

**THE OFFICER TRAINING MANUAL
GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Chapter 1 The Mission of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

Chapter 2 The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, USA by Ruling Elder Jack Shirek, Grace Covenant

Chapter 3 The Nature of the Church

Chapter 4 The History of the Church

Chapter 5 The History of Our Local Congregation by Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

Chapter 6 Our Campus

Chapter 7 Presbyterian Government by Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

Chapter 8 Presbyterian Ordered Ministries by Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

Chapter 9 Ordination and Installation

Chapter 10 The Basics of Parliamentary Procedure

Appendix 1 Helpful Hints for Officers

Appendix 2 Serving at Funerals and Memorial Services

Appendix 3 Helpful Hints for Serving Communion at the 10:45 Worship

Appendix 4 STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Chapter 1

The Mission of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

The mission of the Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church is “**Making a difference in the lives of people.**” We accomplish this mission through the practicing our Seven Marks of Discipleship.

Seven Marks of Discipleship

We hope all members will practice what we have identified as our “Seven Marks of Discipleship.” As a ruling elder or as a deacon, you are a spiritual leader of the church. As such, it is important for you to practice these *Seven Marks of Discipleship*:

Pray Daily
Worship Weekly
Enjoy Spiritual Friendships
Read and Study the Scriptures
Share the Good News of the Gospel
Practice Generosity with Time, Talent and Treasures
Engage in Service in and Beyond the Local Congregation

PRAY DAILY – All members should pray daily, but officers should especially give some time each day to praying for the pastors, staff members, other officers, and the members of the church. You might want to look at our long prayer list that is in each week’s bulletin and take pray for one column per day. You might find some other system. The system does not matter, and it needs to fit you. What matters is that you pray daily for the church you lead.

WORSHIP WEEKLY – We expect all of our members to attend worship every Sunday, but we especially expect our officers to be faithful in worship. Our members are encouraged by your presence in worship, and they notice, and are discouraged, by the absence of our officers. Of course, we sometimes travel or become ill, but as far as possible it is important for us as officers to be diligent in our worship experience.

ENJOY SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIPS – Church members should get to know each other and build these spiritual friendships. They should be welcoming of those visitors in our midst. Such spiritual friendships are vital when a crisis occurs in life and the support of other Christians is needed. Officers in particular need to build these friendships. Let people get to know you, and you should get to know them. Find a new social activity within the church to attend, such as Lunch Bunch or Study and Fun. Look for those sitting alone in Conway Hall after the 10:45 worship; sit with them and get to know them.

READ AND STUDY THE SCRIPTURES – All members are expected to read and study the Word of God. As an officer, you have a special calling to be able to teach as well as study. People will

look to you as a spiritual mentor.

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL – Make it your goal to invite friends to come to Grace Covenant. You can invite them to attend worship, but it may be more effective if you invite them to attend and offer to drive them AND to join you and your family for lunch afterward. Think beyond worship, as many will accept an invitation to Lunch Bunch or similar activity before attending a worship service.

PRACTICE GENEROSITY WITH TIME, TALENT AND TREASURES – All church members are expected to become part of the working body of Christ. We offer our time, talents and treasures. Our officers are expected to be leaders in this generosity. You will need to be present in some form of ministry and to give your time and talent. You will be inviting people to pledge and to give generously to the financial life of the church, and to do this with a sincere heart you must also be a leader in giving to the financial life of the church.

ENGAGE IN SERVICE IN AND BEYOND THE LOCAL CONGREGATION – Not everyone is cut out to travel to Haiti, or to work with children in our MentoReach program. However, there is a place for you in the service in and beyond our congregation. Every mission activity in our church should have an officer present.

Chapter 2

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, USA

by
Ruling Elder Jack Shirek, Grace Covenant

An officer should be familiar with all components of our Constitution, *which is made up* of two books – The Book of Confessions and the Book of Order. The Book of Confessions is a collection of statements which confess our faith. The Book of Order is a set of four smaller books.

The Book of Confessions includes:

- The Nicene Creed
- The Apostles' Creed
- The Scots Confession
- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Second Helvetic Confession
- The Westminster Confession of Faith
- The Shorter Catechism
- The Larger Catechism
- The Theological Declaration of Barmen
- The Confession of 1967
- The Confession of Belhar
- A Brief Statement of Faith--Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Book of Order includes:

- Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- Form of Government
- Directory for Worship
- Rules of Discipline

The Book of Confessions

The Book of Confessions currently contains 12 documents. Each document has something to say to us and to the world about what Presbyterians believe.

There are four kinds of writings in our *Book of Confessions*: creeds, confessions, catechisms, and declarations.

- **Creeds** are short statements of belief, coming from the Latin *credo*, “I believe.”
- **Confessions** are more extensive statements of theological beliefs.
- **Catechisms** are series of questions and answers about our faith.

- A **Declaration** is simply a “here we stand, we can do no other” statement, made in the face of great evil.

Additional documents may be added from time to time. Amending the *Book of Confessions* is a six-year-long process. The process begins when a council overtures to the General Assembly that a document be included in the Book of Confessions. The General Assembly will then appoint a committee to study a proposed document. The committee presents its report two years later at the following General Assembly, which then votes on whether to send the amendment to the presbyteries. Two-thirds of the presbyteries, and another General Assembly must approve the amendment in order for it to be included.

The Nicene Creed (ca AD 325-381)

The Nicene Creed was written in an attempt to unify the Christian church under emperor Constantine. It is heavily influenced by the theologian Athanasius and the work of the first two ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381). This creed was adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

Its central doctrines are those of the Person of Jesus Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit. It is the only creed accepted by all three major branches of Christendom including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians.

The Apostles Creed (ca AD 180-750)

The brief Apostles’ Creed was developed as a baptismal creed for new Christians. This is the most popular creed used in worship by Western Christians. Its central doctrines are those of the Trinity and God the Creator. It was not written by the Apostles but is so named because it provides a summary of the teachings of the Apostles.

The Scots Confession (1560)

The Scots Confession was written during the years of the Protestant Reformation by John Knox and five of his colleagues (Willock, Winram, Spottiswood, Row and Douglas). This document was written at the request of the Scottish Parliament in five days. Its central doctrines are those of the importance of the Word of God, election and the Church. It was approved by the Reformation Parliament and Church of Scotland, attaining full legal status with the departure of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1567.

The Heidelberg Confession (1563)

Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus wrote the Heidelberg Confession in Germany at the time of the breaking of the peace of Augsburg in response to the Lutherans and at the direction of Frederick the Elector. Its central doctrines are those of stewardship, repentance, faith, love and the Lord’s Supper.

This is the most personal of the Reformed creeds. It is written in the first and second person.

Second Helvetic Confession (1566)

The Second Helvetic Confession was composed by Heinrich Bullinger in Switzerland after surviving the Black Plague. He wrote it as a codicil to his will. It is in response to the Anabaptists and makes an attempt to reconcile with the Lutherans. It is influenced by Ulrich Zwingli. Its central doctrines are those of Covenant and Baptism. It declares that the Reformed Churches are in harmony with the catholic faith of all ages.

The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1646-1649)

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms were written by the Westminster Assembly at the call of Parliament. The central doctrines of these three statements are the sovereignty of God and the authority and proper interpretation of Scripture. The Confession is a lengthy statement of faith. The Catechisms are question and answer documents. The Shorter Catechism is brief enough to be memorized by many Presbyterian students.

The Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934)

The Theological Declaration of Barmen was written by Karl Barth and the confessing church in Nazi Germany. It is a response to Hitler's national church. Its central doctrines concern the sin of idolatry and the lordship of Christ.

The Confession of 1967 (1967)

The Confession of 1967 was written by American Presbyterians during the troubled 1960's. It was influenced by the civil rights. Its central doctrines include reconciliation and the equality of all persons.

The Confession of Belhar (2016)

The Confession of Belhar was written in 1982 in South Africa. It was a protest against the sin of apartheid and was approved for inclusion in the Book of Confession as a statement against racism.

A Brief Statement of Faith (1983)

After the two largest streams of Presbyterianism in the United States reunited to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1983, a committee was appointed to draft a confession that would briefly summarize our faith. A lengthy process of writing and review led to its adoption by the presbyteries in 1991. Like the earliest creeds it is liturgical in style and suitable for use in worship.

The Book of Order

The *Book of Order* is a set of four documents. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity,

sets forth the foundational structure for all other documents. The Form of Government is the direction for how to govern our congregation, presbytery, synod and General Assembly. The Directory for Worship guides what we can do or must do in worship. The Rules of Discipline serves as the process for judicial and disciplinary action for our members.

An officer needs to know how to navigate through these books. We do not use page numbers, but a referencing system. Rather than refer to a page number, one might refer to F-1.0201, or G-2.0101. Each reference starts with one of four letters, and the letter refers to one of the four documents found in the Book of Order:

- F — The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- G — Form of Government
- W — Directory for Worship
- D — Rules of Discipline

Amending the Book of Order is simpler than amending the Book of Confessions. The *Book of Order* is amended only by an action of a General Assembly and subsequent approval by a simple majority of our presbyteries. Generally speaking, an edition of the Book of Confessions is good for many years, while an edition of the Book of Order is good for two years (the time between General Assemblies).

In reading the Book of Order it is important to understand the importance of certain words.

SHALL and IS TO BE/ARE TO BE signifies the practice is mandated. When you read these words, you will need to understand this to be a strict rule.

SHOULD signifies the practice is strongly recommended. When you read this word, you can understand that there is some freedom.

IS APPROPRIATE signifies that the practice is recommended as suitable.

MAY signifies that a practice is permissible.

Consider G-1.0501, which says “The congregation SHALL hold an annual meeting and MAY hold special meetings as necessary...” This means we have no option but to hold an annual meeting. However, because we may hold special meetings we are freed from having to do all congregational business in only one annual meeting. There is, however, no rule that says we MUST have more than one meeting per year.

Consider G-3.0113, which says, “Finances Each council shall prepare and adopt a budget to support the church’s mission within its area. A full financial review of all financial books and records shall be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures. Reviewers should not be related to the treasurer(s).” This means that our congregation has no choice but to have an annual financial review (notice the wording does not require an actual audit, but a review). The reviewers SHOULD NOT be related to the treasurer. In a congregation like Grace Covenant we would certainly not want a relative of the treasurer to review the finances, but the Book of Order must consider all churches. In some very small

membership congregations, it may well be that all members are related to one of two to four families. Making this a MUST rather than a SHOULD would be very difficult for such a church.

Local Policies

As an officer of the congregation, you will work not only with the Book of Order and the Book of Confessions, but also with our local policy manual. Not everything is in the Book of Order. If you are wondering what the Book of Order says about the quorum for congregational meetings, you will find it leaves that to the local congregation to decide.

In any local congregation there will be times when someone will say, “it has always been our policy to do ‘such and such.’” If it is not written in our policy manual it is not a policy, it is simply a tradition. Even if one searched the minutes of the session and found such a policy, every set of minutes following would have to be studied to be sure that policy had not been rescinded. It is important that we keep our policy manual accurate and up to date.

Written and approved policies must be observed or changed. Traditions can be respected and observed but do not require obedience.

Chapter 3

The Nature of the Church

The Church Defined

The New Testament was written in Greek, and in that language, the word for “church” was “ecclesia.” The word was not invented for Christianity. It was in common use in the time of Jesus to mean “an assembly of citizens.” This word was often used to refer to a gathering of citizens to conduct political business. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but early Greek translations used “ecclesia” to refer to religious gatherings of Israel (Judges 20:2, “The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of God's people” is one example of “ecclesia” in the Old Testament).

“Ecclesia” became the word of choice to describe the church in the earliest years of Christianity. Dr. Shirley Guthrie, in his book, *Christian Doctrine*, stressed that the “church is a community of people who...are called out of the world to be God’s people. The purpose of their coming together is twofold. First, it is to receive God’s judging, forgiving, renewing grace. Second, it is to be sent out to be agents of God’s judgment, forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in the world.”¹

Paul used the word “ecclesia” in his New Testament letters, but his favorite description of the church was a human body. We are all parts of the same body, which is the body of Christ.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

¹ Guthrie, Shirley C., Jr., *Christian Doctrine*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, rev. ed., 1994), p. 353

Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church

Colossians teaches us that Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). This is one of the foundation statements in our church's constitution, or Book of Order. In its first page it states, "God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body" (F-1.0201) Jesus Christ *is* Head of the Church. We affirm this truth in our creeds and confessions, in the way we govern ourselves, in the way we come together as members of his body to worship him. We serve his church because of our love for, faith in and allegiance to him. All forms of government, of order, and of life itself flow from him, and can only exist under his judgment.

The Signs of the Church

We have noted that the New Testament used the Greek word "ecclesia" for referencing the church. This word was long used as a term for any gathering. How is the church different from any other gathering? From the times of the Protestant Reformation, we have believed that there were three signs that mark a Church. These are stated in the Book of Confessions, Scots Confession Chapter XVIII, and also set forth in the Foundation section of the Book of Order, F 1.0303.

1. *The Word is truly preached and proclaimed.*
2. *The Sacraments are rightly administered.*
3. *Ecclesiastical Discipline is administered.*

The Great Ends of the Church

We sometimes talk about the purpose of the church as "the great ends of the church."

- *"the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;*
- *the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;*
- *the maintenance of divine worship;*
- *the preservation of the truth;*
- *the promotion of social righteousness; and*
- *the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world."*

These words set forth the true mission of our church. These words also become part of your job description as an officer of the congregation. You need to support, strengthen and implement each of these Great Ends, both individually and as part of the Session or Board of Deacons.

The Ways of Governing a Church

There are basically only three ways to operate and govern a church – Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian.

The Episcopal form of government takes their name from the Greek word, “episcopos,” which means “bishop.” We find this form of government used in the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches. Here the power of authority comes from above and moves downward, from Pope or a council of bishops to bishops to priests.

The Congregational form of government puts all power in the hands of the people. Theoretically everyone votes on every issue on every occasion. In practice, such churches often have a board of deacons or trustees to handle many issues, but the congregation can still seek to vote on any particular matter. The Baptist family of churches is a good example of a congregational church.

The Presbyterian form of government is one that is democratic and representative. Have you ever wondered how the Presbyterian Church got its name? The word “Presbyterian” comes from the Greek word “Presbuteros,” which means “elder.” This word frequently appears in the New Testament in references to church leaders. In the Presbyterian Church, the congregation elects a representative body of presbyters, or elders, to serve on a session.

The Presbyterian Principles of Church Order

The Presbyterian Church has long held to certain principles of church order. These are set forth and explained in the Foundation section of the Book of Order.

- 1. God Is Lord of the Conscience.** We consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable.
- 2. Corporate Judgment.** We are not ruled by individuals, but by a corporate body in which we discern God’s will through the voice of the community working together.
- 3. Officers.** We believe that God raises up men and women like you to be officers of the church, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline.
- 4. Truth and Goodness.** Belief and action go hand in hand. The truth we believe must be demonstrated by the goodness of our actions, according to our Savior’s rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”
- 5. Mutual Forbearance.** Men and women of good character and principles may differ. It is the duty of all Christians, but especially of officers in the church, to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.
- 6. Election by the People.** We do not appoint officers through the actions of the pastor, church staff, committee of the church or even the Session. The people of the congregation elect these officers.
- 7. Church Power** The decisions of the church are to be made on the basis of God’s will revealed in Scripture. It must be understood that all exercise of church power is made by people who are fallible.

- 8. The Value of Ecclesiastical Discipline** There are times when a council of the church, such as the presbytery or the session, must consider the actions of one or more of the members under their care and authority. The rules for discipline are set forth to investigate inappropriate conduct and to correct errors.

The Principles of Church Government

The Presbyterian Church has, since 1797, subscribed to principles of Presbyterian Government. They are listed and explained in the Foundation section of the Book of Order, F-3.02.

- 1. One Church.** The term “church” not only refers to a particular congregation, but also to all of the congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) which constitutes one church.
- 2. Governed by Presbyters** This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders. Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Teaching elders shall be committed in all their work to equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.
- 3. Gathered in Councils.** Elders come together in councils. The local council of a congregation is called a session. The council of a regional body (usually made up of several counties) is called a presbytery. The next council is that of the synod, which is made up of a large area, often containing several states. The highest council is the national level, which we call the General Assembly.
- 4. Seek and Represent the Will of Christ.** The work of the officers can be expressed as a simple pair of tasks. Seek God’s will and do it. This is often made complicated because we sometimes seek our will or confuse our will with God’s. We must always be careful.
- 5. Decision by Majority Vote** Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.
- 6. Review and Control.** We work together as a church. Every council’s actions are reviewed by the higher council. The minutes of the local session are reviewed annually by a committee of its presbytery. The higher court has right of review and control over a lower one.
- 7. Ordination by Council Presbyters.** An officer of the church is not the same as an officer on a Board of Trustees of a charity. Our officers are ordained, and we all have the same ordination (though with some variations of vows). Only by the authority of a council are officers ordained. Ruling elders and deacons are ordained by the local church’s session. Pastors and teaching elders are ordained by the presbytery. Ordination is not in the local church, however, but in the Presbyterian Church, USA.
- 8. Shared Power, Exercised Jointly.** Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.
- 9. General Authority of Councils.** Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.

Chapter 4

The History of the Church

Most people look at church history in two main parts. Part one is the Book of Acts in the New Testament, in which we learn about first century church. The next part begins when your local congregation was founded. In between is about 2,000 years of mystery. There are several good reasons that an officer should know something about the history of the Christian Church.

1. **It shows how God has been at work in the church and the world.**
2. **It explains why there are so many different denominations.**
3. **It clarifies what we believe.**

What is presented here is a very simple review of a vastly complex and interesting history of God's people. To keep this simple, think of the church as having six great periods:

1. **The Apostolic Age** (From the Pentecost experience in AD 30 until the death of the last living Apostle, John, in AD 100)
2. **The Persecuted Age** (From the death of John to the Edit of Constantine in 313)
3. **The Imperial Age** (From the Edit of Constantine to the Fall of Rome in 476)
4. **The Medieval Age** (From the Fall of Rome to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453)
5. **The Reformed Age** (From the Fall of Constantinople to the first Presbyterian minister in America in 1683)
6. **The Modern Age** (From the work of the first Presbyterian minister in America until today).

1

The Apostolic Age

A.D. 30- 100

The history of the church begins with Jesus Christ. He is the head and founder of Christian Church. When Peter confessed his faith that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” in Matthew 16, Jesus announced, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

After Christ's resurrection and ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church at Pentecost, the church continued for the remainder of the first century under the leadership of the Apostles. St. Peter and St. Paul and other Apostles carried the Good News and the church throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean World. More than spreading geographically, the church spread across cultural and racial lines. On the Day of Pentecost, all Christians were Jews, but almost immediately the church opened itself to people of every race and nation.

Acts 6 and 7 tell the story of the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, who was stoned to death. What led to his death was his sermon in which he declared Christ was savior not only for

the Jews, but also for all nations and races. The Council at Jerusalem finalized an agreement that Christianity was for Gentiles as well as Jews (Acts 15). We have an excellent record in the Book of Acts concerning the work of St. Paul and his missionary journeys.

One of the most important developments during this period was the writing of Scripture. At the time of the Council at Jerusalem in A.D. 50, none of the New Testament books had been written. By A.D. 68, a large part of the New Testament was in circulation, including the gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke, the epistles of Paul, James and Peter. These were soon followed by the final New Testament writings, Hebrews, the Gospel and epistles of John, the letter of Jude and the book of Revelation.

The last Apostle to die was probably John, around A.D. 100. Unlike others who suffered martyrdom, John died a peaceful death as an elderly Christian. Legend says that this last Apostle was often invited to preach in the church of Ephesus. This man could have told stories about Jesus not recorded in the written Gospels. He could have remembered unrecorded miracles. Instead, his simple sermon was similar to his words in his epistles, "Little children, love one another."

2

The Persecuted Church

100-313

After the death of the Apostle John, the church entered a long period of persecution. There had already been some persecutions. The Book of Acts tells us about the first martyr, St. Stephen. Emperor Nero persecuted Christians in A.D. 64 as a way of diverting people's criticism of him. Emperor Domitian began a second persecution in A.D. 90. But through the second century and into the third century, persecution was fairly constant.

These attempts to destroy the church did not succeed. While persecutions caused great suffering, the church not only endured but also continued to develop in two important ways.

- 1. Formation of the New Testament Canon.** The writings of the New Testament were completed during the Apostolic Period, but they were not considered inspired Scripture until much later. The Canon of the New Testament, determining what was or was not Scripture, evolved over a period of many years. Hebrews, James, II Peter and Revelation were accepted in the East, but rejected in the West. On the other hand, some books not now considered as Scripture were widely considered divinely inspired – the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, and the Apocalypse of Peter. The councils that were held from time to time did not choose the books to form the canon, but rather ratified the choice already made among the churches. Marcion is often considered to be the first of the church's heretics. He taught that the God of the New Testament was a different deity than the God of the Old Testament; that Christ was not born of a woman but simply and suddenly appeared as a grown man; and that the only God-inspired portion of the Bible included Luke and Paul's letters.
- 2. Schools of Theology.** Greater and greater emphasis was placed on correct belief and doctrine. Three great schools of theology arose at Alexandria, in Asia Minor and in North Africa. Each school had great teachers who produced the earliest writings of Christian scholarship. Clement of Alexandria produced several books in defense of

Christianity against paganism. Origen was the greatest of the Alexandrian school, writing on a wide variety of subjects. The school in Asia Minor was not confined to any one center but consisted of a group of theological teachers, the greatest of which was Irenaeus, who combined the skill of the evangelist with the skill of a scholarly writer. The school in North Africa was at Carthage and it did more than either of the other schools to shape the theological thought in Europe. Its two greatest teachers were Tertullian and Cyprian.

3

THE IMPERIAL CHURCH

313-476

In A.D. 305, the Emperor Diocletian abdicated. Four aspirants after the imperial crown engaged in war. The two most powerful rivals were Maxentius and Constantine, whose armies met in battle at the Milvian Bridge in 312. Maxentius represented the old heathen, persecuting element. Constantine was friendly to the Christians, although at that time he was not yet a professed believer. He claimed to have seen in the sky a shining cross bearing the motto, “Hoc Signo Vincas” – “By this sign thou shalt conquer.” He adopted this as the standard of his army. The victory was with Constantine and Maxentius was drowned in the river. Soon afterward, in 313, Constantine issued his Edict of Toleration, which officially put an end to the persecutions. Constantine became the sole emperor in 323, bringing Christianity in full favor throughout the Roman Empire.

There were many benefits to the legalization of Christianity.

1. Persecutions of Christians ended.
2. Christianity experienced incredible growth.
3. Churches buildings were restored and re-opened.
4. Churches became the recipient of public funds.
5. Privileges were bestowed on the clergy, including exemption from taxation and being above many of the civil laws. This advantage later developed into an evil for both the church and state.
6. Observance of Sunday as a weekly holy day. In 312 Constantine forbade the courts from being held on Sunday. Soldiers were commanded to omit their daily military exercises on the Sabbath.
7. Crucifixion was abolished. While state executions continued, Constantine did not want to continue to use what had become a symbol of Christ to be used as a method of inflicting suffering and death.
8. Infanticide was discouraged and repressed. Throughout all the former history of Rome, any unwelcomed infant might be smothered or thrown out of the home to be left exposed. Some people made a business of gathering abandoned infants to raise as slaves. Christianity imparted a sacredness to all human life.
9. Slavery was modified to become more humane. Legal rights were given to them.
10. Gladiatorial games were suppressed. The games lingered in many communities until 404, when the monk Telemachus leaped into the arena and begged the killing to stop. He was slain, but from that time the killing of people for the enjoyment of a crowd ceased.
11. There was time for theological clarity. Specifically, the church was able to address and clarify three important doctrines: the nature of the Trinity, the nature of Christ, and the

nature of salvation.

4

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

476-1453

In 476, the German Odoacer deposed the last emperor to rule from Rome. What is significant for us is that while Rome fell, the Church endured.

Pope Gregory I, The Great

With the fall of Rome in 476, we move from the Period of the Imperial Church to the Medieval Church. During this time the power of the bishop of the city of Rome, or the Pope, grew and developed. The growth of papal power began with Gregory I, “the Great” (590-604). Several things were significant about his papacy.

1. There was a growing power struggle between the bishops of the cities of Constantinople and Rome. Gregory successfully withstood the claim of the Patriarch, or Bishop of Constantinople, for the title of Universal Bishop, or earthly leader of the Church.
2. He developed the doctrine of the adoration of images.
3. He developed the doctrine of purgatory.
4. He developed the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the belief that in the mass or communion, the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the veritable body and blood of Christ.
5. He was a strong advocate of the monastic life, having himself been a monk.

Separation of Greek and Latin Churches

A great division in the Christian Church occurred in 1054 between what is now called the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East. There were some doctrinal differences between the two groups.

1. The Roman Catholic, or Latin Church, taught that the “Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son.*” The Greek Church left out “and the Son.”
2. Marriage of priests was forbidden in the Latin Church but expected in the Greek Church.
3. In the mass, the Latin Church used unleavened bread or wafers, while common bread was used in the Greek Church.
4. The practice of fasting on Saturday arose in the Latin Church, but never in the Greek Church (the Roman Catholic Church later changed the fast day to Friday, the day of the Lord’s crucifixion).
5. The primary cause for the split had to do with power – was it the bishop of Rome (the Pope) who was the church’s Universal Bishop, or was it the bishop of Constantinople (the Patriarch)?

Beginnings of Reforms

During the Medieval Period, there was a growing need to reform the church. A handful of great movements arose, but each was repressed with bloody persecution. This was the time of John Wyclif, whose greatest work was the translation of the Bible into English. John Huss was another early reformer who believed very strongly that all church doctrines should be based on Scripture. Huss was condemned and put to death in 1415.

The Reformed Church

1453-1683

Martin Luther and the Birth of the Reformation

What early reformers such as Huss and Wyclif were trying to accomplish was given new power in 1456, when Gutenberg invented a process for mass-producing printed books using a press with movable type. Books would no longer require tedious hand copying or cost a year's salary. The first book to be printed was the Bible. With the Scriptures now in the hands of common people, many began to realize that the church had departed from its New Testament roots.

The demand for reforms in the church increased when Pope Leo X permitted an agent named John Tetzel to go through Germany selling Indulgences, signed by the pope himself, purporting to bestow the pardon of all sins of the living and their families. Tetzel told people "As soon as your coin clinks in the chest, the souls of your friends will rise out of purgatory to heaven."

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg. These were simply ninety-five brief statements, most of which dealing with the sale of Indulgences.

Luther was a scholarly monk and teacher. Early in his life, he was very devoted to the Roman Church. His studies led him to an appreciation and understanding of Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

After many controversies and debates, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther in June, 1520. Luther met this with defiance by publicly burning the pope's decree (called a bull, from the Latin word *bullā*, "a seal" referring to the pope's seal on the document). The burning of the papal bull marked Luther's final renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1521, Luther was summoned before the Supreme Council of the German rulers, meeting at Worms on the Rhine. He said he could not retract anything except what was disproved by Scripture or reason, saying "Here I stand; I can do naught else. God help me. Amen." Luther continued to preach and teach. He wrote hymns in the language of the people and translated the Bible into German.

John Calvin

John Calvin prepared for the priesthood as a young man, but then changed his direction to study for a career in law. He also changed his direction as he moved from the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation movement, desiring a faith that more closely resembled the faith he read about in Scripture. Calvin himself helped change the direction of history as he became one of the most remembered and respected leaders of the Reformation. His *Institutes of*

the Christian Religion was published in 1536, when Calvin was only 26 years old. It has become the standard of Protestant theology. Because of the importance of his writings and teachings, John Calvin is often considered to be the “father of Presbyterianism.”

The Reformation in Scotland -- John Knox

John Knox was born in Scotland and was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest. He joined the Protestant Reformers and eventually traveled to Geneva three times to study under John Calvin. Mary, Queen of Scots, was a faithful Roman Catholic and she and Knox each tried to convert the other. At one point Mary is said to have remarked, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”

Knox wrote the Scots Confession with five colleagues in 1560. It is one of the documents in the Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

The Legacy of The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation did not start as a movement to split the Christian Church. It sought to reform the church because of significant doctrinal problems.

1. **Salvation by Grace.** The sale of Indulgences was a low point in Christianity. Pope Leo X saw this as a way of funding the construction of St. Peter’s Cathedral and it was later rejected by the Roman Catholic Church. Indulgences had a positive contribution, however, in that it raised an awareness of our dependence on the grace and mercy of God for our salvation.
2. **The Authority of Scripture.** One of the mottos of the Protestant Reformation was “sola Scriptura,” or “Scripture alone.” This is not to be misunderstood as a rejection of what we can learn from church traditions and human reason. However, in the Protestant Reformation, no doctrine is accepted without evidence from Scripture. For this reason, Protestants have continued to reject certain important Roman Catholic doctrines, including the adoration of saints and the existence of purgatory.
3. **The Priesthood of all Believers.** Peter tells us in his epistle that God has called us all to a priesthood (I Peter 2:5-9). Martin Luther and other Reformers understood this to mean that every believer is a priest who is responsible for himself and for his neighbor before God. No priest can answer for any human being. Luther broke down the divisions between laity and clergy.
4. **How Understanding of the Sacraments.** There are seven Sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church, but only two in the Protestant Reformation. The Lord’s Supper and baptism are considered sacraments by both Roman Catholic and Protestant, while Catholics also consider matrimony, confirmation, penance, extreme unction, and ordination to be sacraments. There is also a difference in the way baptism and the Lord’s Supper is viewed. In the Presbyterian Church, baptism is for children or adults, while some Protestant groups reserve baptism until a person is an adult and is able to make a profession of faith. There are also important differences in how we regard the Lord’s Supper and who we understand Christ’s presence in the Sacrament.

6
The Modern Age
1683-Present

As we are Presbyterians, we will focus our attention on that particular branch of the Reformation.

Presbyterianism was born in Europe as part of the Protestant Reformation. It was brought to America as immigrants settled in the New World. It is hard to determine where the first Presbyterian congregation was established in America. Some researchers believe it may have been in Jamaica, Long Island, in 1672.

Francis Mackemie is considered the first Presbyterian minister in America. An Ulster Scot, he was ordained in Ireland in 1683. He came to America at the age of 25 and started a “tentmaking” ministry, meaning he had to take up secular work in order to provide for the expenses of his ministry. As a circuit rider, he organized Presbyterian congregations on the eastern shore of Maryland.

Mackemie went to England in 1704 to recruit other Presbyterian clergy to join him in America. When he returned, he gathered a group of seven ministers and several elders for the purpose of constituting the first Presbytery in America. This meeting, held about 1706 (we don’t have a clear record of the date and place of the meeting), was the beginning of organized Presbyterianism in America.

The first General Assembly was convened in Philadelphia in 1788, and the denomination’s constitution was written with a republican and representative form of government. Some of the same authors of the church’s constitution remained in Philadelphia to work on the writing of the United States Constitution the following year.

The history of Presbyterians has involved many conflicts and splits in the church, but none so great, perhaps, as that brought by the Civil War. The church split into Union and Southern groups, resulting in new denominations. Reunions and mergers took many years, and some groups united in 1870 and others in 1957. The last two large groups to reunite occurred on June 10, 1983, when the mostly southern Presbyterian Church in the United States, or PCUS, merged with the mostly northern United Presbyterian Church USA, to become the Presbyterian Church, USA.

Chapter 5

The History of Our Local Congregation

by Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

In 1946, Orlando, along with the rest of America, was celebrating the end of the war and looking forward to the challenges of a peaceful future. In southeast Orlando, in what was known as the Conway area, there were no Christian churches. Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church was born because families wanted the strengthening influence of a Christian church in their neighborhood.

Since its first meeting in 1946 and its organization as a church in 1947, Grace Covenant's congregation has been served by six pastors, three associate pastors and two parish associates. Families first met and worshipped in a private home, then in a chapel erected from a surplus army metal building, then in a sanctuary and education building, and finally in the campus that exists today. From 63 members at the end of 1947, the congregation has grown to over 700 communicants today.

Commemorating its 50th anniversary in 1997, the church published a journal compiled by Jean Combs. It is the source of the information for the following history, which highlights pastoral leadership and representative programs and ministries over the years:

Initially, a Sunday School was established in the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Smith at the corner of Kaley and Bumby Streets. The first meeting was held on May 26, 1946 and was led by teachers provided by First Presbyterian Church of Orlando. Sunday classes continued in the Smith home during the succeeding months.

Attendance grew steadily and within one year, class members requested and were granted permission to organize as Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. Land was purchased at the corner of Conway (now Curry Ford Road) and Jessamine Street (pronounced "Jasmine") and a surplus army metal building was erected for the Chapel. Sunday School was at 9:30 a.m. and Worship Services at 7:30 p.m.

Initial pastoral leadership was provided by Rev. Jack Powell, assistant pastor at First Presbyterian, who served the congregation as its stated supply from 1947 to 1949. During these years, the church's Sunday School continued to grow, Sunday evening worship services were held, and church membership reached 62. By 1949, a decision was made to replace the metal Chapel structure. Construction of a new Sanctuary started on February 27, 1949, with the laying of the cornerstone, and the building was completed later that year.

After Rev. Powell left, Grace Covenant and the John Knox church of Orlando together called Rev. Hugh C. Hamilton, who divided his time between them between 1949 and 1951. During his ministry, women's circles were established, a Young People's Society and Men's

Club were formed, and the music ministry established. John Knox Church also was growing and Rev. Hamilton accepted a call to minister to that congregation full time.

Rev. George C. Hayward followed Rev. Hamilton, serving from 1951 to 1955. In succeeding years, a stewardship tithing program was started, Boy Scout Troop 23 was sponsored, membership increased to over 200 communicants, the church became self-supporting and no longer needed presbytery's financial aid, and construction of an Education wing was started.

H. Halouk Fikret was Grace Covenant's minister from 1956 to 1963. Rev. Fikret was born a Muslim, converted to Christianity after moving to and attending college in Scotland, and later came to Orlando, where he attended and was ordained an elder in Park Lake church. As a layman of "unusual merits," he was ordained as a minister under church law at that time.

During Rev. Fikret's tenure, the church celebrated its 10th anniversary, a kindergarten school was formed, the church library was opened, the Boy Scout troop was reorganized, mission support was increased, and air conditioning was added to the Sanctuary. Sunday evening worship was discontinued and replaced by two morning worship services, and new by-laws were approved.

Next called was Dr. Donald T. DeBevoise, who served from 1963 to 1981 and who led the church through many significant moves in areas of Christian education, membership, worship, development and support, and benevolences. Increases in membership and program needs led to the decision to move the church and, in July 1968, five acres costing \$10,000 were purchased on Peel Avenue.

Construction on a Social/Education building and new Sanctuary was started in December, 1969, and on September 13, 1970, the new Sanctuary was dedicated to the glory of God. Additional expansion of the campus occurred nine years later with completion of Memorial Hall. Later in this chapter we will describe the merger of Grace Covenant with Orlando's Conway Presbyterian Church, the expansion of Grace Covenant's campus as a result of the merger, and our memorialization of the ministry of Orlando's former John Calvin Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Robert L. Eckard was called to serve the church in 1982. During his ministry, mission and programs expanded and strengthened, outreach extended, lay leadership increased, volunteer participation continued, and campus improvements were completed.

During Dr. Eckard's leadership, Conway Hall was completed and dedicated. This coincided with his decision to retire, which became effective June 30, 2011. Following his retirement, Dr. John Cole, recently senior pastor of Christ Church of Ormond Beach, Florida, was called to serve as interim senior pastor during the search for Dr. Eckard's successor, assuming his position on July 1, 2011 and serving until January, 2013. The search for Dr. Eckard's successor was successfully completed with the call by the congregation to Dr. W. Maynard Pittendreigh, who was installed as senior pastor and head of staff on February 10, 2013.

Church growth required the calling of an associate pastor for the first time, and Rev. William Bruce Bailey served ably from 1986 to 1996. He was followed by Rev. Diane Knauf, who served until 2004, when she accepted a call to a church in Pennsylvania. Succeeding Rev. Knauf was Rev. Derek Davenport who accepted his call as associate pastor in November 2005.

Rev. Davenport served until October 2010 when he was called to a position with Pittsburg Theological Seminary.

Merger with Conway Presbyterian Church

In 2007, members of the session of Orlando's Conway Presbyterian Church contacted Dr. Eckard as they were considering options for the future of their church. Resulting discussions led to the decision to ask Central Florida Presbytery to form an Administrative Commission that year to study a possible merger of the two congregations and make recommendations considering approval of it.

The presbytery commission unanimously recommended approval. After both congregations unanimously gave their approval, they began worshipping together in March, 2008. Conditions of the merger included assumption of and responsibility for Conway's Small Blessings Child Care Center (SBCCC), a self-sustaining ministry for preschoolers that has been active for over 25 years. The congregations were officially joined together and the merger was finalized during a worship service on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 2010.

Coincidentally with these events, Grace Covenant's Long Range Planning Committee had completed a study that recommended a building program for additional physical facilities, which was implemented by the merger in the design, capital fund raising, financing, construction, and completion of a new building on Grace Covenant's campus, Conway Hall.

John Calvin Presbyterian Church

At the about the same time that Grace Covenant and Conway were merging, another sister church was going through some changes. John Calvin Presbyterian Church closed its doors on October 25, 2009. Founded in 1961 under the organizing pastor of the Rev. Ridgley Hall, it was named after the theologian John Calvin at the request of the St. John's Presbytery, now known as Central Florida Presbytery.

When Orange County Public Schools bought the church property for the Oak Ridge High School expansion project, the church had been struggling for several years. They thought long and hard with whether to relocate, merge with another congregation, or to simply close. In a congregational meeting held on May 31, 2009, the church considered the motion from its Session appointed Task Force: "The Session of the John Calvin Presbyterian Church recommends to the congregation of JCPC that it relocate to a yet to be determined transitional location in the area that is bordered on the east by South Orange Avenue, on the north Sand Lake Road, on the south Osceola Parkway, and on the west by International Drive." The church voted 15 in favor and 23 against. The motion failed. Elder Leslie Benson then made a motion "to proceed with the plan for the dissolution of John Calvin Presbyterian Church after the sale of the JCPC property was finalized." The moderator of the meeting called for discussion, but there was none and the vote was taken. It was unanimous to close.

Since the church chose to close rather than to either continue or to merge, the property and funds of the church was transferred to the presbytery. These funds have been an important

part of the creation of new churches in the area. It was the wish of the church that the funds would be used to start new churches, including one in east Orange county. The presbytery honored that request by taking the following action at a presbytery meeting on April 13, 2010. The action of the presbytery was to distribute the funds as follows:

- a. Final payment of all financial obligations of the church
- b. Reimbursement of any funds disbursed by the presbytery on behalf of the congregation during or after the dissolution process.
- c. The majority of remaining funds to be used in the development of at least one new church in east Orange County.
- d. Up to \$700,000 to be used as a revolving loan fund for the support of new church development.
- e. Distribution of funds by the Board of Directors will occur following consideration of recommendations resulting from consultation between Church Development Committee and the Finance Committee.

Hope Presbyterian in Lake Nona is the fulfilment of “part c.” The Nacion Santa NCD was also funded out of the Outreach Fund from 2011-2015.

Presbytery has also made a loan plus a matching grant to New Hope Presbyterian Church (the former Conway property). This was around \$250,000 total. The loan came out of “part d.”

To respond to “part e” several ministries have been funded by Church Development. Grants have varied, between \$7,500, \$25,000, and \$40,000.

- Restauracion y Esperanza, Amadeo Torres, Grace Covenant
- Putnam Memorial NCD, Eme Asztalos, Daytona Beach
- The Missing Peace, Katy Steinberg, Ormond Beach/Daytona Beach
- Anchor Point (The Lifeboat Project), Jill Bolander Cohen, Apopka
- Somang Presbyterian Ministry, Steve Lim, First Kissimmee

It is amazing how the work started and carried on by the John Calvin members continues to do good things for the Kingdom of God here in Central Florida.

The members of John Calvin Presbyterian Church disbursed to four different congregations. Initially, one member went to Wekiva Presbyterian Church; one went to St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, 27 went to First Presbyterian Church of Kissimmee, and 27 came to Grace Covenant.

Three Churches Coming Together

In a worship service on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 2010, three churches celebrated coming together as one congregation – Grace Covenant, Conway and John Calvin Presbyterian Churches.

Conway Hall is named for the church that merged with Grace Covenant. Inside Conway you will find the stained-glass windows of their building, which is now used by a Brazilian congregation of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

John Calvin Memorial Hall was renamed in honor of the members of John Calvin Presbyterian Church. Many of their memorabilia are found on the second floor of this building.

The Work with Orlando Presbyterian Church²

First Presbyterian Church voted to leave the Presbyterian Church, USA, in 2013. A remnant of those wishing to remain with the denomination formed the Orlando Presbyterian Church. Linda Jaberg served as the organizing pastor/interim pastor until the church called its first pastor, David Jones, in late 2014.

Orlando Presbyterian Church initially met on the campus at Park Lake Presbyterian Church. As the 14-member St. John's Presbyterian Church was moving toward closing in late 2015, Presbytery offered Orlando Presbyterian the property of the St. John's church. At about that time, Park Lake was undergoing some renovations in their sanctuary, requiring Orlando Presbyterian Church to move. For a short time, they went to Washington Shores Presbyterian and in November, 2015, they moved to the campus of Grace Covenant Presbyterian. In the spring of 2016, Orlando Presbyterian Church made the decision not to accept the property of St. John's. The congregation continued to meet for 5:00 Sunday afternoon worship at Grace Covenant.

When David Jones left the Orlando Presbyterian Church in mid-2016 to accept a call to a church in Georgia, Dr. Pittendreigh was asked by the Presbytery to serve as the moderator of the OPC session. Different pastors provided worship leadership each week.

In late 2016, the session asked Presbytery to provide an Administrative Commission to help the congregation discern its future. By mid-2016, the Administrative Commission recommended closing the congregation, which at this time had a membership of about 30 people. The Session was divided on this matter and decided to continue and to evaluate their progress by setting forth benchmarks for attendance and finances. At the same time, Presbytery approved Dr. Pittendreigh to serve as the Stated Supply Pastor.

The Grace Covenant session was very open to Dr. Pittendreigh serving two congregations for a period of time and embraced this as a mission of outreach to a sister church. Elders committed themselves to supporting the sister church through occasional attendance at the OPC worship. Dr. Pittendreigh began serving Orlando Presbyterian Church in July, 2017.

A second Administrative Commission was formed to not only recommend a future course of action for Orlando Presbyterian Church, but also to help implement it. Presbytery gave this

² This section regarding Orlando Presbyterian Church was added after the death of Elder Jack Shirek and was written with input from pastors Maynard Pittendreigh and David Jones.

second Commission the ability to make the decision about closing the congregation without further approval from the congregation.

Orlando Presbyterian Church worked diligently to grow and to become self-sustaining, but with little success. By the time the Administrative Commission announced on July 29, 2018, that OPC would be closing, all of the members were accepting of this decision. The final service of Orlando Presbyterian Church was held on August 26, 2018.

Orlando Presbyterian did not seek merger with Grace Covenant because it did not feel it had enough members to make a merger meaningful. Most members moved to Grace Covenant with some going to Park Lake Presbyterian Church.

Chapter 6

Our Campus

Every officer should be familiar with the facilities on our church campus. If you have not already done so, you will want to tour the entire facility. Many people may never have been in the Small Blessings Child Care or in the Youth Rooms.

Grace Covenant Church is located on approximately five acres on Peel Street, just south of Curry Ford Road. Four separate structures enclose the central area, with the Sanctuary on the west as the base, Smith Hall forming the north arm, Conway Hall the east arm, and John Calvin Memorial Hall the south arm. All are joined by exterior covered walkways. Smith and John Calvin Halls contain Sunday school space and meeting rooms, with church offices located on the second floor of John Calvin Hall. Floor plans of these buildings are shown in the Exhibits.

The Sanctuary

The main floor of the Sanctuary contains seating for approximately 450 persons, with the Choir located behind the pulpit area. A small room next to the south side of the pulpit area contains facilities for preparation of the elements for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The area above the Narthex houses the Choir Room, rest rooms, and a room where, during the worship hour, parents may take babies who are irritable or excited.

Stained Glass Windows

When the Sanctuary was constructed in 1970, the cost of stained glass windows was prohibitive. An alternative was found in the use of printed fiberglass panels and these were installed. Over time, however, the colors faded and the base material deteriorated.

In the late 1980s, John and Dee Branca, a couple retired from the stained-glass business, joined the church and offered to teach members to construct stained glass windows. Members responded, learned the technique, constructed a new window of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and installed it in April, 1988.

Over ten years later, at the initiative of Bud and Anna Marie Wilson, a group was formed and trained to construct replacements for the six side windows in the Sanctuary. The work was completed and the stained-glass windows were installed in August, 2001.

The overall theme of the six windows is of the Spirit of God working through Jesus Christ in the church and world. They are symbolic and are designed to be viewed beginning at

the front right of the Sanctuary, continuing clockwise, and finishing at the front left. The first window depicts Advent/Christmas. The second window follows the theme of Lent. Easter is the joyous theme of the third window. The fourth window depicts the great day of Pentecost. The fifth window symbolizes the time of the Church, the time in which we live. The final window celebrates the Kingdom of God.⁸

Smith Hall

Smith Hall is named for A. E. Smith, who was an early leader in the church and was instrumental in funding the construction of this building in 1969. At one time, this was the social hall and housed the offices for the church staff. The first floor of Smith Hall presently contains space for the nursery, toddlers, preschoolers, the Computer Cave, classrooms, and the church library. The second floor has rooms utilized for various purposes, including church school classes on Sundays.

Conway Hall

Conway Hall contains the Small Blessings Child Care Center on its north side and church-related facilities for Grace Covenant's program and outreach in the remaining area.

SBCCC houses state-of-the-art pre-school classrooms, plus ancillary facilities including kitchen space and play areas.

The main structure has a full-sized gym area that is suitable for basketball, volleyball, and other exercise-related functions. Shower rooms are available. The space also may be used for large gatherings and programs (see below). The adjacent youth area has space for various activities.

The reception area and an adjacent full commercial kitchen are located in the west side of the main structure. Uses include special chapel services, wedding receptions, or other special functions. A folding partition at the rear of this area opens into the gym area, thus allowing expansion of the reception area when needed for larger gatherings.

John Calvin Memorial Hall

In October 2009, Orlando's John Calvin Presbyterian Church was dissolved because its property was taken for use by a high school. Acting on a recommendation by Dr. Eckard, our session voted unanimously to perpetuate that church's long ministry by naming our Memorial Hall in its honor. Articles of memorabilia, including John Calvin's sanctuary cross, have been placed in appropriate Grace Covenant locations. John Calvin Memorial Hall's first floor comprises a large meeting room, supported by an adjoining kitchen, rest rooms, and storage space. During the week, a ministry to senior citizens is maintained in this area. The second floor contains offices for the pastors and church staff, conference rooms, workspaces, rest rooms, a small kitchenette, and storage rooms. Sunday classes also are held in several rooms and areas.

It also is important that a significant number of the John Calvin congregation were welcomed as new members of the Grace Covenant family. Many of them have offered their

talents in support of our mission and outreach, now serving as valued ruling elders and deacons, as well as active members of several committees and the choir.

Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden is an area in the courtyard that has been set aside as a place of worship, fellowship and prayer. Thus, it provides a setting for quiet meditation and prayer, for the joy of weddings and other worship services, and for the remembrance of those who have passed from this life to eternal life with the Lord. For those who wish to do so, the placement of cremated remains of Grace Covenant Church members and/or their immediate families is welcomed and encouraged. Oversight of this act and use of the Garden is through the guidance of the pastors and the Building and Grounds Committee.

Chapter 7

Presbyterian Government

by
Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

There is significance in the name of our denomination, which is derived from the Greek word *presbuteros*, a word that means “elder.” Lingle and Kuykendall, after pointing out that the word occurs many times in both the Old and New Testaments, say, “Literally speaking, then, a ‘Presbyterian’ church is a church governed by ‘elders,’ or, if we expand a bit, it is a church with a representative form of government by elders elected by the people.”³

Another author describes us by saying, “Our form of government is a representative democracy in which the people of the congregation elect elders and other officers to make the administrative and spiritual decisions for the congregation.”⁴

Presbyterian Government

As we begin our discussion about the Presbyterian form of church government, we need to emphasize that it and our denominational beliefs all are based on Scriptural truths:

The first chapter of the *Westminster Confession* clearly affirms our belief that the Bible is the written Word of God:

“...therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times and in diverse manners, to reveal himself, and to declare his will unto his Church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church...to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary...”⁵

Furthermore, our *Larger Catechism* answers the question “What is the Word of God?” with the unequivocal statement, “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.”⁶

Also, the *Shorter Catechism* answers, “What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?” with “The Word of God which is contained in the

³ *Presbyterians, Their History and Beliefs (rev. ed.)*, pp. 12-13

⁴ Ward, William B., “Beliefs That Live” p. 59, as quoted in *The Work of the Church—Whose Responsibility? (rev. ed.)*, p. 21

⁵ *The Book of Confessions*, 6.001

⁶ *ibid.*, 7.113

Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us...”⁷

This scriptural foundation of our church government is affirmed in our *Book of Order*, which states “Christ gives to the Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its order and discipline. Scripture teaches us of Christ’s will for the Church, which is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

The *Book of Order* also affirms that “The government of this Church is representative, and the right of God’s people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the Church except by election of that body.”⁹ Thus, members of a church elect its ministers and elders to serve as the session. In turn, these officers select representatives to presbytery, and the presbytery elects commissioners to synod and the General Assembly.

Another facet of our government is that it expresses unity. The *Book of Order* affirms that “Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.”¹⁰ Also, “These councils shall come together in regular gradation.”¹¹ Additionally, the *Book of Order* states that “All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole Church performed by it through the appropriate council...”¹²

Presbyterian Councils

We have emphasized that our councils interrelate with each other. In the following sections, each of the bodies will be described, including their unique functions within the Presbyterian system and their relationships to and with each other. The councils are:

- **Session**, of a local congregation
- **Presbytery**, of several congregations working together in a small region
- **Synod**, of several presbyteries working together in a large region
- **General Assembly**, which is the national level of our church.

The Role of the Congregation

The congregation has some responsibilities and authority but is not actually a council. The *Book of Order* is specific that the responsibilities given to a congregation *do not* include governance.

When a meeting of the congregation is called, the business allowed to be transacted may be only

⁷ *ibid.*, 7.002

⁸ *Book of Order*, F-1.0203

⁹ *ibid.*, G-2.0102

¹⁰ *Book of Order.*, F-3.0208

¹¹ *ibid.*, F-3.0203

¹² *ibid.*, F-3.0203

ecclesiastical and/or corporate. Therefore, business is limited to the following:

1. electing ruling elders, deacons and trustees;
2. calling a pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor;
3. changing (with presbytery's approval) existing pastoral relationships, such as changing the pastors' terms of call or dissolving the call (of the pastoral relationship);
4. buying, mortgaging, or selling real property;
5. requesting the presbytery to grant an exemption as permitted in this Constitution (G-2,040).¹³

Remember, however, that even though the congregation's power is carefully defined, it is the wise session that keeps the members of the church fully informed as to program and work and involves as many of them as possible in both.

The Session

The session probably is the most significant council within our system simply because it is closest to the members of a particular church.

The session truly has an awesome responsibility in the life and work of the church. The *Book of Order* specifically affirms that it "...shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity in the world..."¹⁴ In other words, the session oversees the *total* life and work of the church, including all material, financial, and--most importantly--spiritual aspects.

The *Book of Order* specifically lists areas of responsibility and power for the session, including:

- providing for regular preaching of the Word;
- planning and leading efforts to reach out with the message of salvation;
- inviting persons to enter into a committed discipleship;
- planning and leading ministries of social healing;
- providing that the Sacraments are rightly administered and received;
- receiving and dismissing members; providing programs of nurture, education and fellowship;
- training and ordaining officers;
- managing the church's physical properties;
- managing stewardship and church finances,
- directing the ministry of deacons and others;
- and various administrative issues.¹⁵

¹³ *ibid.*, G-1.0503

¹⁴ *ibid.*, G-3.0201

¹⁵ *ibid.*, G-2.0301

Remember that “The Church’s ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God.”¹⁶ The work of the session is a partnership, not a dictatorship.

The Session and the Pastor

The pastor and the session are colleagues in ministry, working together for the good of the congregation. While the session together has authority over the programs of the work of the church, and hence much of the work of the pastor, the pastor is not subject to the will of the session beyond this “collegial authority.” The pastor is under the authority of the presbytery, not the local session. However, the working relationship needs to be one of strong collegial cooperation between the session and pastors.

The pastor is a member of the session, as is an associate pastor, with exactly the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as any ruling elder, **including the right to vote** on all matters.¹⁷ He or she is the moderator of the session and it may not meet without the pastor present. It is vital that there be a “presence of the presbytery” in all session meetings. However, in the pastor’s absence, the pastor may invite another minister member of presbytery to moderate the meeting. The *Book of Order* also provides methods by which presbytery can provide a moderator if circumstances require such action.¹⁸

What does this mean as a practical matter? First, it means that the pastor and associate pastor are a very real part of the session and have the right to voice their opinions and state their convictions on all issues coming before the session.

This *does not* mean that they should attempt to control the session, nor the session them, because the powers of the church are jointly exercised. What it *does* mean is that a pastor is in a unique and strategic position to contribute sound advice from a spiritual and biblical point of view. The session should use that advice well, weighing the value of it in terms of the pastor’s knowledge, concern, and experience. The advice can be helpful in the decision-making process.

There is another very important point to be made in this relationship. The session is a group that is closer to the pastor and associate pastors than any other in a church. Individually, and as a group, elders should offer to them their counsel, advice, friendship, compassion, and love.

The whole church should be supportive of the pastor because the success of the pastor means the success for the whole congregation. **You as elders and deacons, whether on the board or as officers in reserve, have a special duty to support the pastor.** How does one do this? A good way to start is with remembering the vows the congregation made at the

¹⁶ *Book of Order*, G-2.0101

¹⁷ *ibid.*, G-3.0201

¹⁸ *ibid.*, G-3.0104

installation of each pastor:¹⁹

1. ***Do we, the members of the church, accept [name] as our (associate) pastor, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ?*** In other words, you have accepted that for a period of time the pastors have been called by God to lead this congregation. Working with the pastors in this leadership is a very meaningful way to provide moral support and encouragement. When in disagreement with the pastors about the direction of the church, take these matters directly to the pastors, not to the congregation. If necessary, disagreements might go to the Personnel Committee or to the Session or even the Presbytery. Work to be constructive, not destructive, in working out disagreements.
2. ***Do we agree to pray for [her/him], to encourage [her/him], to respect [her/his] decisions, and to follow as [she/he] guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?*** In other words, make a note to pray daily for the pastors. He or she is certainly praying for each officer of the congregation. Giving encouraging words, speaking respectfully about the pastor in the presence of others, is a great way to support the pastors. Nothing is more discouraging to a pastor who hears through the grape vine that an ordained officer is speaking against or complaining about the pastor without coming face to face and speaking directly to the teaching elder.
3. ***Do we promise to pay [her/him] fairly and provide for [her/his] welfare as [she/he] works among us; to stand by [her/him] in trouble and share [her/his] joys? Will we listen to the Word [she/he] preaches, welcome [her/his] pastoral care, and honor [her/his] authority as [she/he] seeks to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?*** The salary is set at the time of the pastor's call, but it should be updated annually. Typically, the pastors receive an annual Cost of Living Adjustment, which is recommended by presbytery. Not receiving these salary increases can be discouraging to any person in any work place. All pastors occasionally need a friend to stand by him or her. Times of trouble may include illness, debt, spiritual struggles, divorce, death of a spouse or close relative or friend, or any number of other concerns. Sometimes the pastor needs a pastor. Your ordination vow obligates you to be a "friend to your colleagues in ministry."²⁰ Thankfully, sometimes this also means sharing the pastor's joys at the birth of a child, a marriage, or some personal accomplishment.

As one writer reminds us, "Your pastor carries a large responsibility upon his shoulders. Be quick to help, defend, uphold, and encourage him. As far as it is possible...offer your pastor a ministry of love, sympathy, understanding, and compassion to sustain and strengthen him in his ministry to the church. Be a pastor to your pastor...Most important, remember him daily in your prayers."²¹

¹⁹ Book of Order, W-4.0404i

²⁰ The Book of Order, G-4.0404e

²¹ *The Noble Task* (rev. ed.), pp. 23-24

The Session and the Congregation

Because of our representative form of government, some elders might believe that they should determine the wishes of church members on particular subjects before voting on them. This is actually a disguised form of congregationalism and therefore is counter to the very nature of Presbyterianism.

“To represent” means simply to act for or in place of. The elder will act most responsibly as the congregation’s representative when he or she takes actions that arise from personal faith and the desire to be obedient to will of Jesus Christ—even if the action seems counter to the majority of the congregation. You should, however, *listen* to views of the people in the pews!

This also applies when elders are elected as representatives to higher councils, such as presbytery and synod. The *Book of Order*, noting that individual officers shall have freedom of conscience, states that “His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church...”²²

Most importantly, elders not only represent the people, they represent Jesus Christ in his Church. Their decisions must be guided by this higher loyalty and representation. One of the reasons you are an elder is because of your sound judgment, and you should use that judgment in voting your sincere convictions.

The Presbytery

By *Book of Order* definition, a presbytery “is a corporate expression of the church within a certain district composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district.” When presbytery meets, ruling elders commissioned by a particular church’s session join teaching elders to consider and take action on presbytery business. Provision is made for larger churches to be represented by more than one commissioner.²³ For example, Grace Covenant elects three such commissioned representatives to meetings of Central Florida Presbytery.

Teaching elders (pastors) ordinarily are members of the presbytery in which their work is situated, not of the church or ministry to which they have been called. Each presbytery is required to develop written criteria for validating ministries within its bounds.²⁴

The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations. The *Book of Order* specifically lists areas of responsibility and power for the presbytery, including:

- the organizing, receiving, merging, dismissing, and dissolving congregations;
- overseeing congregations without pastors;
- establishing and dissolving pastoral relationships;

²² *Book of Order*, G-2.0105

²³ *ibid.*, G-3.0301

²⁴ *ibid.*, G-3.0306

- guiding preparation of those to become teaching elders;
- establishing and maintaining ecumenical relationships;
- providing guidance and resources to congregations regarding mission, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration;
- providing that the Sacraments are rightly administered and received in its district and exercising pastoral care to its member churches regarding the Sacraments;
- examining, ordaining, installing, and taking other actions when necessary with teaching elders;
- commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service;
- promoting peace and harmony in congregations and acting regarding disharmony;
- supporting and assisting congregations in their service and mission;
- bearing witness against error and immorality in their district;
- and serving in judicial matters.²⁵

In considering the relationship between the session and presbytery, elders should remember that the presbytery is not “*them*,” but is “*us*.” Committees that are made up of clergy and laypersons from individual churches within the presbytery itself administer presbytery’s work and mission.

Meetings of the Presbytery

The *Book of Order* provides that presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice each year; at times, special meetings may be called for specific purposes.²⁶ In larger presbyteries, stated meetings usually are held more often. For example, Central Florida Presbytery usually meets on the first Tuesday of March, June, September, and December, although one such meeting might be called for a different date, such as a Saturday morning.

When an elder is elected by his or her session to represent the church at a presbytery meeting, it is incumbent on the person to attend and participate. We are a connectional denomination, and our responsibilities extend beyond the boundaries of our own church. It would be unfortunate if the work and mission of the Church, here and throughout the world, were in any way diminished because of a lack of interest or participation by persons elected to serve.

²⁵ The Book of Order, G-3.0301

²⁶ *ibid.*, G-3.0304

Chapter 8

Presbyterian Ordered Ministries

by
Ruling Elder Jack Shirek

Our officers are not volunteers serving on committees or boards. They are ordained, just like pastors. We often refer to our “ordered ministries” with deacons and presbyters (teaching elders and ruling elders).

Teaching Elders – Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

Persons set aside by the Lord to serve as teaching elders (also termed Ministers of the Word and Sacrament) are called by a church for this responsibility through presbytery. As such, they are members of the presbytery in which they serve, not the particular church they are called to serve.

The work of the pastor of a local church is laid out in the Book of Order.²⁷ They are responsible

- for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word,
- for celebrating Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,
- and for praying with and for the congregation.

- With the ruling elders, they are
- to encourage people in the worship and service of God;
- to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world;
- to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying;
- to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision-making life of the congregation, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole.

With the deacons they are

- to share in the ministries of compassion, witness, and service.

In addition to these pastoral duties, they are responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in councils higher than the session and in ecumenical relationships.

²⁷ Book of Order, G-2.0504

The Ruling Elder

When a person is elected by a congregation to serve as a ruling elder, that person is installed onto the session for up to three years. A person may be reelected to serve on session from time to time and may have many installations. However, an elder will be ordained only once, and that ordination is to service that never ends. That is why we often take special care to use terms like “elder,” which means any person who is ordained, or “elder in reserve,” meaning any elder who has been ordained who is not currently serving on session, or “session member” meaning an elder currently serving a term on the council.

God created the ministry of elder to be a vital and permanent position both in Old Testament congregations and New Testament churches. God first mandated the office in the history of Israel. In the Old Testament we read:

“Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I have given heed to you and what has been done to you in Egypt.’” (Ex 3:16)

“Moses chose able men from all Israel, and appointed them as heads over the people...”
(Ex 18:25a)

“So the Lord said to Moses, ‘Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.’” (Num 11:16-17)

Thus, selection of elders to govern the people in a congregation was established, continued down through the years and, by New Testament times, was an integral part of church government:

“And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.”
(Acts 14:23)

“From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him.” (Acts 20:17)

“...appoint elders in every town as I directed you...” (Titus 1:5)

In summary, elders originally were recognized as representatives of the people in Israel and later were organized into councils with definite jurisdiction. Then, as synagogues were established, the ministry was continued, with elders receiving additional authority.

In fact, they were called the “rulers of the synagogue.”¹³ Scriptural references to that title can be found, for example, in Acts 18:17 and in Luke 8:41 and 13:14.

Jewish converts organized the first New Testament churches. It was natural for them to carry over the form of church government with which they were most familiar by electing elders to serve in the new churches. In the same manner, when converted Gentiles established churches, elders continued to be an essential part of church government. So it was, centuries later, when our denomination established the office of elder, it drew on this Biblical background in establishing church leaders.

The *Book of Order* advises that “congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit.”¹⁶

Scripture provides additional instructions to elders:

“Now as an elder myself and a witness of the suffering of Christ as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it--not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another...” (1 Peter 5:1-5a)

As an elder, you have been called to labor as Christ’s minister. To love Jesus without reservation, to place your full faith and trust in him as your personal Savior and Lord, to turn your life over to him completely, to rely on him to guide you in everything that you do will totally define your ministry. As Paul wrote to Timothy, ***“The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task.”*** (1 Tim 3:1)

The Deacon

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek *diakoneo*, meaning “to serve.” Although the first deacons performed humble work in waiting on tables, they were called to be ***“men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom...”*** Jesus knelt before his disciples and washed their feet, saying:

“For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (John 13:15-17)

The deacon fills a special ordered ministry in the Church, with special responsibilities in fulfilling his or her tasks. To serve the Lord is to serve him in humility, remembering that Christ

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as

something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death--even death on a cross... (Phil 2:6-8)

The *Book of Order* describes the ministry of deacon as “one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ...” It then requires those filling the ministry to be “Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment...”²⁸

Paul had special qualifications in mind when he first wrote to Timothy:

“Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 3:8-13)

Deacons are not responsible for the total program of the church nor for every aspect of its life, they certainly are responsible for very important areas.

²⁸ *Book of Order*, G-2.0201

Chapter 9

Ordination and Installation

As an officer you will be ordained once and forever. Your ordination will be as an officer for this congregation and for the service of the entire Presbyterian Church, USA. You will forever serve as an elder or deacon. The *Book of Order* affirms that “Once ordained...ruling elders and deacons...continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which they have been ordained...”²⁹ Ordination, therefore, is for life.

When you are first elected by a congregation, you will be installed, as well as ordained. Your installation is for a specific term of time, and at some point that service on the session or the board of deacons will come to a conclusion. You may be installed many times during your life.

Ordination to the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the presbytery. Ordination to the offices of elder and deacon is an act of the session...”³⁰

Ordination distinguishes those whom God has called to serve. You have been chosen and your ordination will set you apart to “go and bear fruit.” To fulfill your calling, continually strengthen yourself spiritually, prior to your being set apart, and afterwards as you serve the Lord.

Ordination Vows

After completion of the training period and approved examination by the session, the newly-elected ruling elders and deacons are ordained to their ministry during a worship service. The service of ordination and installation focuses “upon Christ and the joy and responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the church...”³¹

The Presbyterian Church requires that its officers stand before the congregation and answer affirmatively vows pertaining to their ordination. The vows taken by ministers of the Word and Sacrament, by elders, and by deacons are almost identical, differing only where they apply to the specific office (such vows also are required by commissioned lay pastors and certified Christian educators).

After briefly stating the nature of the ordered ministries of elder and deacon, the presiding minister asks the following questions (the brief commentaries following each question are based on *The Ordination Vows*, a publication of Presbyterians for Renewal, Louisville, KY):

²⁹ *ibid.*, G-2.0404

³⁰ *ibid.*, G-2.0701, 2.0402

³¹ *ibid.*, W-4.4001(b)

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Basic point: Jesus Christ, who showed us the Father and sent us the Spirit, is the one we trust for salvation and for leadership of our church.

2. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal and God's Word to you?

Basic point: The Scriptures point us to Jesus Christ and reveal God's will for our lives.

3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our Church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

Basic point: We can rely on the confessions to help us interpret the Scripture and apply it to our lives.

4. Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

Basic point: Because of our ordination, we live out a calling that is reflective of our relationship to Jesus Christ, ruled by the truth of Scripture and guided by our confessional heritage.

5. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

Basic point: We do our ministry in a community of faith which calls us to accountability, collegiality, and mutual submission according to God's will.

6. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

Basic point: We are called to grow spiritually and to express our faith through godly action in everyday life.

7. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

Basic point: We are called to do our work in a way that will build positive relationships with each other so that the Body as a whole is strengthened.

8. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence,

imagination, and love?

Basic point: We are called to put everything we have into the ministry in order to do it with excellence.

9. (For ruling elder) Will you be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in councils of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(For teaching elder) Will you be a faithful teaching elder, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith, and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry, will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(For ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service) Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(For certified Christian educator) Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for the people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? ⁵¹

Basic point: We are called to give leadership to the ministry and provide a structure in which it can flourish as a witness to Jesus Christ.

Chapter 10

The Basics of Parliamentary Procedure

Our session and committees operate within a framework of Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure. This helps us to do our business quickly, fairly and orderly.

To make a motion, simply say, "I move that the session..." and then state the action you would like to see the session take. A motion ought to state clearly:

- what we are doing
- when we will do it
- who will be responsible for it
- how it will be funded, or the limit to which it will be funded.

The motion "I move do something about the John Doe Memorial Room," may express a concern about a room in the church, but it doesn't say what needs to be done.

"I move that we paint the John Doe Memorial Room," is better, but without a date, it may take years for someone to do it. Add to the motion WHEN.

"I move that we paint the John Doe Memorial Room before the Sunday School Rally day on August 31st of this year," leaves no doubt as to when it will happen. Still, it does not say WHO will do it. Remember the old adage, "everyone's job is no one's job."

"I move that the Building and Grounds Committee paint the John Doe Memorial Room before the Sunday School Rally day on August 31st of this year," now has the WHO – a specific committee knows it needs to do the work and when.

Still, a committee or individual needs guidance as to how much to spend. Adding to the motion something like, "using up to \$100 from the maintenance budget" is a much better motion because it now says WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE AND HOW much.

Every motion needs a second, unless it comes as a committee report. After the motion has been seconded, discussion can follow. Some of the most common results of a motion are

- approval
- disapproval
- amending the motion, so that it changes slightly
- substituting another motion, so that a completely different course of action is taken
- tabling the motion
- committing the matter to a committee for further study

Common mistakes to avoid:

- Never make a speech and then a motion. This is not allowed in good parliamentary procedure. When people make a speech and a motion, people are often wondering what the

motion is. Solution: State your motion clearly and briefly. Once you have a second, you get to be the first speaker.

- Asking questions or discussing the motion when the moderator calls for a second. Solution: Wait for the second and then discuss.
- Waiting until after the vote has been taken to ask questions or discuss the issue. Solution: Speak out before the vote.
- Raising a new issue in the middle of a discussion. Solution: Keep focused. Wait until the session completes its discussion on the new youth program before you raise your idea about painting the sanctuary.
- Being confused about what we are voting on, especially after a lengthy debate. Solution: When the vote is about to take place, ask the Clerk of Session to read the motion.

Helpful Hints about Some Common Motions and Actions at Meetings

Motion	Need a Second ?	Amendable ?	Debatable ?	Vote Required ?	Purpose
<i>Lay on the Table</i>	Yes	No	No	Majority	<i>Allows an assembly to lay aside a pending question. Often used to kill a motion and is often mistakenly used when the assembly should consider the motion "Postpone to a Certain Time."</i>
<i>Postpone to a certain time</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	<i>Means the assembly declines to take a position on the main motion until a certain time, which may be at another meeting.</i>
<i>Postpone Indefinitely</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	<i>Means the assembly declines to take a position on the main motion. It effectively keeps it.</i>
<i>Take from the table</i>	Yes	No	No	Majority	<i>This will present again to the assembly a motion that has been previously laid on the table</i>
<i>Previous question, or Call for the question</i>	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds	<i>A motion used to end debate so the assembly can vote on a motion. WARNING: do not simply shout out "call the question." You must be recognized by the moderator before you can speak.</i>
<i>Postpone to a Certain Time</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	<i>Delays action on a motion for a definite time or until after an event</i>
<i>Refer</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	<i>Generally used to send a pending question to a committee</i>
<i>Amend</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	<i>Modifies the wording of a pending motion before it is acted upon</i>
<i>Point of Order</i>	No	No	No	No Vote	<i>When a member indicates a question in the procedure being followed and asks the chair to make a ruling to endorse the regular rules</i>
<i>Suspend the rules</i>	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds	<i>This allows a body to do something not allowed by one of its regular rules</i>
<i>Limit or Extend Debate</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Two-thirds	<i>The means by which an assembly can exercise control over debate on a question</i>
<i>Division of the Assembly</i>	No	No	No	No vote	<i>A call for a division of the assembly requires the vote to be taken again, only by a standing count rather than a voice.</i>
<i>Rescind</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority with notice, or 2/3 without notice	<i>Used to change action previously ordered, this motion can strike out or cancel a main motion, rule, by-law, resolution, section, or paragraph.</i>
<i>Reconsider</i>	Yes	No	Yes (if to a debatable question)	Majority	<i>A way to bring back for further consideration a motion already voted on, which may upon reflection be viewed as rushed or ill-advised</i>

The Substitute Motion

The substitute motion is a form of amendment applied when the desire is to amend a motion in several different, nonconsecutive places. It also is used when the text to be amended is longer than a paragraph.

The Substitute Motion can be confusing to many people who are not very familiar with parliamentary procedure. When a member of the body makes a substitute motion, it is good to refer to this page and to go through the process step by step as presented here:

1. **The Substitute motion is made and seconded.** At this point go directly to step 2.
2. **The Moderator calls for amendments to the main motion.** The amendments may be debated. Nothing else is in order. This is not a time to debate the main motion, but to perfect it. Debate comes later.
3. **The Moderator calls for amendments to the substitute motion.** Once the council votes that the main motion is perfected, lay that aside and focus on the substitute motion. Again, amendments may be debated. Nothing else is in order.
4. **The Moderator calls for any debate on the question: “Shall the substitute motion be substituted for the main motion?”** At this time, the merits of the main motion and the substitute motion may be debated and no further amendments are in order. No more amendments – the two possible motions are already considered perfected.
5. **The Moderator takes vote on the question of item 4, “shall the substitute motion be substituted for the main motion?”**
 - a. **If the question is approved,** the main motion disappears and the substitute motion is before the assembly for debate and vote. Substantive amendment is out of order. Editorial amendment is in order.
 - b. **If the question is defeated, the substitute motion disappears and the main motion is before the assembly for debate and vote.** The main motion may continue to be amended.

Helpful Hints about What Needs Session Approval

It is sometimes a challenge to know what needs approval by the session. Here are a few helpful hints.

- 1. Membership Changes** – A person joins the church or changes membership status (Active, Inactive, Baptized).
- 2. Certain Personnel Issues** – Hiring or terminating non-pastoral staff. Changing the salary or wages of non-pastoral staff (the congregation is responsible for changes in pastoral staff salaries).
- 3. Approving the Annual Budget**
- 4. New Programs** – Not a slight change or modification of an existing program, or the establishing of a program similar to existing programs, but something completely new. Any program that will incur costs not included in the current budget will need to be approved.
- 5. Policies** – Any policy that will bind the Session or its committees or the staff of the church.
- 6. Positional statements** – Any statement that will be understood as representing the beliefs or views of Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church.
- 7. Election of Clerk of Session, Treasurer or Presbytery Commissioners** – The elder who will represent the Session at Presbytery is appointed by the Session. However, if the elected elder cannot serve, the pastors can usually appoint a replacement from among the elders.
- 8. Approving candidates for and ordaining and installing** members as elders onto the session
- 9. Approval of celebration of Sacraments**
- 10. To call a congregational meeting**
- 11. Curriculum and material for use in church Bible Studies** – The Session may commission a committee to approve these materials.

When in doubt, present your action as an “information item” so that the elders, if they desire, may take action to approve, disapprove or amend.

Helpful Hints About What Every Officer Needs to Know About Church Finances

- 1. In the church, there is often no charge, but there is always a cost.** We would never charge admission to worship, Sunday School, Prayer Meetings, or charge for pastoral visits. There is no charge, but there is a cost to each of these. Someone has to pay, and the costs are paid from the offerings. The budget is put in place to prepare for these costs.
- 2. The church should not MAKE money, but rather we should USE money.** We are stewards of God's money. The church is a non-profit organization. We need to put every penny we receive to good use. Do not despair that we are always in a financial crunch. If we are bringing in too much money, it is probably a sign we are not doing enough work for the Lord!
- 3. Money is no object, when doing the Lord's work.** If God wants the church to do something, He will provide. After all, God has all the money in the world (we just have to figure out where He put it)! The Session should not let money decide our actions. Don't ask, "do we have enough money," but rather, "is this God's will?" If it is God's will, it is our responsibility to carry out His will and to find a way to make it affordable.
- 4. The church is like a business, and we have to handle it like a business.** We have to be accountable in our finances. We have to pay our bills. We have to use money wisely.
- 5. The church is nothing like a business, and we can't handle it like a business.** In spite of number 4, number 5 is also true. We are in the faith business. We are not out to make money. We are out to use money. Many of the rules that apply to business simply do not apply to the church. Many of the common mistakes a session makes begins with the phrase, "In my line of work, this is the way we do this..."
- 6. Approving a budget gives people permission to spend money without further approval.** It is impractical for the session to approve purchases for paper clips and routine curriculum orders. The budget gives people, staff ministry teams and committees in the church pre-approved permission to spend money if the money is available (see #8 below)
- 7. The budget is governed by the giving of the people.** What many teachers and civil employees often find difficult to understand is that just because the Session has approved a budget, doesn't mean the money will be there. We don't enforce taxation of members, we depend on their generous giving. This means that we must all work in harmony with each other and cooperate with the Communication and Resources Ministry Team.
- 8. The session controls the budget; the budget does not control the session.** The budget is a tool. The budget does not bind the session and can be changed at any time. It is extremely rare not to adjust the budget in the course of a year.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND TEAM LEADERS

Always have an agenda. A printed agenda helps keep the meeting on track. Without a printed agenda, the first item of business often absorbs the entire time for the meeting, people go off on tangents, and the meeting will lack direction. The chair should put the agenda together and, if possible, send it out to members prior to the meeting.

Keep minutes. Be sure to keep a record of what you do. Provide the members with a copy of the minutes. Be sure to give one to the Moderator or the clerk of session.

Start with prayer. We are in the Lord's business and we need to ask His blessing on all that we do.

Approve the agenda. Other people on the committee may have items of concern. Immediately after opening with prayer, ask if there are other items of business to add to the agenda. This will help keep the meeting fair so that everyone will have an opportunity to speak out on their concerns, while at the same time helping maintain order and direction.

Make recommendations. Your committee will want to take some recommendations to the Session for approval. Write those motions down and give them to the pastor so they can be placed on the Session's agenda. Once they are in the pastor's hands, the pastor may work with the committee chair to modify the motion slightly. This will be done only to help clarify the motion's purpose.

Good motions include information. Who will do the action? When will the action be done? How will the action be carried out? How much money will it take and how will the funds be secured?

Motions need reasons. Feel free to write a rationale to be included on the Session's agenda that explains why this action is being taken.

Provide information. Not all actions of a committee will require a Session's approval. If it is not clear whether or not the action needs a motion, always have it included on the Session's agenda as an item for information. This way, the Session is free to make a motion for or against the action if the elders feel it is necessary.

Helpful Hints for Officers Serving at Funerals and Memorial Services

Please wear your name tag.

Please arrive **30 minutes** in advance

BEFORE the SERVICE

1. **Unlock** All Narthex doors
2. **Open** Courtyard and North facing Narthex doors (weather permitting)
3. **Lights** Turn on bathroom, narthex, sanctuary, and stair lights
4. **Family Pews Need**
"RESERVED" pew markers from the usher closet.
Box of tissues from the usher closet.
5. **Light Candles** about 20 minutes before the start of the service.
6. Stand with guest register and distribute bulletins.
7. **Close narthex doors** when service begins.

END of SERVICE

1. **Prop open** inside narthex doors and door facing courtyard.
2. **Blow out candles**
3. **Pews** Check pews and remove personal items, etc.
4. **Return** "Reserved" markers and tissue boxes to usher closet.
5. **Lights** **Turn off** bathroom, narthex and stair lights.
Lower lights in sanctuary if flowers are to be removed *after* the reception.
6. **Lock** All sanctuary doors from the inside.
All narthex doors *except* those facing courtyard.

Rev: 10/17

Helpful Hints for Serving Communion at the 10:45 Worship

Serving Communion is a privilege and an honor, and we appreciate each person who assists. Any member of the church can serve the Sacraments in Sunday Worship, as allowed by the Session. In our church this is restricted to the ordained officers, with occasional exceptions of the youth, the recently confirmed, or others as approved by Session.

In reading these instructions, refer to chart on the following page.

1. Step one – look at the letter next to your name on the other side of this page. This tells you where to sit and where to serve the Sacraments.
2. Sitting in assigned spaces on the front row makes everything flow more smoothly and keeps us from bumping into each other.
3. During the Prelude, gather in the back and enter together and sit in your assigned place on the front pew.
4. When the Communion begins, the pastor will speak briefly about the Sacrament and have a prayer. His words: “These are the gifts of God for us the people of God” is your cue to stand and come to the Table, pick up your bread tray, and then move to where you will begin to serve.
5. The letter you are assigned tells you which part of the sanctuary you serve. In the middle of the sanctuary there are pews that have raised wooden branches along the tops of the pew ends. That is the definition of where each server will either stop or begin.
6. As you finish serving your area, go to the back of the Sanctuary and wait for all servers to gather. Then line up in the manner shown on the back of this paper. Enter together and return your bread plates to the Table.
7. Take your assigned seats. The pastor will serve you.
8. The pastor will return to the Table and say words about the wine and cups. He will again say, “These are the gifts of God for us the people of God.” That is your cue, once again, to go to the Table and take a tray of cups.
9. Repeat the process with the cups in the same manner as you did the bread. Remain in place until the end of the service.

Person “I” serves the choir, musicians and worship leader/liturgist and the pastors.

The primary goal is, as with any family meal, to be sure all are served who wish to be fed. If you run low on bread or cups, just work with a partner to cover your area.



	1	G E C A	
E	2	Start	G
E	3	Start	
E	4		G
E	5		
E	6		G
E	7		
A	8		G
A	9		
A	10	Start	C
A	11	Start	
A	12		C
A	13		
A	14		C
	15		
	16		C
	17		
	18		C

	B D F H (I)	1	
H	Start	2	
H	3	Start	F
H	4		
H	5		F
H	6		
H	7		F
D	8		
D	9		F
D	Start	10	
D	11	Start	B
D	12		
D	13		B
D	14		
D	15		B
	16		
	17		B
	18		
	19		B

G _____
 E _____
 C _____
 A _____

G H
 E F
 C D
 A B

H _____
 F _____
 D _____
 B _____

**STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT
FOR
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore, I will:

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore, I will:

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me

11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- ** 15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
- ** 16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- **17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore, I will:

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

**These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.