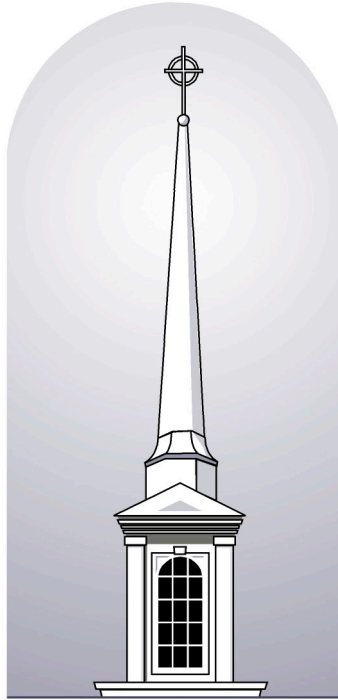


The Book of Order



Westkirk
Presbyterian
Church

The Book of Government
The Book of Discipline
The Book of Worship

Approved, 2004, by the Congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church
Edited as approved, 2006, from the Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Contents

Preface	4
The Essentials of Our Faith	5
Part 1 – The Book of Government	7
Chapter 1 – the Church Defined	7
Chapter 2 – the Government of the Church	8
Chapter 3 – the Power of the Church	9
Chapter 4 – the Church	10
Chapter 5 – the Organization, Dissolution, Reception or Dismissal of a Mission Church....	12
Chapter 6 – Membership of the Church.....	15
Chapter 7 – Rights Reserved to the Church	16
Chapter 8 – Meetings of the Church	17
Chapter 9 – the Authority of the Session over Church Membership	18
Chapter 10 – Officers of the Church	24
Chapter 11 – Calling to Office.....	27
Chapter 12 – Preparation for Office	31
Chapter 13 – Examination for Ordination and/or Installation.....	33
Chapter 14 – The Ordination and/or Installation of Officers.....	35
Chapter 15 – The Dissolution of an Officer’s Relationship.....	40
Chapter 16 – The Organizational Structure of the Church	43
Chapter 17 – Amendment, Union and Limitations.....	50
Chapter 18 – Union Churches.....	52
Part 2 – The Book of Discipline	56
Chapter 1 – Discipline – Its Nature, Subjects and Purpose.....	56
Chapter 2 – Pastoral Care.....	58
Chapter 3 – Jurisdiction	59
Chapter 4 – Offenses	60
Chapter 5 – Actions for Discipline.....	61
Chapter 6 – Procedures in Actions for Discipline	62
Chapter 7 – General Provisions Applicable to All Cases of Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedure.	63
Chapter 8 – Evidence.....	65
Chapter 9 – The Trial.....	68
Chapter 10 – Disciplinary Sanctions.....	70
Chapter 11 – Removal of Sanctions.....	74
Chapter 12 – Dissent and Protest.....	81

Part 3 - The Book of Worship	82
Chapter 1 - Man's Chief End	82
Chapter 2 - Public Worship of God	83
Chapter 3 - The Sacraments	90
Chapter 4 - The Worship of God at Other Times	98
Chapter 5 - Christian Marriage	100
Chapter 6 - Christian Burial of the Dead.....	102
Chapter 7 - Service to God	103

PREFACE

The Constitution of Westkirk Presbyterian Church is the **Westminster Standards** (the *Westminster Confession of Faith* along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms), the **Book of Order** (which consists of *The Book of Government*, *The Book of Discipline* and *The Book of Worship*) and, “**Essentials of Our Faith.**” These standards are subordinate to Holy Scripture, which is “the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks.”

The Constitution regulates the government, discipline and worship of the Westkirk Presbyterian Church as our corporate interpretation of the Bible. All members and officers of Westkirk promise to be subject to these standards and benefit from the governance these standards provide.

Believing the visible church to be the “kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,” these standards represent Christ’s gracious reign over His people through His undershepherds (1 Peter 5:1ff).

This amended version of *The Book of Order* and the “Essentials of our Faith,” was been adopted by the Session and Congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church at the Annual Meeting of January 2, 2004.

Westkirk Presbyterian Church Session
19 December 2005

Pastor Michael Mudlaff (Moderator)
Darrell Aldrich
Scott Bland
Richard Cunitz
George DeGraaf
Chuck Heitbrink
Ron Long
Bill Raisch
Barbara Robinson
Gary Robinson
Barbara Springer
Jerry Tuinstra
Lee Turnbull

ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:

1. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!
2. Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.
6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20)
7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and

service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)

These Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In Essentials.....Unity
In Non-Essentials.....Liberty
In All Things.....Charity

Explanatory Statement to “Essentials of Our Faith”

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a confessional statement of orthodox Presbyterianism. The Westminster Confession of Faith is our standard of doctrine as found in Scripture. It is a positive statement of the Reformed Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith constitutes a system of biblical truth that an officer of Westkirk Presbyterian Church is required to believe, acknowledging that the Session has the freedom to allow exceptions which do not infringe upon the system of doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

“Essentials of Our Faith” is an irenic statement of historic evangelicalism. The purpose of “Essentials of Our Faith” is to define core beliefs of the Christian Faith. It expresses historic Christian beliefs common to all true believers and churches throughout the world. “Essentials of Our Faith” is not intended to be the exclusive test of orthodoxy for ordination. It is not intended to be used as an explicit standard for minimal core beliefs for candidates, ordination or ministerial examinations. It is not to be construed as a substitute for the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Both the Westminster Confession of Faith and “Essentials of Our Faith” are important documents of Westkirk Presbyterian Church. The Westminster Confession of Faith and “Essentials of Our Faith” are not alternative statements of truth, nor are they competitive statements of truth. They each serve important and harmonious purposes within Westkirk Presbyterian Church. The Westminster Confession of Faith preserves our commitment to the historic orthodoxy of the Reformed Faith. “Essentials of Our Faith” preserves our commitment to historic evangelicalism.

PART ONE

BOOK OF GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 1

The Church Defined

§1-1 The true Church catholic is described by the two terms, invisible and visible.

§1-2 The invisible Church is composed of all those saints of all times who truly belong to Jesus Christ, claiming only Him as Lord and Savior. This invisible Church will be the Church Victorious when Jesus comes again finally to establish His Kingdom forever and ever.

§1-3 The visible Church is the Church on earth established by Jesus, its Lord, for the gathering and perfecting of His saints. This visible Kingdom of Grace is the one and the same in all ages. The members of this Church are all those persons in every place who profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior, who submit to His law and Lordship, together with their children.

§1-4 The Church on earth, sometimes called the Church Militant, is not defined by, nor limited to, particular forms of government or denominational structures. While such divisions may more or less obscure the true Church in its visible form, nevertheless, such uniformity is not essential to its existence.

§1-5 The Visible Church, though more or less divided and obscured, is bound together in its essential unity where scriptural discipline is practiced, where the Word is rightly proclaimed, where the sacraments are properly observed, and where loving fellowship is maintained. Such groups who demonstrate this fundamental integrity of the Church shall be recognized as true parts of the Church, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

CHAPTER 2

The Government of the Church

§2-1 The government of Westkirk Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form. This is government by Elders, both Ruling and Teaching. While this form of government is not essential to the existence of the true Church, Westkirk Presbyterian Church believes the perfecting of the order of the visible Church is best established where the scriptural doctrine of government by Presbyters is practiced.

§2-2 The officers of Westkirk Presbyterian Church as set forth in Scripture are: Teaching Elders (designated by many titles in Scripture, including Ministers and Pastors), Ruling Elders, and Deacons.

§2-3 The court of Westkirk Presbyterian Church shall be the Session. The Boards of Deacons, while useful in service and ministry, are not courts of the church and are under the supervision and control of the Session.

CHAPTER 3

The Power of the Church

§3-1 The power given to the Church by Christ is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of Westkirk Presbyterian Church from civil government. The powers of the Church reside in Westkirk Presbyterian Church as exercised in the Session and not in individuals. The use of these powers is for the purpose of proclamation, administration, and enforcement of the laws of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. Exercise of these powers must always be in conformity with the Scripture.

§3-2 There are two kinds of powers of Westkirk Presbyterian Church: the Power of Order and the Power of Jurisdiction.

A. The Power of Order: This power is exercised by individuals who have been ordained. It is the power to serve, to proclaim, and to minister in the name of Christ as under-shepherd. While such duty is incumbent upon every Christian, it is especially incumbent upon those who are ordained to office. It includes especially the sharing of the Gospel, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and otherwise exhibiting to the world the fruit of the Spirit.

B. The Power of Jurisdiction: This is the power to rule and the exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the Church.

§3-3 Powers given to Westkirk Presbyterian Church by Jesus Christ are not an end in themselves, but are given to edify God's people, to promote the faith of the Church, and to evangelize the whole world to the end that all might know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

CHAPTER 4

The Church

§4-1 The visible Church is seen not only in denominations, but is especially evidenced in individual churches or congregations. Westkirk Presbyterian Church consists of all those professing Christians who, along with their children, are associated together to live their faith, to worship together, who seek individually and jointly to serve the Lord in witness and service, who agree to submit themselves to the government and discipline of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, and who promise to promote its purity and peace.

§4-2 It is the privilege and primary duty of Westkirk Presbyterian Church to worship God regularly. Out of the experience of worship, the Church renews her faith and clarifies her understanding of obedient service to God.

§4-3 In terms of its work, the first duty of Westkirk Presbyterian Church is to evangelize by extending the Gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to provide for the nurture of that faith that all might grow in grace and in sanctification. It is to be remembered that good deeds in ministry and service to others, offering relief to those in need, is the fruit of the Gospel. Without the clear evidence of such fruit, all else is brought into question. However, Westkirk Presbyterian Church must never confuse its primary task of evangelism (the Gospel) with the fruit of faith (good works).

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

§4-5 The home and the church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and in the Church Catechisms. To this end the Session should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of Westkirk Presbyterian Church to guide their children in the catechizing and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.

§ 4-6 Westkirk Presbyterian Church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full Church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by Westkirk Presbyterian Church and every means used to reclaim them.

§4-7 It is the further duty of Westkirk Presbyterian Church to provide for the nurture of its members, to promote the welfare of the whole Church, to provide the sacraments, to teach the

faith, to observe special days, including times of prayer and fasting, and to otherwise further its common life together as hereafter set forth in the *Book of Worship*.

§4-8 Westkirk Presbyterian Church is governed by the Session which is composed of the Pastor(s) called by the congregation, and Ruling Elders. Westkirk Presbyterian Church may also have a Board of Deacons with whom is lodged the primary duty of sympathy and service. Westkirk Presbyterian Church may elect not to have a Board of Deacons, in which case these duties return to the Session.

CHAPTER 5

The Organization or Dissolution of a Mission Church

§5-1 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has the right to organize or dissolve a mission church as an extension work.

§5-2 **The development of a mission church:** A mission church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeable to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government and discipline of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

A mission church is distinguished from Westkirk Presbyterian Church in that it has no permanent governing body, and thus must be governed or supervised by others: However, its goal is to mature and be organized as an independent church as soon as this can be done in good order.

A. Governance: The mission church, because of its transitional nature, requires a temporary system of government. Depending on the circumstances, and at its own discretion, the Session shall provide for such government in one of several ways:

1. The Session may appoint an Evangelist as prescribed in 10-3C of the **Book of Government** and entrust appropriate powers to that person.
2. The Session may serve as a temporary governing body of the mission church.
3. The Session may appoint a commission to serve as a temporary Session of the mission church.

B. Membership: The temporary governing body shall receive members into the mission church as prescribed in Chapter 9. These persons then become confirmed or baptized members of Westkirk Presbyterian Church. Mission churches shall maintain membership rolls in the same manner as, but separate from Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the Session or its appointed commission having oversight of their temporary governing body. It is the further intention of Westkirk Presbyterian Church that mission churches enjoy the same status as the Westkirk Presbyterian Church in relation to civil government.

C. Minutes: The temporary governing body of the mission church shall record and submit its minutes to the Session for review in the same manner as Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

§5-3 **The organization of an independent church:** The procedures for such organization shall be according to the stipulations set forth as follows:

A. The Session may organize an independent church directly or through a Commission established for that purpose.

B. At a service of worship convened by the organizing body, those desiring to be charter members of the independent church shall indicate membership in some other body from which the organizing Commission shall request a letter of dismissal; or persons may be received as charter members by Reaffirmation of Faith or by Profession of Faith, all as indicated in the *Book of Government*.

C. A covenant shall be established among those desiring to be charter members of the new congregation. By an appropriate means, usually the signing of the covenant, they shall indicate their willingness and commitment, in reliance upon God, to walk together as an independent church, based on the faith and government of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, to be faithful to one another, to the Lordship of Christ, to the support of the whole Church, to be obedient to the order and doctrines of our holy religion, submitting themselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promising to promote its purity and peace.

D. The person presiding shall then pronounce the following or like statement: “On behalf of the Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, I do now pronounce and declare that you who have covenanted together are now constituted a church according to Scripture and according to the constitution of Westkirk Presbyterian Church. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

E. The organizing body shall authorize the election of Ruling Elders. If the new congregation desires, Deacons may also be elected. Further, a search committee may be elected to begin the process of selecting a pastor. The organizing body shall further provide for the instruction, examination, ordination, and installation of the officers-elect. The organizing body shall make arrangements in agreement with the new congregation, for the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, until such time as a Pastor has been duly elected and installed.

F. At the service of worship it is appropriate that the Word be preached and that the Lord’s Supper be celebrated.

§5.4 The reception of a church from another body or from independency: When an established congregation desires to become a mission church of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, it shall petition the Session to be received. Such petition should be presented by an authorized delegation from the requesting congregation which indicates that the congregation and its governing body have duly concurred in the request, and have agreed to walk together as a church, based upon the faith and government of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, to be faithful to one another, to the Lordship of Christ, to the support of the whole Church, to be obedient to the order and doctrines of our holy religion, submitting themselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promising to promote its purity and peace.

The petition shall include a list of the membership and a list of elected officers. Upon approval of the request, either the Session or a duly appointed commission shall meet with the petitioning

congregation. If the petitioning congregation does not have Elders, the receiving body shall proceed in the manner described for new congregations in G5-3E. However, if the petitioning congregation comes from a fellowship with similar form of government, the receiving body may declare the officers of that congregation to be duly installed Elders (and Deacons), or it may require them to be prepared for office according to G12-3, and shall arrange for their ordination and installation. If the petitioning congregation is served by a Pastor(s) and if said Pastor(s) has been duly received by the Session, the receiving body may declare the Pastor(s) duly installed. If there is no Pastor(s), a search committee may be elected by the congregation. In any case, the Pastor(s) serving that congregation must be received by the Session according to the **Book of Order** for pastors coming from other denominations.

§5-5 The dissolution of a mission church: When a congregation ceases to exist or is dissolved by the Session, the property that may remain shall be delivered, transferred, and conveyed to Westkirk Presbyterian Church by those holding title. The disposition of the remaining property shall be at the discretion of the Session. However, in no case shall the Session dissolve a mission church which can be reasonably deemed viable.

§5-6 The dismissal of a mission church to another body: Should a mission church desire to be dismissed to another body, the following procedures shall be followed:

A. The mission church shall notify the Session of its desire to be dismissed. Once the mission church has notified the Session of its desire under this section, the Session shall take no action to dissolve or divide the mission church and its elders until all proceedings under this Section 5-6 are fully completed.

B. At a duly called meeting of the congregation, with representatives from the Session present and having the privilege of the floor, the motion for dismissal shall be put and discussed. The meeting shall recess for no less than three months and no more than six months, to a date determined at the meeting.

C. At the time set, the congregation shall reconvene, with representatives from the Session present and having the privilege of the floor, and the question shall again be put to the congregation and the floor opened for discussion. The congregation shall then vote on the motion by written ballot. If it passes by a two-thirds majority, the Session shall dismiss the congregation as requested with all of its property and assets. Those not desiring to participate in the dismissal shall notify the Session which will welcome them to Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER 6

Membership of the Church

§6-1 The classes of membership shall be as follows:

A. **Confirmed Members:** Those who have been baptized and who have made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who have been admitted to active membership by the Session are entitled to participate in the governing of the Church by voting in meetings of the congregation.

B. **Baptized Members:** All those whose parent(s) are members in good standing in a congregation are to be considered members of the covenant by right of birth and adoption. As such, they are entitled to pastoral oversight, to instruction, to nurture, and to encouragement to embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. Such persons are entitled to receive the sacrament of Baptism. Upon reception of that sacrament, they shall be enrolled as Baptized Members.

C. **Affiliate Members:** Persons separated geographically from their home church because of educational, military, or other reasons, may ask to be received as affiliate members according to the procedures set forth in Section 9-4. This affiliation shall be good for one year and may be renewed. Such affiliates shall be given the rights and privileges of confirmed members, including the oversight and concern of the Session, except they may not vote or hold elected office within the congregation.

CHAPTER 7

Rights Reserved to the Church

§7-1 Certain rights and privileges are irrevocably reserved to Westkirk Presbyterian Church and its members.

§7-2 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has the right to elect its own officers.

§7-3 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has the right to determine whether or not it shall have a Board of Deacons.

§7-4 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has ownership of its own property. It may buy, sell, lease, rent or otherwise determine the use of its property. It may incur debt and other legal obligations. However, care should be exercised that the good name and the reputation of the Church not be harmed through unwise and imprudent management.

§7-5 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has the right to call its own pastor.

§7-6 Westkirk Presbyterian Church has the right to elect Trustees from within its membership who have demonstrated a consistent Christian life and who shall have the power, upon authorization from the congregation, to buy, sell, mortgage property, accept and execute deeds, to hold and defend titles to the same, and to assume other such related duties as may be assigned to them. The responsibilities of the Trustees shall not infringe upon the duties or powers of the Session or the Boards of Deacons, and their authority is always subject to the instruction of the congregation or the Session. Since Westkirk Presbyterian Church is legally incorporated it is limited by the constitution of Westkirk Presbyterian Church in establishing its charter and by-laws.

CHAPTER 8

Meetings of the Church

§8-1 Meetings of the congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church shall follow the procedures set forth below:

A. **Calling a meeting:** The Session may call a congregational meeting when deemed necessary. Also, when at least one fifth of the active membership shall request a meeting, in writing, the Session shall do so without delay.

B. **Notice of meeting:** At least two Sundays notice shall be given. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.

C. **Agenda of meeting:** Only those matters stated in the call may be presented and handled.

D. **Moderator of meeting:** Ordinarily, the Pastor will be the Moderator unless for some reason it is deemed not practical or wise by the Session with the concurrence of the Pastor. In that event, the Session with the concurrence of the Pastor shall appoint one of its members to call the meeting to order and to preside. In case of sickness, temporary absence, or refusal of the Pastor to moderate, the same expedient may be adopted.

E. **Quorum for the meeting:** If the size of the congregation is less than 100 members, a quorum shall be one-fifth of the active membership. If the size of the congregation is larger than 100, a quorum shall be one-tenth of the membership, but not less than 20.

F. **Clerk for the meeting:** The Clerk of the Session shall ordinarily serve as Clerk for the congregational meetings. In the absence of the Clerk, the Moderator shall appoint a temporary Clerk. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep a record of the proceedings and business transacted. Such records shall be kept in a permanent form. After approval by the moderator of the meeting, the record shall be transmitted to the Session for insertion in the minutes of that body.

G. **Eligibility to vote:** Those who are eligible to vote consist of those persons who are active members of the congregation as determined by the Session, and who are present at the meeting. The moderator of the congregational meeting may not vote.

H. **Tie votes:** When a matter has been put to the congregation and the vote results in a tie, the moderator shall put the question a second time. If there is still a tie, the matter shall be declared defeated.

CHAPTER 9

The Authority of the Session over Church Membership

§9-1 The Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church shall be responsible for receiving, dismissing, retiring to the inactive roll, or otherwise determining membership in Westkirk Presbyterian Church. This authority shall be governed by and limited to the following stipulations:

Rolls to be kept: The Session shall maintain the rolls listed below.

A. **Active Roll:** This roll shall include confirmed members who have been received into active membership.

B. **Baptized Roll:** This roll shall include the names of those baptized in Westkirk Presbyterian Church, and the names of those baptized children of confirmed members received from other churches.

C. **Affiliate Roll:** This roll shall include the names of those received into affiliate membership.

D. **Inactive Roll:** This roll shall include confirmed members who have been removed by the Session to this roll in accordance with provisions in Section 9-5.

§9-2 Reception of persons into **active membership:** Members may be received into active membership in the following manner:

A. **By transfer of membership:** Persons may be received by a transfer of membership from some other body recognized as a part of the true Church. The following procedures shall apply:

The person(s) shall meet with the Session and request reception. The Session shall be responsible for writing for the letter(s) of membership.

The Session may require the person(s) applying for membership to participate in a course of instruction at its discretion.

The Session shall satisfy itself with respect to the faith, commitment and intention of continued obedience to God in Jesus Christ of the applicant. Thus, it is appropriate for the Session to ask for testimonials of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a sharing of one's growth in faith.

Persons shall be asked the following questions:

1. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating in this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?
2. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Westkirk Presbyterian Church, and to the spiritual oversight of this Session, and promise to further the unity, purity and peace of the Church?

The Session may not deny membership for any reason not related to profession of faith and obedience.

The Session shall announce to the congregation the names of those received into active membership and they shall be commended to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection.

B. By profession of faith: Persons may be admitted to active membership by the Session upon the profession of their faith.

The person(s) shall meet with the Session and indicate readiness to make profession of faith.

The Session may provide a suitable course of instruction in faith, worship and mission of the Church, as well as instruction for participating in the governing and decision-making life of the congregation.

The Session shall satisfy itself that each applicant demonstrate evidence of true commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and determination to live as becomes a follower of Christ.

Ordinarily the person(s) being received on profession of faith shall make that profession in a public service of worship in the presence of the congregation.

If not previously baptized, each applicant shall be baptized in accordance with the *Book of Worship* as it deals with adult baptism. (*Book of Worship*, Section 3-2).

The Session shall commend them to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection.

C. By reaffirmation of faith: Persons who have previously made a profession of faith who apply for active membership may be unable to secure a certificate of membership or may wish to reaffirm their faith. In that event, the following procedures shall apply:

The person(s) shall meet with the Session and request admission to active membership.

The Session may provide a suitable course of instruction and preparation for full participation in the faith, worship, and mission of the Church as well as instruction for participating in the governing and decision-making life of the congregation.

The Session shall satisfy itself with respect to the applicant's faith, commitment, and intention of obedience to God in Jesus Christ.

Ordinarily, the person(s) being received by reaffirmation of faith shall make that reaffirmation in a public service of worship in the presence of the congregation.

The Session shall commend such persons to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection.

The Session shall seek to notify in writing the particular churches to which individuals formerly belonged of the reception into active membership.

D. Persons professing or reaffirming faith shall be asked the following questions. The time having come, such persons who have been approved by the Session shall take their places in the congregation. The minister or moderator of the Session shall state: ("All of you) being present to make a public profession (reaffirmation) of your faith, are to assent to the following declarations and promises, by which you enter into a solemn covenant with Christ and the Church." Then the officiating person shall address the following or like questions:

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God and without hope for your salvation except in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon Him alone for your salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now promise and resolve, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating with this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Westkirk Presbyterian Church to the spiritual oversight of this Session, and do you promise to promote the unity, purity and peace of the Church?

When these questions have been answered in the affirmative, and after baptism has been administered, if necessary, the officiating person shall say, "Inasmuch as you have made a

profession (reaffirmation) of your faith, and having (been baptized) (received baptism), and having been approved by the Session for active membership, I declare you entitled to all the privileges of this congregation and of the full fellowship of the Church, as well as having all the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon those who profess Christ and seek to worship God by service to Him and ministry to others.”

After commending the new members to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection, a brief charge as to the importance of the solemn obligations assumed may be given to the new members and to the congregation and the whole concluded with a benediction.

E. **By baptism:** See Section 9-1 B and *Book of Worship*, Section 3-2.

§9-3 Care of persons on **baptized rolls:** All non-confirmed members who receive with meekness and appreciation the oversight and instruction of the Church are entitled to special attention. Their rights and privileges under the covenant should be frequently and fully explained, and they should be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant obligations.

§9-4 The reception of **affiliate members:** Affiliate members are those believers temporarily residing in locations other than their permanent homes. Such believers may become affiliate members of a particular church without ceasing to be members of their home churches. An affiliate member shall have all the rights and privileges of the Church, with the exception of voting in a congregational or corporate meeting, and holding an elected office in the Church.

The procedure for receiving affiliate members shall be the same as that for receiving members by transfer of membership. An affiliate membership is effective for one year and is renewable.

§9-5 Placing persons on the **inactive roll:** When placing persons on the inactive roll, the Session should be especially conscious of its role in shepherding those under its charge. Thus, to place a person on the inactive roll not only reflects on the commitments made to Christ by that individual, but it may also reflect on the failure of the Session to be diligent in its pastoral duties. For that reason, certain requirements are placed on the Session before it may place a person on inactive status.

A. If a member fails to participate in the life of the church for a period of one year, that individual may be placed on the inactive roll by act of the Session. However, prior to such action, the Session must earnestly seek to discover the causes of the failure to participate, and seek to encourage the person to resume active involvement in the life of the congregation.

B. When a member changes residence so that it is no longer possible or practical to participate actively in the life of the church, the Session shall encourage that person to establish a relationship to a church where participation is possible. After six months, the Session may then remove that person's name to the inactive roll. In any event, the Session

should notify a church in the area of the member's residence and suggest that pastoral oversight be given.

C. A person placed on the inactive roll may be restored to the active roll upon request to the Session and when the individual has resumed active participation in the life of the church. The Session shall satisfy itself of the intention of renewed commitment.

D. If a person remains on the inactive roll for a period of at least one year and has not resumed active participation in the life of the church despite the diligent efforts of the Session in its pastoral duties, that individual may be removed from membership of the church upon written notification from the Session.

E. If a Ruling Elder or Deacon who is presently serving shall be placed on the inactive roll, that active officer relationship is automatically dissolved. This fact shall be reported to the congregation by the Session.

§9-6 Limitations of the Session: the following limitations are placed on a Session with regard to its authority over members:

A. The request of any member in good standing to be dismissed to any church considered to be part of the Church must be honored.

B. Letters of dismissal are always to the governing body of another church.

C. Restoration to active membership may be granted when requested by an inactive member who resumes active participation in the life of the church. The Session shall satisfy itself of the intention of renewed commitment.

D. The request of an inactive member to be dismissed to any church considered to be a part of the true Church must be honored; but the dismissal shall note the inactive status.

E. The request of any member, active or inactive, for a certificate of membership with the view to establishing an affiliate membership shall be honored provided the body with whom application is made is considered to be a part of the true Church. Such affiliate membership is effective for one year and is renewable. The person requesting such an affiliate membership shall be maintained on the roll where currently inscribed.

§9-7 When a member of Westkirk Presbyterian Church is ordained to the Ministry, the ordaining church shall notify Westkirk Presbyterian Church. The Session shall remove that name from its rolls and shall record in its minutes the removal due to ordination.

§9-8 Each year the Session shall review its four rolls, ordinarily at a meeting in February. It shall review its ministry to those on each roll, giving special care to examine its ministry to those on the

baptized members roll, and its continuing efforts to restore to active participation those on the inactive roll.

CHAPTER 10

Officers of the Church

§10-1 The Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, has given three offices to the Church. These are: Ministers of the Word (Teaching Elders, Pastors), Ruling Elders, and Deacons. The Church should prayerfully search the Scriptures and choose for officers those who are best qualified. Teaching and Ruling Elders are known as Presbyters and share in the governing of the Church. These offices are not indications of special pre-eminence by those who hold them, but rather indicate a call to service, to ministry to special discipleship and the evidencing of the fruit of the Spirit in every part of life.

§10-2 The office of Minister: For dignity and usefulness, this office historically has been considered first in the Church. Many titles are attached to this office such as Bishop, Pastor, Minister, Presbyter, Elder, Ambassador, Evangelist, Preacher and Teacher. All these titles refer to various aspects of the whole ministry to which one is called in this office. Those who fill this office should, according to the Scripture, have certain qualifications. They should be sound in the faith and have an aptitude for teaching. Their lives should reflect holiness and discipline which brings honor to Christ and which causes them to be well thought of by those outside the Church. They should have wisdom and discretion and should have adequate training to equip them for their task.

§10-3 Varieties of callings: Within the office of Minister, there are numerous callings. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:

A. **Pastor:** When one is called by a congregation to be the shepherd of that flock, that person shall be called Pastor. As such, the duties of the Pastor shall be to preach and expound the Word, to be God's prophet to the people and to be the people's priest before God. The Pastor shall lead the people in worship, shall celebrate the Sacraments, shall oversee the education and nurture program of the congregation. The Pastor with the Ruling Elders shall minister to the sick, the dying, the grieving, the troubled, the poor, and to all those who have need of a Pastor's care, love, and compassion. With the Ruling Elders, the Pastor shall exercise the joint power of government.

B. **Teacher:** A minister may be called to teach in a seminary, college, or some other school. As a Teacher, the Minister is no less responsible for being a Pastor to those whom he teaches. The Teacher is to use that calling for planting the Word and for searching for the fruit of it. Above all, the Teacher is to serve as one who cares for the spiritual well being of others.

C. **Evangelist:** A Minister may be called by some organization to serve as an evangelist. Westkirk Presbyterian Church may commission the Minister to share the Gospel and to administer the sacraments outside the geographical bounds of the church or the world. An Evangelist called as missionary shall always have as his primary duty the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. When the church calls an Evangelist as Church

Planter, it may entrust to that person the responsibility to develop churches, to conduct preparational meetings of such churches, and to oversee the required preparation of Elders and Deacons. Those special powers given to the Evangelist shall be specified by Westkirk Presbyterian Church in writing. That person may be given the power to receive and dismiss members.

D. Administrator: The Session may call a Minister to serve in some administrative capacity. Some worthy organization deemed proper by the church may also issue a call to a Minister to be Administrator. In such cases, it is always the duty of the Minister to give a good account of the Gospel, always making the Word the focus and center of ministry.

E. Chaplain: A hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Minister as Chaplain if Westkirk Presbyterian Church deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Minister shall always have as his primary duty the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.

F. Pastor Emeritus: When any Pastor or Associate Pastor shall terminate a pastorate because of age or incapacity, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her Pastor Emeritus, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the Personnel Committee of Westkirk Presbyterian Church concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action will be subject to the approval of the Session, and shall take effect upon the approval of the Session.

Whenever a minister is called to one of the positions provided for under paragraphs A to E above that is outside the authority of a court of the church and after being fully satisfied that the ministry is consistent with the calling to the ministry of the Word, the Session may grant permission for the Minister to labor outside of bounds. It shall be required of the Minister of the Word to make an annual report to the Session of faithfulness to the Gospel, and have such permission of the Session renewed annually at its discretion. In any event, that person shall be diligent to serve actively in the court of which he is a member.

§10-4 The Office of Ruling Elder: In the Old Testament, the office of Elder was established for the oversight of the Church. In the New Testament, this office is continued. Those who fill this office today for governing the Church are called Ruling Elders. Chosen by the people of a particular congregation, these Ruling Elders are to watch over the spiritual welfare of that congregation. The Ruling Elder shares authority with the Teaching Elder in the Session, in both rights and duties. As a representative of the people, it is the first duty of the Ruling Elder to represent the mind of Christ, as that person understands it, to the Session.

§10-5 The life of the Ruling Elder: According to Scripture, those who bear this office should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being blameless in life, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle

that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.

§10-6 The Ruling Elder and the Power of Order: While the power to rule is a joint power exercised in the Session in regular gradation, each Ruling Elder also exercises the power of order. This is the power that belongs to the Elder by right of ordination. Thus, a Ruling Elder should study and learn the Word and become equipped to teach that Word, even to supplying a regular ministry of the Word where none is available. The Ruling Elder should become adept at leading worship and at leading in prayer. As an Undershepherd, that person should visit the sick, the bereaved, the lonely, the aged, the shut-in, and all those who have a pastoral need. In cases where there is a special need, the Ruling Elder shall be careful to inform the Pastor. It is especially incumbent upon the Ruling Elder to see to the development of the children of the congregation, to inquire after the inactive members, to encourage new members in spiritual development, and to otherwise show care for those whom they serve. They should be diligent to watch for moral failures and seek to warn, to admonish, and otherwise to reclaim those who stray. In special cases, where it is deemed necessary, such failures should be brought to the attention of the Session for appropriate action of discipline. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, the Ruling Elder is especially bound to fulfill those duties and to be an example to all.

§10-7 The office of Deacon: The office of Deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, concern for needs, and of serving others. Therefore, the first duty of the Deacon is sympathy and service. Historically, to this office has been given the duty of being the Church's instrument for the ministry of compassion. Such duties may include the care, maintenance, and preparation of the church and its facilities. Since the Board of Deacons is under the authority of the Session, to the Deacons both individually and collectively, the Session may assign from time to time special duties felt to be appropriate to that office.

§10-8 The life of the Deacon: According to Scripture, those who bear this office should exhibit especially those spiritual qualities of the Christian, and should be earnest and wholehearted followers of Christ. They should be persons who are steady and reliable, well thought of by all. They should not be new in the faith and should be tested for faithfulness before election.

CHAPTER 11

Calling to Office

§11-1 It is God through the Holy Spirit who calls persons to office in the Church. This call is confirmed in three ways: first, the inward call to the individual where that person bears testimony that God has called him or her; second, a confirming call of the Nominating Committee to that person to fill that office; third, the approval of that call by the Session.

§11-2 Because the call to fill an office must be confirmed by the Nominating Committee, the right of calling may never be taken away or conditioned for non-scriptural reasons. This right is inalienable and may not be changed.

§11-3 However, because a call to office must be confirmed by the Nominating Committee, the Session also has the inalienable right not to confirm a particular individual for reasons they may determine to be proper and in keeping with Scripture.

§11-4 Calling must always be to a specific task. Westkirk Presbyterian Church must call a Ruling Elder or Deacon to office within the congregation. A Minister must be called by the Nominating Committee to a particular task deemed appropriate to the Session.

§11-5 The Call of a Minister by Westkirk Presbyterian Church: When a particular church desires to call a minister as Pastor, the procedure shall be as follows:

A. The Session shall call a congregational meeting following the procedures for the purpose of electing a Search Committee. The Session may nominate a Search Committee to the congregation, although the floor must also be opened for other nominations. The congregation shall proceed to determine how many persons are to serve and to select them.

B. The Search Committee shall carry on its work in regular consultation with the Session.

C. Upon agreeing on a Minister they feel led of God to nominate, the Search Committee shall secure the consent of the Session.

D. The Search Committee shall notify the Session in writing and the Session shall call a congregational meeting.

E. When the congregational meeting has been convened, the Search Committee shall make its report and recommendations to call a Pastor. This recommendation shall include the details for remuneration, including all benefits. The congregation shall conduct a counted vote in a fashion it deems appropriate. A majority favoring the recommendation is required to elect a Pastor. The exact vote must be recorded in the minutes and the person being elected notified of the count.

F. The call of the congregation shall be stated in the following or like terms:

Westkirk Presbyterian Church of Urbandale, Iowa, feeling led by the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, have covenanted together to call you, _____, as Pastor (or other office). In issuing this call to you to be our Pastor and spiritual leader, we commit ourselves to support you in every way. We commit ourselves to support you in prayer, in participation in the work of ministry, and in your material needs.

In meeting your material needs, we initially commit ourselves as follows:

1. Annual Salary _____ (and frequency of payment)
2. Housing or housing allowance _____
3. Utilities and maintenance _____
4. Car and expense allowance _____
5. Full portion of a retirement program _____
6. Medical insurance for you and your family _____
7. Annual vacation leave of _____
8. Others shall be stipulated, such as: study leave (required), book allowance, etc.

We commit ourselves to continue this remuneration as long as you continue as our Pastor (or other). We commit ourselves to review this pledge annually and to adjust it appropriately. In addition, we commit ourselves to paying the expense related to your move.

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names on behalf of the congregation this _____ day of _____, A.D. _____.

Clerk of Meeting

Moderator of Meeting

Chairman of Search Committee

§11-6 A congregation may call a Minister to serve as Associate Pastor and shall proceed in the same fashion as indicated above, with the exception that the call of the congregation shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Associate. Ordinarily, an Associate Pastor is not eligible to succeed the Pastor. However, should a Search Committee desire to consider an Associate Pastor as Pastor, approval by a three-fourths vote of Session shall be required for the Search Committee to proceed.

§11-7 A Minister may be called as Assistant Pastor. However, the call is issued by the Session. The call shall follow the form indicated above and shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant. The Call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session. A person serving as Assistant

Pastor on the same church staff at the time the pastor position become vacant shall not be called to fill that position in the same church, by any means.

§11-8 Temporary Pastoral relationships. The Session may invite a Minister to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, and perform needed pastoral duties. No person currently serving in a temporary relationship is eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Moreover, should a Search Committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session for the Search Committee to proceed. The various relations are as follows.

- A. Stated Supply. Invited to serve for a definite period of time of no less than one month and no more than twelve. The Stated Supply may be appointed to moderate the Session during the time of service.
- B. Interim Supply. Invited to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Interim Supply may be appointed to moderate the Session during the time of service.
- C. Occasional Supply. Invited to serve on specified days.

§11-9 In the event the Minister being called is from some other church body, the Session shall not enroll that person without a valid call. The dismissing church body shall be informed by the calling church for the purpose of taking appropriate action. The churches shall deal directly with each other through their stated clerks in certifying both the call of the church and the credentials of the Minister or Candidate.

§11-10 If some court or agency issues a call to a Minister in some capacity other than a pastorate, the calling agency shall issue a call in like form as a particular church and the Session shall proceed in ordinary fashion for approving a call to a particular congregation, except the Commission to install shall be omitted.

§11-11 If a Minister desires to accept a call outside the structures of the church, he or she shall present a request to the Session, indicating the nature of the work and the terms of call. If the Session approves the nature of the work as appropriate to the Gospel ministry, it may approve it for a definite time period of time. After the expiration of that time, the Minister must receive further approval to continue.

§11-12 In the event a Minister accepts a call disapproved by Session, that person shall be placed on inactive status.

§11-13 The Calling of Ruling Elders and Deacons by a particular church: When the church desires to call Ruling Elders and Deacons, the following or like procedures shall be followed:

- A. The congregation may nominate and elect its Ruling Elders and Deacons by any

procedure it desires to establish. Should it be decided that a Nominating Committee be used, the congregation will include among those elected to the committee at least two active Elders, one of whom shall be appointed by the Session as chairman. The Session shall call congregational meetings as needed for this purpose.

B. The congregation shall have the right to determine how many officers it will have, whether or not a system of rotation will be used, and the length of terms if rotation is chosen, subject to the limitations in Section 15-6.

CHAPTER 12

Preparation for Office

§12-1 Calling to office at Westkirk Presbyterian Church places certain obligations on an ordinand. Each person being ordained to office is required to make certain commitments in terms of faith and order as well as to give a good testimony of Jesus Christ. For that reason, certain preparations for office are required.

§12-2 Preparation for the Ministry: Since the Ministry is seen as the first office in the Church, special preparation is required.

A. A Committee of the Session, charged with the oversight of Candidates shall make whatever tests of gifts and abilities, as well as of sincerity of purpose, it deems necessary. If the Candidate is approved, the Committee shall recommend to Session the approval of candidacy.

B. The Session shall make public examination of the Candidate as to Christian experience and growth, the motive for seeking ordination, and a statement regarding the person's call to the Ministry. If approved, the Session shall proceed as follows:

The Candidate shall stand before the Session and respond affirmatively to the following questions to be put by the Moderator of the Session:

1. As you understand God's working in your heart and life, do you continue to affirm that you feel called to the Gospel Ministry?
2. Do you now submit yourself to the care and supervision of this Session as you prepare yourself for this task?
3. Do you renew your commitment as a Christian, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live as becomes a follower of Jesus?

The Candidate shall kneel and the Moderator, or someone appointed by the Moderator, shall offer a special prayer of thanksgiving and a blessing to rest upon the Candidate.

A charge shall be given to the Candidate by someone appointed by the Moderator. The Moderator shall then declare the person received as a Candidate and the person's name placed on the Candidate roll of the Westkirk Presbyterian Church. Afterwards, it is appropriate either for the Moderator on behalf of the Session, or for the entire Session, to extend to the Candidate the right hand of fellowship.

C. The Session shall assign an Elder (current or inactive) to serve as advisor to the Candidate, ordinarily not the Candidate's Pastor. The advisor and the Candidate's Pastor shall report regularly to the Session on the progress of the Candidate. It is also appropriate for the church to have some special service of recognition.

D. The Session shall have some Committee to which the oversight of Candidates is assigned. This Committee shall oversee the training program of the Candidate, giving encouragement and pastoral attention, and making an annual report to the Session of the progress of the Candidate.

E. After being under the care of the Session for a minimum of one year, the Candidate may request ordination.

F. A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a degree from a four-year college and a degree from a seminary approved by the Session, requiring at least three years of study. The Candidate shall have had appropriate courses in the original languages of the Scriptures and shall complete an exegesis in one such language on a passage assigned by the Session.

G. In extra-ordinary circumstances, the Session, for reasons it judges adequate, may receive a Candidate for whom it may waive part or all of the total educational requirements for ordination. This action requires a two-thirds vote by Session. When such a Candidate is received, it is appropriate to assign courses of independent study or study under some appropriate person.

§12-3 Preparation for Ruling Elder and Deacon: Those who serve well must be prepared for such service, and it is the duty of the Session to offer adequate opportunity to those elected to office to prepare them for their ministry.

A. The Session shall confer with each person elected to office to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully.

B. The Session shall make provision for courses of instruction in the following matters: Church government, the Sacraments, the Faith of the Church, the Worship of the Church, the Discipline of the Church, the History of the Church, and an understanding of the office to which one is elected.

CHAPTER 13

Examination for Ordination and/or Installation

§13-1 Prior to approving a Candidate for ordination to the Ministry or as a Ruling Elder or Deacon, it is important for the Session to assure itself of the competency of the individual being ordained to serve. Therefore, certain examinations should be made.

§13-2 The examination of a Candidate for the Ministry: The Candidate shall be examined on competency in the original languages of Scripture. However, evidence of coursework as previously indicated (Sec. 12-2.G), along with the required exegesis, may be accepted in lieu of examination. The Candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth. The Candidate shall be examined in writing and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the **Book of Order**, the Reformed tradition, and the nature of the office of Minister of the Word. The Candidate shall preach a sermon to the Session on an assigned topic or Scripture to demonstrate ability to expound the Word of God effectively.

§13-3 If the Session has previously received a Candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary, the requirements for language shall be omitted. However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Session.

§13-4 The examination of an ordained Minister coming from a denomination: A Minister seeking to become a member of Westkirk Presbyterian Church from a denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination. Further, a person coming from any other tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination. Each person seeking admission shall always be examined on personal Christian experience and progress in spiritual growth. The Session shall not ordinarily receive a Minister while either discipline, inquiry, or charges are pending against the Minister. The Session may, however, by three-fourths vote and following careful review of the case, declare pending charges insufficient for refusal of membership.

§13-5 The candidate or Teaching Elder shall provide a written statement of any exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of this Church, and the Session must act to allow or disallow the exceptions. The Session shall not allow any exception to “Essentials of Our Faith.” If the Teaching Elder develops exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms after ordination, he or she must report those exceptions to the Session and the Session must act to allow or disallow these exceptions.

§13-6 Persons previously ordained in another Reformed denomination, but who, for reasons other than disciplinary action, lack current ordination credentials, shall be examined by the Session on views of those subjects set forth for ordination. Those persons shall, upon approval, become immediately eligible for ordination and to receive a call approved by the Session.

§13-7 The examination of a Candidate for Ruling Elder or Deacon: The Session shall examine each candidate for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon. The Candidate shall be examined on personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth. Each Candidate for ordination shall be examined on the following matters: the Faith of the Church, the Sacraments, the Government of the Church, the Discipline of the Church, the Worship of the Church, the History of the Church, and an understanding of the office to which one is elected.

§13-8 The examination of a previously ordained Ruling Elder or Deacon: Each officer who has been previously ordained into the office to which one has been called shall be examined by the Session on views of those subjects set forth for ordination. Each shall also give testimony of the personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and report progress in spiritual growth.

§13-9 Officers ordained in other denominations: Those persons who have been ordained previously to the office of Ruling Elder and Deacon in other Reformed denominations shall be examined by the Session as one being ordained, except that the act of ordination itself shall be omitted.

CHAPTER 14

The Ordination and/or Installation of Officers

§14-1 A commission shall be appointed. At a date and time approved by the Session, a worship service shall be conducted. A sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The person presiding shall recount the conditions necessary for ordination and/or installation, the solemnity of the event, and its importance in the life of the Church.

A. The Ordination of a Minister: The person presiding shall propose the following questions for one being ordained and for one coming into Westkirk Presbyterian Church from some other denomination:

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church you will on your own initiative make known to the Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
5. Do you affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception?
6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of Westkirk Presbyterian Church?
7. Do you promise subjection to your fellow Presbyters in the Lord?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy Ministry from love of God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
10. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?
11. Are you now willing to take the charge of this Church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a Pastor?

When the Candidate has responded affirmatively to these questions, the person presiding shall address the following questions to the congregation:

12. Are you, the members of this congregation ready to receive _____ as your Pastor?
13. Do you promise to submit to _____ in matters of spiritual discipline, and to receive with humility and love the word of truth?
14. Do you promise to support your Pastor with your prayers, to give encouragement in his/her work, and to assist him/her in every way as he/she seeks to instruct you in the things of the Lord and to lead you in the building of the Kingdom of God in this place?
15. Do you recommit yourselves to fulfill the terms of the call you have extended and to make provision for your Pastor's needs that the name of Christ might be glorified?

When the congregation has responded in the affirmative to these questions, the Candidate shall kneel and members of the Session shall lay hands on the ordinand.

A solemn prayer shall be offered suitable to the event and the Candidate shall thereby be set apart to the office of the Gospel Ministry. The Candidate shall be given the right hand of fellowship by Elders present, both Ruling and Teaching, to take part in the office with them. Then the presiding person shall state: "By the authority of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, I declare that _____ has been ordained to the Gospel Ministry of this Church, and that he/she has been duly and properly installed as Pastor of this congregation, agreeable to the Word of God and the laws of this Church. As such he/she is entitled to be given support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

It is appropriate that a charge be given to the Pastor and to the congregation suitable for the occasion. Following the installation it is appropriate that the officers and members of the congregation demonstrate their reception of the Pastor and their commitment to love the Pastor by coming forward and giving the right hand of fellowship. The Session shall make careful account of the event and inscribe the occasion in its permanent records.

B. The Installation of a Minister: A Minister previously ordained shall be installed as the Pastor of Westkirk Presbyterian Church in the same manner except the laying on of hands shall be omitted and the questions to be asked shall be as follows:

1. Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a Pastor?

2. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of Pastor of this congregation out of love for God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son in this place?
3. Do you promise to continue to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
4. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God has made you overseer?

C. Ordination and/or installation of a Pastor in more than one congregation:

When a pastor is called to a multiple field, it is appropriate that the procedures for ordination and/or installation be conducted in each congregation, or a joint service may be held.

D. Ordination and/or installation of a Minister in a non-pastoral work: In the event a Minister is being ordained and/or installed in a work approved by the Session that is nonpastoral, the same procedures as appropriate shall be followed by the Session, except question 14-1. A-10 for ordination and question 14-1. B-1 for installation shall be replaced by the following questions: “Are you willing to take charge of the work to which you have been called, agreeable to your declaration when accepting the call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge it to the duties you have accepted?”

E. The Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons: The person presiding shall propose the following questions for one being ordained and installed and one who has been ordained previously in some other denomination and is being installed:

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church you will on your own initiative make known to your Church Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
5. Do you affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception?

6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of the Westkirk Presbyterian Church?
7. Do you promise subjection to your fellow Presbyters in the Lord?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon) from love of God and sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
10. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon), whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before this congregation of which God will make you an officer?
11. Are you now willing to take responsibility in the life of this congregation as a _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon), and will you seek to discharge your duties, relying upon the Grace of God, in such a way that the entire Church of Jesus Christ will be blessed?

When the Candidate(s) has responded affirmatively to these questions, the person officiating shall address the following question to the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, continue to receive this (these) person(s) as Ruling Elder(s), Deacon(s), and do you continue your promise to yield him/her/them and all your officers all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which the ordination as an officer entitles him/her/them, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of Westkirk Presbyterian Church?

When the congregation has responded in the affirmative, the Candidate for ordination shall kneel (except that a person previously ordained in some other ordination shall not) and the Ruling Elders shall lay hands on the ordinand. A solemn prayer shall be offered suitable to the event and the Candidate shall thereby be set apart to the office to which elected. The Candidate shall be given the right hand of fellowship to take part in the office with them by the Church Session.

Then the presiding person shall state: "By the authority of Westkirk Presbyterian Church and the Session of this congregation, I declare that _____ has been ordained to the office of _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon) and has been properly installed in that office, agreeable to the Word of God and the laws of this Church. As such he/she is (they are) entitled to be given support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” It is appropriate that a charge be given to the new officers and to the congregation suitable for the occasion. The Session shall make careful account of the event and inscribe the occasion in its permanent records.

F. The installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons: The procedure for installing a Ruling Elder or Deacon who has been previously ordained will be the same as that for ordination except that the following question shall be substituted for questions 1 through 8: (Sec. 14-1. E.) “Do you now reaffirm the vows you took upon your ordination and do you recommit yourself to them in the discharge of your obligations?” Then shall follow questions 9 through 11, (Sec. 14-1. E).

CHAPTER 15

The Dissolution of an Officer's Relationship

§15-1 An officer of the church remains ordained to the office and remains obligated to fulfill the vows of ordination. However, there are certain conditions under which the officer may be removed as set forth in the **Book of Discipline**, or a person may be divested of office without censure, or a person may be assigned to Inactive Status. The following regulations shall apply:

§15-2 The dissolution of a pastoral relationship: This relationship may be dissolved only by the Session. The Session shall consult with the Minister before making a request to the congregation to dissolve the pastoral relationship. A congregational meeting shall be duly called and the congregation requested to concur with the Pastor in the request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship. In the event the congregation, in a duly called congregational meeting, decides to vote to dissolve the relationship, the vote for dismissal must be affirmative by 75% of the congregation voting. The Session shall, then, be the sole judge of whether or not to dissolve the relationship. The Session may appoint an appropriate commission with authority to dissolve pastoral relationships.

§15-3 Dissolution by reason of age: When a Minister serving in any capacity in the Church reaches the age of 70, that relationship shall be terminated. The Minister is obligated to notify the Session six months prior to the 70th birthday. The Minister is then eligible to be reelected in the same relationship yearly with the approval of the Session. When such a renewal privilege is exercised, no installation is necessary. The Minister is then eligible to be reelected in this new relationship yearly with the approval of the Session. Moreover, a Minister who has reached the age of 70 is eligible to serve as Stated Supply, Interim Supply, or Occasional Supply for a period of up to one year as approved by the Session.

§15-4 When the Session shall divest a Minister of his office without censure, it may assign him to membership of the church.

§15-5 Dissolution of a Ruling Elder or Deacon relationship: A Ruling Elder or Deacon may have valid reasons for requesting that active service on the Session or Board of Deacons be dissolved. Should the Session concur after careful consideration, it may dissolve the active relationship and its action shall be reported to the congregation. Other conditions under which the relationship shall be dissolved are as follows:

- A. When the officer is placed on the inactive roll.
- B. When membership is placed with another congregation.
- C. When membership in or jurisdiction of the church is renounced.
- D. When the Ruling Elder or Deacon is elected to the office of Ruling Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus. This shall be accomplished when, due to disability, age, or other

sufficient cause, the Session, at a meeting of the congregation, is led to nominate the officer to the position of Emeritus. To be elected an officer Emeritus is a high honor, and should not be bestowed indiscriminately.

E. When the officer is divested of office by due process according to the *Book of Discipline*.

§15-6 Term of service of Ruling Elders and Deacons: The church at a duly constituted congregational meeting, may elect to establish limited terms of service for either or both Ruling Elders and Deacons.

A. Terms of Ruling Elders shall be for no less than three years except to initiate the system or to fill vacancies. There must be at least three classes; and an officer who has served all or part of two consecutive full terms shall be ineligible for reelection for one year.

B. Terms of Deacons shall be for two years except to initiate the system or to fill vacancies. An officer who has served all or part of a full term shall be eligible for reelection.

§15-7 Removal of a Minister to Inactive Status: A Minister may, for reasons deemed valid, request the Session to be placed on Inactive Status. If the Session concurs, the Minister shall be placed on such status. All rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside, including the right to vote and participate in the meetings of Session. However, the name of the Minister shall be carried on the Inactive Status Roll of the church. After at least one year, the Minister may request the Session to be restored to Active Status. The Session, after careful deliberation, may do so provided the Minister has a valid call that the Session approves.

When the Minister who is not retired has been without approved call for a period of one year, the Ministerial Committee will confer with the Minister as to his continued sense of call and his expectations for future ministry. The committee will then recommend to the Session whether the Minister should remain on Active Status in the church or be placed on Inactive Status. The Session, at its discretion and after judicious consideration, may place the Minister on the Inactive Status Roll involuntarily provided the vote to do so is by a two-thirds majority.

A limit shall be placed on the time during which a Minister on Inactive Status who is not retired shall remain on the roll of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, the limit being five years. After five years, the Session has the right to drop that person from the roll without censure.

§15-8 The retirement of a Minister: A Minister may request the Session to be placed on the Retired Roll of Westkirk Presbyterian due to age, infirmity, or other debilitating condition. If the Session concurs, a service of appreciation and thanksgiving should be conducted, either at the meeting of Session or during a worship service of the church. Ordinarily, the Session shall appoint a special Commission to conduct this service and a record of it inserted in the minutes of Session. The Session shall be responsible for making an annual review of its retired members to be sure of

their welfare and to rectify any deficiencies. Such annual review shall be reported to the court and recorded in its minutes.

§15-9 Retired Ministers: A Minister who is retired according to the provision of G.15-9 remains a full member of Westkirk Presbyterian Church. Membership may be transferred to another church. A Retired Minister who does not participate in the life of the church by attending at least one Stated Meeting during a calendar year, may be placed on Inactive Status at the discretion of the Session. After at least one year, the Retired Minister may request the Session to be restored to Active Status. The Session shall make the determination based on the Minister's participation in the meetings of the church and need not require a specific call to be restored to Active Status. A Retired Minister on Inactive Status shall not be removed from the membership rolls for that cause and is to be afforded the same pastoral care as Retired Ministers on Active Status.

CHAPTER 16

The Organizational Structure of the Church

§16-1 The governing units of Westkirk Presbyterian Church are distinct from the civil government. Their jurisdiction is spiritual and moral with no civil jurisdiction or power to inflict civil penalties. Church government is established for the purpose of exercising spiritual discipline and giving proper order to the church. In the exercise of its jurisdiction, the church has one unchanging limitation. For the Christian, the Scriptures are the ultimate rule of faith and practice. Thus, the church may create no laws that will bind the conscience.

§16-2 The organizational units of Westkirk Presbyterian Church: The church shall have two basic organizational units: The Board of Deacons and the Session.

§16-3 Review and Control: For the orderly process of review and control, the Board of Deacons shall submit its minutes at least semiannually to the Session. The Session shall review the minutes submitted to it to insure that the Deacons have faithfully and diligently fulfilled all duties and responsibilities assigned. It may refer matters back for reconsideration, call attention to omissions, require amendment of actions out of conformity with the Constitution, or otherwise exercise proper review and control of the lower body.

§16-4 Powers of the Session and its officers: The Session shall have certain powers, as well as its officers, for the efficient dispatch of its business and for the exercise of its duties.

- A. The Moderator of the Session has the necessary authority to keep order, to expedite business, to convene, recess, and adjourn meetings in conformity with rules of the Session. In an emergency, with due notification to members of the Session, the Moderator, in consultation with the clerk of the Session, may change the date, time and place of the meeting of the Session. The Moderator is responsible for assuring that each meeting is opened and closed with prayer.
- B. The Session has authority to bear witness against error or doctrine that is contrary to Christian faith, both in and out of the Church.
- C. The Session has authority to establish rules for its own governance as long as they are in conformity with Scripture and the Constitution of the Church.
- D. The Session may apply discipline to its members or those under its charge in keeping with the regulations established in the *Book of Discipline*.
- E. The Session may issue calls to persons to serve in various capacities assigned to the Session. Such calls shall always be for a specific period of time not to exceed three years. Such calls shall ordinarily be renewable.

- F. The Session has authority to organize itself as it deems appropriate for the fulfillment of its duties.

§16-5 Jurisdiction of the organizational units of the Church: Each organizational unit of the Church has a definite sphere of action. For the efficient dispatch of the work of the Church in a manner that is decent and in order, the following definitions of those spheres shall apply:

- A. The Board of Deacons shall have that area of responsibility hereafter assigned to it, or assigned by the Session which is limited to the designated portion of the worship and ministry of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.
- B. The Church Session has jurisdiction over all that belongs to the worship and ministry of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

§16-6 The Board of Deacons: Westkirk Presbyterian Church shall have a Board of Deacons composed of all Deacons on active service, unless in a duly called congregational meeting it shall vote not to have such a Board. In that event, the duties that fall to the Board shall become the duties of the Session.

- A. Ordinary duties: The ordinary duties of a Board of Deacons shall be as follows:
 - 1. To oversee the ministry of compassion of the congregation to the sick, friendless, bereaved, and those in any way distressed.
 - 2. To serve as ushers, to receive the offerings of the people, and to assist in preparing the facilities for the use by the people.
 - 3. The Session may also assign to the Board of Deacons such duties as stewardship development, property maintenance, disbursement of funds according to an approved budget, and other related matters.
- B. Other duties: The Session may relegate the above duties to itself. It may assign other duties instead of or in addition to the ordinary duties.
- C. Officers of the Board: Each Board may elect a Moderator for a term of one year, or the Church Session may appoint a Pastor of the congregation to serve as Moderator. In addition, a Recording Clerk shall be elected for the same period of time. A particular Board shall elect such other officers as it may determine are needful.
- D. Treasurer: Where the responsibility for the finances of the particular church falls to the Board, it shall appoint a Treasurer to handle the financial matters of the congregation. This person may or may not be a Deacon. Where the Session assumes responsibility for financial matters, it shall follow this stipulation, the Treasurer shall report to the appointing body at each stated meeting, keeping a careful record of financial matters.

The appointing body shall be responsible for an annual audit of the finances of the church.

- E. Meetings: The Board shall meet at least quarterly unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator, or when ordered to convene by the Session. When requested in writing by one-fourth of the Board, the Chairman shall call a meeting. The purpose shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted.
- F. Minutes: A careful record of the meetings shall be kept by the Recording Clerk. The Board must approve its minutes and they shall be signed upon approval by the Moderator and the Recording Clerk. At least once each six months, unless otherwise determined by the Session, the minutes shall be submitted to the Session which has the right to rescind any action of the Board or return it for further consideration.
- G. The Board and the Pastor(s): Though not a voting member of the Board, the Pastor is officially designated an Advisory member. As such, the Pastor(s) is entitled to participate in deliberations, giving advice and wisdom.
- H. Quorum: Each Board shall determine its own quorum, provided the number is not less than one-third its membership.
- I. Assistants to the Board: The Session, upon request of the Board, or at its own discretion, may appoint godly persons from the congregation to assist the Board in its various duties, especially in its ministry of compassion. In addition, the Board or Session may appoint persons from the congregation to assist in the ushering and other duties related to the worship of the particular church.

§16-7 The Session: The entire life of the congregation is under the oversight and supervision of the Session. The Session is composed of the Pastor(s) called by the church and all the Ruling Elders on active service.

§16-8 Officers of the Session: The Pastor shall be the Moderator. An Associate Pastor, at the request of the Pastor and with the consent of the Session, may serve as Moderator for the Pastor. If there is no Pastor, the Session may elect one of its members to serve in that capacity. The Pastor(s) elected by the church is a full member of the Session and has the privilege of voting. If the Pastor wishes to make motions or otherwise participate in debate, some other member of the Session should serve as Temporary Moderator. In addition to the Moderator, the Session shall elect a Clerk.

§16-9 Duties: In maintaining the spiritual supervision of the church, the Session has the following duties and powers:

- A. To monitor the spiritual conduct of the members, and to take action when appropriate according to procedures set forth in the *Book of Discipline*.
- B. To initiate the ministry of evangelism as the first business of the Church, and to seek to lead persons to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- C. To remind parents of the responsibility of presenting their children for Baptism, and to provide instruction as indicated in the *Book of Worship*, Section 3-2.G.
- D. To receive members in accordance with Sections 9-2.A, 9-2.B and 9-2.C.
- E. To keep rolls in accordance with Section 9-1.
- F. To dismiss, restore, grant affiliation, or remove members in accordance with Sections 9-4, 9-5, 9-6 and 9-7.
- G. To determine the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.
- H. To oversee the educational program of the congregation, and to determine its literature.
- I. To oversee the work of the Board of Deacons and to review its minutes at least semiannually unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It is also desirable for the Session to call a joint meeting at least semiannually to discuss matters of common interest, although each body must act separately on matters under its charge.
- J. To fulfill the obligations to those elected to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon as set forth in Sections 12-3, 13-7, 8 and 9.
- K. To oversee the worship of the congregation in accordance with the *Book of Worship*, including the time and place of worship, special services, the music program, and the celebration of the sacraments. This shall not infringe on the responsibility of the Pastor in the selection of hymns, Scriptures, sermon, administration of the sacraments, or other duties that are incumbent on the office of Pastor.
- L. To determine policies regarding the use of the property and facilities of the congregation.
- M. When there is no pastor, to convene the people for worship on the Lord's Day, offering prayers, praise, reading the Scriptures and teaching thereof. It is also appropriate for one member to give an exhortation or to read a sermon by some Minister of the Word of the greater Church.

- N. To organize itself for the advancement of the ministry of the church and the mission of that congregation.
- O. To order special offerings, special days of prayer and fasting, special days of worship and other matters that benefit the spiritual life of the people.
- P. To do whatever else may be necessary for the spread of the Gospel, the edification of the members, the well being of the church, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the growth in grace of all.

§16-10 Meetings: The Session shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet at the call of the Moderator. When one-fourth of the members make a request in writing for a meeting, the Moderator shall immediately call a meeting. The purpose of the meeting shall be clearly stated. No business other than that stated in the call may be transacted. In the absence of the Pastor, the Session may not meet except in the case of an emergency. In that event, two Ruling Elders must convene the Session and no business may be transacted other than that which precipitated the emergency.

§16-11 Quorum: If there are five or more Ruling Elders, the Pastor and two Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum. If there is no Pastor, three Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum. If there are less than five Ruling Elders, the Pastor and one Ruling Elder, or two Ruling Elders if there is no Pastor, shall constitute a quorum. However, any Session may set its own quorum, provided it is not less than the minimum stated above.

§16-12 Minutes: A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Clerk. When the Session has approved the minutes, they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall be careful to record deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding members.

§16-13 Committees and Commissions:

- A. A committee is appointed by the Session to study a matter and make recommendations back to the Session, or to carry out decisions already made. It shall then make written reports to the Session.
- B. A commission is appointed to act for the Session. The Session shall state specifically the powers and duration given to a commission. A commission shall make a written report of its actions which shall then be inserted in the minutes of the Session and be regarded as the actions of the Session itself. Commissions appointed by the Session may be either administrative or judicial.

1. **Judicial Commission:** Such a commission is appointed to handle cases according to judicial process as set forth in The *Book of Discipline*.

2. **Administrative Commission:** Such a commission is appointed to perform special functions. The functions entrusted to such commissions include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. to ordain Ministers and to install them where appropriate;
- b. to organize, dissolve, dismiss, or receive a particular church, or to constitute a mission church (G5-2);
- c. to serve as a temporary Session of a mission church (G5-2C);
- d. a commission shall have as its quorum, a minimum of one half of its membership.

§16-14 Required Committees and Commissions: For the orderly working of the church, it is necessary that certain committees and commissions be established in by the Session on a permanent basis, with duties outlined and established.

A. The Ministerial Committee: Each Session shall have a Ministerial Committee. It shall have at least six members equally divided between Ministers and Ruling Elders. Its quorum for action shall be one-half (1/2) of membership, to include at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder. The Committee shall be established in equal classes for a term of three years. Eligibility to succeed will be determined by the appointing court. Its duties are as follows:

- 1) It shall report annually on the work of the Ministers of the Word to the Session, along with any recommendations it might have. This includes an annual report from those Ministers of the Word approved for labor outside the bounds of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.
- 2) It shall work with the Session in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this Committee who shall then make its recommendation to the Session.
- 3) It shall review each request for dissolution of a pastoral relationship, and make a recommendation to the Session.
- 4) It shall counsel with congregation seeking a Pastor or other pastoral staff, shall recommend to the Session a Minister to serve as Moderator of the Session, and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply.
- 5) It shall have the oversight of Candidates for the Gospel Ministry of the Session, although the Session may assign this function to some other committee.

- 6) It shall confer with each Minister desiring to become a member of the Session, or Candidate desiring ordination, and conduct any examination it deems necessary in order to make a decision for its recommendation to the Session concerning the application. It shall also conduct the examination by the Session of the applicant according to the **Book of Government**. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation which has not first consulted with the Committee.

- 7) The Committee shall be responsible for an annual review of remuneration of Ministers, shall consult with the Session if deemed necessary concerning such remuneration, and may recommend to the Session minimum terms for the call of a Minister. Requests to the Session for a change in the terms of call shall come through this committee.

CHAPTER 17

Amendment, Union and Limitations

§17-1 Herein are set forth the procedures whereby the Constitution may be amended, union with other denominations accomplished, and limitations in perpetuity which are placed on the Church.

§17-2 Amendments to the **Book of Order**, including its parts composed of the **Book of Government**, the **Book of Discipline**, and the **Book of Worship**:

- A. After approval by the Session, in accordance with G.16-27B.2, the recommended change shall be sent to the congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.
- B. No changes may be made to the **Book of Order** including any of its parts composed of the **Book of Government**, the **Book of Discipline**, and the **Book of Worship** which would be contrary to the Confession of Faith and catechisms.
- C. Approval by three-fourths of the congregation is required.

§17-3 Amendments to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms:

- A. After approval by the congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, in accordance with G.16-27B.2, the recommended change shall be made.
- B. Approval by three-fourths of the congregation is required.
- C. This provision can be amended only by the same method it prescribed for amendments to the confessional documents.

§17-4 Union with another denomination. Union with another ecclesiastical body is possible under the terms set forth below.

- A. After approval by a vote of the Session, the recommendation for union shall be sent to the congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church
- B. Approval by three-fourths of the congregation is required.
- C. This provision can be amended only by the same method it prescribes for union.

§17-5 Limitations in perpetuity: Certain rights are held in perpetuity by Christians, both individually and gathered in congregations. These rights must always be guaranteed by the Church. These rights include, but not by way of exclusion, the following:

- A. The Church may make no laws to bind the conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture. No person may be rejected for membership or ordination

because of such matters of conscience unless that matter has been officially declared a heresy by the Church, or unless it obstructs the constitutional governance of the Church.

- B. The Church may make no laws that infringe on the rights of the congregation of Westkirk Presbyterian Church to elect its own officers, to own and control its own property, to determine its own benevolence and other budgetary objectives, and to determine its own internal life so long as it does not violate the constitution of the Church.
- C. This section may be added to by the procedures set forth for amending the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, but no deletions may be made.

CHAPTER 18
Union Churches

§18-1 Westkirk Presbyterian Church may unite to form union churches with one or more particular churches of other Reformed bodies, with the approval of the congregation. The Session of this church may act in concert with comparable judicatories of other Reformed bodies to organize union churches, or to reorganize a particular church to become a union church. Such union churches shall be subject to the provisions of Section 18-2 and 18-3 as applicable.

§18-2 The following Plan of Union shall be adopted by the union church so formed:

- A. The following Plan of Union is adopted by Westkirk Presbyterian Church of Urbandale, Iowa and the _____ Church of _____, effective as of the date when each of the congregations has approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by the Constitution of each Church, and when the Presbytery or Classis of jurisdiction of the other church has approved the particular union and this Plan of Union.
- B. The purpose of this union is to provide for the worship of Almighty God and instruction in the Christian religion by a united congregation which will share the property, real and personal, of the uniting churches and provide for the services of a Minister or Ministers for the united church.
- C. The united church shall be known as the _____ Church of _____.
- D. The united church shall be subject to the Constitution of each Church involved as set forth in Sections 18-2.R, 18-2.S, 18-2.U, and 18-2.V.
- E. The Session or Consistory shall submit its records annually, and whenever requested, to each judicatory of jurisdiction.
- F. The membership of the united church shall consist of those who were members of the uniting churches, plus those received by the Session or Consistory of the united church.
- G. The Session or Consistory of the united church shall report an equal share of the total membership to each judicatory of jurisdiction, and such membership shall be published in the Minutes (Acts and Proceedings) of the General Assembly, with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union church, and with an indication of the total actual membership. A similar report of church school members, baptisms, etc., and financial expenditures shall be made by the Session or Consistory and noted by the General Assembly in its minutes.

- H. Initially the officers of the united church, Elders and Deacons, shall be those officers in active service of the uniting churches, who will undertake to perform their ordination responsibilities under the Constitution of each Church, as indicated in Sections 18-2.D and 18-2.R, 18-2.S, 18-2.U, and 18-2.V.
- I. At the first annual meeting subsequent to the effective date of the union, new classes of officers, to replace the officers noted in Section 18-2.H, shall be elected by the united congregation according to the constitutional procedure in force as a consequence of Section 18-2.V.
- J. The pastoral relations of the Ministers of the uniting churches shall be dissolved automatically by the action of the Presbytery or Classis of jurisdiction in approving this plan, but they may be eligible to be Ministers (Pastors or Associate Pastors) of the united church according to the approval of the Presbytery or Classis.
- K. The Minister or Ministers of the united church shall be full and responsible members of each judicatory of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided in Section 18-2.S.
- L. The united church shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state, where permissible. That corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of Sections 18-2.B, 18-2.C, and 18-2.D.
- M. All property of the uniting churches, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in Section 18-2.L. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting churches, and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or monies received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the uniting churches shall be liabilities of the united church. In any state where a church corporation is forbidden, the purposes of this paragraph shall be achieved in harmony with the law of that state.
- N. Trustees of the corporation (or the unincorporated body) shall be elected in harmony with civil law according to the constitutional provisions outlined in Section 18-2.D, as interpreted by Section 18-2.V.
- O. While recognizing the basic right of all givers to designate the cause or causes to which their own gifts shall go, the Session or Consistory of the united church shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the Session or Consistory shall decide in response to the requests of the higher judicatories.

- P. Per capita apportionments or assessments shall be paid to each Presbytery or Classis of jurisdiction on the basis of the total confirmed (communicant) membership of the union church, equally divided among the denominations involved.
- Q. All members of the united church shall be under the discipline of the Session or Consistory according to rules agreed upon in harmony with the Constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the Constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the Session or Consistory where they may be contradictory.
- R. Appeals or complaints against the actions of the Session or Consistory shall be made to one judicatory only (Presbytery or Classis) at the choice of the members and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the courts of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the Session or Consistory and on the member.
- S. The Minister or Ministers shall be subject to the discipline of the Presbyteries (the Presbytery and the Classis) provided that when either shall begin an action, it shall invite a committee from the others to join the commissioner, prosecutor, or prosecuting committee in formulating and pressing the charges. In the event of appeal the case shall be finally decided by the highest court to which the appeal is taken in the Church which commenced the action, and that decision shall be equally binding on the Presbyteries (both the Presbytery and the Classis).
- T. The Minister or Ministers shall participate in the denominational Pension Plan of one of the Churches. If a Minister is already participating in one plan, that Minister shall remain in that plan. If a Minister is not a member of any, that Minister shall choose among them.
- U. Complaints against the administrative acts of the Session or Consistory may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant, and once being complained to one judicatory, no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same matter.
- V. Wherever the Constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in Section 18-2.Q), the Session or Consistory of the united church shall petition the judicatories of immediate jurisdiction to overture their respective highest courts to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.
- W. A union church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings, held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the Presbyteries or Classis involved. In case of dissolution of a union

church, all property of the united church, real and personal, shall be divided equally between the Presbytery and the Classis of jurisdiction.

- X. No sooner than six months after its formation, a union church may elect to become a member solely of the Presbytery or Classis of which it is a member. By a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting called for that purpose, the congregation may elect to be a member one Presbytery or the other. In such a case it is mandatory that the United Church with all its property, real and personal, become a member solely of the Presbytery or Classis of its election.

§18-3 No provision in this chapter shall be construed as modifying or amending the Constitution of Westkirk Presbyterian Church in its application to any but union churches organized under this chapter, their members, officers, or Ministers.

PART TWO

The Book of Discipline

CHAPTER 1

Discipline ~ Its Nature, Subjects, and Purpose

§1-1 Definition of Church Discipline

Discipline is the exercise of authority given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and their children and to promote its purity and welfare. The term has two senses: the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the church maintains with respect to its members, its officers, and its courts; the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying ecclesiastical judicial procedures.

The word “discipline,” when used in this ***Book of Discipline***, shall be deemed to refer to ecclesiastical judicial procedures unless the context demands otherwise.

§1-2 Grounds for Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedures

Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for ecclesiastical judicial procedures. Offenses which require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, which consists of holding beliefs, doctrines, or practices contrary to the Scriptures and condemned in the subordinate standards; Immorality; and Contempt for the established order of the church.

In the case of misunderstandings and disputes which are not offenses requiring discipline, the church or its members or officers may attempt to assist in achieving reconciliation or other resolution, but shall have no obligation to do so.

No Minister should be shielded from discipline or lightly sanctioned on account of his office. Neither should actions for serious charges be received against him on slight grounds.

§1-3 Church Members Who Are Also Employees

The employer/employee relationship is not within the scope of coverage of this ***Book of Discipline***. Church members who are also employees of the church shall be subject to discipline as an employee under whatever procedures may be established by the church for employees. They shall also be subject to discipline as a member under the ***Book of Discipline***.

§1-4 Persons Subject to Discipline

All active and inactive members of the church, confirmed, baptized, and affiliate, are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline.

§1-5 Purpose of Discipline

The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. The purpose of discipline is to maintain the honor of God, to restore the sinner, and to remove offense from the church.

Ministers must instruct the officers and congregation in discipline and jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and courts of the church.

When used herein, the masculine gender shall include the feminine and the singular number shall include the plural unless the context demands otherwise.

§1-6 Basis of Discipline

Scriptural law is the basis of all ecclesiastical discipline because it is the revelation of God's holy will. Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. According to Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1, these principles include instruction in the Word and the individuals' responsibility to admonish one another. If the initial admonition is rejected, then one or more witnesses must be called (Matthew 18:16). If rejection persists, then the church must act for the exercise of discipline. No charge involving a personal offense will be received unless the offended person alleges and proves to the Session evidence demonstrating that he has followed the procedures required under Matthew 18:15-16 and Galatians 6:1.

If anyone knows a Minister to be guilty of a private offense, he should warn him in private. But if the offense be persisted in, or become public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other member of the Session.

§1-7 Definition of "Church"

"Church" - As used in this *Book of Discipline*, the word "church" shall refer to the Westkirk Presbyterian Church.

§1-8 Definition of "Contempt"

Contempt is willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of the Session, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities.

§1-9 Definition of "Heresy"

Heresy is the expressed or implied denial of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity, openly taught and obstinately maintained.

§1-10 Definition of "Immorality"

Immorality is conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping, hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality.

The terms "bickering" and "gossiping" as used herein are intended to deal with those acts that are disruptive to the peace and unity of the church.

§1-11 Definition of "Jurisdiction"

Jurisdiction is the authority of the Session to render a decision. The Session must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision.

Mat. 18:15-16 (NIV) “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶ But if he will not listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Gal. 6:1 (NIV) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you may be tempted.”

CHAPTER 2

Pastoral Care

§2-1 The Duty to Evangelize - In terms of its work, the first duty of Westkirk Presbyterian Church is to evangelize by extending the Gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to provide for the nurture of that faith that all might grow in grace and in sanctification. **Book of Government §4-3.**

§2-2 The Spiritual Power of Westkirk Presbyterian Church - The power of the church is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of the church from civil government. See **Book of Government §3-1.** This means that the church does not have civil authority over anyone.

§2-3 Spiritual Nurture of Members - Among other duties, it is the duty of the church to provide for the nurture of its members. **Book of Government §4-7.**

§2-4 Retention of Authority over Church Property - While possessing no civil authority over any person, Westkirk Presbyterian Church does retain authority over its property and ministries. In providing a secure and nurturing atmosphere for worship and spiritual growth, the church retains the right to exclude anyone from its property, services or ministries on such terms and conditions as it may desire. Thus, for example, Westkirk Presbyterian Church may require certain standards before permitting adults to teach Sunday School, lead ministries, or otherwise participate in the life and ministry of the church.

CHAPTER 3

Jurisdiction

§3-1 The Right of Private Judgment - Since “God alone is Lord of the conscience,” we consider the right of private judgment in religious matters to be universal and unalienable. Therefore, the church in disciplinary cases has jurisdiction only over her members (as defined in §1-4.)

§3-2 Original Jurisdiction - In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply:

- A. The Session
 - a. The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of Westkirk Presbyterian Church.
 - b. The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving Ministers of the church.
- B. Transfer of Membership: A member of Westkirk Presbyterian Church whose membership is being transferred shall remain under the jurisdiction of the first until received by the second.

§3-3 Termination of Jurisdiction - Jurisdiction in judicial cases ends upon receipt of written notice of renunciation by the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the Session of original jurisdiction. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the Session acknowledging that renunciation. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days, the acknowledgment of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the permission of the accused.

A “Renunciation of Jurisdiction” shall have the effect of terminating membership in the church and shall immediately dissolve the relationship of Ruling Elder, Deacon, or Minister. The Session should never engage in unnecessary actions under Chapter 10 et al, should the member be found guilty. Though the Session may pronounce a judgment of admonition, suspension, removal from office, or excommunication against a person who has renounced jurisdiction, it need not do so and should not do so unless (1) the offender has given his or her permission, and (2) it is necessary for the purity of the church or the benefit of the offender.

CHAPTER 4

Offenses

§4-1 Offenses - As defined in §1-2, offenses which require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, Immorality, and Contempt for the Session. Nothing ought to be considered by the Session as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the **Book of Order** consisting of the **Book of Government**, the **Book of Discipline**, and the **Book of Worship** are the standards adopted by the church as expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to faith and practice.

§4-2 Personal and General Offenses - A personal offense is an offense as defined in §4-1 in a way of wrong done to some particular person or persons, including one's own self. A general offense is an offense as defined in §4-1, but not directed against any particular person.

§4-3 Private and Public Offenses - Private offenses are those known only to an individual or at most only to a few persons. Public offenses are those which are known to more than a few persons.

§4-4 Preliminary Sanctions - When it is impracticable to commence an action against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the church requires it, exclude the accused from the sacraments until the charges against him can be examined.

§4-5 Out of Bounds Offenses - When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely to otherwise become known to the Session, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself there is a strong presumption of guilt, to send notice to the Session, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be transferred for trial and imposition of sanctions, if any, to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.

CHAPTER 5

Actions for Discipline

§5-1 Commencement of Actions for Discipline - An action for discipline shall commence:

- A. By a Person or Persons: When a person files a written charge with the Clerk of Session.
- B. By the Session: When the Session determines that a charge is in order and there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

§5-2 Limitation on Actions - An action for discipline must be commenced within three years after the acts constituting the offense were committed, unless the acts were unknown and were not reasonably knowable by the offended person or court. In the event that the offended person is under the age of 18, the action for discipline must be commenced before that person's twenty-first birthday.

§5-3 Preliminary Investigation of a Charge by a Person or Persons - After an action is commenced by a person:

- A. The court shall commence a preliminary investigation in accordance with §6-1.
- B. After the preliminary investigation is concluded, the court shall make a determination whether or not there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

§5-4 Proceedings Upon a Determination of a Strong Presumption of Guilt - In the event of a determination of a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused, the Session shall appoint a prosecutor, who shall prepare an indictment and proceed to trial in accordance with Chapters 6 through 9.

§5-5 Trial - The Session shall conduct a trial in accordance with Chapters 8 and 9.

§5-6 Decision - The Session shall render its decision in accordance with Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 6

Procedures in Actions for Discipline

§6-1 Investigation of a Charge

A. Care over the Church. It is the duty of the Session to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses which require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved by an offense shall request an investigation in writing.

B. Written Charges. No investigation against an accused offender shall be commenced unless some person files a written charge with the Clerk of Session, or unless the Session finds it necessary under *Book of Discipline* §1-5 and §1-6 for itself to undertake an investigation.

C. Judicial Investigative Committee. The Session may appoint a judicial investigative committee to serve as a finder of fact, which shall report its findings to the Session with its recommendations. The judicial investigative committee shall have no authority to act for the Session other than as an investigative body.

§6-2 Appointment of a Prosecutor

If an investigation should result in raising a strong presumption of guilt of the party accused, the Session shall institute an ecclesiastical judicial procedure, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare an indictment and to prosecute the case. The prosecutor need not be a member of that court, but needs only to be a communing member of the church (as defined in §1-7).

§6-3 Selection of Prosecutor

Ordinarily, no offended person (or person knowing of an offense) shall become a prosecutor of personal offenses. The Session, however, may investigate personal offenses requiring discipline under §6-1 when they become known to members of the Session.

§6-4 Parties in a Case

The original and only parties in a case of ecclesiastical judicial procedure are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always Westkirk Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor is always the representative of the church. On appeal the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

§6-5 Private Reconciliation

When the prosecution is instituted by the court the steps required by §1-6 in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will be advisable to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring him to a sense

of repentance, before instituting actual ecclesiastical judicial procedures. The committee may then make recommendations to the Session concerning further prosecution of the case.

§6-6 Biased Accusations and Testimony

Great caution should be exercised by the Session in receiving accusations and testimony from any person:

- A. Who is known to hold a malignant spirit against the accused;
- B. Who is not of good character;
- C. Who is under sanction or who is the subject of an action for ecclesiastical judicial procedures;
- D. Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or
- E. Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash or highly imprudent.

§6-7 Suspension of Official Functions

When an action for discipline has been commenced against a member of the Session, any or all of his official functions may be suspended at the Session's discretion, but this shall never be done in the way of sanction.

CHAPTER 7

General Provisions Applicable to All Cases of Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedure

§7-1 Warning to All

Every member of the Session engaged in an ecclesiastical judicial procedure shall bear in mind the command of Scripture: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” Galatians 6:1 (NIV).

§7-2 Processing a Charge

- A. Commencement - When ecclesiastical judicial procedures are commenced in accordance with §5-1, nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the Session thereafter, unless by consent of the parties, except:
 - a. To appoint a prosecutor in accordance with §6-2 and §6-3.
 - b. To order the indictment drawn and a copy, including names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, in person or by means requiring a written receipt.
 - c. To set a date for trial.
- B. Commissions - Ordinarily, the Session shall decide at this time whether it shall try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission in accordance §9-5 and **Book of Government** §16-26B.1. Commissioners shall be ordained Elders.
- C. Moderator Pro-Tem - With the consent of the Moderator, and if the court so desires, it may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator Pro-Tem for a particular case. The Moderator Pro-Tem shall exercise the duties of a Moderator as described in **Book of Government** §16-4A with respect to the particular judicial case only.

§7-3 Indictment

- A. Heading of the Indictment - Every indictment shall begin: “In the name of Westkirk Presbyterian Church,” and shall conclude, “against the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.”
- B. Contents of the Indictment - The indictment shall clearly state the times, places and circumstances as to the actions alleged to require disciplinary sanctions, so that the accused may have adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make his defense.

§7-4 Formal Summons

- A. Issuance of Formal Summons - The Moderator or Clerk shall issue formal summons in the name of the Session to the accused and to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf.
- B. Contents - The formal summons shall identify the parties to the trial, shall state the time and place of the trial, and shall warn the parties and witnesses of the sanctions for refusal to obey a formal summons.
- C. Service of Summons and Indictment - The Clerk of the Session shall deliver a copy of the summons and the indictment to the defendant in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. The Clerk shall further deliver a summons to necessary witnesses in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt.
- D. Witness and Exhibits List - Each of the parties shall provide the other with a list of expected witnesses and copies of all exhibits not later than 5 days before trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt.

§7-5 Refusal to Obey a Formal Summons

- A. Accused Person: When an accused person shall refuse to obey a formal summons, he shall be served with a second formal summons.
- B. Second Summons: A second formal summons shall be accompanied with a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the Session), or that if he appear and refuse to plead, he shall be dealt with for his rebellion.
- C. Sanctions for Failure to Appear: When an accused person, having been twice formally summoned in accord with §7-5B shall fail to appear, the Session shall enter this fact upon its records, together with a copy of the indictment, and shall suspend the accused person from the sacraments for his rebellion in failing to appear. In the event the accused person shall be an officer, the Session shall remove him from office and suspend or excommunicate him from the church. In the event the accused person shall be a member but not an officer and the charge be one of a serious nature as described in §1-2, the court may proceed to removal of the accused person from the membership and fellowship of the church.
- D. Failure of a Witness to Appear: In the event a duly summoned officer or member of the church willfully fails to appear or refuses to testify, the Session may treat the refusal of the witness to appear as rebellion, and may proceed to admonish, suspend, remove from office, and/or expel him from the membership and fellowship of the church without need for further action.

§7-6 Time Periods

The time which must elapse between the serving of the first formal summons on the accused person, and the meeting of the Session at which he is to appear shall be at least ten days. The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent summons shall be left to the discretion of the Session, provided that it be quite sufficient for a reasonable and convenient compliance with the summons.

CHAPTER 8

Evidence

§8-1 Competency of Witnesses

Competency means ability to testify. All persons, including the parties, who have sufficient intelligence to understand the obligation of an oath or affirmation are competent witnesses.

§8-2 Testimony of the Accused

The accused party may be allowed but not compelled to testify. No inference of guilt may be drawn from his failure to testify. The person or persons who filed the charges under §5-1A shall be required to testify on the demand of the accused.

§8-3 Families

Husbands and wives, parents and children, shall not be required to testify against each other.

§8-4 Exclusion of Witnesses

Any witness to be examined, other than the accused or a member of the Session, may be excluded from the examination of any other witness in the same case if any party objects.

§8-5 Disqualification of Witnesses

A member of the Session who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified for sitting as a judge if either party objects.

§8-6 Oath or Affirmation

The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms: "Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?" If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before the Session who for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so.

§8-7 Examination of Witnesses

A. Examination and Cross-Examination.

Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party, after which any party or member of the Session may ask additional questions. No question shall be asked or answered except by permission of the Moderator subject to an appeal to the Session. The Session shall not permit cumulative or repetitive questions or questions which are frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

B. Witness Inconvenience

When the alleged offense took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the Session having jurisdiction, that Session may either appoint a judicial

committee or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it.

Due notice of the time and place of the taking of testimony by the judicial investigative committee or the coordinate court shall be given to the opposite party. Testimony may be taken by questions asked to the witness with answers recorded in writing or recorded by electronic or other means. All parties shall have the right to examine the witness.

§8-8 Credibility

Credibility means the degree of credit which may be given to the testimony of a witness. In assessing the credibility of a witness, the Session may consider any matter that bears on the credibility of the witness, including, but not limited to, the witness's relationship to the parties or other witnesses, his interest in the result, his weakness of understanding, his demeanor while testifying, his character for honesty or truthfulness, and his belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments.

§8-9 The Record

A. Authentication

The records of a Session, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the Moderator and Clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in any other Session. Authentication shall be in writing in the following or similar form:

I, _____, Clerk [or Moderator] of the Session do hereby certify that the foregoing are true, correct, and complete copies of the Record in the Case of _____.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

B. Testimony

The testimony taken by one court and regularly authenticated shall be received by the Session as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

§8-10 Burden of Proof

The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to prove an allegation of the indictment. However, if in addition to the testimony of one witness, other supporting evidence is proved, the allegation may be considered to be proved.

CHAPTER 9

The Trial

§9-1 Trial Proceedings

When a Session proceeds to trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

A. The Charge to the Session

The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tem) shall exhort the members to remember and consider their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to participate.

B. Indictment

The Moderator shall read the indictment, and the accused shall be called upon to declare whether he is guilty or not. If the accused pleads guilty, the Session may deal with him according to its discretion. If he pleads not guilty the trial shall proceed. Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Accused parties necessarily absent shall have counsel assigned to them.

C. Service of Summons

Before proceeding to trial, the Session shall ascertain that its summons has been duly served.

D. Opening Statements

Each party shall be permitted to make a brief opening statement not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the Session. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused party or parties.

E. Testimony

The witnesses for the prosecution and then those for the accused shall be examined in accordance with Chapter 8.

F. Exclusion of Prosecutor and the Accused Persons

On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the prosecutor and the accused persons. When they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the Session until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. The Moderator shall announce the Session's decision upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the room.

G. Closing Argument

Each party shall be permitted to make a brief closing argument not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the Session. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused party or parties. The prosecutor shall be permitted to close, but total amount of time allocated to each party shall be equal.

H. Deliberations

The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinions in the case. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the Session until the members deliberate upon and decide the question.

I. The Vote

The vote shall be by secret ballot, and all members of the Session shall vote “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” on each charge of the indictment. A verdict of guilty shall be rendered only upon a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the Session’s decision upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the room.

J. Imposition of Sanctions

Before sanctions are determined, the prosecutor and accused person found guilty shall be given the opportunity to present evidence or argument bearing on the administration of sanctions only.

Thereupon, the court shall proceed to a determination of sanctions pursuant to Chapter 10. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the Session until the members deliberate upon and determine sanctions. Sanctions may be rendered upon a simple majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the Session’s determination of sanctions, which shall be entered upon the records, upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the room.

K. Motion for New Trial

If after trial before the Session, new testimony is discovered which the accused believes is important, he shall have the right to ask for a new trial. The Session shall have the power to grant his request.

§9-2 Challenges to the Session

Any party may, for cause hereinafter described, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case. The question shall be decided by other members of the Session. A challenge for cause against a member of the Session shall be granted when:

A. Disclosure of Opinion

The member of the Session expresses his opinion of the guilt of any party to any person not a member of the Session before the conclusion of the trial.

B. Absence

The member of the Session shall absent himself from any sitting of the trial without the permission of the Session, or satisfactory reasons rendered.

C. Conflict of Interest

The member of the Session appears to the Session to be related to the parties or other witnesses, to have an interest in the result, or to have similar impediment or conflict of interest.

§9-3 Professional or Learned Counsel

A. No Paid Counsel

No person serving as counsel shall be permitted to receive compensation for services rendered to any party. However, parties may reimburse counsel for their reasonable expenses.

B. Professional or Learned Counsel

In the event any party shall be represented by a person who is a graduate of an accredited school of law, the other parties shall be likewise permitted to be represented by learned or professional counsel. However, learned or professional counsel must be a member of the church as defined in §1-7. A member of the Session serving as counsel in the case shall not be allowed to sit in judgment on the case.

§9-4 The Record

A. The Record

The Clerk or other person designated by the Session shall, within thirty days after the trial, make and maintain as part of the permanent records of the Session, a complete record of the proceedings, including the charges, the indictment, the answer (if any), all the testimony, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the Session relating to the case including the written ballots evidencing the decision and the determination of sanctions. These documents shall constitute the Record of the Case and should ordinarily be maintained separately from the Minutes of the Session.

B. Expenses of the Record

The Session shall make and maintain a transcript or record of the proceedings by written or electronic means. The parties shall be permitted to make copies (by transcript or electronic recording) of the whole proceedings at their own expense.

§9-5 Judicial Commissions

(See also Book of Government §16-26 B)

A. Rights and Duties. A judicial commission created in accordance with §7-2 B, shall have all the rights, privileges, duties and obligations of the Session in the matter assigned to it.

B. Composition. Judicial commissions shall be composed of no less than three or more than seven members elected by the Session.

C. Membership: Judicial commissions of the Session shall be composed of Ministers and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Minister as possible in accordance with *Book of Government* §16-26B.

CHAPTER 10

Disciplinary Sanctions

§10-1 Exhortation to Meekness

When any person shall be found guilty of an offense, the Session shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother or sister in the spirit of meekness. The members are exhorted to watch themselves, so that they may avoid temptation.

§10-2 Disciplinary Sanctions

Disciplinary sanction, which may be administered by the Session, is: admonition, suspension, removal from church office, and excommunication. When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the Session to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction.

If the Session finds on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the person's ministry, it shall take all prudent measures to see that the infirmity is amended.

§10-3 Definition of Admonition

Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by the Session, warning of his guilt and danger, and encouraging him to be more careful and watchful in the future.

§10-4 Definition of Suspension

Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities.

With respect to church officers, suspension may include the exclusion of the officer from office and the sacraments. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration. Suspension should generally be indefinite in its duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its repeal. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though he confesses his sin and gives evidence of repentance.

§10-5 Definition of Removal from Office

Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender's ordination and election are set aside, and the offender is removed from all church offices without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.

§10-6 Definition of Excommunication

Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent.

The purpose of this sanction is to reclaim the offender, to deliver the church from the disgrace and injury of his offense, and to motivate the church with fear by the example of his discipline.

§10-7 Principles for the Administration of Sanctions

The administration of church sanctions shall be suited to the nature of the offense. For private offenses, sanctions should be administered in the presence of the Session alone, or in private by one or more members of the Session. In the case of public offenses, the degree of sanction and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the Session, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular sanctions.

If the charge is one of serious immorality or heresy, and the accused person persists in his rebellion, the Session may proceed to inflict the highest sanction.

When a Minister is removed from office, his pastoral relationship shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Session whether the sanction shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

In accordance with §3-5, no sanction shall be administered in the case of a person who has renounced jurisdiction in writing to the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the Session. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the permission of the accused.

§10-8 The Sanction of Admonition

The sanction of admonition may be administered in private by one or more members of the Session if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public, the admonition shall be administered by the Moderator in presence of the Session and may also be announced in public should the Session deem it appropriate.

§10-9 Confession and Restoration

A. Confession. When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the Session, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without judicial procedures.

When an officer, before judgment is entered, shall make a confession of a matter that is marked by outrageous or scandalous crime or vice, such as substance abuse, marital infidelity, embezzlement or the like, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the Session shall without delay suspend or remove him from his office.

B. Restoration: An officer suspended or removed from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which, in the case of removal from office, shall be for not less than one year. Any officer must present evidence that it is virtually certain that the conduct causing his suspension or removal from office will not occur again. A Minister removed from office shall not be restored until it

appears that the general sentiment of the church is strongly in his favor and demands his restoration.

§10-10 The Sanction of Suspension

Suspension may be for a definite period of time or for an indefinite period of time.

The goal of suspension is to impress the offender of the evil of his sin, and, under God's blessing to lead him to repentance.

Definite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the Session alone or in open session of the Session, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the Session's discretion.

§10-11 Indefinite suspension

Indefinite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the Session alone or in open session of the Session, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the Session's discretion.

When the Session has resolved to pass the sentence, the Moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

"Whereas you, _____ (here describe the person as a Minister, Ruling Elder, Deacon, or member of the Church) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of _____ (here insert the offense), we the Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance."

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

§10-12 Removal from Office

The sanction of removal from office shall be administered by the Moderator in the words following:

"Whereas, _____, a Minister of Westkirk Presbyterian Church (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon), has been proved by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of _____, we, the Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church do adjudge him disqualified for the office of Minister (or Ruling Elder or Deacon), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, remove him from the office of Minister (or Ruling Elder or Deacon) the said _____, and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof." If the sanction includes suspension or excommunication, the Moderator shall proceed to say: "We do, moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said

_____ from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the membership and fellowship of the Church.”

The sentence of removal from office ought to be accompanied by solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

§10-13 Excommunication

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

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

CHAPTER 11

Removal of Sanctions

§11-1 Session Should Pray for the Offender

After any person has been suspended from the sacraments, it is proper that the Elders of the church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him and for him, that it would please God to give him repentance.

§11-2 Restoration to the Sacraments

When the Session shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of a suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance either in the presence of the Session alone or publicly, and be restored to the sacraments of the church, and to his office, if such be the judgment of the Session, which restoration shall be declared to the penitent in words of the following import:

“Whereas, you, _____, have been suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the office of Minister of the Gospel ministry, or Ruling Elder or Deacon) but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church, do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, restore you from the said sentence of suspension, and restore you to the full communion of the Church (and the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).” After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

§11-3 Restoration of an Excommunicated Person

Subject to the provisions of §11-7, when an excommunicated person shall be so moved with his excommunication that he is brought to repentance and he desires to be readmitted to the membership and fellowship of the church, he may request that the Session restore him. The Session shall proceed to restore him if it finds sufficient evidence of his sincere repentance. This may be done in the presence of the Session or of the congregation as seems best to the Session. On the day appointed for his restoration, the Moderator of the Session shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him the following questions:

“Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God and in refusing to hear His Church?” Answer, “I do.”

“Do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the church?” Answer, “I do.”

“Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and sorrow for your sin and rebellion: and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?” Answer, “I do.”

“Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humility of mind and carefulness to avoid sin, and to attempt to live a lifestyle that will glorify God our Savior?” Answer, “I do.”

Here the Minister shall give the person being restored a suitable exhortation, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words:

“Whereas you, _____, have been shut out from the membership and fellowship of the Church, but now have demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we, the Session of this Church, do declare you restored from the sentence of excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the membership and fellowship of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.”

The whole shall be concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

§11-4 Restoration to Office

When an officer who has been removed from office makes public confession in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the restoration of an excommunicated person, he may be restored to office. His restoration to office shall be announced to him by the Moderator as follows:

“Whereas, you, _____, formerly a Minister of Westkirk Presbyterian Church (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), have been removed from your office, but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the Session of Westkirk Presbyterian Church do declare you restored from the said sentence of removal from office formerly pronounced against you; and we do furthermore restore you to your office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be duly called.”

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

§11-5 Reelection Required for Exercise of Office

When a Ruling Elder or Deacon has been pardoned from the sanction of removal from office, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without reelection by the people.

§11-6 Special Provisions for the Restoration of a Minister

In the restoration of a Minister who has been suspended or removed from office, it is the duty of the Session to proceed with great caution. And pursuant to §10-7, the Session should first admit him to the sacraments, if he has been suspended from them, and afterwards should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time. The Session shall oversee his lifestyle so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness. When the Session is satisfied in these respects it shall restore him to his office. The case shall remain under judicial consideration until the sentence of restoration has been pronounced.

§11-7 Transfer of Case to More Convenient Forum

When a person under sanction shall move to a place which is remote from the Session by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, the Session may, if it deems it appropriate, transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the board of the church where the person under sanction resides. The church board of the person's residence shall then assume jurisdiction over the case and proceed with it as though it had original jurisdiction.

CHAPTER 12

Dissent and Protest

§12-1 Dissent

A dissent is a statement on the record by members of a minority objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any expression of dissent shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for dissent.

§12-2 Protest

A protest is a more solemn and formal statement on the record by members of a minority, strenuously objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any protest shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for protest.

§12-3 Record of Protest or Dissent

If a protest or dissent contains temperate language, and is respectful to the Session, it shall be placed in the Record of the Case. The Session may, if it believes it is necessary, respond to the protest or dissent. The matter shall be ended unless the persons protesting obtain permission to withdraw or amend their protest.

§12-4 Right to Vote Required

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

PART THREE

The Book of Worship

CHAPTER 1

Man's Chief End

§1-1 Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. In giving glory to God, the Christian is to worship God as a private exercise of faith and as a part of the spiritual exercise of individual families. However, each person as a Christian becomes a part of the larger family of God, a community of faith called the Church. Within this family, all believers are called to share a corporate fellowship of praise, love, commitment, and service. This life together finds visible expression within the family and to the world through worship together.

§1-2 Called to worship: Since natural understanding reveals that there is a God who is Lord and sovereign over all, that this God is holy, loving, good, merciful and forgiving, it is appropriate for God's own people to hold Him in awe, to praise Him, to pray to Him, to trust in Him, and to magnify Him. While Christians are bound to give God this worship as individuals and as families, it is especially incumbent upon them to join together in common worship. In such worship, God's love and power in giving the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ for the remission of sin is to be acknowledged and the dedication of life in service to Him is to be made.

§1-3 Called to serve: The worship of God has, as its natural consequence, the response of commitment and service to Him. This finds expression as God's people gather to worship, then scatter into the world to serve Him. Such service includes witnessing to all peoples the marvelous deeds of Him who calls us out of darkness into His wonderful light. It includes, as a first duty, the proclamation of a grace that reaches out to forgive, to redeem, and to give new spiritual power to life for Him through Jesus Christ, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It includes a witness to the Word of God revealed in Scripture. It includes a witness to God's love and compassion by embodying that love in acts of ministry to the needs of others. Thus, the Church becomes God's instrument in the world for the fulfilling of His divine purposes for mankind.

§1-4 The Church as a body of Christ: As the Church gathers in common worship and fellowship and then goes back into the world to live out its faith and commitment before men; it is acting as the Body of Christ. As a result, the individual Christian, the Church, and the visible Church in the world, combine to serve the great Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, when it is engaged in its worship and work. To be in Christ means to be involved actively in the Body by building the inner spiritual life of the Church and by extending its ministry to the world. The goal for the whole Church and each member of it is to have every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, both within the Church and in the whole world.

CHAPTER 2

Public Worship of God

§2-1 The acceptable way of worshiping God is established by God Himself. Proper worship is defined and outlined in God's revealed will and is to be followed in giving glory to Him. True and proper worship therefore finds its prescription in Holy Scripture. Only God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to receive such worship. Such worship shall include the reverent and attentive reading of the Scriptures, the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word, and singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the proper administration and right receiving of the sacraments, and prayer with thanksgiving. Such public worship of God shall also include times of solemn prayer and fasting, as well as special days of praise and thanksgiving. All worship should at all times and in all places be performed in a holy and religious manner. The public worship of God is not to be carelessly or willfully neglected or forsaken.

§2-2 The Lord's Day: It is appropriate that some amount of time be set aside for the worship of God. God has commanded in His Word that all men in every age keep one day in seven holy to Him as a Sabbath. From the beginning of the world up to the resurrection of Jesus, this Sabbath was the last day of the week. Since the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, it has been changed to the first day of the week and is to be continued until the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath. As a day for remembering and celebrating the resurrection of Christ, it is a continuing witness to God's power over sin and death.

A. While Christians may worship God at any time and in any place, they especially worship God in places set aside for that purpose. This does not mean other places are less sacred, but it is a witness to the world when Christians gather together in visible demonstration that God is the Lord of all. For that reason it is appropriate to gather for common worship in a place set aside for the special purpose of praising, glorifying and worshiping God.

B. It is incumbent upon all Christians to gather on the Lord's Day for worship that it might be kept holy unto the Lord. Affairs should be so arranged and influence so used that no one will be kept unnecessarily from worshiping God or observing the day in an appropriate manner.

§2-3 Preparing and gathering for worship: No Christian should come to the Lord's Day unprepared. Hearts should be prepared that worshipers might be ready to hear and receive the Word of the Lord. Daily affairs should be taken care of beforehand and the day should be spent in rest, free from the cares and concerns of the ordinary works and words. Thoughts should not be concerned with worldly activities, but should focus on the things of the Lord. Plans should be made to participate in public and private worship. Works should be limited to the duties of necessity and mercy.

A. As the people gather, they should do so in a quiet and reverent manner, remembering beforehand to pray for the minister, for those who gather to worship, for those who are providentially hindered, and for themselves.

B. All should be present at the appointed hour, unite in all the parts of the worship, and depart only when the benediction has been pronounced. The conduct of all should be reverent, and no unbecoming conduct should be practiced.

§2-4 The order of common worship: The people of God have been set free from all forms of bondage, including bondage to rigid rules and regulations for worship. However, the people are to remember to do all things decently and in order that all may participate and God may be glorified. For Westkirk Presbyterian Church, this means we are not required to follow any predetermined or rigid form of worship. However, it also means that worship should be conducted in such a way that persons are not hindered in their worship and that it not be an offense to God.

A. The Pastor, while advised to consult with the Session, has the duty and responsibility to determine the order, sequence, elements, and proportion of the service that each shall have in public worship. In making those decisions about worship, the Pastor shall be reminded of guidance for worship given in Scripture, the Reformed heritage in which we stand, of the customs, circumstances, and particular needs of the congregation, as well as the admonitions and limitations set by the *Book of Worship*.

B. All who come to worship should actively participate. The worship should be so designed that there is common participation when all share in the various elements of praise to God. Participation by various members of the particular congregation is encouraged to demonstrate that worship is a privilege of all and not relegated to a select few.

C. Each time of worship should give expression to the whole Gospel. However, it is also appropriate to give special emphasis to certain times of the Church year, wherein the whole life of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the whole counsel of God is celebrated. Such times, common to the Church Universal, include Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity.

- *Advent*, wherein the Church celebrates the promise of the Messiah who was to come and who is coming again;
- *Christmas*, wherein the Church celebrates the incarnation of God in Christ;
- *Epiphany*, wherein the Church celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the world;
- *Lent*, ending in Holy Week, wherein the Church observes a time of repentance and humility, of sacrifice and self-denial, as it celebrates the death of Christ upon the cross for the sins of the world;
- *Easter*, wherein the Church celebrates God's mighty power and promise by the resurrection of His Son from the dead;
- *Ascension*, wherein the Church celebrates the Lordship of Christ from the right hand of God where He also makes intercession for His own;
- *Pentecost*, wherein the Church celebrates the bestowing of the Holy Spirit upon believers, and the gift of spiritual power to equip Christians to live for Jesus under the Lordship of Jesus;

- *Trinity*, wherein the Church celebrates the oneness and fullness of the Godhead, revealed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

D. It is always appropriate to join with other parts of the Church in the celebration of certain days, seasons, and other special occasions. However, participation should always be in conformity with Scripture and in keeping with the heritage of the Reformed faith. It is always appropriate for the Session to set special days for prayer and fasting, for thanksgiving and praise, for remembering our heritage, and for recognizing the civic duties and responsibilities of the people of God.

§2-5 The Word of God in Worship: The ordinary worship of God always includes the reverent and attentive reading of the Scriptures. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence so manifest God in all His power and glory as to leave mankind without excuse, to know God and His will in a way sufficient for salvation necessitates God's self-revelation made in Holy Scripture. The Scriptures are for the sure establishment of the Church, as well as its comfort, and protects it from the corruption of the flesh, the malice of Satan and the world.

A. Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is to be the rule of faith and life for all Christians. The authority of the Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, does not depend upon any other than God Himself. The full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures is the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the heart. All that is necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation is clearly evident in Scripture.

B. The supreme Word of God is Jesus Christ, who for the salvation of mankind came and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He is preeminently revealed in the Scriptures and in order to truly know Him the Scriptures must be heard. Thus, the reading of the Scriptures becomes an essential part of worship.

C. Reading of the Word should be done with a sense of awe and reverence. A prayer for illumination prior to reading is appropriate in which prayer is made for a sensitive and open heart to the leading and speaking of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily the Scriptures in worship should be read by the Pastor, or some other appropriate person who has been invited to do so.

D. The choice of passages and their length to be read from Scripture belongs to the Pastor. Since the whole counsel of God should be heard by the people, care should be exercised to read from both the Old and New Testaments and from all parts of the Word. It is appropriate to use a lectionary in accomplishing this purpose.

§2-6 Sound Preaching of the Word: The ordinary worship of God always includes the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word in obedience to God. Such preaching should always open the Word of God in such a way that the hearer can respond with clear understanding and simple faith. In dealing with matters in which there is a question about the true and full sense

of any Scripture, the Preacher is to remember that the only infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.

A. Because preaching is closely related to the reading of Scripture, it is appropriate for the sermon to follow closely the reading of the Word and to be based upon it.

B. The sermon should be related to the particular congregation and the individuals within it. It should address the real issues of that community of faith and should include practical application to life. It should be framed in such terms that all present can understand. Such preaching demands study, meditation, prayer, and time for adequate preparation. Above all, that which is preached should be exemplified in the life of the Preacher.

C. Since the reading of Scriptures requires attentiveness and the sermon conscientious hearing, the worshipers have a duty also. As God speaks through the Word as it is read and preached, cutting hearts, giving guidance in the Christian life, building up in the faith, the worshiper has a solemn duty to be open and receptive to God's revelation. Even as the Preacher is to make proper preparation, so the worshiper is to be prepared in every way to hear and respond.

D. While all of the elements of public worship are important and should not be neglected, no worship is complete without the reading and preaching of the Word. For this reason, the Pastor and Session should be careful to protect the pulpit in each particular church that the Word be truly preached. No person should be permitted to preach without the invitation of the Pastor and the Session, or the Session if there is no Pastor.

§2-7 Music in Worship: Singing of psalms with grace in the heart is a necessary and indispensable part of the common worship of the people of God. The whole congregation is the true choir singing praises and giving glory to God. For this reason, corporate singing is not to be neglected. Emphasis should be given to the content of the hymns that all might sing with understanding.

A. Music is not an end in itself, but should serve the whole purpose of giving glory and praise to God. Where there is a choir auxiliary to the congregation, it should be remembered that it is representing the whole congregation before God and is not performing for the people. For this reason, it is appropriate for the choir to be composed of those from the church as far as possible. Those who participate in a choir inevitably represent a special calling in the life of a congregation and should exhibit a gracious Christian life that brings honor to God. Participants in the choir should have such a character and conduct themselves in such a way that their lives will not be a barrier or hindrance to those who worship.

B. The Minister is responsible for the order for worship, for leading the service, and for determining the parts of worship along with the emphasis given to each. The Minister has final authority over all, including the music. Where there is a music director or other such

person working in music, that person shall always consult with the Minister concerning the music or worship.

C. Care should be exercised in selecting hymns that both new and old are selected in order that all may rejoice in the Lord, singing and making melody in their hearts. The words of hymns should be appropriate and reflect Reformed theology. It is appropriate to include contemporary hymns that are in keeping with the life of the particular congregation.

D. The use of various musical instruments in worship is appropriate unless disapproved by the Session. However, it is to be remembered that all music, including instruments, should be aids and not hindrances to or substitutes for congregational participation.

E. As a community of praise, a congregation should ordinarily conclude its worship with a hymn suitable for the occasion prior to the benediction.

§2-8 Prayer in Worship: The Minister ordinarily has the duty to lead the people in prayer during times of worship, although from time to time others may be invited to do so. As the Minister prays the people are being represented before God. All the prayers should be offered silently from the hearts of those who listen. In order for prayer to be accepted it must be made in the name of Jesus, by the help of the Holy Spirit, and be made in accordance with the will of God. It is to be made for things that are lawful for God's people and should be made with understanding, reverence, humility, fervor, faith, love, and perseverance. It should be made in a language that is common to all.

A. In preparing to lead in prayer, the Minister should give as careful attention to preparation for prayer as for preaching. The duty of voicing the prayers of the people is a solemn one and should be performed with the dignity befitting the occasion. The Minister's own prayer life, the study of the great prayers of the Church, a close acquaintance with Scripture, the reading of devotional classics, all combine to enhance effectiveness as the Minister represents the people before God in prayer.

B. No less than the Minister, the people are to prepare themselves for worship and prayer. During those times when the Minister is leading in prayer, their hearts should give assent to the thoughts that are voiced and their demeanor should be reverent.

C. Those who lead in prayer need not be limited to fixed forms of prayer in worship and the Minister shall determine the emphasis given to the various parts of prayer. However, in the public worship of God the prayers should include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession and the communion of saints.

- *Adoration* is comprised of offering glory and honor and praise to the holiness and majesty of God for His works of creation and providence, and for the fullness of His revelation in Jesus Christ.

- *Confession* is comprised of the voicing of sins common to all with opportunity for the people to confess silently private and individual sins and shortcomings, both of commission and omission.
- *Assurance of Pardon* is the appropriate response to confession. God's people can approach His throne of holiness because in Jesus they are assured of His grace and mercy. Those who believe in Jesus as Savior, who confess their sins, who are truly penitent and sorry for all their offenses, and who intend by God's gift of spiritual power through the Holy Spirit to turn from their evil ways, are assured of forgiveness. Therefore, it is the duty of the Minister in joyous, affirming voice to declare unto such their forgiveness. It is then appropriate for the people of God to express their own joy and gratitude in the mercy of God by singing some hymn or response such as the *Doxology* or the *Gloria Patri*.
- *Thanksgiving* is comprised of the expression of gratitude to God for all His blessings, specific and general as well as temporal and spiritual. God's gracious providence should be remembered and special thanksgiving should be made for His unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ.
- *Supplication* is comprised of the requests of the people, both corporate and personal, for those things needful for life, for spiritual growth, for help in trouble, for health in sickness, for the development of the fruit of the Spirit, and for all those blessings necessary for witness and service.
- *Intercession* is comprised of those requests made in behalf of others, especially praying for the visible Church, the Kingdom of Christ on earth, for the civil government including the president, the congress, the judiciary, the governor, and all those in positions of authority. It shall include petition for widows and orphans and for all those who have need of God.
- *Communion of Saints* is comprised of prayers of gratitude for those who have witnessed a good confession and gone to be with the Lord. The prayer should remember the invisible Church whose members number those believers of all ages of all times. It is always appropriate for the prayers of the people of God to conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

§2-9 The Offerings of the People of God: The acknowledgment that God is the Author of every good gift and that His people are but stewards of His grace should find expression in the offerings of the congregation. In returning to God a proper stewardship of His gifts, the congregation is to be reminded that they are also held accountable not only for a proper stewardship, but for the use of all they have and are. The giving of the people of God in response to His goodness and love should find expression in three principal areas.

A. The offering of self: The first duty of the Christian is to offer self to God, heart, mind, body, and soul. Each service may properly include a time for rededication or for commitment. It is always appropriate to present individuals with an opportunity for public response to the proclamation of the Gospel by public profession of faith or reaffirmation.

B. The offering of tithes and gifts: Each worship service should include a time when the community of believers may present their tithes and gifts to God. It is a visible expression of the commitment of believers to the extension of the Gospel, the work of ministry, and the support of the Church of Jesus Christ.

C. The offering of service to others: Each service of worship should remind the worshipers of God's call to service in ministry to others and provide opportunity from time to time for commitment to special service. This may include the announcement of opportunities within the common life of the congregation to serve. Thus, announcements may play an important role and should not be excessive or irrelevant. From time to time it is important to offer opportunity for individuals to make a life commitment to serving others through some form of full-time service.

CHAPTER 3

The Sacraments

§3-1 In the Gospel only two sacraments are ordained by Christ. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Ordinarily, only a lawfully ordained Minister may administer the sacraments, but such do not act in their own right, rather on behalf of Christ and His Church. In the absence of a lawfully ordained Minister, authority to administer the sacraments may be exercised by Ruling Elders with consent of the Session. This privilege should be exercised only in extraordinary circumstances in which a lawfully ordained Minister is not reasonably available.

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, representing Christ and all His benefits. They confirm our relationship to Him and represent a visible difference between those who belong to the Church and the rest of the world. There is a spiritual or sacramental relationship in the sacraments between the sign (water and bread and wine) and what is signified. The power revealed in the sacraments does not reside in them or in the one administering them, but is in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the promise of God who gives benefits to those who worthily receive them. Thus, the sacraments are powerful and effective in the life of the recipient because of God's Word which instituted them. For this reason the sacraments should not be neglected or omitted.

§3-2 The Sacrament of Baptism: Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ. By the act of baptism, a person becomes a part of the visible Church, for it is a sign and a seal of the Covenant of Grace for believers and their children. As a sign it proclaims God's forgiveness and our redemption in Jesus Christ. As a seal, God marks us as adopted children of our heavenly Father. It indicates our ingrafting into Christ, our rebirth, the remission of sins, and our ability by the power of the Spirit to walk in newness of life. This sacrament is to be continued by God's people until the end of the world.

A. Candidates for baptism: Those eligible to receive this sacrament are those who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and have promised to be obedient to Him, along with the infants of one or both believing parents. Also, those who have legal responsibility for an infant have the right to present the child for baptism.

B. Method of baptism: In the sacrament of baptism water is to be used. Immersion or dipping the person into the water is not essential and baptism is ordinarily administered by pouring or sprinkling.

C. Effectiveness of baptism: God's grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to this sacrament. Some who are baptized will be lost and some not baptized will be saved. Nevertheless, it is a great sin to make light of or to neglect this sacrament. A great benefit is lost when baptism is neglected, for God promises to bless His people through this sacrament. The effectiveness of baptism is not tied to the moment it is administered, yet God who keeps His promises confers His grace according to His own will and in His appointed time.

D. Administration of baptism: The grace received through baptism does not come from the tradition or form of administration, and since it is not dependent upon the devoutness or the intention of the person administering it, baptism should be administered only once.

E. Time and place of administration: Since baptism is the act by which a person is solemnly admitted into the visible Church, the regular administration of the sacrament should ordinarily be in the presence of the family of believers. At that time, the benefits and promises should be set forth. The people should be reminded of baptism as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our ingrafting into Christ, and of the need to yield to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life. However, if circumstances justify administering the sacrament at a time and place other than public worship, the Minister may judge. In any event, at least one Ruling Elder should be present to represent the congregation and to assume on behalf of the congregation the commitment required by that congregation in the baptismal vows. No such private administration should convey the impression of baptismal regeneration or its necessity for salvation, and those present are to be reminded that baptism is not inseparably connected with God's grace and salvation.

F. Baptism for Adults: When a person who was not baptized as an infant desires to profess faith in Christ and be ingrafted into His Body, being admitted into the visible Church, the sacrament of baptism shall be received.

1. Proper instruction: Those persons desiring to be baptized shall receive necessary instruction concerning the meaning of the sacrament, the obligations of Church membership, the need to live by faith, to walk in holiness and righteousness, and to act in brotherly love toward those who have been baptized by the same Spirit into the same Body. The Session shall authorize the baptism of the petitioner only when it is fully satisfied as to that person's full intention to be obedient to Christ and a profession of faith has been made.
2. Minister's duty: The Minister shall remind those present of the meaning of the sacrament as a sign and seal of ingrafting, remission of sin, regeneration by the Spirit, adoption, and resurrection to everlasting life. All should be reminded to be thankful for their own baptism with its benefits and privileges, to be humble because of sin and walking contrary to the grace given us, and to draw strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we were baptized.
3. Recipient's duty: Prior to baptism, the recipient shall make affirmative response in professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, affirming intention to walk in newness of life as one of those who have given their names to Christ. The recipient shall further affirm faithfulness and support of the Church and of the particular church.

4. Congregation's role: In receiving a person into its fellowship and in acknowledging that person to be a part of the covenant community, the congregation assumes responsibilities toward that person. As Christ commanded His Church to baptize and teach, the congregation shall affirm its duty and commitment to the recipient by public vow. The following or like vow shall be proposed to the congregation by the Minister: "Do you, the members of this congregation, and in the name of the visible Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, take responsibility for the continued Christian nurture of _____, promising to set a godly example by your own life, and to pray for _____ in this new life of faith?"

5. The administration of the sacrament: After asking God's blessings to attend the sacrament, the Minister shall administer baptism. This shall be done with water, either by pouring, sprinkling or immersion and without other ceremony, during which the Minister shall say, " _____ , I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." After a brief prayer for the effectual working of the Spirit in the life of the recipient, the Minister shall declare that person to be received into the fellowship of Christ's Church and into membership in that particular church, along with the right to partake of the Lord's Supper and the privilege of sharing in the mission and governance of the Church. It is appropriate that a charge be given and that the event be concluded with a promise of the blessing of God.

G. Infant baptism: Believing parents are encouraged to present their children for the sacrament of baptism, which should not be unnecessarily delayed. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace and in part confirm our position with and in Christ and demonstrate to the world the visible difference between it and those who belong to the Church. The baptism of an infant requires a two-fold affirmation, one by the parents and one by the covenant community. The parents are to take vows indicating their commitment to bring the child up in the faith and in the loving discipline of the Lord. The congregation also takes a vow indicating its commitment and duty to provide nurture, support, and a godly example in assuming with the parents the spiritual oversight of the child. Parents and congregation together are to encourage growth in grace until the child, having become of age, claims Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

1. Who may present children: The infants of one or both believing parents, or of a believer who exercises the authority of a parent, are eligible to receive the sacrament of baptism. Ordinarily this privilege is limited to those active members of the particular congregation. At its discretion, the Session may authorize those on the inactive roll to present infants for baptism. It may also require evidence of the intent of the petitioner(s) to follow the vows to be taken by meeting the requirements for restoration to the active roll. Further, the Session may grant permission to believers who are not members to present

infants for baptism, provided such persons are members in good standing in some true branch of the visible Church.

In such cases, the Session shall be careful to notify the governing body of the particular church in which those believers hold membership, of the baptism of the infant. Ordinarily the Session shall authorize and approve the baptism of infants, except in such cases as the Minister may deem inexpedient. In that case the Minister shall report the baptism to the Session. All baptisms shall be recorded in the permanent record of the Session.

2. Instruction of parents: It is the duty of the Session and Minister to offer instruction to the parents concerning the nature and meaning of the sacrament, the obligations assumed, and the role the congregation plays with the parents in the spiritual nurture and growth of the child.
3. Use of Godparents: Westkirk Presbyterian Church does not recognize godparents since the members of the particular congregation assume with the parents responsibility for the spiritual life of the child. However, it is permitted to have persons who might become the responsible parental authority for the child to assume the vows of obligation with the parents. In such a case, the persons participating with the parents should have the same qualifications for membership in the visible Church.
4. The obligation of the Minister: The Minister shall be careful to remind the congregation of the meaning and nature of baptism. They should be reminded to remember the significance of their own baptism, the benefits and privileges of it, being humbled for failures contrary to the grace of baptism, and to remind all believers of the need for recommitment to their endeavor to live by faith. It is appropriate to restate that faith by confessing some appropriate symbol of the faith such as the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed.
5. The obligation of the parents: The parents or other responsible person shall assume vows of duty and obligation. This shall be done by responding affirmatively to the following or like questions:

Do you acknowledge _____'s, need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?

Do you claim God's covenant promises and benefits for _____ and by faith do you look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your child as you do your own?

Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and do you promise by relying on God's power and grace through the Holy Spirit to live an exemplary life before your child?

Do you commit yourself to pray with and for your child, to teach your child the Scriptures and the great articles of our faith in Jesus Christ?

Do you promise to use every means provided by God, including faithful participation in the life of the Church, to bring your child up in the loving discipline of the Lord?

6. The obligation of the congregation: The congregation is to assume, with the parents, responsibility for the spiritual nurture and development of the child. The congregation acts for the whole family of God and assumes responsibility for it on behalf of the child. The Minister shall propose the following or like questions:

Do you, the members of this congregation, acting for yourselves and in behalf of the whole Body of Christ, assume responsibility with these parents for the spiritual nurture of this child?

Do you commit yourself to set a godly example before this child, to provide as far as you are able, all that is necessary to the end that this child may one day confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

7. Administration of the sacrament: The Minister shall set apart the water from all common uses to this holy use and mystery and pray for a blessing upon the ordinance. Then the Minister shall use the following or like formula without adding any other ceremony and shall baptize the child with water, saying:

“_____ , child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The ordinance is to be concluded by a prayer in which God’s blessings are asked upon the child, upon all the children of the congregation, and for faithfulness to the vows the people have taken.

8. The continuing obligation of the Session: It is the duty of the Session to record each baptism in its permanent records and to inscribe the name of the child on the baptized roll. It is the continuing obligation of the Session to watch over the children of the congregation, to provide for that spiritual nurture necessary to grow in grace, and to provide opportunities, such as a communicants’ class, where the children of the congregation may come to profess their faith and be prepared to assume the obligations and privileges of full participation in the life of the congregation.

§3-3 The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: The Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus on the night of His betrayal. It is to be celebrated until the end of the world as a perpetual remembrance of

what He did for mankind on the cross. The Lord's Supper is a seal of all those benefits of Calvary for believers, and signifies their spiritual growth and nourishment. It is a bond and pledge of the communion of believers with Jesus Christ and with each other as parts of the Church.

A. A commemoration: This sacrament is in no way a re-offering of Christ nor a sacrifice. It commemorates Christ's once for all offering of Himself, and in celebrating the sacrament the people offer praise to God for what has already been done.

B. Nature of the elements: While sometimes called by the name of what they represent, the body and blood of Christ, yet they retain the essential nature of bread and wine. While the elements are to be set apart for the use ordained of Christ, this sacramental use gives no special quality to the physical elements. Christ is spiritually present in the elements and is discerned by the faith of the believer.

C. Different names for the sacrament: Historically Christians have used different names to describe the Lord's Supper. However, these names all signify the same sacrament. In addition to being called the Lord's Supper, it is called the Breaking of the Bread, Holy Communion, and the Eucharist (Thanksgiving).

D. The significance of the sacrament: Worthy receivers by faith spiritually receive Christ crucified into their hearts and receive the benefits of His death on their behalf. In that sense, the sacrament conveys what it signifies when it is received by faith. Those who unworthily receive the sacrament do not receive what is signified. Rather, they are guilty of the body and blood of Jesus and condemn themselves. For this reason, the Session should be careful to refuse the Lord's Supper to those who are ignorant of its meaning or who are ungodly.

E. The frequency of commemoration: The Session is responsible for determining the frequency of celebration. It is proper to observe it as often as each Lord's Day, but it should be observed at least quarterly. The Session should exercise care that the sacrament be not neglected.

F. The place of commemoration: The Lord's Supper is a part of the worship of God's people. For that reason it should be celebrated ordinarily as a part of a regular service of worship. The observance of the sacrament should always be in conjunction with the reading and preaching of the Word, with the prayers of the people accompanied with hymns of praise.

G. Special times of commemoration: When requested, the Session may authorize the Lord's Supper to be celebrated with those who are ill. At least one member of the Session should be present on such occasions. The Minister shall be careful to give some brief explanation of the meaning of the sacrament. Also, the Session may authorize the celebration of the sacrament at a time and place other than the ordinary place of worship on the Lord's Day, provided that the Session is represented.

H. Preparation for commemoration: The Session should give at least one week's notice prior to the celebration of the sacrament. It is always appropriate for the Session to provide instruction in the nature and meaning of the sacrament and to solemnly warn those who are not spiritually prepared. The people are to prepare themselves by the examination of their inner spiritual life, of their present relationship to Christ, to confess and repent of known sins, to forgive those who have offended them, to pray earnestly for the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, and to draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith.

I. Invitation to partake: The Minister shall invite to partake all true believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including those from other congregations that are a part of the true Church. All should be reminded of the need to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, to repent of sin, and to covenant once more to live as followers of Jesus. Those who are ignorant in their knowledge of Christ or who are living ungodly and unrepentant lives should be warned of the serious consequences for those who unworthily partake. Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord's Table provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership.

J. The bread and the wine: Adequate preparation should be made of the elements to be served. It is appropriate for a large piece of bread to be made ready for breaking by the Minister and a cup with pouring vessel for the pouring of the wine during the commemoration. The bread and wine may be placed on a table and covered with a fine white cloth, or they may be brought forward and placed on the table when the time of celebration comes.

K. The commemoration: The time of celebration having come, the Minister shall proceed in the following or like manner:

The words of institution shall be read, either from the Gospels or from I Corinthians 11.

The bread and wine shall be blessed and be set apart from ordinary use to holy use and mystery.

The bread is to be broken before the people as a visible demonstration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The Minister may say: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when he had blessed and broken it, He gave it to His disciples, as I give this bread to you in His name, saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.'" (Distribution of the element). Then the Minister may pour the wine into the cup, or, if not possible, to hold up a cup, and say: "After the same manner our Savior took the cup, and having given thanks, as has been done in His name, He gave it to His disciples saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins: all of you drink of it.'" (Distribution of the element.)

L. **Distributing the elements:** It is proper for the people to gather at the table, but ordinarily the Ruling Elders (or others appointed by the Session) shall distribute the elements to the worshipers. The Session may appoint godly people to distribute the elements when there are no Ruling Elders available.

M. **The conclusion of the commemoration:** Following a time for private prayer and self-examination the service may conclude with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving and the people dismissed with a benediction. Following the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as an act of gratitude to God and renewed love for others, it is always appropriate to receive a special offering for the poor or for some other worthy cause. Such offerings should be ordered only by the Session.

CHAPTER 4

The Worship of God at Other Times

§4-1 The principal time of worship for the people of God is the Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, when the resurrection of Christ is celebrated and commemorated. However, the Session has the right and duty to assemble the people for worship on other days and at other times. The Session may order such assemblies at regular times or for the celebration of special events. At such special times of worship, the ordinary parts of worship will normally be observed, although the Session may call for special emphasis on matters of particular concern.

§4-2 Days of Prayer and Fasting: The Lord Jesus Christ set the example for God's people in a time of fasting. Throughout the New Testament there is frequent indication that Christians in the early Church practiced fasting. Therefore, the Church will do well in its spiritual life if it follows this example. The Session should be diligent and sensitive to those times when such a special day is called for and should be eager to order such an event. Christians individually and in particular families should observe special days when fasting is practiced.

A. When called by the Session: When the Session calls a day of prayer and fasting, the purpose of the occasion should be announced and adequate time given in order that members may prepare themselves. It is appropriate on such occasions for services of public worship to be conducted during the day set aside. All the members under the authority of a Session should make diligent effort to conscientiously participate in the day set aside.

B. Private or family observance of a day of prayer and fasting: It is entirely proper for individuals or for particular families to enter into a day of prayer and fasting. Christians should exercise such an option with some regularity as an offering to God and as a reminder of total dependency upon God for all one has and is.

§4-3 Days of Thanksgiving: A joyful and grateful heart is pleasing to the Lord and brings glory to Him. Because of God's infinite love, His providential care, and His continued working in the affairs of His people, it is appropriate to observe special times of praise and thanksgiving. During such times there shall be special services of worship, times of prayer, and the lifting of the hearts to God by all His people. Such occasions shall be ordered by the Session for those under its jurisdiction, and by individuals or families who have been especially blessed.

§4-4 Individual Worship: It is incumbent upon each Christian to develop the practice of daily worship of God. Such a time should include prayer, reading of the Scriptures, examination of one's inner spiritual life, and serious meditation. The individual Christian should strive to improve knowledge of faith and of the Church by reading and studying the documents of the faith of the Church, by learning its government and worship, as well as its history.

§4-5 Family Worship: Each individual family should worship together. Such times, done regularly and faithfully, should include the reading together of God's Word, times of prayer, times of sharing with one another God's working in individual hearts, and times of doing together the

things of the Lord. It is always appropriate for a family to sing together in praise of God's goodness and mercy. Families ordinarily should worship together in the public worship of God in the particular congregation.

CHAPTER 5

Christian Marriage

§5-1 While marriage is not a sacrament of the Church, it is ordained of God and intended to last as long as the couple shall live. God has designed marriage for the mutual help of husband and wife and for the development of their moral and spiritual character, and for the propagation of children who are to be reared in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

§5-2 Who Should Marry: A man and a woman who are able to give their consent may marry unless their blood relationship is forbidden by Scripture. The partners should share a common Christian faith and a common intention to build a Christian home. Christians would be wise to seek as partners those who share a common faith and heritage.

§5-3 The Church's Role in Marriage: Marriage ordinarily should be performed in the place of common worship by an ordained Minister of the Church, and with the family of faith present. In approving the marriage, the Church affirms the divine institution of marriage and invokes God's blessings upon those who enter the relationship according to God's Word. As the Church hears the vows a couple make to one another, it should assure the couple of God's grace within their new relationship.

§5-4 The Remarriage of Divorced Persons: It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows, yet only in cases of extreme, unrepentant, and irremediable unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the church, in keeping with the redemptive Gospel of Jesus Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm posture of an endeavor after Christian marriage is manifested. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union. If the Minister has any questions about the readiness of divorced persons to remarry according to these principles, the Session should be consulted and its concurrence sought.

§5-5 The Minister's Role in Marriage: It is the duty of the Minister to consult with the couple contemplating marriage. They should be given godly advice concerning the establishment of a Christian home, as well as instruction in the meaning of marriage in God's sight, and the biblical teachings of the roles, duties, and relationships within the home. The Minister should give such other counsel which seems needful, wise, and helpful that the couple may be well prepared for their new estate in marriage. Should the Minister be convinced that genuine faith is absent, that full responsibility for one another is missing, and that the blessings of God are not likely to rest upon such a relationship, the marriage ceremony should not be performed. It is the duty of the Minister to meet all civil requirements in performing and properly registering the marriage. In addition, the Minister shall report the marriage to the Session which shall record it in its

permanent records. It is wise for a Minister to keep a personal record of marriages which includes the names, the dates, the place, and the civil body issuing the authority to marry.

§5-6 The Service of Christian Marriage: The marriage ceremony is an act of worship. For that reason, it is under the direction of the Minister only and shall always be characterized by reverence throughout. Music should be appropriate to the occasion and the Session or the Minister may determine what music is acceptable. Appropriate hymns sung by all are always proper. The decorations and all appointments should not be ostentatious or so call attention to themselves as to distract the worshipers from their duty to God on such a solemn occasion. The service itself should be conducted with dignity and reverence, beginning with prayers for the new home being established and for the members of the new family. Vows shall be exchanged, appropriate Scriptures read, and a charge may be given which sets forth both the duties and privileges of marriage. The Minister shall conclude the ceremony by publicly declaring that the couple is now husband and wife and the benediction shall be pronounced.

§5-7 The Blessing of a Civil Marriage: Persons who have been married by a civil authority may desire to have that marriage blessed by a service in the Church, performed by a Minister of the Gospel. It is proper to perform such services, provided all the conditions for a couple preparing for marriage are observed. A marriage should never be sanctioned that does not meet the criteria laid down herein.

CHAPTER 6

Christian Burial of the Dead

§6-1 Above all, a Christian burial should be a witness to the faith of the believers, to their confidence in the resurrection of the body and everlasting life. It is a time of worship in which glory is given to God for His care of the bereaved, for His trustworthy providence, and for the hope God's people have in Jesus Christ. The focus of the burial service is God who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead and given believers an earnest appreciation of their own resurrection. It is a time for the reaffirmation of the Church's faith and a time for expressing joy in the assurance of eternal life.

§6-2 The Place of Worship: Ordinarily a service of burial should be conducted in the place of common worship. As this is the place for baptism and marriage, it is also the place where witness to faith in the resurrection is made.

§6-3 The Parts of Worship: A burial service, which shall be entirely under the control of the Minister, should include the reading of appropriate passages of Scripture, from both the Old and New Testament; it should include an exposition of some passage by the Minister, prayers of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased and prayers of intercession for the bereaved, the singing of appropriate hymns, and a reminder to all of death for every person and judgment to come, along with a solemn reminder that each must repent and turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to gain eternal life. It is not appropriate to include a civic or fraternal rite in this service. If such is desired, it should be conducted at another time and place.

§6-4 The Casket of the Deceased: It is not necessary for the casket to be present for the worship service. It should not be open if present. Decorations and ostentatious display of flowers should be avoided. It is permissible for Christians to dispose of bodies by burial, cremation, or donation for scientific purposes.

§6-5 The Committal: Ordinarily the committal should be reserved for the immediate family and close friends. It may be performed either before or after the worship service. It should consist of a few selected passages of Scripture, a brief prayer of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased, a committing of the body to its place of rest, and a committing of the soul to God, concluding all with a benediction.

CHAPTER 7

Service to God

§7-1 In giving glory to God through worship, both the individual and the community of faith as a whole also give glory to God by serving Him in ministry to others. The first duty of Christians is to give glory to God and to share with others the mighty deeds of God for our salvation.

However, the necessary and inevitable consequence of faith and love is to care for others. Such ministries of compassion and concern for the well being of others are not the Gospel, although they may embody the Gospel and convey the Gospel in a real way. Service to others is the fruit of the Gospel, the result in the lives of believers of the Gospel, who, in doing even unto the least, do it as unto Christ. It is to be remembered that good deeds done for others that do not include the sharing of what God has done in Jesus Christ are inadequate and incomplete. Until the Christian and the Church have shared the Good News of salvation, they have not shared their best gift.

However, to share the Good News and fail to show concern and compassion for others' needs is to present an incomplete Gospel and may cause people to call in question the Good News itself. Faith and works are inseparably linked and are incomplete without one another.

§7-2 The Service of Evangelism: The first task of the Church is to share the Gospel of salvation with all the nations of the world. This is the task of every Christian, every particular church, and the whole church. The Session should encourage, train, and lead those under its jurisdiction in the service of evangelism.

§7-3 The Service of Teaching: Jesus commanded that Christians not only go into the world to make converts, but that those converts should be taught. Therefore, it is the duty of Christians and the Church to disciple those who believe. Within the particular church this duty falls to the Session. The basic study material is always the Bible, along with the confessional documents of the Church.

A. Duty in the home: It is the obligation of Christian parents to bring their children up in the nurture and instruction in the Lord. When parents present children for baptism, they take a vow to that end. Diligence should be exercised in fulfilling this obligation.

B. Duty in the particular church: It is the obligation of the Session to offer a program of education and nurture to the believers. This includes adequate educational facilities, properly trained teachers, and materials that reflect the history, heritage, faith and practice of Westkirk Presbyterian Church. Such teachers should be active members of the congregation and approved by the Session. The Session may secure full-time personnel to oversee the educational program under the supervision of the Pastor. The Session should also seek to extend its teaching ministry by searching for opportunity to establish mission church schools in places that are destitute of the Gospel and training in the faith.

§7.4 The Service of Giving: As set forth in Section 2-9 of the *Book of Worship*, the giving of God's people is an acknowledgement that He is the author of every good and perfect gift and that they are but stewards of His grace. God's people are reminded that they are held accountable not only for a proper stewardship of God's gifts in terms of tithes and offerings, but for the proper use of all they have and are. This giving of the people finds expression in three principal areas of the offering of self, the offering of tithes and gifts, and the offering of service to others. (*Book of Worship*, Section 2-9.A, B, and C)

- A. **The giving of self:** The Christian is one who offers his heart and life totally to God. This self-giving is never complete, for each person must continue to offer self to re-surrender and recommitment.
- B. **The giving of tithes and gifts:** Nowhere does the Bible mention less than a tithe as a proper stewardship for the Christian. Westkirk Presbyterian Church believes in the tithe and teaches it as the minimum requirement for the believer. Gifts to the Lord are those contributions made over and above the tithe. Such giving should be done regularly and systematically.
- C. **The giving of service to others:** The teaching of Christ is that in service and ministry to others God's people are honoring and serving Him. Therefore, it is incumbent upon believers to serve others and to minister to their needs.
 1. The individual believer: Each Christian is to seek opportunity to serve. This may be special service in the particular church, where each person should exercise the gifts God has given for the common good. Such service may include involvement in the agencies of the community which minister to the needs of people. It especially includes Christians in their daily work. The Scriptures teach that God calls every person to some vocation and whatever that task, the individual is to serve as unto the Lord. For that reason, each Christian in daily tasks is to seek to serve God as a good steward. In leisure time, with friends and neighbors, the Christian is to seek to show love and compassion and to exhibit before the world what it means to belong to Jesus Christ.
 2. The Church: The individual congregation is to serve others as a witness to the world of God's love for all people. The Session must judge how best to exemplify this love to its particular community and situation, but the congregation as a whole must be given ways to collectively show their care and concern.

§7.5 The Service of Compassion: The New Testament describes the concern and compassion of Christ for the conditions of people. The Church shall emulate its Head by showing special concern for the sick, the sorrowing, the hungry and the poor. The Session shall be responsible not only for establishing ministries to such within the congregation, but into the community as well.

The service of compassion to those in adversity shall include such places as hospitals, retirement homes, convalescent homes, children's homes, orphanages, prisons, and other public institutions.

§7-6 The Service of Education: Teaching the things of God may include education within the context of the Christian faith. All of the courts of the Church should examine ways in which this may be accomplished. It may include Christian schools.