

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE CAROLINAS, LTD.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

(Last modified 1/5/06 5:28 AM)

Article I. Name

The name of this body shall be known as Christ Church of the Carolinas, Ltd., with the acknowledgement that the abbreviated title, Christ Church, shall be representative of the longer incorporated title. The stated body is domiciled in the State of South Carolina.

Article II. Foundation and Philosophy

Commission

*“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”
(Matthew 28:18-20).*

Christians in all places at all times are commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all the nations. Going and making disciples is not optional for any Christian.

God commands all Christians to be engaged in holy warfare. His Spirit furnishes us with divinely powerful weapons for the destruction of everything that is opposed to the knowledge of God (II Cor. 10:4f.).

Christ Church is purposed to enhance the appetite for and adequacy of Jesus’ brothers and sisters in fulfilling their commission.

Vision Statement

*“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God,
which is your spiritual service of worship.
And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,
that you may prove what the will of God is,
that which is good and acceptable and perfect”
(Romans 12:1f.).*

Every man, woman and child approaching the doors of Christ Church enter with one of two spiritual needs: to be transformed out of darkness into light or to be transformed from their present light into greater light. Christ Church is committed to being deployed by the Holy Spirit as His agents of transformation for all whom He escorts into our commonwealth.

The vision that God's Spirit has placed upon our hearts is to communicate His gospel by way of all God-honoring verbal, visual, relational, lifestyle, print and electronic approaches known to man. We will refuse to be limited by man's vision, always praying to capture the mind and resources of Christ.

God's vision for Christ Church is for her to be the equipper of Christ's bride throughout the world. God has gifted us with a burden to assist all God's people in the proclamation of the excellencies of Him who has called His sons and daughters out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pe. 2:9).

The Church

Jesus said, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it" (Mt. 16:18). At the church's inception, Jesus alerted us to His church being the focal point for conflict. We should anticipate and prepare for the battle. Christ Church is committed to assaulting this world's culture with Christ's Gospel.

John Calvin's Genevans were fractious, John Knox's zealous congregation in Edinburgh turned Laodicean, John Owen's Londoners became sluggish and Jonathan Edwards' Northamptoners fired him! The Corinthians accused Paul of being "unimpressive, and his speech contemptible" (II Cor. 10:10). Ananias and Sapphira lied to the apostles (Acts 5:1-11).

Nevertheless, where on earth do we find the most splendid display of God's glory?

*"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, **to Him be the glory in the church** and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20f).*

The church is the Scripturally anointed earthly ambassador for evangelism and edification (Eph. 3:10). The church is charged with the teaching of orthodoxy and the practice of righteous living. This we must do because Jesus gave Himself up for the church (Eph. 5:25).

In the Confession of Augsburg (1530), Martin Luther defined the church as "the congregation of the saints, in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered." Christ Church will welcome unbelievers while guarding against their becoming members until they evidence being regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The whole counsel of God shall be taught (Acts 20:27). The Lord's Supper and baptism will serve as visible sermons of Scripture's verities.

The pastors' responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of service (Eph. 4:12). The saints are the body builders (I Thess. 5:14; I Pe. 4:10). Elders and deacons shall shepherd and serve the saints (Ex. 18:17ff.; I Ti. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; I Pe. 5:1-3).

The worship service is a worship of God, not man. Therefore, the order of worship will purpose to bring glory to God, not man. The saints' participation in the worship service shall be structured so that **all** praise goes to God, not to preachers, musicians, artists, missionaries, church leaders, children, etc. Decorum concerning dress, instrumentation and presentations will assist in disallowing performances and enhance our awareness of Paul's admonition: "Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (I Cor. 14:40). We intend to establish an environment that encourages and advances the saints' entry into the transforming presence of the living God.

Philosophy of Ministry

*"When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.
For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.
And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
That your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God"*
(I Corinthians 2:1-5).

Jesus' desire is for us to teach the truth of God's *doctrines of grace*. We long to preach with sincerity and clarity companioned with unity and order. The Holy Spirit has graciously burdened our hearts to assist Jesus' brothers and sisters in their efforts to access and practice the whole counsel of God with impacting boldness.

We seek to foster the saints' self-denying hunger and thirst for righteousness. God's word is a call to arms for the sons and daughters of Adam to groom their souls before the face of the living God. We ache for the supernatural enablement to practically and verbally proclaim Christ's holiness. Our yearning is to be anointed with the Spirit's vigor to alert Christians to their personal practice of Christianity with seraphic enthusiasm.

God commands His heirs to **be transformed** by the renewing of their minds. We are to **be transformed** into His image. We must not allow ourselves to merely inhabit the meager margins of the abundant Christian life.

Our craving is to be the Lord Christ's instrument in His deliverance of another *Great Awakening*. We want to celebrate with Jesus the Holy Spirit making His word operative in the lives of His people. The fruit of Jesus' ministry of reconciliation through us should be a conspicuous growth in the depth and richness of the saints' desire for godliness.

God has called us to apply ourselves in the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ's cross. We must deal thoroughly with the souls of the lost and the saved so that many shall be delivered from darkness, false confidences and dead formalities. This earthen vessel is charged with the responsibility of preaching, teaching

and living awakening sermons so that people listen as though they are hearing the eternal voice of God Himself.

The Holy Spirit is our Anointer. We are totally dependent upon Him to take dominion of our lives and to craft the messages that the world shall receive from our lips and lives. He is the Lord of the harvest, not us. Our reliance is upon Him to declare, “*Thus saith the Lord.*”

*“If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion;
for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel”
(I Corinthians 9:16).*

Article III. Statement of Faith (The Apostles' Creed)

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;
He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I BELIEVE in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic* church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.

* universal

Article IV. Doctrine

The sixty-six (66) books of God's Holy Bible shall be regarded as the plenary authority on all matters relating to faith and practice by the members of this body known as Christ Church.

The Westminster Confession of Faith as set forth between 1643 and 1649 by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and as accepted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America as its standard of doctrine at its first General Assembly in 1789 shall be the guiding general interpretation of God's Holy Bible that Christ Church adopts as its own, with the following adjustments:

1. Chapter 28 shall be interpreted in a light most favorable to practicing baptism via sprinkling, effusion and immersion.
2. Chapter 31 is omitted unless the congregation of Christ Church determines to become part of a larger body that includes Churches and Councils in its form of government.

The Larger and Shorter Catechisms are also made a part and parcel of the doctrine of Christ Church in keeping with the above stated adjustments to Chapter 28 of The Westminster Confession of Faith being included concerning Q. 166 of the Larger Catechism and Q. 95 of the Shorter Catechism.

Article V. Government

Chapter 1 – Governance and Procedure

The government of this body shall be a representative form of government vested in its elected elders and deacons who shall be selected by the elders.

A. Parliamentary Procedure

1. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary procedure for all meetings unless suspended by a seventy-five (75%) percent vote of all present.
2. In the event any person entitled to vote is directly affected by the outcome of the vote, he is to remove himself from the meeting place until that issue is discussed and the vote taken. For example, no member would be entitled to participate in discussions or vote in a matter affecting the member, the member's spouse and children, or anyone related to the member by blood or marriage to the 2nd degree. He may be allowed at the discretion of the body to make an opening statement.
3. Votes may be taken orally or by secret ballot as the body deems most appropriate in regard to maintaining unity in the body.

B. The Congregational Meeting

1. Purpose:
The purpose of a congregational meeting is to give spiritual and temporal direction in all matters not within the realm of duties assigned to the pastor, the session or the diaconate. Such matters as the adoption of the congregational budget as proposed by the session, the authorization of expenditures for the erection or major alteration of any building or the purchase of real property are to be considered at a congregational meeting.
2. Procedure and Governing Rules:
 - (a) Notice for all congregational meetings shall be given at least seven days beforehand. No meeting shall be regular and in order unless such notice is given to the pastor and the congregation, or congregational chairman where there is no pastor.
 - (b) A business meeting of the congregation shall be held at least once a year. The specific purpose of all other congregational meetings shall be stated in the notice and no other business other than that which is stated in such notice shall be transacted.
 - (c) Adjourned meetings shall not be held without the required notice except when circumstances prevent completion of the business stated in the notice. In such cases the adjourned meeting shall be held no later than two weeks following the date of the original meeting.
 - (d) One-fourth of the active membership entitled to vote, as determined by the session, shall constitute a quorum. No business shall be considered without a quorum. If the Church has more than one thousand members on the active roll, the quorum shall be one-tenth of such members, but not less than two hundred and fifty.

- (e) Only members who are personally present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.
- (f) Voting shall be by any convenient method except as otherwise designated in this Form of Government or as determined by the session.
- (g) If a congregational meeting of considerable length is anticipated, a congregation is encouraged to conduct such meeting at some time other than immediately following the Sunday morning worship service.
- (h) At all congregational meetings, the pastor, the chairman of the session or the diaconate chairman shall preside and the clerk of the session shall serve as secretary. If none are able to preside, another approved by the session shall preside.
- (i) Only communicant members in full standing are entitled to vote.
- (j) The following order of procedure shall prevail for all congregational meetings:
 - (1) The meeting shall be called to order by the presiding officer and prayer shall be offered.
 - (2) The minutes of the previous meeting shall be read for information if there is any unfinished business recorded in the minutes.
 - (3) Action shall be taken upon any unfinished business disclosed by the minutes.
 - (4) Committees shall report as necessary and said reports shall be acted upon.
 - (5) Other business shall be considered as indicated by the notice of the meeting.
 - (6) After a motion to adjourn has prevailed, the meeting shall be closed with prayer.

Chapter 2 - The Total Ministry of the Church

A. Biblical Use of the Word “Ministry”

1. “Ministry” as used in the Bible designates the whole body of believers. We are all to be ministers of the One who came not to be served, but to serve.
2. Every member of the Body of Christ has a ministry to fulfill as the Church seeks to realize its mission in the world. The Christian’s total life should be regarded in the exercise of his ministry.
3. Certain members are chosen to specific tasks for which they may be particularly suited. They are to labor as the Church and for the Church. This division of labor, while necessary to maintain orderliness, does not create a difference in status, but a difference in function only.

B. Preparation for this Ministry

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

2. There is in the Church as a whole, and there should be in each particular congregation, evidence of a variety or diversity of spiritual gifts whereby God has provided for the perfecting of the saints.
3. The call of God comes to every Christian and, if he is willing to obey, directs him into that vocation in which he may best serve God and his fellowman. There are ministries within the “gathered church” as it assembles for corporate worship, study and fellowship. There are also ministries within the “scattered church” wherever Christians go.

C. The word “Minister”

The word “minister” in popular usage and in this Form of Government refers to a clergyman who is especially qualified, called, educated and ordained.

Chapter 3 - The Church Member

A. Definition of a Church Member

1. The communicant Church member is one who has been baptized, who has made public his profession of faith in Jesus Christ and who has submitted his life to His Lordship and to the ministry of the Church. He is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the congregation, including the right to vote in congregational meetings, the right to hold office unless restricted by a minimum age limit set by the session, the right to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and the right to present his children for the Sacrament of Baptism.
2. The children of believers by right of being born into covenant relationship are non-communicant members of the Church. They are entitled to the Sacrament of Baptism and to the pastoral care, government and nurture of the Church with a view to their entering communicant Church membership.
3. An associate Church member is one who expects to reside in the area of the Church for a limited time or expects to make extended periodic visits to such area and does not want to transfer his Church membership from his home Church, but wants to be a part of the visiting Church while temporarily residing in that area.

B. Responsibility of Church Members

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

C. Procedures for Individuals Being Received into Communicant Church Membership

1. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
 - (a) Applicants for communicant Church membership shall be examined by the session in private with regard to a knowledge of their spiritual need, their faith in Jesus Christ, whether they have placed their lives under the authority of Scripture and their intention to be obedient to Him. The applicants shall provide the session with a written profession of their understanding of how our Lord Christ called them to Himself (their written testimony) unless this is waived by the session for extraordinary reasons. The applicants shall give assent to the following or similar questions, by which they enter a solemn covenant with God and His Church:
 - (1) Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure and without hope except for His grace?
 - (2) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, do you acknowledge Him as Lord and trust in Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
 - (3) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the written Word of God, inspired by God, inerrant and infallible, the only perfect rule of faith and practice?
 - (4) Do you now promise, in humble reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
 - (5) Do you accept the doctrines and principles of Christ Church, so far as you understand them, as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God?
 - (6) Do you promise, with the Lord's help, to be faithful in the performance of your Christian duties, both in private life and in the work of the Church?
 - (7) Do you understand that the Lord requires Christians to "live by faith" and as a part of that command you are to evidence your faith in the Lord Christ by tithing of your resources to Christ Church without neglecting "the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness?" (Ro. 1:17; Mt. 23:23, respectively).
 - (8) Do you submit yourself in the spirit of love to the government and discipline of Christ Church, and seek the peace, purity and prosperity of this congregation so long as you are a member of it?

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

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

- (c) Applicants who have not been baptized previously shall become communicant members upon receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, which shall ordinarily be administered before the congregation. In cases of exigency a pastor may hear the profession of faith of a penitent sinner and administer to him the Sacrament of Baptism. He shall then report his action to the session.
 - (d) New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.
2. By reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ.
- (a) Applicants for communicant Church membership by the reaffirmation of their faith shall appear before the session and reaffirm their faith according to all the matters set forth in the preceding section. Upon affirmative action by the session, such applicants shall then be received into communicant membership. Baptism shall not be re-administered.
 - (b) The session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of any baptized children.
 - (c) New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.
3. By transfer of membership.
- (a) Applicants for communicant membership from other Christian congregations shall be received on presentation to the session of certificates of good standing from the congregation to which they belong and all the matters set forth in section 1 (a) above.
 - (b) Applicants whose certificates raise a question of good standing, whose testimonials are defective, or whose motives appear unchristian shall be received only after a satisfactory examination by the session as to their personal religion and their reasons in seeking their transfer.
 - (c) No certificate of Church membership older than one year shall be valid. One presenting an invalid certificate shall be received by reaffirmation of faith.
 - (d) The session shall enter into its record all pertinent information, including the names of any baptized children.
 - (e) New members shall be appropriately presented to the congregation.
4. Associate members.
- (a) Applicants for an associate Church membership may be received by a certificate of good standing from the congregation to which they belong and all the matters set forth in section 1 (a) above.
 - (b) Associate members' names shall be entered into the records of the session; be appropriately presented to the congregation; shall have the rights, privileges and duties of regular communicant Church members when residing in the area of the Church except they shall not have the right to vote in congregational meetings nor the right to hold office in the congregation or Church.

D. Procedures for Members Transferring to Other Congregations.

1. The order of the Church requires that members transferring from one Christian congregation to another shall present certificates of their good standing. Upon request the session shall grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing.
2. Certificates issued for ordained officers shall certify to their ordination; however, they shall not be transferred as officers.
3. Certificates issued for parents shall include the names of any baptized children.
4. In all ordinary cases, certificates shall be signed by the moderator and the clerk of the session and in other cases by either.
5. Members shall be dismissed only to specific Church bodies except in the case of the dissolution of a congregation.
6. Members of one congregation transferring to another shall remain as members of the dismissing congregation without voting privileges until they are received by that congregation to which they are dismissed.
7. A form by which the receiving session shall give prompt notification of reception shall be attached to the certificate of transfer.
8. A member's name shall be removed from the Church roll when the session has accurate information that the member has united with another congregation without having requested transfer.

E. Rolls of Church Members

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

1. The active roll consists of the names of communicant members who attend worship services at least 24 times per year and have consistently contributed to the well-being of Christ Church, or who have previously been active in the life of the congregation but are prevented from activity by infirmity, or who are temporarily away in academic study, military service, or for other valid reasons.
2. The inactive roll shall consist of the names of persons removed from the active roll by the session because of their failure to meet the requirement of an active member. No names of persons, however, shall be thus removed from the active roll until the session has made diligent effort to restore such persons to active membership. The session shall encourage non-resident members to transfer membership to another congregation and if membership has not been transferred within a period of one year their names shall be placed on the inactive roll.
3. The session may remove from the inactive rolls of the Church the names of persons who remain on the inactive roll for a period of one year. No names of persons, however, shall be thus removed from the inactive roll until the Session has made diligent effort to restore such persons to active membership.

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

Chapter 4 - The Act of Ordination

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

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

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

Chapter 5 - Concerning Deacons

A. Description and Qualifications of a Deacon

1. The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, mercy and service after the example of Christ.
2. To this office should be chosen men of good character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly love, sympathetic nature and sound judgment; and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture, particularly I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
3. There shall be no women deacons.

B. Individual Responsibilities

It is the duty of a deacon to be a faithful and diligent Christian, actively sharing in worship and service of the Church and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office. They are required by their office to visit the people, especially the sick, and pray with them, to comfort the sorrowing, encourage the weak, guide the wayward and the careless, and, in general, to discharge all other duties of Christian love.

C. The Diaconate

1. Purpose:

The diaconate shall be responsible for the congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress. It shall also encourage practice of total stewardship among the members of the congregation.

2. Organization:

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

3. Procedure:

- (a) The diaconate should hold at least five regular meetings each year.
- (b) The chairman may call a meeting of the diaconate at any time he deems necessary and shall call a meeting upon the request of either two deacons or the session. Notice of such meetings shall be given.
- (c) The diaconate shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum.
- (d) Only members who are personally present are entitled to vote.
- (e) Each meeting of the diaconate shall be opened and closed with prayer.

4. Relationship to the session:

- (a) In the discharge of its duties, the diaconate is under the supervision and authority of the session.
- (b) The session may void or amend any action of the diaconate or return it for further consideration.
- (c) It is recommended that the session and the diaconate meet once a year in joint session to confer on matters requiring mutual attention. At such meetings the moderator of the session shall preside and the clerk of the session shall serve as secretary. The joint meeting can take no official action, but the session and diaconate shall act separately on matters committed to the care of each.

Chapter 6 - Concerning Ruling Elders

A. Description Qualifications of a Ruling Elder

1. There were elders of the people for the government of the Old Testament Church. Likewise in the New Testament Church, besides the apostles and the ministers, there were elders who ruled.
2. To the office of ruling elder shall be chosen men of wisdom, discretion, sound faith and Godly life, and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture, particularly I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
3. There shall be no women elders.

B. Individual Responsibilities

1. Ruling elders are the congregation's immediate representatives. Together with the ministers, they make up the session of Christ Church, and the session exercises government and discipline. They oversee the spiritual interests of the Church. In all the courts of the Church, ruling elders possess the same authority and the same eligibility to office as ministers.
2. It is the responsibility of ruling elders, both individually and jointly, to guard and promote the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They are required by their office to visit the people, especially the sick, and pray with them, to comfort the sorrowing, encourage the weak, guide the wayward and the careless, and, in general, to discharge all other duties of Christian love. They are to seek the will of God in all Church court decisions.

Chapter 7 - Concerning the Selection, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons

A. Eligibility

1. Ruling elders and deacons shall be members in full communion in the congregation in which they are to exercise office. The minimum age for holding these offices shall be determined by the session.

B. Terms of Office

1. Ruling elders and deacons are regularly selected and ordained for life unless deposed in the process of discipline.
2. Service shall be pursuant to the following:
 - (a) The term of office for ruling elders shall be not less than four (4) years or more than six (6) years.
 - (b) The term of office for deacons shall be not less than three (3) years or more than six (6) years.
 - (c) Ruling elders and deacons shall not be eligible to hold the same office until one (1) year has elapsed after the close of their terms of offices.
 - (d) Ruling elders and deacons retired under the rotary system shall be eligible for election to the diaconate and session, respectively.
3. Any Ruling Elder or Deacon who has served the Church faithfully, but whose ability to render active service is limited because of age, physical ability, or other cause, may be elected Ruling Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus by the session and diaconate, respectively.

C. Selection Procedure

1. The selection of nominees for the offices of ruling elders and deacons shall be by the congregation. The number of ruling elders and deacons shall be determined by the session.
2. Nominations may be made by ballot or other method as the session directs. The session shall review the nominees and the session shall confer privately with those men session deems appropriate to interview as to their qualifications and willingness to serve before being selected. The session shall determine in its sole discretion, in light of God's holy Word, the men who shall serve as elders and deacons.
3. The session shall arrange for the instruction and examination of the officers-elect, and shall appoint a day for their ordination, when required, and installation. This day shall be announced to the congregation soon after the selection.

D. Ordination and Installation

1. The session shall meet before the service of ordination and installation to confer with the officers-elect and to hear any objections to the ordination and installation of such officers-elect.
2. The pastor of the congregation shall preside over the service of ordination and installation of ruling elders and deacons. If the congregation is without a pastor, the session shall invite an ordained gospel minister to preside.
3. At the time of the ordination and installation service, the officers-elect shall present themselves before the congregation, and shall solemnly promise, according to the Vows set forth in Article V, Chapter 3, C, 1, a, 1-8, to maintain the doctrine, government, discipline and worship of the Church.
4. These questions having been answered in the affirmative, the presiding officer shall address the following question to the congregation:

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

5. After the members of the congregation have signified their affirmative answer to this question, the officers-elect shall kneel and be set apart to their office with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the session.
6. Following the ordination prayer, the minister shall say:
"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, I now declare you duly ordained and installed in the sacred office of elder/deacon."
The minister shall then charge both the officers and the people regarding their Christian responsibilities to each and to the Church.

E. Reinstallation

1. A ruling elder or deacon re-elected to office shall be installed into the same office without reordination.
2. A ruling elder or deacon who transfers membership from one congregation to another and is elected to the same office may be installed without reordination.
3. Officers being reinstalled shall be required to assume the obligations in Questions 5 through 7 of the "Formula for Ordination and Installation," and shall then be declared formally installed by the presiding officer.

F. Record and Report

A record of the service of ordination and installation shall be entered in the minutes of the session.

Chapter 8 - Concerning Ministers

A. Description and Qualification of a Minister

1. A minister is a man who is called by God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, to a special ministry of the word. Only those who give evidence of being called and qualified by the Lord Jesus Christ shall be set apart by the Church to this ministry.
 - (a) No female may be a minister at Christ Church, nor may a female officiate at any baptism, funeral or wedding at Christ Church, or administer the elements at our Lord's Table.
2. It rests primarily with the individual to determine whether or not he has been called as a minister. Yet, as Christ fits His servants for this ministry, they must also evidence the necessary qualifications for this work.
3. The qualifications of a minister consist of such gifts as fit him for service as a teacher and a leader in this ministry, and of such character and reputation as will continue to honor this office.
 - (a) Spiritual Maturity. A minister must be mature in his faith, with absolute certainty of his own saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (b) Belief. A minister must accept the doctrines, government and worship of Christ Church as agreeable to and founded upon the Word of God and within the parameters of this document.
 - (c) Knowledge. A minister must give evidence of his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines, the government and worship of our Church, and the duties of a minister.
 - (d) Compassion. A minister must serve as Jesus Christ, Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.
 - (e) Personality. A minister must be one who will attract people to Christ and His Church.

- (f) Intelligence. A minister must be capable of meeting the education requirements essential for ordination.
 - (g) Education. A minister must present evidence of having obtained a baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent, from an accredited four-year college or university, as well as evidence of a theological education embracing three years of satisfactory work in a seminary approved by session, said work to result in a degree of at least a Masters of Divinity including courses in Hebrew and Greek. The educational requirements may be waived only in extraordinary cases and such waiver shall require consent of three-fourths of the members of session present and shall be voted upon in a meeting subsequent to the one in which the motion is made.
4. The Scriptures acknowledge no degrees of rank or dignity among ministers, they being equal in office and authority. The names of pastor, teacher, bishop and presbyter are used simply to set forth different duties and responsibilities.
 5. The office of minister includes the office and authority of ruling elder. For this reason the minister is sometimes referred to as a teaching elder.
 6. The Pastoral Selection Committee:
 - (a) Shall be composed of the session of Christ Church. The session may select from its membership to serve on the Committee.
 - (b) A unanimous vote of all the members of the Committee is required in order to recommend a man for the position of pastor at Christ Church.
 - (c) If the Committee is composed of less than all of the active members of session, then the Committee must report to session at each session meeting concerning the efforts they have made and the matters they are considering.
 - (d) When a man is selected to be nominated to the congregation for the position of pastor at Christ Church, his name and credentials shall be announced to the congregation at a called congregational meeting and he shall be voted upon at the next called congregational meeting which shall be at least 10 days following the initial meeting when the proposed nominee was announced.
 - (e) The congregation shall vote by secret ballot with seventy-five (75%) percent of the members present and voting calling for the nominee's investiture as pastor of Christ Church.

B. Responsibilities of a Minister

1. As a pastor of a particular congregation.
 - (a) Public Responsibilities. A minister shall pray for and with his people; read the Scriptures; preach the Word; teach, reprove, exhort and comfort; administer the sacraments; pronounce the blessings of God upon the people; officiate at weddings and funerals; and serve with ruling elders in all matters pertaining to the government, discipline, worship, and education of the congregation. He shall serve as an advisory member of all committees in the higher courts of the Church.
 - (b) Private Responsibilities. A minister shall visit with and be available to his people as their pastor that he may counsel with and instruct them in spiritual things and pray for and with them; visit especially the sick, the afflicted and the aged; advise, comfort and pray with those who have need; admonish those who are guilty of

- conduct unbecoming their profession or who are indifferent to their religious duties; and, in general, assume the spiritual oversight of his people.
2. As a teacher.
 - (a) Some ministers are especially qualified by their gifts to be teachers and may be called to teach in seminaries, colleges and other schools, provided such teaching is in keeping with their calling as ministers.
 - (b) A minister is no less a pastor as a teacher. He is to take pastoral oversight of those under his charge to be diligent in promoting the work of the Kingdom and to seek to win the lost to Jesus Christ.
 3. As an evangelist.
 - (a) A minister may serve as an evangelist as long as he is a member in good standing.
 - (b) He shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and perform the duties of a pastor in new fields or in congregations that are unable to support a pastor. He may also devote himself entirely to preaching the Word in special evangelistic services under the supervision and direction of the pastor in whose charge he may be laboring.
 4. As a missionary.
 - (a) The Church shall ordain and send forth ministers as missionaries in obedience to the command of Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation.
 - (b) The minister, as a missionary, may perform the duties of a pastor, teacher and evangelist.
 5. In other positions.

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

C. Procedures for Ordination

1. Candidates for the ministry.
 - (a) One preparing to become a minister may be a candidate under the care of Christ Church.
 - (b) One seeking to be received under the care of Christ Church shall be examined through a committee as to his Christian character, his conviction of being called of God to the ministry, his qualifications and his saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (c) The session shall enroll and counsel with each candidate under its care and shall direct his theological studies, inquiring into his diligence and progress. He shall preach trial sermons before Christ Church as it may direct. The session, with or without his request, may remove his name from the roll of students under its care.
 - (d) A candidate may be received under the care of the session in an appropriate service of recognition in which he shall be asked to stand before the session and answer the following questions:

- (1) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a character consistent with your Christian profession and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for God's ministry of reconciliation?
- (2) Do you promise to submit yourself to the supervision of Christ Church in matters concerning your preparation for the ministry of the Word?

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

2. Procedure for ordination.

- (a) When a candidate has completed his academic training as required by the session, the session may take steps for his ordination.
- (b) Requirements for ordination, in addition to academic standards, shall consist of the following:
 - (1) A review of the candidate's personal Christian religious experience.
 - (2) An examination of his knowledge of the English Bible.
 - (3) An examination of his knowledge of theology and his doctrinal positions. He shall present a brief written statement of his Christian beliefs.
 - (4) An examination of his knowledge of the history and government of the Church and the determination of his approval of the form of government, discipline and worship of Christ Church.
 - (5) A sermon in manuscript form which he shall preach before the session or congregation and which shall be subject to constructive criticism by the session. The session may assign or approve the text for this sermon.
 - (6) A call either to a congregation or to another approved ministerial labor.
- (c) If a minority of one-fourth or more of the members of the session or congregation disapprove a candidate's examination, the session may require a further examination in writing on questions proposed by the session, which questions and answers shall become a part of the official records of the session.
- (d) When the session has approved a candidate's examination and is furnished evidence of a candidate's call, the session shall appoint a time and place for the ordination of the candidate. Usually the ordination shall be held before a called meeting of the session in the Church of which the candidate is to be pastor.
- (e) On the day appointed, the session shall be convened and a minister shall preach an appropriate sermon. The presiding officer shall review all that the session and candidate have done in preparation for this ordination and shall impress upon the congregation the solemnity of the occasion.
 - (1) The presiding officer shall then propose to the candidate the Vows set forth in Article V, Chapter 3, C, 1, a, 1-8, and the following vows:
 - (A) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the session of this Church and to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?
 - (B) Do you sincerely resolve to fulfill all your responsibilities in your home life and in all your relations with your fellowman, fulfilling all righteousness, faith, and love?

- (C) Do you accept and enter upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through you with a desire to glorify God and to be instrumental in strengthening His Church?
 - (D) Do you promise to preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity, declaring the whole counsel of God, and to perform all your official duties with zeal and faithfulness, seeking the salvation and edification of sinners?
- (2) The candidate, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the session.
- (f) If the ordination is not in connection with his installation as pastor, the presiding officer shall declare the candidate set apart to the ministry, emphasizing the importance, the difficulties and the excellence of the ministry that he now enters.
 - (g) The newly ordained minister shall be given a Certificate of Ordination signed by the pastor/moderator and clerk of session. A full report of the ordination service shall be recorded in the minutes of the session and a copy forwarded to the congregation of which he was formerly a member so that his name may be removed from the membership roll.

D. Procedure for the Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

1. The dissolution of the pastoral relationship shall be by action of session. The pastor, the congregation, or the session may initiate such action.
2. When a pastor wishes to be released from his pastoral charge, he shall first inform the session in writing of his wishes. The session shall then call a congregational meeting to advise them of his request.
3. When the session concurs in this request, the session may dissolve the pastoral relationship.
4. If the session desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it shall, by calling a congregational meeting, first notify the congregation of its desires. The congregation, if concurring with the session, shall proceed according to paragraph five of this section.
5. If the congregation desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it shall first notify the pastor by written request and then make the same written request to the session. The session shall then take whatever action is in the best interests of the Church and its pastor.
6. The session has authority, acting on good information, to dissolve a pastoral relationship without formal application from either party, if in its judgment the welfare of the congregation (Church) so requires.
7. The session may request an installed pastor to take up the work in another field of labor, but cannot require him to do so. Any pastor so requested shall give prayerful consideration to such a request for an indication of the will of God.

Chapter 9 - Concerning the Session

A. Its Purpose

1. The highest court of the Church consists of the elders in active service of a particular congregation, and is called the session. The precedent for this court is found in the general form of Church government founded upon the Old and New Testament principles, which was that of government by elders.
2. The session is charged with the spiritual oversight and government of the congregation.

B. Its Authority and Responsibilities

1. The session shall have as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization and administration of programs designed to enable the congregation to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the community and also in the world.
2. In order to carry out its responsibilities, the session has power:
 - (a) To counsel with the members of the congregation and to inquire into their Christian knowledge and conduct.
 - (b) To admonish, rebuke, suspend, or exclude from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper any member of the congregation found delinquent, according to the Rules of Discipline.
 - (c) To encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism.
 - (d) To receive applicants into communicant Church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership.
 - (e) To grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing upon proper request.
 - (f) To instruct, examine, ordain and install elders and deacons.
 - (g) To encourage the officers of the congregation to devote themselves to their respective responsibilities.
 - (h) To supervise the work of the diaconate and examine the records of its proceedings.
 - (i) To develop and supervise the Church school and the educational programs of the congregation.
 - (j) To exercise, in accordance with the Directory of Worship, authority over the time and place of the preachings of the Word and the administration of the sacraments and over all other religious services.
 - (k) To assemble the people for worship in the absence of the pastor.
 - (l) To direct the budget and the process of budgeting as well as the securing, receiving and distributing of special offerings.
 - (m) To devise and encourage suitable measures for the spiritual advancement of the congregation and of the Church.
 - (n) To observe and enforce the lawful injunctions of the courts.

- (o) To select from among its elders representatives to attend the meeting of other Christian entities and associations.
 - (p) To propose to the diaconate and congregation such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church.
 - (q) To supervise, review and control all organizations within the congregation and in its discretion to require stated reports.
 - (r) To call a congregational meeting.
 - (s) To exercise authority over the use of the Church building and associated properties.
3. The session shall:
- (a) Keep an accurate record of its proceedings.
 - (b) Keep an accurate record of:
 - (1) The rolls of the members of the congregation according to the Form of Government.
 - (2) The names of persons receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.
 - (3) Deaths and marriages of members of the congregation.

C. Its Organization

1. The senior pastor, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the session. All associate pastors are also members of the session and may substitute as moderator at the discretion of the senior pastor.
2. In addition to the moderator, the officers of the session may be a chairman, a vice-moderator and a clerk, who shall be elected annually by the session.
3. In cases where the pastor is, for any cause, disqualified from presiding, the chairman, the associate pastor or the vice-moderator may preside.
4. The session should hold approximately five regular meetings each year. The moderator may call a meeting of the session at any time he deems necessary and shall call a meeting upon the request of two elders or upon request of the diaconate. Notice of such meetings shall be given.
5. No meeting of the session shall be held without knowledge of the pastor.
6. Each session shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum, provided such a quorum be not less than a pastor and two elders, or three elders without a pastor.
7. Only members who are personally present at the meeting are entitled to vote.
8. Each meeting of the session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

Chapter 10 - Concerning Boards, Ecclesiastical Commissions and Committees

A. Boards

1. Purpose.

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

2. Authority and responsibility.
 - (a) A board shall perform special work entrusted to it without particular instructions from the appointing court but shall follow the general instructions of the court.
 - (b) A board shall be empowered to study, initiate, administer programs and funds and hold title to properties within its specific area of responsibility.
 - (c) A board shall make an annual report to the appointing court, giving full statement of all business transacted and actions taken during the year.
 - (d) Any action of a board may be approved, amended or set aside by the appointing court.
 - (e) A board shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings in a permanent form, which shall be available for review and inspection as required by the appointing court.
3. Composition and organization.
 - (a) Members of a board shall be appointed and the appointing court shall fix their terms of membership.
 - (b) A board shall elect its own officers and, subject to approval of the appointing court, may adopt a constitution and by-laws.
 - (c) A board may incorporate; however, the provision of its charter and by-laws must always be in accordance with this document.
4. Any newly-elected employee of any board or committee, or any newly-appointed administrator or teaching employee of any board, shall give satisfactory evidence of his belief in and adherence to the fundamental doctrines of evangelical Christianity including:
 - (a) The inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture;
 - (b) The Divinity of Jesus;
 - (c) The virgin birth;
 - (d) The bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead;
 - (e) The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Ecclesiastical Commissions

1. Purpose.

An ecclesiastical commission is a body appointed and empowered by a court of the Church to examine, consider and conclude certain designated business.
2. Authority and responsibilities.
 - (a) An ecclesiastical commission may be formed to take testimony in judicial cases, to install ministers as pastors, to consider and seek solutions for problems of disorder within congregations, to effect the organization or merger of congregations and to perform similar ecclesiastical functions. The action of an ecclesiastical commission may be amended or reversed by a majority vote of the appointing court.

- (b) A judicial case brought before a court of the Church may, with the consent of the parties, be committed to the judgment of an ecclesiastical commission. In such cases the commission appointed must be satisfactory to both parties.
- 3. Composition and organization.
 - (a) Each ecclesiastical commission shall elect a chairman and secretary. Full and complete records of the commission's proceedings shall be kept and submitted to the appointing court at its next stated meeting. Such report shall be entered into the minutes and shall be regarded as an action of that court. The commission shall then be dissolved.
 - (b) Persons appointed to ecclesiastical commissions shall be members of the court making the appointment.
 - (c) A quorum for each ecclesiastical commission shall be a majority of its total membership.
 - (d) Size of membership: An ecclesiastical commission appointed by a session shall be not fewer in number than three (3) members, consisting of at least one (1) minister.

C. Committees

- 1. Purpose.

A committee is a body appointed by a court or agency of the Church to study matters committed to it and to recommend appropriate action and carry into effect specific directions or decisions made by the appointing court or agency.
- 2. Authority and responsibilities.
 - (a) A committee shall perform its designated work according to the specific instructions of the appointing court or agency.
 - (b) The recommendations of a committee require action by the appointing court or agency, but a committee report of its actions implementing the instructions and orders of the court or agency may not require further action. All written reports shall be signed by the chairman and secretary.
- 3. Composition and organization.
 - (a) The appointing court or agency shall determine what committees are necessary for its work, the number of members of each committee and terms of membership.
 - (b) Committees shall be classified as follows:
 - (1) Moderator's Committees. A moderator's committee shall be a temporary committee appointed by the moderator to serve at his pleasure. The first named member of a moderator's committee shall be the chairman.
 - (2) Special Committees. A special committee shall be appointed whenever the work of the court or agency requires it. The moderator, chairman or nominating committee shall appoint its members whenever authorized by the court or agency. The committee shall be convened by its first named member and shall organize at its first meeting.
 - (3) Standing Committees. A standing committee shall be a permanent committee to study and implement specific orders of the court or agency. The court or

agency shall appoint the members of its standing committee in any manner it may determine for a specified term. The committee shall report to the appointing court or agency at each meeting or as otherwise directed. Such committees shall reorganize annually.

Chapter 11 - Concerning Amendments to the Constitution and Church Union

1. The Constitution and By-Laws, Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline, and the Directory for Worship:
Amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws, Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline, the Directory for Worship, shall be proposed by the session to the congregation and must be approved by eighty-eight (88%) percent of all those voting. The session shall certify the vote at its next meeting.

Chapter 12 - Concerning Matters Unprovided For

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

Article VI. Book of Discipline

Chapter 1 - Theology of Church Discipline

1. The basis of all Church discipline is the free love of God in Christ expressed in both mercy and judgment. The purpose of discipline is to bring about the reconciliation of man to God and man to man, to engage the people of God in the ministry of reconciliation and to promote the peace, purity and edification of the Church. Christian discipline is discipleship; it is the response of loving commitment to God in Christ as Lord that learns from Him as it obediently seeks to carry on His mission in the world. Under the rule of Christ expressed through the Church, discipline is that submission that frees the Christian for more effective service. Such service by the Church in the world demands a disciplined individual and corporate life. Each Christian is incorporated into the disciplined community and is responsible under its government for the total ministry of the body as the body is responsible for each individual and group in the Church. In this mutual responsibility, all are held accountable for the sake of the task of the whole body of Christ, remembering that each individual and group is finally responsible not to a Church court, but to God.
2. Discipline is never to be perverted into the impossible and unnecessary effort to gain the gift of salvation, into a source of pride, or into the nourishing of the life of the Church as an end in itself. Whereas a certain structure is essential for the disciplined life, the mission of the Church is primary, and the rule of discipline is not rigid but open to change that will better accomplish this mission according to the Scriptures.
3. In this context of discipline, the Church, under the authority of the Lord, disciplines or guides, instructs and controls its members and courts to enable them to serve God more effectively. The exercise of discipline is made necessary by the need more fully to reconcile Christian individuals or groups to God and one another, to prevent mercy from becoming a soft and finally cruel indulgence, and to control those whose words and actions may seriously hinder the witness of the whole body of Christ. Whereas each Christian has a responsibility for discipline, corporate discipline exercised in the name of the Church is to be undertaken only by the Church courts of session.
4. The constant responsibility of every Church court to a situation calling for discipline is contrition by the court itself. The court will search for any ways in which what the court has done or failed to do has contributed to the problem requiring discipline. True contrition leads to that repentance which will cause the court to confess its own sin and need for forgiveness and to be more responsible. The court will submit itself constantly to the will of the Lord in searching the Scriptures and in prayer.

5. The court is to restrain the words and actions of those under its jurisdiction according to the particular circumstances. The criterion for corrective discipline is the teaching of the Scriptures and the standards of the Church. This is summed up in the good news that in response to God's love, the Christian loves God and his neighbor as himself and is engaged in the mission of the Church. Every effort will be made to accomplish any needed restraint by constructive and verbal persuasion. If these means fail, then necessary censures will be employed in proportion to the offense and in consideration of all the circumstances.
6. In all things, the Church court shall seek the repentance and restoration of the individual or group involved, consistent with the higher responsibility of the court to carry on Christ's work in the most effective way.

Chapter 2 – Offenses and Censures

A. Offenses

1. An offense is anything in the principles or practice of the Church member or court that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, the Constitution of Christ Church and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.
2. Offenses are either personal or general, private or public, but all offenses, being sins against God, are grounds for discipline. A personal offense is a violation of the law of God in the way of wrong done to some particular person or persons, including one's own self. A general offense is a violation of the law of God not directed against any particular person. Private offenses are those known only to an individual or, at most, to a few persons. Public offenses are those which are generally known.

B. Censures

(See Chapter 7 on the Application of Censures)

1. There are five ascending degrees of Church censure: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition and expulsion. When a lesser censure fails to reclaim the offender, the court shall consider the infliction of a higher degree of censure.
 - (a) Admonition is kindly reproving an offender, warning him of his guilt and danger and exhorting him to refrain from such conduct in the future.
 - (b) Rebuke is reprimand, a strong, authoritative expression of disapproval by a Church court.
 - (c) Suspension is temporary exclusion from receiving the sacraments or from a Church office or from both. This censure becomes necessary when more serious offenses have been committed or when, notwithstanding admonition or rebuke, an offense is persistently repeated.
 - (d) Deposition is depriving an officer of the Church of his office.
 - (e) Expulsion is the judicial dismissal of an offender from membership in the Church. This fearful censure is to be passed only for such errors or violations of the law of God as are grossly inconsistent with the Christian faith, or for obstinate

- persistence in grave offenses in the face of milder censures. Its purpose, like all censures, is to reclaim the member for Christ's service.
2. The censures of the Church are in no case to be employed for any selfish or vindictive purpose.

Chapter 3 – Jurisdiction

1. Original jurisdiction over Church members, including non-communing members, and over elders and deacons as officers, is vested in the session.
2. Jurisdiction over a member ceases upon his expulsion. Original jurisdiction by the session over ministers ceases upon their deposition.

Chapter 4 – Private Procedure

1. When a personal offense has been committed, whether the offense is public or private in nature, the injured party shall use the means prescribed by our Lord for bringing the offender to the recognition of his wrong and shall exhaust every effort to effect a reconciliation.
 - (a) He shall go in the spirit of Christian love and forgiveness and endeavor to reconcile the trouble between himself and the one who has committed the offense (Matthew 18:15).
 - (b) If the breach cannot be healed privately, the injured party is to take with him one or more other members of the Church and repeat the effort to effect reconciliation (Matthew 18:16).
 - (c) After a reasonable time, if it appears that the efforts to effect reconciliation are in vain, the matter may be referred to the Church court which has jurisdiction (Matthew 18:17).
2. Personal offenses satisfactorily settled between the parties concerned are not, as a rule, to be inquired into by the Church court. Judicial process by the Church court, however, is not to be precluded in such cases where the personal offense is so generally known or of such a nature as to require judicial investigation.
3. In all cases of private offense, any one to whom the offense is known shall endeavor to effect reconciliation without disturbing the peace of the Church.
4. An informer who has not taken these previous steps to effect reconciliation is himself to be considered worthy of censure.
5. In certain cases, the person to whom the offense is known, before making any effort to remove it, may desire to obtain the counsel and assistance of the pastor or some officer in the Church. To seek such counsel and assistance in order to remove the offense privately is not only not censurable, but in some cases highly proper.
6. It is the duty of pastors and other session members to endeavor earnestly, according to the spirit of the Lord's command, to handle all private offenses that may come to their knowledge and maintain the peace that is often disturbed by public process.
7. The peace and purity of the Church is best maintained when private offenses are resolved by the parties immediately involved and kept confidential.

Chapter 5 – Court Procedure

A. Procedure for Judicial Process

1. Judicial procedure is the orderly succession of legal proceedings in accordance with those principles and rules set forth in this document and specifically in this Book of Discipline.
2. Offenses that are brought before a Church court are those of the public and general nature or personal and private offenses that cannot be settled in a private way.
3. Whenever any charge of offense is referred to a Church court for decision, the court shall, before even hearing the charge, determine whether every reasonable and appropriate effort has been made to settle the matter in a more private way.
4. Judicial process against an alleged offender shall not be instituted unless some reliable person or persons make the charge and undertake to substantiate it, unless the court finds it necessary for the good of the persons involved and/or the Church to investigate the alleged offense.
5. If there is any doubt in the minds of two or more members of the court regarding whether the alleged offender is censurable or whether there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the charge, a committee shall be elected by the court to ascertain whether all required preliminary steps have been taken, whether there are probable grounds for an accusation, and whether, if charges are proved, they will constitute a censurable offense.
 - (a) In its investigation, the committee (or the court) is to exercise great caution when charges rest chiefly on the testimony of persons who are or have been at enmity with the accused, who have the reputation of being untruthful or quarrelsome, or who have prospect of some temporal advantage from the charges.
 - (b) Anyone who brings charges shall be previously warned that if there is a failure to show reasonable grounds for the charges, the accuser may himself be censured for slander. The committee (or the court) will drop any charges based on rumors or other common report unless some particular offense is specified, is widely believed, and raises a strong possibility of the guilt of the accused.
 - (c) If the committee finds that the case does not require judicial process or that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the charge, the committee will recommend that the matter be dropped. If the investigation indicates that charges should be made, the committee shall prepare the charges for presentation to the court.
6. A person who may consider himself injured by a rumor, more or less current, may request an investigation for his own vindication. If the court grants the request, it may elect a special committee to make the investigation and report in writing. A record of the results may conclude the matter. If the committee finds that charges should be made, it shall prepare the charges for presentation to the court.
7. Before proceeding with the any judicial process, the court, or a committee appointed by the court, should seek by private conference with the accused to avoid, if possible, the need for actual judicial process.

8. If the offender confesses, the way is clear for the court either to restore him or to impose such censure as the welfare of the offender and/or the Church may require.
9. The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. A court in the name of Christ Church always initiates the prosecution. The prosecutor is always the representative of the Church, whether he voluntarily brings the charge and is permitted by the court to prosecute it or whether he is a member of the court appointed by the court to act as prosecutor. In appellate courts, the parties are known as appellant and appellee.
10. When the judicial process is initiated, the court shall appoint one or more of its members (in a case before the session, any communing member of that congregation may serve) as a prosecuting committee to prepare the indictment and conduct the case in all its stages in whatever court until the final decision is reached. Any appellate court before which the case is pending may appoint one or more of its own members to assist in the prosecution. No one is to be admitted as prosecutor who is personally biased or at enmity with the accused, who is not of good reputation, or who may have some temporal advantage in view.
11. When any Church officer has been cited for process, all his official functions may be suspended at the discretion of the court pending the trial, but this shall not be construed as a censure.
12. In any trial neither the accused, his counsel, nor the prosecutor shall perform any function of a voting member of the court.
13. Prosecution for an alleged offense shall begin as soon as possible, but it must begin within one year from the time of the alleged commission of the offense or from the date it is reported to the court of jurisdiction.
14. The accused person may appear on his own behalf, or if he prefers, he may be represented by any member or members of the Church subject to the jurisdiction of the court. Any counsel appearing before the court must sign a statement that he has not and will not accept any fee or other emolument beyond necessary expense for any service rendered as counsel for defense or prosecution.
15. If the accused is absent and not represented by counsel, the court shall appoint as counsel one or more members of the Church subject to the jurisdiction of the court.
16. It is incumbent on every member of a court engaged in the trial of offenders to bear in mind the injunction: "...if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual, should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).
17. Every charge must be presented to the court in writing and must state the alleged offense with the specifications of the facts relied upon to sustain the charge. Each specification shall declare, as far as possible, the time, place and circumstances of the commission of the alleged offense, and shall be accompanied with the names of the witnesses and the titles of records and documents to be cited for its support.
18. When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely otherwise to become known to the court having jurisdiction, it is the duty of the court within whose bounds the offense occurred, after satisfying itself that there is reasonable grounds of accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction.
19. A charge shall not allege more than one offense. Several charges against the same person, however, with the specifications under each of them, may be presented to the

court at the same time and may be tried together. A vote on each charge must be taken separately.

B. Trial Procedure

1. Before beginning a trial, the court shall decide whether it shall try the case or refer the judicial case for hearing and decision to a judicial commission elected by it.
2. Judgment shall not be rendered in a case by any members of a court or commission who can benefit personally from the decision, who is closely related to either party, who had been active for or against either party in the matter embraced in the charge, who has personal enmity toward either party, or who has prejudged the case. Any member may be challenged by either party at and only at the first opportunity when the court meets for trial. The decision about the challenge shall be made by the remaining members of the court.
3. When the court begins consideration of an alleged offense, the charge and specifications shall be read. Except by consent of both parties, the only other actions to be taken at the first meeting of the court shall be: (1) To appoint the prosecution committee; (2) to furnish the accused with a copy of the charge and specifications including the times, places and circumstances, if possible, and with the names of all witnesses then known and titles of records and documents that may be offered in support of the charge; (3) to cite all parties and their witnesses to appear and be heard at another meeting for the trial, which, except in an appellate court, shall not be sooner than two weeks after such citation.
4. The citation must specify the name of the accused, the court before which he is to appear, the time and place. It is to be accompanied with a copy of the charge. The citations shall be issued and signed by the court's moderator and/or clerk, who shall also furnish citations for such witnesses as either party shall name. The accused shall not be required to disclose the names of his witnesses. Citations are issued only to members of this Church. Other persons can only be requested to attend. Citations shall be served personally or by registered mail to the last known place of residence. Before proceeding to trial, it must be clear that all citations have been served as indicated. If anyone who is a member of the Church fails to obey the citation, he shall be cited a second time. The second citation shall include that if he does not appear and plead and/or testify at the time appointed, unless providentially hindered (which he must make known to the court), he shall be considered guilty of disobedience and contempt and may be censured for that offense. The time allowed for responding to a second citation shall be set by the court with proper regard for all the circumstances.
5. When an accused person refuses to appear or plead after a second citation, the court shall enter the fact on its records, together with the nature of the offense charged, and the person shall be suspended from the sacraments and/or any office held in the Church. When the censure of suspension is imposed upon an accused person for refusing to appear or plead, the court will ordinarily proceed no further with the trial. It may, however, if circumstances require it and if it is sure the citation was received, proceed to trial on the merits, despite the absence of the accused, and impose

whatever censure it finds warranted. In this event, counsel would be appointed to represent the interest of the accused person during the trial.

6. At the meeting when the citations are returnable, the accused may request a change in the time of meeting because of inability to be present or because of the need for additional time to prepare his defense. The accused or his counsel shall appear. He may file objections and be heard on the regularity of the organization, the jurisdiction of the court, the right of any member to participate in the trial, the sufficiency of the charges and specifications in form or legal effect, or any other substantial objections affecting the order or regularity of the proceeding. The court shall consider all such preliminary objections or charges which do not change their general nature. If the proceedings are found in order and the charges, if proved, are censurable, the accused shall be called to plead "guilty" or "not guilty". If the plea is "guilty," the courts may deal with him according to their discretion. If the plea is "not guilty," or if the accused declines to answer, a plea of "not guilty" shall be entered on the record, and the trial shall proceed.
7. The following trial order shall be observed: (1) The moderator or commission chairman shall charge the court to recollect and regard their high responsibility as judges of a court of Jesus Christ. (2) The indictment shall be read and the answer of the accused heard. (3) The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined, with either party being entitled to call rebuttal witnesses. (4) The parties shall be heard – first the prosecutor and then the accused – and the prosecutor shall close. (5) The prosecutor and the accused, their counsel and all non-members of the court shall withdraw, the roll shall be called, and then members may express their opinion in the case. (6) A ballot vote shall be taken on each charge separately, with a majority necessary to convict. (7) Keeping in mind that the purpose is to correct and restore and not to punish as an end in itself, the courts shall determine what censure, if any, shall be inflicted. (8) The parties shall be recalled, the verdicts announced, and judgments entered on the records. It is then in order at once, in any court except the highest, to give notice of appeal. Such notice must be filed with the moderator or clerk of the court within two weeks after adjournment of the court.
8. Before or during the trial of a case prior to completion of receiving all evidence, any member of the court who expresses his opinion on its merits to either party or to any member of the court, or to any person not a member of the court, or who absents himself from any session without the permission of the court for reasons satisfactory to the entire court, shall be thereby disqualified from taking part in subsequent sessions.
9. If there are questions as to order or evidence arising in the course of the trial, the questioning parties shall have an opportunity to be heard. The question shall be decided by the moderator, or chairman, subject to an appeal to the court to be determined without debate.
10. At any stage of the trial, the court may decide by a vote of two-thirds of the members present to sit in private session with all non-voting members excluded.
11. The charge and specifications, the plea, all the testimony and the judgment shall be entered on the minutes of the court. The minutes shall also include all the acts and orders of the court relating to the case, with grounds therefore together with any

notice of appeal, with the grounds therefore. All of this, together with the evidence in the case duly filed and authenticated by the clerk, shall constitute the record. The parties shall be allowed copies of the whole record at their own expense, if they request them. In case of appeal, the lower court shall transmit the record, or a certified copy, to the higher court. Nothing not contained in the record shall be taken into consideration by the higher court without consent of the parties in the case. After the final decision in a higher court, its judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the case originated.

C. General Procedure

1. If the convicted party refused to submit to the censure, the court may impose a higher censure for disobedience.
2. The court shall use its own judgment as to when it is necessary to pronounce sentence in public. When the ends of public edification can be as well served, private censure is to be preferred.
3. A Church officer under process shall retain the right to deliberate and vote in other matters unless suspended by the court until completion of investigation and/or trial.
4. Church courts are to be careful not to involve in the shame and severity of a judicial process errors and irregularities which do not strike at the vitals of doctrinal and practical godliness and/or which may be removed by private admonition and reproof.
5. Whenever a Church officer willfully and habitually fails to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall be the duty of the court having jurisdiction, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the cause of such dereliction, and, if necessary, to institute judicial proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. In such a case, the clerk shall, under the order of the court, forthwith deliver to the individual concerned a written notice that, at the next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this proceeding. If the court decides that his neglect proceeds from his want of acceptance to the Church, or from his lack of interest in the work of his office, it may divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds being necessary for this purpose. The Church officer may appeal from this decision as if he had been tried after the usual forms.

Chapter 6 – Witnesses and Evidence

1. Every court shall be its own judge as to who shall be admitted as witnesses in a case. Either party has the right to challenge any witness that may be called to the stand, giving his reasons for the challenge, and the court shall decide whether the witness shall be allowed to testify.
2. The accused party may be allowed, but shall not be compelled, to testify and no inference of guilt may be drawn from his failure to testify. The person originating the accusation shall be required to testify, on the demand of the accused.
3. The credibility of witnesses, or the degree of credit to be given to their testimony, may be affected by relationship to either of the parties, by interest in the result, by

want of proper age, by weakness of understanding, by defect in any of the senses, by enmity to the accused, by personal character and various other circumstances to which the court should carefully attend and for which it should make due allowance in its decision.

4. Private writings and printed publications, the genuineness and authorship of which are clearly established, shall be received as evidence of the author's opinion.
5. Husbands and wives, parents and children shall not be required to testify against each other.
6. The records of a Church court, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, attested by the moderator and the clerk, or by either of them, shall be received as legal evidence in any other court.
7. Where it may not be practicable for witnesses to appear at the trial, the court may request another court to take their evidence or it may appoint a commission for this purpose, due notice in either case being given to the opposite party. Evidence thus taken shall be received as if taken in the presence of the court.
8. The testimony of a witness in a different case in which the accused was not a party and had no opportunity to cross-examine shall not be admitted as evidence of the truth of the matters to which the witness testified.
9. Hearsay evidence is not to be received except when it would be admitted in courts of law.
10. No private knowledge possessed by members of the court shall be allowed to influence their decision. A member of the court who is called on to testify in the case may not vote on any matter in the trial except with the approval of the both parties.
11. Circumstantial evidence may be received either to corroborate positive testimony or as conclusive when it is of such character as to produce full conviction on the mind of the court.
12. When a charge depends entirely upon the testimony of witnesses, at least two credible witnesses shall be necessary to establish the charge. But the testimony of one witness corroborated by good circumstantial evidence may be considered sufficient to establish the charge when there is no conflicting evidence.
13. In cases of common report, the testimony of several different witnesses to different acts of the same kind may be considered sufficient to establish the charge.
14. If after trial before any court new testimony is discovered which the accused believes important, it is his right to ask a new trial, and it is within the power of the court to grant his request. No person who has been found innocent, however, shall be re-tried for that same offense.
15. If in the prosecution of an appeal, new testimony is offered, which, in the judgment of the appellate court, has an important bearing on the case, it is proper for that court to refer the case to the lower court for a new trial, or, with the consent of parties, to take testimony and proceed with the case.
16. Before giving his testimony, every witness is to be solemnly admonished by the moderator or chairman, that his testimony is given as before the Lord and that he is to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.
17. Witnesses who have not yet been examined shall not be present during the examination of another witness if either party demands their exclusion.

18. Witnesses are to be examined in the presence of the accused or his counselor, who are at liberty to cross-examine them. The same privilege belongs to the prosecutor and to every member of the court. All questions are to be asked with the permission of the moderator or chairman, and no frivolous or non-pertinent questions are to be allowed.
19. The testimony of each witness is to be taken down in writing, mechanically reproduced and read to him for his approval and signature, and then filed among the permanent records of the court.
20. If the testimony taken during the trial proves an offense properly denominated by another name than that charged in the accusation, the accused, while he is to be acquitted of the specific charge of the accusation may be found guilty of that which appears in the proof.

Chapter 7 – Application of Censures

1. When a court shall have completed its deliberation concerning an accused offender and shall have found him guilty, the court, unless it has received a written notice of appeal within two weeks after the decision has been rendered, shall proceed to apply the appropriate censure. All censures may be administered or announced in the absence of the offender, but not without due notice having been given the offender. As in previous judicial proceedings, the court shall, in the application of censures, remind itself that the purpose of Christian discipline is the redemption of the offender.
2. Admonition: this censure is to be administered in private.
3. Rebuke: where the offense is private, or where the witness of the Church will not be injured thereby, the rebuke shall be in private. But where the offense is public, the rebuke shall ordinarily be pronounced in public. In either case, a statement of the offense shall accompany any rebuke.
4. Suspension: this censure 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. This censure should, as a rule, be announced in the Church by a representative of the court. If in the judgment of the court, however, the good of the offender and/or the Church requires, this censure may be administered privately.
5. Deposition: the censure of deposition is to be announced in the Church by a member of the court. The censure of deposition passed on a pastor shall be publicly read to his congregation by a representative of the session, who shall then declare the pulpit vacant. Only in rare cases of gross offense, the good of the offender and/or the Church may require that the offender, even though he confesses his sin and manifests repentance, be deposed from office. Except in such cases, deposition is to be preceded by suspension to give time for careful consideration before deposition is imposed.
6. Expulsion: the officiating minister shall read the decision of the court in the presence of the congregation and recount the steps taken in the case, showing the necessity of this censure. He is then to lead the congregation in prayer for both the Church court and the offender. After the announcement of the censure, he is to instruct the

members of the Church that expulsion does not destroy the bonds of natural and civil relations nor does expulsion relieve them from their Christian responsibility to witness to the love of God to the expelled person.

7. In all cases of censure by lower Church courts, the offender shall be advised of his right of appeal to a higher court.

Chapter 8 – Withdrawals

A. Ministers

1. If a minister notifies the session that he can no longer adhere to the standards of the Church due to a change in his doctrinal views, the session shall endeavor to resolve his difficulties. Upon failure to resolve, the session shall grant the minister a certificate indicating his relationship to the session, stating reasons for his separation from the session, enter the facts on the record, and remove the minister's name from the roll.
2. If a minister desires release from the office of the ministry, he shall notify session. The session shall consider his request and being satisfied that the reasons for release are sufficient, shall without censure, grant the request and enter the facts upon the record.
3. In the event a minister ceases entirely to exercise the duties of his office, devoting himself to other pursuits without satisfactory reason, the session shall endeavor to persuade him to return to his work of the ministry. If unsuccessful in their persuasion, the minister's name shall be removed from the roll with entry of the facts upon the record. These circumstances may constitute a censurable offense.
4. In the event a minister becomes involved in areas of work outside the normal bounds of Christ Church, this Church shall have the responsibility of determining his voting status.

B. Elders and Deacons

1. If an elder or deacon decided that he is unable to discharge the duties of his office or that for some other reason his service is not for the good of the congregation, he shall so notify the session. The session, if unable to resolve these difficulties, shall release the officer from his duties, either temporarily or permanently, as conditions dictate. The recorded facts and action taken by the session shall be made part of the session's permanent records.
2. If an elder or deacon ceased entirely to exercise the duties of his office, the session shall endeavor to persuade him to perform his duties. If unsuccessful in their persuasion, the name of the officer shall be removed from the roll of officers with entry of the facts upon the record. These circumstances may constitute a censurable offense.

C. Church Members

1. A member uniting with another Church body without a certificate or transfer shall have his name removed from the roll of the congregation after the session assures itself of this change of membership.
2. A Church member shall notify the session if his doctrinal views have so changed that he can no longer adhere to the standards of the Church. The session, if failing in its attempts to change his views, shall make record of the facts and remove his name from the roll.
3. If a member habitually absents himself from the communion table and gives other convincing evidence of indifference to his religious obligations, he shall be privately admonished. Should private admonition fail, the session shall apply whatever higher censure it deems necessary.
4. The congregation shall normally be informed of any withdrawal or removal of a Church member's name from the roll by censure.
5. The session shall endeavor to communicate with members who have moved beyond the geographic boundaries of the congregation. Such members shall be retained on the roll so long as interest in the congregation is maintained. After one year the session may either drop such names from the roll or transfer members to the list of inactive members.

Chapter 9 – Restoration

1. Restoration is the culmination of the element of mercy in the discipline of the Church; therefore, it is to be regarded as the goal of judgment. There is no degree of guilt which automatically precludes the restoration of an offender to full Church privileges, following satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation.
2. An offender is to be restored by the same authority that censured him or by the authority of a higher court.
3. The act of restoration may be publicly announced or privately conveyed. The court shall determine the option based on the good of the offender and/or the Church.
4. An offender desiring restoration shall make application to the court by which he was censured, acknowledging his offense and expressing his desire to be restored to the privileges of the Church. The necessity of initiative on the part of the offender is in no manner to be seen as releasing the Church from its responsibility in pursuing the repentance and restoration of the offender.
5. The court is to consider carefully the request of the offender with the evidence of his repentance and if satisfied of his sincerity and of the earnestness of his purpose to live a Christian life, the court is to remove the sentence and to restore him to the privileges of the Church.
6. An officer who has been suspended or deposed from office and has had the privileges of the Church suspended is to be restored to the Church privileges on satisfactory evidence of repentance. He is not to be restored to the exercise of his office until such time that the witness of the Church will not be impaired by such restoration.
7. When an offender has been restored he is, as one forgiven through Christ who claims God's covenant promises, to be received by the Church as a brother.

Chapter 10 – Procedure for Transfer of Jurisdiction

A. Introduction

1. Transfer of jurisdiction to a higher court is provided in order to remedy, in an orderly way, wrongs that may be done. When those who had no concern in the origin of proceedings review and confirm or amend the proceedings' judgments, the possibility of permanent wrongs is reduced as much as our present imperfect state allows.
2. The decisions of all Church courts, with the exception of the highest, are subject to investigation by a higher court. The decision of the lower court may be brought before the higher court by review, reference, appeal, complaint, or declinature.

B. Review

1. The records of all lower courts are subject to the review of the next higher court as any of the higher courts shall require.
2. In reviewing the records of a lower court, it is proper for the higher court to examine: first, whether the proceedings have been constitutional and regular; second, whether the proceeding have been equitable, faithful and prudent; third, whether the proceedings have been properly recorded.
3. The review may be conducted by a committee of the court that shall make its report at the meeting at which it was appointed. If any censure or correction appears to be necessary, the members of the lower court present shall be heard in defense, and then the higher court shall make its judgment on the matter. This judgment shall be entered both on the records of the court and on the records reviewed.
4. If the review indicates irregular proceedings which require correction, the lower court shall be required to review and correct its proceedings, and to report the correction to the highest court as soon as possible.
5. No judicial decision shall be reversed by a court sitting in review unless the decision is regularly brought to the court by appeal or complaint.
6. If, however, the highest court is advised of unrecorded neglect and/or irregularities of a lower court, it shall cite the lower court to appear and answer the charges. If the charges are found to be true, the higher court shall impose such censures and give orders as it may judge necessary in the case.

C. Reference

1. A reference is a written representation made by a lower court to a higher court for advice or other action on a matter pending before a lower court.
2. Among proper subjects for reference are matters which are new, delicate, or difficult; which have produced a serious division among the members of the lower court; or with which a number of the members are so connected as to render it improper for them to sit in judgment.
3. In making a reference the lower court may ask either for advice or for final disposition of the matter referred. In case of referral for advice, the effect is to

suspend the judgment of the lower court. In the case of referral for trial decision, the effect is for the lower court to relinquish jurisdiction to the higher court.

4. A reference may be presented to the higher court by one or more representatives appointed by the lower court for this purpose, and it should be accompanied with the records necessary for proper understanding and consideration of the matter referred.
5. In cases of reference for advice the higher court ought, as a rule, to give the advice asked for. It may, however, in cases of reference for decision, decline to give judgment, and remit the whole case, with or without advice, to the court referring it.
6. Notice of reference must be given to parties concerned in the case, and all evidence should be duly prepared and in readiness so that the higher court may be able to hear and issue the case with as little delay as possible.

D. Appeals

1. An appeal is a legal proceeding by which a case is brought from a lower to a higher court for rehearing. The effect of an appeal is to suspend all further proceedings in the case, including the sentence, until the case has been finally decided in a higher court. If a sentence of suspension or deposition be appealed from, however, it shall be considered in force until the matter is decided.
2. An appeal can normally be made only by an accused party, called the appellant, who has submitted to a regular trial. An appellant who has not submitted to a regular trial is not entitled to an appeal.
3. An appeal can be made only to the next higher court, except with the express consent of that court.
4. An appeal may be made either from a definite sentence or from any particular part of the proceedings. The grounds for an appeal include matters such as any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court; hindrance of procedural rights; refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; receiving improper or declining to receive proper evidence; rendering a decision before all testimony is taken; evidence for bias or prejudice in the case; and an unjust or mistaken sentence.
5. The appellant must make his appeal, together with the reasons for it, in writing, either to the court hearing his case before it adjourns or to the moderator or the clerk of that court within ten days after the judgment appealed from is pronounced. The appeal, however, should not be refused if reasons for unavoidable delay can be demonstrated.
6. The appellant shall lodge his appeal, with the reasons for it, with the clerk of the higher court prior to the beginning of its next regular meeting. The clerk of the lower court appealed from shall send the full record of the case or a certified copy to the higher court by the same time.
7. Evidence that has come to light at the first trial may be presented by either the appellant or appellee in an appeal.
8. The higher court may, at its own discretion, appoint one or more of its members to assist in the presentation of the case to its court.
9. After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and that it should be considered by the court, the following procedures are to be followed: (1) reading the appeal, with the reasons for it; (2) reading the record of the case, which may include the whole record or only that part of it against which appeal is being made; (3)

hearing the parties, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument; (4) taking the vote, with members having the right to vote either to sustain, to sustain in part, or not to sustain the appeal.

10. If the appeal is sustained, either in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court is set aside, and the court may either close the case, if further proceedings are unnecessary; it may try the case itself; it may send the case back to the lower court for a new trial; or it may remit the case back to a lower court for the purpose of amending the record, if it appears incorrect or defective.
11. If the appeal is not sustained, the judgment of the lower court is upheld.
12. The decision of the higher court shall be recorded and a copy of it shall be sent to the lower court.
13. If after entering his appeal, the appellant does not appear before the higher court either in person or by counsel at its next meeting following the date of his notice of appeal, the appeal shall be treated as abandoned and the judgment of the lower court shall stand, unless the appellant can furnish the court with satisfactory explanation of his failure to appear.
14. In cases where an appeal would necessarily and injuriously delay proceedings, it is proper for the lower court to refuse to admit an appeal and proceed with the trial. In such cases, the party refused an appeal may register his complaint with the next higher court.

E. Complaints

1. A complaint is a representation made to a higher court in respect to a decision of the lower court regarded as being irregular or unjust.
2. It differs from an appeal in that it does not suspend proceedings in the case and is the privilege of any one under the jurisdiction of the court. In judicial cases, however, a party declining to appeal shall not be allowed to enter a complaint.
3. Complaints are usually to be entertained only where the complainants do not have the right of appeal or where an appeal is refused.
4. A complaint brings the whole proceedings of the lower court in the case under review of the higher, and if the complaint is found to be well grounded, the higher court may not only reverse the decision of the lower court, either in whole or in part, but may also subject it to such censure as the case may require.
5. The same rules of procedure are to be allowed in complaints as in appeals.

F. Declinature

1. A declinature is the refusal of a party under process to submit to trial by that particular court.
2. Declinature is warrantable where the court betrays unfairness or partiality; where it prejudices the case; where it goes beyond its lawful authority; or where it permits persons closely related to either party, at enmity with either party, or who have themselves been active as parties to sit and vote in the case after they have been challenged.

3. A declinature is to be admitted by a court only when it is accompanied with reasons and notice of appeal. It in no case ends the matter, but only removes it by appeal to the higher court, where it is to be considered according to the rules already given.

Chapter 11 – Matters Unprovided For

Any matters of discipline or details of process not provided for are left to the judgment of the court having jurisdiction in the case. The court, however, is to be governed by the general principles and rules set forth in this document and specifically in this Book of Discipline.

Article VII. The Book of Worship

Chapter 1 – The Purpose of Worship

The Christian life is a response to God, expressing itself in worship and service. After a man's reconciliation to God through the blood of Christ, he desires by the moving of the Holy Spirit to seek a knowledge of Him, to aspire after Him, and to respond to Him in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and obedient love.

The purpose of worship is affirmed by the words of the psalmist:

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness;
come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God;
it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep
of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For the Lord is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations”
(Psalm 100).

Chapter 2 – The Nature of Worship

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Worship, then, is not confined to place and external exercises, but involves a reality in the heart, soul and mind and may be public, family or private. Worship may be planned or spontaneous, but should be such as to invoke in the worshiper praise, honor, homage, obedience, dedication and gratitude to God, with adoration and exaltation of Him with reverence and humble acknowledgment of one's unworthiness of God's presence. It should be accompanied by confession of and plea for forgiveness of sin by virtue of atonement by Jesus Christ, with open heart and attentive mind to the voice of the Holy Spirit and by the assurance of God's pardoning grace.

Public worship is a unique event in the experience of man where together response is made to God's mighty acts of redemption in Jesus Christ. In public worship, the subject matter is the complete revelation of God set forth in Holy Scripture and centering in the Person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Public worship is corporate in all its parts with active participation or silent attention, or both. It should be orderly, interesting and inspiring toward spiritual ideals and Christian service. It should be directed to the total person involving intellect, emotion and will. It should include any or all of the following acts of worship: prayer and thanksgiving; singing or praise; the reading, hearing and preaching of the Word; the administering and receiving of the sacraments; the giving of tithes and sacrificial offerings; an appropriate response to the Gospel; an affirmation of faith; and the dismissing of the people with a Biblical benediction.

Family worship should be biblical and instructive. Participation by all should be encouraged. Subjects to discuss, materials to use, and activities of this worship period may be suggested by any member of the group. Ordinarily, the head of the home should assume the leadership responsibility.

Chapter 3 – Forms of Worship

A. Corporate Worship

It is necessary, unless providentially hindered, for spiritual growth that Christians gather for corporate worship. Christians normally worship on the Lord's Day, in a building set aside as a house of worship. However, in addition, they may worship at any time or place agreeable to those who gather.

The particular form which is employed will be designed, keeping in mind not only the time and location for the service of worship, but the needs and circumstances of the congregation. This is the responsibility of the session and the minister who leads the service.

The use of an orderly form for the service of worship on the Lord's Day is most desirable. Such a form should reflect our Protestant heritage in the Reformed tradition. There is no set form required by our Church, but it should include acts of worship set forth in The Nature of Worship.

B. Individual and Family Worship

Equally necessary for spiritual growth is daily worship, privately as an individual and as a family in the home.

There should be the reading of Scripture and prayer. Other materials and activities may enhance the worship experience.

Christian families should set aside some time each day to worship God. The head of the home should see that this is done.

Chapter 4 – Aids to Worship

A. General

All worship services shall be conducted in full accordance with Scripture and the doctrines and government of Christ Church as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and these documents.

B. Church Music

Anthems and other special music shall be in keeping with the doctrines and government of Christ Church. The same rule shall apply to music used in weddings and funerals.

The pastor and session shall have oversight of all music used by the congregation.

C. Guides to Worship

Any Books of Worship may be used as guides to worship provided they do not conflict with the doctrine and government of Christ Church.

Chapter 5 – Christian Marriage

Marriage was instituted by God when He saw that it was not good that man should be alone. Jesus Christ blessed this relationship by His presence at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. It was given a crown of glory by the Apostle Paul, who compares it with that holy union which exists between Christ and His Church in which Christ is called the Bridegroom and His Church the Bride. Therefore, a man and woman may enter together into the estate of marriage, pledging their love and promising fidelity to each other, as long as they both live.

It is to be expected that both of the partners are professing Christians, and that they will share a common Christian faith.

Before any man and woman are joined in marriage they shall fulfill all the lawful requirements of the state in which the marriage is to be performed. The couple shall provide satisfactory evidence of being prepared to enter upon marriage with maturity and wisdom.

If, after counseling, the minister is not convinced in his conscience of the propriety of the marriage under the laws of the state and of Holy Scripture, as interpreted in the Standards of this Church, he shall not perform the ceremony.

The Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God, normally conducted in the house of God. As in all other services of worship, reverence shall be expected on the part of all present. The service shall be under the sole direction of the minister.

The order for the marriage service shall include a brief statement of the meaning of Christian marriage. There shall be prayers for the couple as they enter their new estate. There shall be an exchange of vows between the man and the woman. There may be an exchange of vows, or the giving of a ring to the woman by the man. There may be a charge to them, laying before them the privileges and obligations that they are about to receive and undertake. There shall be a declaration by the minister that the man and woman standing before him are now joined in marriage according to the ordinance of God and the law of the state. The service shall conclude with a benediction.

The minister shall comply with all requirements of the state for the proper performance and registration of the marriage. He shall also see that the Church maintains an adequate record of all marriages within the congregation.

Chapter 6 – The Funeral

Christians are aware of the inevitability of death. In the presence of death, Christians witness to their faith that God, in Jesus Christ, has conquered death and raises His people from death to life eternal.

In order that those who are bereaved may know that they are not called upon to face death in isolation, but are sustained and upheld by the people of God, it is appropriate that a service of worship be held. The service should ordinarily be held in a church and should be conducted by the minister. The casket should remain closed in order that the worship of those present may more naturally be directed to God.

The funeral service should be conducted with dignity and simplicity. It should witness to the resurrection and to the sure and certain hope that Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place for God's children. This service should include the reading of appropriate passages from the Holy Scripture and the offering of prayers of thanksgiving, intercession and supplication. If songs or music are included, care should be taken to assure that they are consistent with the Biblical affirmations of God's power over death. Funeral sermons, remarks and prayers in the nature of a eulogy of the deceased are discouraged with the awareness that God is to receive all the glory not the deceased.

The committal of the body to the grave may be done with Scripture and prayer, the service being closed with the benediction. The presence of members and friends of the

family of the deceased at this part of the service bears witness, in the face of death, to their belief in the resurrection from the dead.

Chapter 7 – Special Days

From apostolic times Christians have observed the first day of the week as the Lord's Day, because on it our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Therefore, on that day the Gospel should be proclaimed in services of worship.

In addition, there are special seasons that provide occasion for emphasis on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, ascension and coming again and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There are days appointed to our Church to recall the heritage of the Church, proclaim its mission and forward its work. All of these may be observed in the public worship of God.

It is also appropriate that some weekday may be appointed by the session for the gathering of the people to prayer, praise and the hearing of the Word.

If at any time the civil authorities should appoint a fast or thanksgiving, the minister and people of our church should consider paying due respect, ordinarily through a service of public worship. The prayers, Psalms or hymns, the selection of Scripture and the message should be especially selected for the occasion.

Chapter 8 – The Sacraments

A. The Sacrament of Baptism

1. General.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the Word made visible as ordained by Jesus Christ. Primarily, it represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the lives of God's people. It may also be understood as a sign of God's power and mercy in cleansing men of their sin, and as a means whereby men are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, entering with Him into His death are rising with Him to newness of life (Romans 6:4ff.). It is to be regarded as the sign of their engrafting into Christ, and of their entrance into the Church, inasmuch as that which unites them with Christ unites them also with His Church.

As a Sacrament, Baptism is an act of the whole Church and normally should be administered in the presence of the worshipping community. Since the Sacrament is a means by which the Gospel is proclaimed to all who receive it or witness it, and yet cannot be separated from the Word, it should be administered ordinarily at a service at which the written Word is expounded, inasmuch as the Word sets forth the promises which the Sacrament seals to man.

The Sacrament is both a means of testifying to the reality of God's grace, and also a means by which all faithful members of the Church show forth publicly their own faith and trust in Him.

Since no person is worthy by his merit to receive the gift of God's grace shown forth in Baptism, all those present when the Sacrament is administered are to recall their dependence on God's grace, trusting that in the Sacrament He will certify to them His promise, and draw men closer to one another through their common acknowledgment of the need in which they stand.

The Sacrament of Baptism not only shows God's grace but is a means by which His grace is communicated to men. Thus the visible Word of the Gospel in Baptism points toward, and is fulfilled by, Christ Himself.

2. The Baptism of Children.

The baptism sets forth the grace of God in Jesus Christ and affirms that all who are children of believers are heirs of this covenant of grace, as many as the Lord our God shall call Himself. In the Sacrament of Baptism they are acknowledged to be members of the household and family of God. It is, therefore, appropriate that at an early age the children of believers are baptized.

The baptism of a covenant child has particular significance for the Church as that Sacrament of God's grace, His unmerited love, which shows forth that, long before the child is conscious of God or confesses Him, God has set him apart, loving him with a love which is eternal. The Sacrament, as administered, is to be understood as a declaration of Word of God in its grace and power to all He calls to Himself and makes believers. Believers present are called upon to see themselves likewise as helpless children, whom God in His mercy has called to eternal life in the Spirit.

The parents of the child promise to bring him up to love God and serve Him, and the members of the congregation likewise promise to surround the child with their concern and love in Christ, that he may continue in the fellowship of the Church, confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and live in His eternal Kingdom.

It is desirable that a minister, before baptizing a child, engage in instructions and discussion with the parents, to acquaint them with the significance of what God is doing in this act and with the responsibilities which it lays upon them.

The parents having presented their child for baptism at a service of public worship, the minister shall make declaration of the meaning of the Sacrament and the gifts of God that it exhibits and offers to all assembled. The minister shall make it clear that the child is not saved by the administration of this sacrament for baptism as an ordinance does not save as it is intended as a sealing sacrament. At least one parent, or one rightly exercising parental authority, shall be asked to make affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He shall also promise publicly, in dependence on the grace of God, to raise the child to love God and to serve Him, to

the end that the child may come to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.* Christ Church does not recognize sponsors customarily called Godparents.

The congregation shall then, in the name of the whole Church of Christ, be asked to undertake responsibility for the growth of the child in Christian nurture; and members of the congregation shall indicate their intention to do so in an appropriate manner.**

After prayer, the minister shall baptize the child with water alone, declaring, “ _____, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The minister shall then charge the parents and the members of the congregation to be faithful in their response to God, in bringing up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The Sacrament shall conclude with prayer for the child, the parents and all those of the household of faith.

At the time of baptism the child shall be recorded as a baptized “non-communicant” member of the Church, and shall be numbered among those whom the session has responsibility.

- * The parent or parents shall give affirmative answers to the following questions:
 - a. Do you renew the vows that you made when you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and entered into the full Communion of this Church?
 - b. Do you acknowledge that your child is a sinner in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit?
 - c. Do you claim God’s Covenant promises on this child’s behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for this child’s salvation, as you do for your own?
 - d. Do you now covenant and promise in humble reliance on the Grace of God to bring up your child to love God and to serve Him, to the end that your child may come to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
- ** The congregation shall give affirmative answer to the following or equivalent question: Do you the members of this congregation in the name of the Church of Christ, undertake with these parents the Covenant responsibility for the Christian nurture of this child?

3. The Baptism of Adults.

When individuals who have not been baptized as children desire to commit their lives to Christ and become incorporated into the membership of His Church, they shall, upon their public profession of faith, receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

Before the Sacrament is administered, such individuals shall receive instruction concerning the meaning of the Sacrament, the nature of the Church and the Christian faith, and privileges and obligations attendant upon membership in the Church.

After they have satisfied the session to their Christian purpose and given assent to the formula of questions required for membership in Christ Church, they shall ordinarily be presented before the congregation for baptism in a service of public worship which includes the reading, hearing and preaching of the Word.

The minister shall declare the meaning of the Sacrament and of the gifts of God that it exhibits and offers to all assembled. Such persons as are to be baptized shall, in response to the prescribed questions in the Form of Government, publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and in the power and readiness of God in Christ to forgive their sins, and shall promise in dependence on the grace of God to live as faithful members of His Church, and to place their lives under the authority of Scripture.

B. The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper

1. General.

Having given His children eternal life based upon the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, God offers continual spiritual nourishment to them and sustains them in the fellowship of the body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The session shall determine how often the opportunity to partake of this Sacrament may be provided in each congregation. It is fitting that it be observed frequently and regularly enough that it is seen as a proper part of, and not an addition to, the worship of God by His people.

The Table is none other than Christ's Table. He invites those who put their trust in Him to share in the feast that He has prepared.

The Words of Institution set forth the Sacrament as originating in Christ's command, and make plain that those worshipping do so in obedience to His will. Hereby they participate in the continuing history of the people of God until Christ comes again.

The participation of the entire congregation in the service – in the singing of Psalms and hymns, the offering of prayers and the reception of the elements – demonstrates that God has redeemed a people, and that individuals come to the Table as members of a corporate fellowship. Although it is not essential to the Lord's Supper, there is a solemnity and sweetness and sacredness in gathering around the table as our Lord and His disciples did.

The prayers and responses witnessing to the communion of saints testify that this fellowship includes all the faithful everywhere, both in heaven and on earth, and not simply those visibly assembled.

The invoking of the Holy Spirit signifies that what takes place in the Sacrament is not of man's doing, but is done by the grace of God.

The breaking of the bread and the pouring of the cup show forth that Christ gave His own body to be broken and His life's blood to be poured out on man's behalf in His offering of Himself on the cross.

The distribution and partaking of the elements show forth the reality of the believers' union with Christ through faith and their willingness that His presence should abide in them.

The promise of Christ's presence in the midst of those who receive this Sacrament witnesses to the reality of His resurrection from the dead and is a foretaste of eternal fellowship with Him.

The prayers of thanksgiving, the singing of Psalms and hymns and the believers' offering of themselves show forth the response in praise and self-giving which is required of those who receive such gifts as are here set forth.

Let no one presume that words can exhaust the meaning of the Sacrament, but let each one search in the light of the Word of God for such further truth as God may be pleased to reveal to him.

Since the Sacrament is an action in which the whole Church participates and is part of the public witness of the Church to the power of the Word, it is normally to be celebrated as the culmination of the public worship of God, and shall not be isolated from the acts of worship which precede and follow it.

While the sacrament witnesses primarily to the power of God's love for the sinner in the death and resurrection of His Son and the promise of His grace to all who believe, it provides also a means whereby His children, in public reception of the elements and in response to the great gifts of God conveyed by them, can show forth their faith in God by offering themselves to Him in love and praise.

Since no one can come to the Lord's Table as a worthy recipient of God's gifts, but must trust utterly that God in His graciousness will welcome those who acknowledge and repent of their unworthiness, participation in the Sacrament is to be understood as a privilege given to the repentant undeserving rather than a right conferred upon the worthy. Since this Sacrament is offered out of the fullness of God's love, it is to be received in joyful gratitude that the power of the Gospel extends to God's undeserving children, and thereby unites them all in a common dependence upon Him.

2. The Nature of the Sacrament.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be administered as part of the public worship of God, that it may show forth and convey to all the people of the congregation the graciousness and power of God. It should be preceded by the reading and preaching of the Word, during which the people may prepare themselves to receive and appropriate the Word of God offered to them in the Sacrament, that the sacramental Word may be shown forth in full unity with the written and preached Word.

An invitation to partake shall be extended to all who confess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The service shall follow the New Testament pattern in which appropriate Words of Institution are read after the Table has been prepared.

After the distribution and partaking of the elements, the service may continue with prayers that include thanks to God for his great gifts received in the Sacrament. Reverent disposition shall be made of the unused elements.

The Sacrament, being an act of the whole Church, is ordinarily to be celebrated with the participation of the full congregation. There may be occasions, however, when the session or other judicatory is persuaded of sufficient reason for its celebration at other times or places. Such celebration should be understood, not as a private ceremony, but as a part of the public worship of the whole people of God, and if possible, there should be present at the celebration officers and other members of the congregation, in addition to the minister, to show forth the communal nature of the Sacrament.