not he has been called as a minister. Yet, as Christ fits His servants for this ministry, they must also evidence the necessary qualifications for this work.

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

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

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

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

d. *Compassion.* A minister must serve as Jesus Christ, Who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

e. *Personality.* A minister must be one who will attract persons to Christ and His Church.

f. *Intelligence.* A minister must be capable of meeting the education requirements essential for ordination.

g. *Education.* A minister must present evidence of having obtained a baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent, from an accredited four-year college or university, as well as evidence of a theological education embracing three years of

satisfactory work in the seminary of this denomination or in a seminary approved by the Presbytery. The educational requirements may be waived only in extraordinary cases and such waiver shall require consent of three-fourths of the members of Presbytery present at a meeting, prior to which the Presbytery shall have been informed in writing of the circumstances which require the application of this extraordinary case waiver.

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

5. The office of minister includes the office and authority of ruling elder. For this reason the minister is sometimes referred to as a teaching elder.

#### B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MINISTER

1. As a pastor of a particular congregation or as a mission developer.

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

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

2. As a teacher.

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

**Amendment No. 27 effective June 9, 1998 (X.A.3.g)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (X.B.1)**

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

3. As an evangelist.

a. A ministr may serve as an evangelist as long as he is a member in good standing of some presbytery.

b. A presbytery may issue a call to a minister as an evangelist in order to:

(1) do preparatory work within the bounds of the presbytery toward establishing new missions,

(2) develop missions outside the bounds of the presbytery with the approval of the presbytery, provided this work receives prior approval from the General Synod,

(3) perform the duties of a pastor, without being installed as pastor, in a congregation that is unable to support a pastor, or

(4) devote himself entirely to preaching the Word in special evangelistic services under the supervision and direction of the presbytery, or of the pastor in whose charge he may be laboring.

The evangelist shall always have as his primary duty the faithful sowing of the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

c. A presbytery may give an evangelist authority to preach the Word and administer the sacraments without the oversight of a session or provisional session. In special cases, the presbytery may also entrust the evangelist with authority to examine, receive, and dismiss members in a mission, and to train and examine potential ruling elders and deacons. The presbytery shall specify in writing the authority given to the evangelist, and may also specify the particular field and the time period in which this authority may be exercised.

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

4. As a missionary.

a. The Church shall ordain and send forth ministers as missionaries in obedience to the command of Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

b. The minister, as a missionary, may perform the duties of pastor, teacher, and evangelist.

c. A minister, as a missionary in fields where there is no

organized Presbytery, may exercise presbyterial authority under direction of the General Synod in organizing congregations, in receiving students of theology and directing their studies, and in ordaining and installing them as ministers.

5. In other positions.

The varied work of the Church makes it necessary and proper for ministers to engage in ministries other than those specified. Ministers engaged in such ministries should discharge their duties faithfully and diligently, seeking to serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

### C. PROCEDURES FOR LICENSURE

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

2. As a rule no one shall be licensed to preach the gospel without a course of theological study embracing three years. This, however, shall not prohibit students of theology from preaching occasionally, under the direction of Presbytery, during their theological course.

3. Every candidate for licensure, whether or not he has a diploma from a seminary, shall be examined by the Presbytery in open session as to his soundness in the faith, and belief in and adherence to the distinctive principles of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

4. The trial for licensure shall consist of a popular sermon, to be delivered by the candidate in public immediately before licensure.

5. After the trial the Presbytery shall proceed to consider it, and also to offer suggestions and criticisms.

6. If the Presbytery be not satisfied with his trials and refuse to sustain them, they either will be appointed to him again, or he shall be directed to resume his studies, as the Presbytery may deem best.

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

8. If his trials for licensure be sustained, he shall present himself before the Presbytery in public meeting and take the obligations in the prescribed formula of questions (See formula of questions for ordination of ministers, excepting 8). The moderator shall then declare him licensed by the Presbytery, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel as a probationer for the holy ministry; and shall, in a few words, remind him of the importance, the difficulties and the excellence of that work on which he is about to enter, and exhort him to devote himself to it in faith and zeal.

9. Probationers shall be given certificates of licensure signed by the moderator and the stated clerk of the Presbytery. Such license shall expire at the end of two (2) years unless the licentiate shall request in writing an extension and such extension be recommended by the Committee/Commission on the Minister and His Work for approval by the Presbytery.

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

11. Probationers, not being ministers, shall not administer the sacraments, pronounce the benediction, officiate in marriage ceremonies, ordain officers, or act as moderator or vote in any church court. It is their duty, however, to attend the meetings of their respective Presbyteries and of the Synod, in which they shall have the right to deliberate and advise, and shall always be consulted in matters pertaining to their particular work and appointments.

#### D. PROCEDURE FOR ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

##### 1. Candidates for the ministry.

a. One preparing to become a minister shall be a candidate under the care of the Presbytery which has jurisdiction of the congregation in which he is a member.

b. One seeking to be received under the care of the Presbytery shall be examined, through a committee, as to his Christian character, his conviction of being called of God to

the ministry, his qualifications, and his saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. The Presbytery shall enroll and counsel with each candidate under its care and shall direct his theological studies, inquiring into his diligence and progress. He shall preach trial sermons before the Presbytery as it may direct. The Presbytery, with or without his request, may remove his name from the roll of students under its care. After a candidate has been under the care of a presbytery for five (5) years his name shall automatically be removed from the roll unless he has requested in writing an extension, has given evidence of good faith in continuing his preparation, and his request has been recommended by the Committee/Commission on the Minister and His Work for approval by the Presbytery.

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

(1) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a character consistent with your Christian profession and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for your ministry?

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

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

e. A candidate shall attend the meetings of his Presbytery and remain a member of his congregation and shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership. His pastor and session shall give special encouragement and counsel during his years of preparation.

## 2. Procedure for ordination.

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

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

**Amendment No. 24, effective June 10, 1997 (X.D.1.c)**

(1) A review of the candidate's personal Christian religious experience.

(2) An examination of his knowledge of the English Bible.

(3) An examination of his knowledge of theology and his doctrinal positions. He shall present a brief written statement of his Christian beliefs.

(4) An examination of his knowledge of the history and government of the church and the determination of his approval of the form of government, discipline and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

(5) A sermon in manuscript form which he shall preach before the Presbytery and which shall be subject to constructive criticism by the Presbytery. The Presbytery may assign or approve the text for this sermon.

(6) A call either to a congregation or to another approved ministerial labor.

c. The presbyteries shall strive for uniformity in their examination for ordination and shall not omit any of these requirements for ordination.

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

e. When the Presbytery has approved a candidate's examination and is furnished evidence of a candidate's call, the Presbytery shall appoint a time and place for the ordination of the candidate. Usually the ordination shall be held before a called meeting of the Presbytery in the church of which the candidate is to be pastor.

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

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

(1) Do you believe in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head

over all things to the Church, which is His Body?

(2) Do you reaffirm your belief in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of the Living God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice, to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken at any time or upon any pretext?

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

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

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

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

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

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

h. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. After the ordination prayer, the members of the Presbytery shall take him by the hand saying, "We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us."

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

j. The newly ordained minister shall be given a Certificate of Ordination signed by the moderator and principal clerk. A full report of the ordination service shall be recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery, and a copy forwarded to

the congregation of which he was formerly a member so that his name may be removed from the membership roll. (See Form)

3. Procedure for installation.

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

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

c. A minister may be installed as the pastor or associate pastor of one or more congregations. The procedure for installation of pastors may be adapted for associate pastors.

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

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

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

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

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

“Do you, the members of this congregation, now acknowledge and receive \_\_\_\_\_ as your pastor, and do you promise to give him all the honor, obedience, encouragement, cooperation, and support in the spirit of love to which this office entitles him and as you promised him in the call?”

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

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and

Head of the church, I now declare \_\_\_\_\_ duly (ordained) (installed) as pastor of this congregation.”

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

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

j. A Presbytery may refuse to install a minister. If so, he shall be informed of the reasons and he or the congregation who has called him may appeal the decision of the Presbytery to the General Synod.

#### E. PROCEDURE FOR CALLS TO PARTICULAR CONGREGATIONS

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

2. The relationship between a minister and a congregation may be that of pastor, associate pastor, stated supply, occasional supply, evangelist or, in the case of a mission congregation, mission developer.

3. A pastor or associate pastor shall be elected by the congregation in the manner outlined below. The relationship is established by installation and is dissolved only by action of the Presbytery. The terms of the call for an associate pastor shall specify the particular function which he is to fulfill in the life of the congregation. His work shall be under the supervision of the pastor and the session. Upon dissolution of a pastor's relationship, the relationship of the associate pastor shall be reviewed carefully by the congregation and Presbytery.

4. A stated supply is called by the session to perform the functions of a pastor in a congregation. The relationship shall be established by permission of the Presbytery only after it has given careful consideration to the qualifications of the individual and to all other factors involved. The term of a stated supply shall be for no more than twelve months and may be renewed. No formal call shall be issued by the congregation.

5. An occasional supply may be a minister, a student of the-

ology, or a layman secured by the session to conduct services during periods when a congregation is without a pastor or when its pastor is unable to perform his duties. The session shall not secure any person as occasional supply, except in an emergency, without the approval of Presbytery or the installed pastor. The Presbytery shall keep a list of those who are available for immediate service as occasional supplies, including ministers, students of theology, and laymen who give evidence of outstanding abilities as Christian leaders.

6. To call a pastor, the session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a nominating committee representative of the whole congregation.

7. When the nominating committee is ready to report, it shall submit to a congregational meeting, convened for the election and call of a pastor, the name of its nominee for approval or rejection. This meeting shall be presided over by the moderator of the session appointed by the Presbytery, who shall be responsible for having a call properly drafted.

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

9. After the election, the call shall be signed, first by the elders and deacons, then by the other members.

10. The signed call shall be confirmed in writing by the moderator. It shall be presented by one or more congregational commissioners to the Presbytery for approval.

11. The call shall clearly state the amount of salary and other allowances, and shall include information as to manse, vacation, moving expense, medical and group insurance and, except for calls to new fields or congregations which are unable to support a pastor (i.e., as an evangelist), shall include provisions for the church to make contributions to the General Synod in support of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan (for churches in the United States) or to a locally-accredited and registered retirement plan approved by the presbytery (for churches located outside the United States), according to the guidelines approved by the General Synod. Calls shall provide for an annual review of the terms of the call. Without such a statement the call shall not be approved. The call shall meet all requirements of the Presbytery before approval. A call shall be presented to a pastor-elect by the Presbytery in which the congregation issuing the call is located.

**Amendment No. 31 effective June 9, 1998 (X.E.11)**

**Amendment No. 33 effective June 8, 2004 (X.E.12 added, X.8.12-17 renumbered)**

**Amendment No. 34 effective June 8, 2004 (X.E.11)**

**Amendment No. 35 effective June 7, 2006 (X.E.11)**

**Amendment No. 46 effective June 6, 2007 (X.E.11)**

At its discretion, presbytery may approve a call for a minister to serve as pastor without the provision for group insurance when a congregation is unable to support a minister on a full-time basis provided:

a. the Presbytery has determined that the congregation presenting the call is unable to support a minister on a full-time basis and includes such provision in the printed call, and

b. the minister works elsewhere at an occupation that has the approval of the Presbytery for labors outside the pastoral ministry (See Chapter XII.B.2), and

c. the call acknowledges the minister's responsibility for providing acceptable insurance coverage for himself and, if appropriate, his family.

12. Where provisions of the call respecting contributions for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan have not been made for a period of one (1) year, due notice shall be given by the Board of Benefits to the Minister, Clerk of Session, Clerk of Presbytery, and Chairman of the Presbytery's Committee/Commission on Minister and His Work that the terms of said Minister's call have been breached. The failure to meet the terms of a call within a period of one year from date of notification shall constitute the termination of the call for Retirement Plan purposes.

13. If a call is issued to one who is a member of another Presbytery, the pastor-elect shall secure a transfer to the Presbytery in which the congregation issuing the call is located, where he shall then be presented with the call. If the pastor-elect accepts the call, the Presbytery shall immediately appoint a commission to conduct the installation service.

14. The Presbytery may decline to present a call which may be regular in all aspects if, in its judgment, the best interests of the church so require.

15. The presbytery may call a minister to serve as an evangelist. The presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development, church revitalization, or evangelism will serve as the nominating committee to submit the name of a nominee to the presbytery, along with the terms of call, for approval or rejection by the presbytery.

16. The presbytery may call a minister to serve as mission developer of a mission. The presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development will serve as the nominating committee to submit the name of a nominee to the presbytery, along with terms of call, for approval or rejection by the presbytery.

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

18. A minister who is serving as a Mission Developer can be installed as a pastor of the Church at its organizational service, if he has been called as a Pastor prior to the service at a called meeting of the petitioners and the Presbytery or its Commission on the Minister and His Work has approved him for this call and the terms of the call.

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

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

#### F. PROCEDURE FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. The dissolution of the pastoral relationship shall be by action of the Presbytery. Such action may be initiated by the pastor, the congregation, or the Presbytery.

2. When a pastor wishes to be released from his pastoral charge, he shall first inform the session in writing of his wishes. The session shall then call a congregational meeting to act upon this request. He shall then present the same request in writing to the Presbytery. The action of the congregation shall be presented in writing to the Presbytery.

3. When the congregation concurs in this request, the Presbytery may dissolve the pastoral relationship.

4. If the congregation does not concur in this request, it shall submit its reasons in writing to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall give careful consideration to all such reasons and take whatever action is in the best interests of the church and the pastor.

5. If the session desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it must by calling a congregational meeting first notify the congregation of its desires and then the congregation, if concurring with the session, shall proceed according to paragraph six for this section.

6. If the congregation desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it shall first notify the pastor by written request and then make the same written request to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall then take whatever action is in the best interests of the church and its pastor.

**Amendment No. 19 effective June 11, 1996 (X.E.15) (Now X.E.17)**

**Amendment No. 13 effective June 13, 1989 (X.F.2, F.5, F.6, F.7, F.8)**

**Amendment No. 48, effective June 6, 2007 (.E.2., E. 15, E. 16)**

7. The Presbytery has authority, acting on good information, to dissolve a pastoral relationship without formal application from either party, if in its judgment the welfare of the congregation (Church) so requires.

8. The Presbytery may request an installed pastor to take up the work in another field of labor, but cannot require him to do so. Any pastor so requested shall give prayerful consideration to such a request for an indication of the will of God.

#### G. PROCEDURE FOR TRANSFERRING MINISTERS FROM ONE PRESBYTERY TO ANOTHER

1. Transfer within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

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

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

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

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

2. Transfer from another denomination.

a. The Procedure for transferring ministers from another denomination shall follow in substance the procedure for transfer from one Presbytery to another within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

**Amendment No. 28 effective June 9, 1998 (X.G.1.a)**

**Amendment No. 29 effective June 9, 1998 (X.G.1.c)**

**Amendment No. 30 effective June 9, 1998 (X.G.1.b, X.G.1.c)**

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

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

d. The minister requesting transfer from another denomination shall furnish evidence of an education equal to that required of ministers trained under the care of the Presbyteries of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. (Chapter 10, A through G)

### 3. Transfer to another denomination.

The procedure for transferring ministers to another denomination shall follow in substance the procedure for transfer to another Presbytery within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

## H. PROVISIONS FOR CALLS TO OTHER MINISTRIES

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

2. When a minister desires to accept work not under the jurisdiction of any church court or agency, he shall request permission of his Presbytery. The Presbytery may grant permission upon determination that the particular work serves the best interests of the church and the minister. If permission is not granted and the minister persists in accepting such work, he shall request that he be divested of his office without censure. If he does not so request, the Presbytery shall charge him with violation of his ordination vows and institute judicial process against him.

## CHAPTER XI CONCERNING THE SESSION

### A. ITS PURPOSE

1. The lowest court of the Church consists of the ruling elders in active service and the pastor, if there is one, of a particular congregation, and is called the session. The precedent for this court is found in the general form of church government founded upon the Old and New Testament principles, which was that of government by elders.

2. The session is charged with the spiritual oversight and government of the congregation.

3. The presbytery initiating a mission may appoint a provisional session to exercise oversight of the mission on behalf of the presbytery. The provisional session will report to the appropriate committee of presbytery that is charged with responsibility for new church development.

4. If an organized ARP congregation is sponsoring a mission, the presbytery may appoint the session of the sponsoring church as the provisional session to oversee the mission on behalf of the presbytery. The sponsoring church session may choose to exercise its oversight through a subcommittee of the session.

### B. ITS AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The session shall have as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization and administration of programs designed to enable the congregation to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the community and also in the Presbytery, the General Synod and the whole world. In order to institute and supervise the general work of the congregation, the Session has the power to appoint boards, commissions, or committees. (See Chapter XIV)

2. In order to carry out its responsibility, working under the proper jurisdiction of the higher courts and with the pastor, the session has power:

a. To counsel with the members of the congregation and to inquire into their Christian knowledge and conduct.

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

c. To encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism.

**Amendment No.37 effective June 7, 2006 (XI.B.1)**

**Amendment No. 49, effective June 6, 2007 (XI.A.3, A.4)**

d. To receive applicants into communicant church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership.

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

f. To instruct, examine, ordain, and install ruling elders and deacons upon their election by the congregation.

g. To encourage the officers of the congregation to devote themselves to their respective responsibilities.

h. To supervise the work of the diaconate and examine the records of its proceedings.

i. To develop and supervise the church school and the educational program of the congregation.

j. To employ and supervise the work of a director of Christian education.

k. To exercise, in accordance with the Directory for Worship, authority over the time and place of the preachings of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, and over all other religious services.

l. To assemble the people for worship in the absence of the pastor.

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

n. To devise and encourage suitable measures for the spiritual advancement of the congregation and of the Church.

o. To observe and enforce the lawful injunctions of the higher courts.

p. To select from among its ruling elders representatives to the meetings of the Presbytery and the General Synod, but not to instruct such representatives as to how they shall vote, but may so instruct its representatives on a vote on a proposed plan of Church union. These representatives shall make a report to their session of the proceedings of the court.

q. To propose to the Presbytery such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church.

r. To supervise, review, and control all organizations within the congregation, and in its discretion to require stated reports.

s. To call a congregational meeting.

t. To exercise authority over the use of the church building and associated properties.

3. The provisional session overseeing a mission has the same responsibility as a session, but is a transitory authority aimed at preparing the mission to be governed under its own session. Presbytery has the primary oversight responsibility for the mission. This responsibility is usually exercised through the presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for new church development. The provisional session has secondary oversight and is accountable to the presbytery committee. Elders on the provisional session must be careful to allow the mission to develop its distinct identity and direction.

4. In order to carry out its responsibility to the presbytery, the provisional session has the power:

a. To receive applicants into communicant church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership.

b. To encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism.

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

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

e. To instruct and examine potential ruling elders and deacons.

f. To work with the mission developer in setting the time and place of the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and over all other religious services.

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

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

i. To provide care and nurture to the people attending the mission. The provisional session members should attend the mission often enough so that they know and are known by the members of the mission.

j. To ensure proper oversight and stewardship of financial resources.

k. To keep the presbytery committee informed of concerns that may need the presbytery's attention.

l. To call a congregational meeting of the mission in order to elect a pulpit search committee and vote upon the terms of a call to a pastor prior to the organization of the mission as a particular congregation.

m. To oversee all organizations within the mission, and in its discretion to require stated reports.

5. The session shall:

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

b. Keep an accurate record of:

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

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

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

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

### C. ITS ORGANIZATION

1. The pastor, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the session. An associate pastor, if there is one, is also a member of the session, and may substitute as moderator at the discretion of the pastor.

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

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

4. In cases where the pastor is, for any cause, disqualified from presiding, the associate pastor or the vice moderator may preside.

5. When a congregation is without a pastor, the moderator shall be a minister of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church appointed by the Presbytery. When it is not feasible for such moderator to be present, the vice moderator shall preside. In judicial cases the moderator must be the appointee of the Presbytery.

6. The session shall hold one regular meeting each month. The moderator may call a meeting of the session at any time he deems necessary and shall call a meeting upon the request of two ruling elders or upon request of the Presbytery. Notice of such meetings shall be given.

7. No meeting of the session shall be held without the knowledge of the pastor.

8. Each session shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum, provided such a quorum be not less than a pastor and two elders, or three elders without a pastor.

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

10. Each meeting of the session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

11. A provisional session should hold at least one regular meeting each month.

**CHAPTER XII****CONCERNING THE PRESBYTERY****A. ITS PURPOSE**

The court of the Church next higher than the session is the Presbytery, which has the oversight of a group of congregations within a specific geographical area. It is the essential court of the Presbyterian system in administering its general order, the higher courts being constituted simply by a wider application of the general principles of the Presbytery. The precedent for this court is found in the example of the Apostolic church. The name is scriptural, derived from the Greek of the New Testament.

**B. ITS AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The Presbytery shall have as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization and administration of programs designed to enable it to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the Presbytery and also in the local congregations, the General Synod and the whole world. In order to institute and supervise the general work of the Presbytery, the Presbytery has the power to appoint boards, commissions, or committees. (See Chapter XIV)

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

a. To enforce the lawful injunctions of the higher courts.

b. To receive, hear, resolve, and decide references, appeals, and complaints according to constitutional procedures, including questions of doctrine or discipline.

c. To advise and to assume original jurisdiction for adjudication on matters from church sessions where their authority cannot be exercised.

d. To review and approve or censure the records of sessions and to require their correction, to redress anything contrary to order, and to take effectual care for the observance of the Constitution of the Church.

e. To unite, divide, organize, dissolve, receive, dismiss, and transfer congregations.

f. To hold, dispose, and apply the properties of dissolved congregations at its discretion.

g. To approve or disapprove the buying, selling, mortgaging, or leasing of any real property by a congregation over which the Presbytery may have control or jurisdiction.

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

i. To receive under its care students of theology as candidates for the ministry.

j. To examine and approve candidates for the ministry.

k. To ordain, install, receive, dismiss, remove, and try ministers of the Gospel, requiring ministers to devote themselves diligently to their sacred calling and censuring the delinquent.

l. To examine and approve calls and changes in terms of calls.

m. To establish the pastoral relation, and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or at its own discretion.

n. To direct the labors of ministers who have no pastoral charge.

o. To establish and direct mission work within its bounds.

p. To institute and superintend the agencies necessary for its work and to concert measures for the enlargement of the Church within its bounds.

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

r. To propose to the General Synod such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church.

s. In general to take whatever action may be necessary for the spiritual welfare of the congregations under its care and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.

3. The Presbytery shall:

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

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

(1) Students of theology received.

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

(3) Formations, organizations, dissolutions, unions, and divisions of congregations, and the receiving and transferring of congregations within the General Synod.

(4) Ordination and receiving of ruling elders.

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

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

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

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

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

### C. ITS COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The members of the Presbytery shall consist of all the ministers, in number not fewer than two (2), and at least one (1) ruling elder from each congregation within a geographical area as determined by the General Synod, which area shall include at least five (5) congregations. The moderator of the Presbytery not otherwise a member thereof shall be a member by virtue of his office.

If a Presbytery fails to meet these requirements for a period of one year, the General Synod shall review the status of such Presbytery. If this failure continues for a period of three years, the Presbytery shall be dissolved and its congregations and pastors shall unite with other Presbyteries.

2. Every congregation in the Presbytery shall be represented by one (1) ruling elder, and every congregation whose active communicant membership exceeds four hundred (400) in number shall be represented by two (2) ruling elders and shall be entitled to one (1) additional ruling elder for each additional four hundred (400) active communicants. The session shall make a record of each appointment and credentials of such appointment shall be submitted to the Presbytery.

For the purpose of determining the number of elder rep-

**Amendment No. 20 effective June 11, 1996 (XII.B.3.b(4))**

**Amendment No. 21 effective June 11, 1996 (XII.B.3.b(5))**

**Amendment No. 22 effective June 11, 1996 (XII.B.3.b(6))**

representatives to which a church is entitled, the number of active communicants as reported on the Annual Statistical Report shall be the basis to determine the number of elders to represent a church. Any change in the number thereafter that would modify the number of elder representatives shall be certified to the Principal Clerk, not less than 30 days prior to the next meeting of Presbytery.

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

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

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

4. The officers of the Presbytery shall be a moderator, a vice moderator, a principal clerk, and such other officers as are necessary. The method of selection and terms of office and duties shall be determined by the Presbytery.

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

A quorum for stated meetings of Presbytery shall be one-third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the ministers of the Presbytery and duly elected elders from one-third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the congregations.

A Presbytery may adjourn to a meeting during the sessions of the General Synod, but only at a time when the General Synod is in recess.

6. If any matters which require immediate attention arise between the stated meetings, meetings may be held upon the call of the moderator, or, in his failure to act, of the principal clerk, or upon the request of three (3) members of the Presbytery from at least two (2) congregations. At least one week's notice of called meetings shall be given to all members of the Presbytery specifying the time and place of meeting and

the particular business for which the meeting is called. No other business shall be transacted at called meetings except that specified in the notice.

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

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

8. A Presbytery or any of its committees or agencies may incorporate under the laws of any state in which it functions; however, the provisions of its charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with the *Form of Government* of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

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

If a Presbytery or any of its committees or agencies are unincorporated they may elect individual trustees from their members.

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

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

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

The General Synod shall apply such property or the proceeds therefrom at its discretion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCERNING THE GENERAL SYNOD

In order to institute and supervise the general work of the Church, the General Synod has the power to appoint boards, commissions, and committees. (See Chapter XIV)

#### A. ITS PURPOSE

1. The Confession of Faith (XXXI:1-3) declares that there ought to be such assemblies as synods and councils for the better government and further advancement of the Church; that ministers of Christ and other fit persons delegated from their churches have exclusive right to appoint these assemblies; and that it belongs to synods, thus appointed, to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for public worship and the government of the Church and to receive and determine complaints.

2. The General Synod is the highest court of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and represents in one body all of its particular presbyteries. It bears the title of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and constitutes the bond of union, peace, and correspondence among all of its congregations and courts.

#### B. ITS AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

2. In order to carry out its responsibility, the General Synod has power:

- a. To establish measures for advancing the Church.
- b. To institute, create operating rules and supervise the agencies necessary in the general work of the Church.
- c. To make appointments to such labors as fall under its jurisdiction.
- d. To organize, receive, divide, unite, transfer, dismiss, and dissolve Presbyteries in keeping with the advancement of the Church."

**Amendment No. 39 effective June 7, 2006 (XIII.Heading)**

**Amendment No. 40 effective June 7, 2006 (XIII.B.2.b)**

- (1) An organized presbytery, or a group of individual congregations, located outside the geographical areas of existing Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbyteries desiring to be received as a presbytery and which meets the following requirements shall petition the General Synod, giving full assurance that this is the desire of all ministers and congregations to be received:
  - (a) Any group desiring to be received by the General Synod as a presbytery must meet the requirements of the *Form of Government*, Chapter XII.C.1, i.e., the Presbytery must have at least two (2) ordained teaching elders and at least five (5) organized congregations.
  - (b) At least five (5) of these congregations must be located outside the geographical bounds of an existing Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery.
  - (c) Congregations that do not belong to an Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery must agree to accept the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, to be subject to the courts of the Church, and to work cooperatively with other congregations toward the purity and unity of the Church. To this end, the members, at a duly constituted congregational meeting, shall be required to enter into covenant by answering affirmatively the following question, either by voice, by uplifted hand or by standing:

“Do you, in reliance on God’s grace, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as a congregation according to the Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, working toward the purity and unity of the Church?”
- (2) Congregations that belong to an Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery which desire to be a part of the petitioning group must give notice in writing to their presbytery of their intent. Such notice must be accompanied by a request for transfer to the new presbytery when and if it is established.

- (3) The following procedures shall be followed on receipt of a formal request for admission:
- (a) Petitions shall be directed or referred to the Principal Clerk who shall:
    - 1. Provide the group a copy of the requirements necessary for reception.
    - 2. Provide the group a copy of the procedures to be followed.
    - 3. Inform the group that if they are connected to another denomination, that they must provide a copy of the letter informing their governing body that they intend to correspond with the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. If the group has no denominational affiliation, they shall be requested to provide written certification of that status.
    - 4. In those circumstances where other denominations are involved, inform the governing body of the other denomination that the General Synod is responding to the petition.
    - 5. Once the preceding four requirements have been met, refer the petition to the Executive Board of the General Synod.
  - (b) The Executive Board of the General Synod, acting on behalf of the General Synod, shall appoint a commission to meet with representatives of the inquiring group. The commission shall look carefully into the motives and intentions of each minister and each congregation, shall assure itself that the ministers and members of the congregations understand the privileges and the responsibilities that accompany their request, and shall be fully satisfied that God is leading the ministers and congregations to become a presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The commission

1. shall have the authority to meet with each petitioning congregation to ask and answer questions;
  2. must examine each petitioning minister according to the provisions of the *Form of Government*, Chapter X.G.2.; and
  3. shall report its findings and actions and submit appropriate recommendations to the Executive Board.
- (c) Recommendation for the reception or establishment of such a presbytery, to include its geographical area, shall be presented by the Executive Board of Synod to the General Synod at its next regular or called meeting.
- (4) If the presbytery contains congregations that are located within the geographical areas of an existing Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery, such congregations shall be allowed to remain with the presbytery for a maximum of two (2) years, during which time they shall be expected to transfer to the presbytery within whose geographical area they are located. If such a transfer is not requested, or if no waiver is granted by the General Synod, the transfer will automatically take place at the expiration of the two (2) years.
- (5) Whenever a new presbytery is established, or an existing presbytery is received by the General Synod, a special service of recognition and reception shall be held, either during a meeting of the General Synod or during a meeting of the presbytery. If held during a meeting of the presbytery, the General Synod shall be represented by the Moderator and/or a duly appointed commission of the General Synod."
- e. To communicate with individual congregations which are outside the geographical areas of existing Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbyteries. Requests from such congregations to be received into the Associate Reformed

Presbyterian Church shall be handled in the same manner as outlined in *Form of Government*, Chapter XIII.B.2.d.(3)(a) and Chapter XIII.B.2.d.(3)(b) above. When all requirements have been met, the Executive Board may request an existing Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery to consider receiving the petitioning congregation, with the understanding that such reception shall not be final until the General Synod has granted a waiver to the geographical area rule as found in the *Form of Government*, Chapter XII. A and Chapter XII.C.1. A congregation so received shall be expected to become a part of an Associate Reformed Presbyterian presbytery organized in its geographical area at a later date.

f. To review the records of the Presbyteries, giving whatever counsel and advice is necessary.

g. To require all lower courts to observe the Constitution.

h. To redress whatever the lower courts may have done contrary to order.

i. To organize particular synods in keeping with the advancement of the Church.

j. To receive and decide upon all appeals, references, and complaints regularly brought before it from the lower courts.

k. To bear testimony against error in doctrine and against immorality in practice, both of which injuriously affect the Church.

l. To make final decisions in all controversies respecting doctrine, order, and discipline.

m. To give its advice and instruction in conformity with the Constitution in all cases submitted to it.

n. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputes according to the rules provided.

o. To correspond with other denominations on such terms as may be agreed upon by the General Synod and the corresponding body.

p. To effect organic union with other ecclesiastical bodies according to the procedure set forth in this *Form of Government*.

q. To supervise the affairs of the entire denomination, directing such measures as are necessary for the promotion of love, truth, and holiness through all congregations under its care.

### C. ITS COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The General Synod shall meet at least once in every year. Those entitled to sit as members of this court shall include all pastors of congregations, active or retired; and every minister engaged in full-time service of the foreign missions, presbyteries, institutions, boards and agencies of the denomination, or who were retired while engaged in such full-time service; ministers involved in Presbytery-approved Christian ministries; and military chaplains, active or retired. Other ministers who deem their vocation to be an appropriate exercise of their call and ordination to the ministry may be certified annually by vote of their presbyteries as being members of the General Synod, after written application each year by such ministers, showing, to the satisfaction of the presbytery, that the minister is, in compliance with Chapter XII B.2 (k), devoting himself diligently to his sacred calling.

Those entitled to sit as members of this court also shall include at least one ruling elder from each congregation, the vice-moderator, if he should be a ruling elder, and the retiring moderator, should he be a ruling elder. Congregations having more than four hundred (400) active communicant members are entitled to send two (2) representatives, the basis for representation continuing in this proportion.

The Principal Clerk of each Presbytery shall submit to the Principal Clerk of the General Synod a statement stating the Presbyters are duly certified.

2. The meeting of the General Synod shall be held at the time and place designated at the preceding meeting. The moderator shall designate an alternate time and/or place of meeting in the event that such a change should be necessary. Notice of any change shall be given to each session not less than thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.

**Amendment No. 2A effective June 8, 1976 (XIII, C. 1)**

**Amendment No 4 effective June 15, 1982 (XIII, C. 1)**

**Amendment No. 10 effective June 10, 1986 (XIII, C.1)**

**Amendment No. 18 effective June 8, 1993 (XIII, C. 1)**

3. A special meeting of the General Synod may be called only at a time of emergency and in the following manner: The moderator, or in his failure to act, the principal clerk shall issue a call for a special meeting, at the official request of at least two Presbyteries or upon his own initiative, with the official concurrence of at least two Presbyteries. Notice of the meeting shall be given to each session not less than thirty (30) days in advance. The purpose of the meeting shall be as stated in the notice and no other business shall be transacted. In addition to all ministers of the General Synod, the ruling elders or their alternates who were enrolled at the previous stated meeting, shall be members of the special meeting. A session shall have the right to elect a representative or alternate in the stead of one who has died or transferred his membership.

4. The officers of the General Synod shall be a moderator, a vice moderator, a principal clerk, a second clerk, a bill clerk, a treasurer and such other officers as are necessary. The method of selection and the terms of office and duties shall be determined by the General Synod.

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

6. Each elder-representative, before he shall be enrolled as a member of the General Synod, shall present from his session a statement signed by the moderator and the clerk in the following form:

“The session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, meeting on the \_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby appoints Ruling Elder \_\_\_\_\_, or, in the case of his absence, Ruling Elder \_\_\_\_\_, to be a representative of this Session to the \_\_\_ meeting of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, or wherever and whenever the said Court may meet, to consult, determine, and vote on all things that may come before the court, according to the principles and Constitution of this Church and the Word of God.”

The session shall make a record of the appointment. No representative shall have the right to deliberate or vote in the General Synod until he has been enrolled by the principal clerk. Only those representatives who are personally present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.

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

8. Each session of the General Synod shall be opened and closed with prayer. The business of the General Synod having been completed and the vote having been taken for final adjournment, the moderator shall state:

“By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, I now declare the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is adjourned, to meet next at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_.”

The session of the General Synod shall be closed with a song of praise, after which the moderator shall offer a prayer and pronounce or cause to be pronounced on those present a scriptural benediction.

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

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

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

The corporation or individual trustees and successors shall hold title to all property belonging to the General Synod or any of its boards or agencies, and upon authority from and on behalf of the General Synod may buy, sell, or mortgage property for the General Synod or any of its boards or agencies; shall accept and execute deeds and shall hold and defend same; shall manage any permanent special fund so entrusted for the furtherance of the purposes of the General Synod, or any of its boards and agencies; and shall facilitate the management of its civil affairs in such manner as the General Synod may from time to time direct. Title to institutional General Synod property shall be acquired, mortgaged, held and transferred by the appropriate board, corporation or agency of the General Synod.

#### D. THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

ARP Women's Ministries is an organization which encourages and equips the community of Associate Reformed Presbyterian women to minister together for God's glory and purpose, functioning under the ecclesiastical leadership of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

ARP Women's Ministries accomplishes its purposes through its Board and presbytery and local church organizations.

ARP Women's Ministries shall report to the General Synod on an annual basis.

**CHAPTER XIV**  
**CONCERNING BOARDS, ECCLESIASTICAL**  
**COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

**A. BOARDS**

1. Purpose.

A board is a body appointed and empowered by a court of the Church to take management of certain specified duties in advancing the mission of the church.

The specified duties shall be set forth and published in a manual of authorities and duties or other document of the appointing court.

2. Authority and responsibility.

a. A board shall perform the specified duties entrusted to it without particular instructions from the appointing court but shall follow the general instructions of the court.

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

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

d. A board shall make an annual report to the appointing court, giving full statement of all business transacted, actions taken during the year, and newly initiated and/or planned programs. The report shall address the specified duties as set forth in a manual of authorities and duties or other documents of the appointing court.

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

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

**Amendment No. 17 effective June 9, 1992 (XIV.A.4)**

**Amendment No. 42 effective June 7, 2006 (XIV.A.1)**

**Amendment No. 43, effective June 7, 2006 (XIV.A.2)**

### 3. Composition and organization.

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

b. A board shall elect its own officers and, subject to the approval of the appointing court, shall adopt a constitution, policy book, and/or by-laws. Changes to governing documents shall be reported to the appointing court.

c. A board may incorporate; however, the provision of its charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with the *Form of Government of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.

4. Any newly-elected member of any board or any newly-appointed administrative or teaching employee shall have given satisfactory evidence of his or her belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity as adopted by the General Synod and as set forth in a manual of authorities and duties.

## B. ECCLESIASTICAL COMMISSIONS

### 1. Purpose.

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

### 2. Authority and responsibilities.

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

b. An ecclesiastical commission may be formed to interpret, construe, and apply the constitution and laws of the church to all matters involving constitutionality referred to it by the appointing court.

c. A judicial case brought before a court of the Church may, with the consent of the parties, be committed to the judgment of an ecclesiastical commission. In such cases the commission appointed must be satisfactory to both parties. The decision of an ecclesiastical commission appointed for judicial purposes may be appealed to the appointing court.

### 3. Composition and organization.

a. Each ecclesiastical commission shall elect a chairman and secretary. Full and complete records of the commission's proceedings shall be kept and submitted to the appointing court at its next stated meeting. Such report shall be entered into the minutes and shall be regarded as an action of that court. The commission shall then be dissolved.

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

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

d. Size of membership:

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

(2) An ecclesiastical commission appointed by a Presbytery shall be not fewer in number than three (3) members, consisting of at least two (2) ministers and one (1) ruling elder.

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

(4) An ecclesiastical commission appointed by the General Synod shall be not fewer in number than seven (7) members, consisting of at least four (4) ministers and three (3) ruling elders.

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

## C. COMMITTEES

### 1. Purpose.

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

## 2. Authority and Responsibility.

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

b. The recommendations of a committee require action by the appointing court or agency, but a committee report of its actions implementing the instructions and orders of the court or agency may not require further action. All written reports shall be signed by the chairman and secretary.

## 3. Composition and Organization.

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

b. Committees shall be classified as follows:

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

(2) Special Committees. A special committee shall be appointed whenever the work of the court or agency requires it. The moderator, chairman or nominating committee shall appoint its members whenever authorized by the court or agency. The committee shall be convened by its first named member and shall organize at its first meeting.

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

4. Any newly-elected member of any Committee shall have given satisfactory evidence of his or her belief in and adherence to the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity as adopted by the General Synod and as set forth in a manual of authorities and duties.

**CHAPTER XV****CONCERNING AMENDMENTS TO THE  
CONSTITUTION AND CHURCH UNION****A. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSOCIATE  
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The Constitution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church—consisting of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, the *Form of Government*, the *Rules of Discipline* and the *Directory of Public Worship*—shall be amended in the following manner:

1. The *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*:

Amendments to the *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* shall be proposed by the General Synod to the Presbyteries and must be approved by two-thirds of all those voting in the Presbyteries. The General Synod shall certify the vote at its next meeting.

2. The *Form of Government*, the *Rules of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Public Worship*:

Amendments to the *Form of Government*, the *Rules of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Public Worship*, shall be proposed by the General Synod to the Presbyteries and must be approved by a majority of all those voting in all the Presbyteries. The General Synod shall certify the vote at its next meeting.

3. The provisions contained in this chapter can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* (Ch.XV.A–1).

**B. CHURCH UNION**

Full organic union and consolidation of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church with any other ecclesiastical body shall be by plan proposed and recommended by the General Synod to the Presbyteries and approved by two-thirds of all those voting in the Presbyteries, and, if approved, union will be consummated at the next meeting of the General Synod. Any plan of union as proposed and recommended by the General Synod shall provide for the orderly withdrawal of any congregation and its property.

### C. REGULATIONS GOVERNING AMENDMENTS AND CHURCH UNION

1. Any proposed amendment to the constitution or proposed church union shall be presented to the Presbyteries at their regular fall meeting and shall be voted upon at their regular spring meeting. The principal clerk of each Presbytery shall record and submit the official count of the vote to the Principal Clerk of the General Synod.

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

3. Proposed amendments and proposed church union shall not be specifically presented to congregations for discussion or decision.

4. Only those members personally present at the meeting of Presbytery shall be entitled to vote. After the results of the vote are announced the question shall be closed and shall not be reconsidered.

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

**CHAPTER XVI**  
**CONCERNING MATTERS UNPROVIDED FOR**

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

