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National Covenant Presbyterian Church

A Proposed Constitution

What follows is presented for your prayerful deliberation and continued refinement.

May God grant us wisdom as we stand together to affirm and live out our faith

**The National Covenant Association of Churches
and
The National Covenant Presbyterian Church**

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NATIONAL COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, INC.

Printed in the United States of America

National Covenant Presbyterian Church Constitution

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Prologue

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“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:22-23

It was Jesus’ great desire that his Church be one, even as he is one with the Father. Divisions within the Church have always been an example of the failure of the Church. However, in a broken and fallen world, it is sometimes better to have a separate peace than to always be at war, and this is especially true within families.

These divisions, necessary as they may be, have caused some to conclude that doctrinal unity is an impossibility and that unity can only be based on theological pluralism or some loosely defined “missions” connection. However, both of these approaches have proved inadequate in the 20th Century Western church. To refuse to define what are the essentials of the faith (as pluralism attempts to do) is to say we have a Gospel to proclaim, but we either don’t know what it is, or it is anything anyone wants it to be. This is a rejection of objective reality, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Jesus is no myth or metaphor, but the Creator of all things and the most objectively real being in existence. He can (and has) defined Himself for us (it’s called revelation) in history, and the essentials of the faith are those things He has clearly made known. Those essential beliefs do not exclude people from the Church; they define what it means to be in the Church. And to think we could simply serve others in the name of a God, who is defined by what you choose to belief, is likewise a rejection of the objective nature of the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

All this is to say, we must (and shall) define the essentials of the faith. These essentials define what the historic Orthodox Church has faithfully passed on that was faithfully delivered to us from the apostles and those who witnessed God’s revelation through Jesus the Christ. These essentials have been faithfully represented in previous creeds, like the Nicene Creed, but each age must find a way of expressing those truths in a way that communicates to its generation. Then, along with those essentials of the faith, there are certain ethical imperatives – inherent implications of how we must live, if these are the things we say we believe. The essentials and the imperatives constitute the National Covenant that forms the basis of this expression of the Church universal, and provide a basis for a connection between heretofore divided parts of the Body of Christ.

While the essentials and the imperatives define our common ground, there are things about which Christians of good conscience can, and do, disagree. While not being essential or imperative, these distinctive beliefs are critical to how a particular church goes about living out their common faith. For example, some believe that the Biblical office of bishop (or overseer) is defined as an individual so called and gifted by God within the church. Others believe that the

153 office of bishop is a function within the Church, but it can be fulfilled by a council, and not an
154 individual. These are critical beliefs in how we go about ecclesiology, but they are not essentials
155 of the faith. The National Covenant Churches will recognize both our common ground (in the
156 National Covenant) and respect the choices of ministers and congregations about how to
157 organize a particular branch of that larger Church. Thus, the distinctives, or critical beliefs, will
158 define the connection of ministers and congregations within a branch, such as the National
159 Covenant Presbyterian Church, or the National Covenant Methodist Church, providing both a
160 basis for shared ministry within the National Covenant, and structural autonomy within each
161 branch.

162
163 Just how many “branches” do there need to be? Only the Holy Spirit can answer that question,
164 but the guiding principle will be, as many as necessary for us to stop the “infighting” that has
165 plagued the Western Church. Based on the connection between the “branches” that is provided
166 by the National Covenant, if a person or congregation changes their critical beliefs, say for
167 example on the ordination of women, rather than fight internally to change that critical belief,
168 they would be able to move into another “branch” of the National Covenant without penalty, thus
169 maintaining the peace, unity, and purity of the Church in fact, not merely in name.

170
171 The following Constitution is offered as the basis for the branch of what hopefully will grow into
172 a larger connectional Church. This particular branch will be called the National Covenant
173 Presbyterian Church. It would not be the only Presbyterian branch, but it will be defined first by
174 the National Covenant (the essentials and the imperatives) and the particular distinctives put
175 forth and agreed to herein.

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Chapter One

The Essential Tenets of the Christian Faith

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“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!”
Revelation 19:1

*“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*
I Peter 1:3

Joyfully and humbly, as undeserving recipients of the gracious work of God through Jesus Christ, we confess these essentials of our shared faith.

WE AFFIRM ...

... one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

... the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, the authoritative, and infallible rule of our faith and practice.

... the historic actuality of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and his divine/human nature.

... the historic actuality of the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ as conveyed to us in the pages of Holy Scripture.

... the efficacy of the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ for our sins being both necessary and sufficient.

... the historic actuality of the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again.



Chapter Two

A Declaration of Ethical Imperatives

217
218
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221
222 *“Jesus said, ‘If anyone loves me he will obey my commands.’”*

223 John 14:23

224
225 Genuine Christian faith is more than mere assent to propositions of truth. Saving faith issues forth in
226 an ethical life, a life of love, obedience, and holiness.

227
228 Christian ethics are grounded in the character of God the Father. Neither an abstract formulation
229 nor an arbitrary rule of conduct, our ethical standard is nothing less than likeness to the holy God
230 whom we love and serve.

231
232 As Jesus is the Divine Exemplar, “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his
233 being” (Hebrews 1:3), His life of love and self-sacrifice becomes the pattern for our own. The
234 follower of Christ is called to conform to the character of Christ.

235
236 As the Holy Spirit is the Divine Counselor, sent by the Son from the Father to convict of sin (John
237 16:8-11) and to guide into truth (John 16:13-15), His presence empowers us for transformed living. It
238 is the work of the Spirit to transform us into the character of Christ.

239
240 We confess that we are incapable of meriting the love of God through any effort of our own. Right
241 standing before God is His gift apart from any holiness, love, or obedience which may be present in
242 our lives. The ethical life is the fruit, not the basis of, our reconciliation with God through the work
243 of Jesus Christ on the cross.

244
245 We likewise confess that we are incapable of producing holiness in ourselves. Holy living is possible
246 only as we cooperate with the transforming work of God’s Spirit within us. The ethical life is God
247 living His life through us by His Spirit.

248
249 Ethical living involves more than mere avoidance of wrongdoing. We are called not only to shun
250 what is hurtful and wrong but also to seek what is good and right. The moral life is one that
251 vigorously pursues the good.

252
253 The parameters within which God desires us to live as His children have been lovingly revealed for
254 us in the Scriptures.

255
256 1. The Scriptures define the good we are called to pursue. Prescriptive ethical standards for
257 Christian conduct, grounded in the covenant with Moses (Exodus 20:1-17), were summarized
258 positively by Jesus in the Great Commandments:

259
260 *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with*
261 *all your strength.’ Here is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: ‘Love your*
262 *neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:37-38*

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2. The Scriptures also define the sin we are called to avoid. Proscriptive guidelines for Christian conduct, grounded in the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:1-17), were summarized negatively by the Jerusalem council in its guidance to the Gentile church:

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything but the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” Acts 15:28-29

3. These categories of prohibitions suggest useful boundaries for Christian behavior in all times and circumstances. In order to honor God, we encourage one another to avoid the following:

Idolatry: Love of God requires that the Lord alone be adored and worshipped. The Lord our God is our ultimate source of joy and contentment. We reject the worship of anything other than God, including: work; wealth; health; success; progress; family; race; nation; political ideologies; economic systems; religious institutions and structures. We reject the practice of tolerance that refuses to discriminate between good and evil and of embracing sin in the name of diversity. We reject those forms of pluralism and syncretism that misrepresent God as revealed in Scripture.

Sexual Immorality: Love of neighbor requires that the sanctity of marriage be honored. The Lord our God is the source of our sexuality, which is to be cherished and expressed in the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman; all other sexual interaction falls outside of this biblical norm. We reject such practices as premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse, homosexuality, bisexuality, adultery, polygamy, pornography, sexual objectification, predatory behavior, and abuse.

Bloodshed: Love of neighbor also requires that the sanctity of life be honored. The Lord is the author and giver of life. We affirm all human life to be sacred to God. We, therefore, reject all practices in which life is diminished, demeaned, or indiscriminately destroyed. Abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, domestic violence, oppression, acts of revenge, and unjust wars are symptoms of an ethos of death that repudiates God’s culture of life. So too are destructive speech, unforgiveness, treating people as objects, and all unjust partiality against persons based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or social class.

We confess these behaviors to be sin and urge our brothers and sisters in Christ to flee from these and other forms of disobedience. *

Embracing the power of God’s love to overcome sin’s mastery and to heal sin’s wounds, we affirm a grace-filled, redemptive approach to discipline and restoration, one that leads to repentance, forgiveness, and wholeness in Christ for those who fall prey to the idolatries and perversions of our age.

Honoring God, marriage, and life is a high standard of Christian discipleship, one for which we need and receive grace. While this is the standard for all the people of God, it is a requirement for leadership in the church.

We believe these ethical imperatives to be grounded in Scripture and define how we should live in faithful response to God’s grace. While we recognize that some may have questions or reservations about some of these imperatives, it is expected that those who join in this covenant agree, none the

313 less, to be bound by these imperatives by either actively supporting or passively submitting, or
314 peacefully withdrawing from our fellowship.

315

316 *There are a number of ways to express these ethical imperatives. Recently a number of people
317 came together to put forth the Manhattan Declaration that clearly speaks to our current Western
318 culture and the loss of a Biblical perspective. The Manhattan Declaration is included in Appendix
319 D.

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Chapter Three

Distinctives and Governing Principles

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I. Distinctives

The following distinctives define the particular beliefs and practices of the National Covenant Presbyterian Church:

- A) There were four great statements coming from the time of the Reformation that particularly distinguish this understanding of the faith. They are, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, and the Sole Priesthood of Christ.
- B) Our theology is reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God because while our interpretations may be in error, the inspired Word of God is infallible in matters of faith and practice. Interpreting any portion of Scripture must be done in the whole light of Scripture because God does not contradict Himself. The principle for interpretation is then Scripture interprets Scripture.
- C) The offices of elder and deacon as described in the Scriptures. We believe that the Holy Spirit speaks more clearly through the duly elected elders, listening and participating in the debate of a topic and then prayerfully voting their conscience than through one person alone. As with the Jerusalem Council in Acts, the Holy Spirit leads us through mature leaders, not merely one charismatic individual.
- D) The Holy Spirit has given spiritual gifts to the members of the Church according to His providential choice without respect to gender.
- E) We find Scriptural warrant for only two sacraments: communion and baptism. Even as these sacraments are signs of God's grace not means of God's grace, we recognize the various forms used by the Church over the centuries, including infant, child, and adult baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or full immersion as valid forms of the sacrament.
- F) Presbyterian: a form of denominational governance distinguished by:
 - 1) vesting spiritual leadership and temporal authority in members who are recognized for exercising the mind and maturity of Christ Jesus by being elected as elders (presbuteros) by a local church.
 - 2) allying several local churches with their elders in voluntary connectional and missional association with and submission to one another for the sake of faithful mission and ministry for the Kingdom of God through mutual edification and encouragement, and accountability in the areas of theology, ethics, and calling.
 - 3) providing a constitutional structure that establishes a series of widening representative networks of elders elected, first by their congregations, to share responsibility. The purpose of this structure for shared responsibility is to support and serve the mission and ministry of each local church and to encouraging the cooperative ministry and mission of the several local churches.
- G) Reformed: a set of theological emphases drawn from Scripture, enumerated by John Calvin and other Church reformers, summarized in the historic creeds and confessions of the Church and distinguished from other systems of theology by:

- 364 1) the sovereign reign of God over human history and the lives of individuals;
365 2) the inability of persons, because of the taint of sin upon every aspect of the mind,
366 heart, and will, to please God or to seek Him of their own accord;
367 3) the Trinitarian nature of redemption, including the doctrine of predestination
368 (although the particular interpretation of that Biblical term is variously understood), the
369 substitutionary sacrifice of the Son to purchase their redemption, and the empowering
370 work of the Holy Spirit to bring them from spiritual death to new life in Christ; and
371 4) the Church's missional call to be "in" but not "of" the world, there to demonstrate the
372 loving reign of God and to engage the world with God's redemptive purposes by the true
373 sounding of these notes: the faithful proclamation of the Word of God, "the right
374 administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus," and the upright exercise of
375 ecclesiastical discipline.
376
377

378 **II. Foundational Governing Principles: The Church**

379 The following biblical principles will govern our life together:
380

- 381 A) The Head of the Church: Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and the Lord over His
382 followers, giving active leadership to the body of Christ by His living presence within it.
383 We join with the whole of creation in ascribing to Him praise and offering up our lives in
384 His obedient service.
385 Ephesians 1:22-23, Philippians 2:9-11, Romans 12:1-2
386
- 387 B) The Purpose of the Church: The Church exists to bring glory to God through its faithful
388 ministry and mission. In ministry, as the body of Christ, it is privileged to honor God
389 through its worship and discipleship, loving fellowship, and mutual ministry in imitation
390 of Christ. In mission, as the agent of the Kingdom, it is privileged to serve God through
391 its witness and service, demonstrating the loving reign of God as it is sent in evangelistic
392 mission to the world.
393 Matthew 22:36-40, Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 1:28-29
394
- 395 C) The Final Authority of the Church: Every aspect of the life of the Church is to be
396 governed by the revealed truth of Scripture, which the Holy Spirit inspired, illuminates,
397 and applies to God's people. The historic creeds and Reformed confessions, though of
398 human origin, are reliable guides in our interpretation of the Bible.
399 Matthew 22:29, II Timothy 3:16-17
400
- 401 D) The Unity of the Church: The Church is to be one in mind and purpose, having the same
402 love. The unity of the Church is found in its common commitment to our Lord, its
403 common submission to the authority of the Scriptures, and its common understanding of
404 theology, ethics, and mission.
405 Ephesians 4:3-4, Philippians 2:1-4
406
- 407 E) The Gifting of the Church: The body of Christ is uniquely gifted to carry out the ministry
408 of the Church and its mission to the world. It is the responsibility of the Church's leaders

409 to equip the members of the local church and to release them into the works of service to
410 which they are called and for which they are gifted.
411 I Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4:11-12
412

413 F) The Leadership of the Church: Spiritual leadership is exercised by men and women of
414 recognized spiritual maturity who are called and gifted to direct the local church in its
415 ministry and mission. Pastors, elders, deacons are called to serve humbly and wisely,
416 leading the body as they are led by its Head, Jesus Christ, and exercising faithful
417 leadership by representing not their congregations but their consciences as held captive
418 by the Word of God.
419 Ephesians 4:11-16, I Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17
420

421 G) The Structure of the Church: The Church worldwide finds local expression in particular
422 congregations. As the Scriptures teach the value of the counsel and correction of others,
423 of resources shared for common ministry, of banding together for mutual strength and
424 encouragement, and of ministry structures that make optimal use of the gifting of the
425 body, we are led to recognize the benefit and importance of connectional support
426 structures (denominations) by which particular congregations within the broader Church
427 may join together for the sake of more faithful ministry and mission.
428 Exodus 18:13-26, Proverbs 15:22, 32; 27:17, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
429

430 **III. Foundational Design Elements: The Connectional Structure**

431 In the light of these convictions about the Church, the constitution of the National Covenant
432 Presbyterian Church is characterized by the following foundational design elements:
433

434 A) Unity: We are bound together in our shared commitment to Jesus Christ and to his truth,
435 as historically understood in orthodox biblical theology. Participating churches and their
436 leaders will make a mutual confessional commitment to biblically-derived statements of
437 faith and ethics, which we call the National Covenant (consisting of the Essential Tenets
438 of the Christian Faith and the Declaration of Ethical Imperatives).
439

440 B) Encouragement and Accountability: We build our shared life upon covenant relationships
441 of mutual encouragement and support. Particular congregations and their leaders are
442 joined together with others for shared worship, prayer, and Scripture study, as well as
443 equipping, planning, and sharing resources for collaborative ministry. Within these
444 covenant relationships will be exercised loving accountability and just discipline that
445 upholds the Essential Tenets, the Ethical Imperatives and all certification/ordination
446 standards.
447

448 C) Structure and Flexibility: We are committed to a missional ecclesiology that combines
449 constitutional order with permission-giving freedom for the sake of effective ministry and
450 mission. To ensure ministry faithfulness, congregations within the connectional structure
451 agree to nonnegotiable commitments to this National Covenant Presbyterian Church
452 Constitution. At the same time, to ensure ministry and mission effectiveness, they are
453 provided with flexibility in areas which are not specifically defined in this constitution.
454

- 455 D) The Primacy of Local Ministry and Mission: We share a common understanding of the
456 purpose of the Church that centers on the primacy of the local congregation and its
457 ministry of equipping and sending its members in mission to all the world. Local
458 congregations are called to join with other Christian disciples to build up the body of
459 Christ to spiritual maturity and to reach the world for Christ.
460
- 461 E) Covenant connections of support and accountability: We seek a connectional structure
462 each component of which supports and serves the local congregations of which it
463 consists:
464
- 465 1) The Congregation is the primary agent and focal point of kingdom mission and
466 ministry. Together its members are called to worship God, to love one another, to
467 make disciples, to serve the world, to reach the lost, and to equip and send out its
468 members into mission and ministry. Towards these ends, the congregation calls
469 leaders, holds and maintains property, and hires staff.
470
 - 471 2) The Presbytery gathers leaders of particular congregations ordinarily from a
472 shared geographical proximity into covenant relationships for mutual edification
473 and support, for shared worship and study, for collaborative ministry and mission,
474 and for loving accountability and discipline. Congregations are encouraged to
475 form other relationships for collaborative ministry and mission.
476
 - 477 3) The General Assembly exists to support and guide the Presbyteries of which it
478 consists, including planning for regional ministry, meeting for mutual growth and
479 encouragement, providing counsel in the event of congregational difficulties, and
480 upholding the essential tenets, the ethical imperatives, and the standards for
481 ordination.
482
 - 483 4) The National Covenant Administration exists to support the administrative,
484 judicial, and missions work for the entire denomination. This includes pension
485 and health care services for pastors and other employees of the connectional
486 structure, a system of courts for mediating conflicts, and coordinating the global
487 missions outreach for the denomination.
488

489 **IV) Definitions**

- 490 A) Mission: the various evangelistic works of the Church through which the body of Christ
491 and its individual members are sent out as instruments of the Kingdom of God to reach
492 all the world, including: announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ, demonstrating the
493 reign of God, and training and sending followers for works of service in the world
494 including works of compassion and Biblical justice.
495
- 496 B) Ministry: the various disciple-making works of the Church through which the body of
497 Christ and its individual members are built up toward spiritual maturity, including:
498 worship and prayer, biblical proclamation and instruction, the cultivation of Christ-
499 centered relationships and community, pastoral care, and equipping believers to use their
500 gifts in ministry and mission.

501
502 C) Kingdom of God: The Trinity’s eternal dominion over all creation, natural and spiritual -
503 seen and unseen, by which sovereignty the Father unites everything in the Son through
504 the Spirit and calls, emboldens, and equips men and women, children and youth to
505 surrender heart, soul, mind, and strength to become willing citizens and faithful servants
506 of the Lord’s own just, reconciling, and righteous rule of forgiveness, love, joy, peace,
507 and hope.

508
509 D) Church: consistent with the New Testament usage, this refers to either: the worldwide
510 fellowship of Christian believers (the Church universal), or a community of believers
511 gathered in a particular locality (the local church). The Church is the body of Christ in the
512 world, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9)
513 which, in mission and ministry, is a present agent and provisional demonstration of the
514 Kingdom of God.

515
516 E) Membership in the local church:

517 1) Baptized Members: normally children who have been baptized but are not yet old
518 enough to make a decision for themselves. They have the privilege of participating in
519 communion (at the discretion of their parents) and the life of the church, however, without vote
520 or leadership responsibilities.

521 2) Communicant Members: These are adults who wanted to join the church, but who
522 were unable to affirm the Essentials and the Imperatives. This would also include those
523 adolescents who had been baptized (or not) as infants, who want to join the Church of their own
524 choice, but who are frankly not ready to make all the commitments incumbent on full members.
525 These Communicant members would have the privilege of the sacraments, and full participation
526 in the life of the Church, except for voting and holding leadership positions.

527 4) Covenant members: These are adults who are ready to affirm, without mental
528 reservation, the National Covenant (the essentials and the imperatives) and the NCPC
529 distinctives. Covenant Members are full voting members and have all the responsibilities and
530 privileges that go with the commitments they have made. Covenant members are eligible for
531 election to all leadership positions within the denomination.

532
533 F) Denomination: a connectional, missional structure established by a portion of the
534 Church- in which several local churches voluntarily organize around the unity of a common faith
535 in Jesus Christ, a shared theology, and a joint commitment to mutual accountability for the
536 greater benefit, edification, and effectiveness of mission and ministry. It is not to be mistaken for
537 or misrepresented as the Church.

538 G) The National Covenant Presbyterian Church will recognize what might be called
539 “dual citizenship.” Either individuals or congregations, if they are willing to affirm the National
540 Covenant and the Constitution of the NCPC, may also remain members of other denominations.
541 The NCPC will allow, not mandate, participation in all the benefits of the NCPC as long as the
542 National Covenant and the Constitution can be affirmed.

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Chapter Four The Local Congregation

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I. The Member as a Disciple of Jesus Christ

Jesus came to make disciples. Disciples demonstrate that they are followers of Jesus Christ in faith, word and deed. As disciples within the National Covenant Presbyterian Church they are growing in faith and are expected to move through the different levels of discipleship to full covenant membership.

Disciples are committed to lifelong growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are part of a broader community, living in relationship with other followers of Jesus Christ to strengthen their faith and life and to carry out collaborative kingdom ministry and mission. Discipleship will express itself in a commitment to the fulfillment of the Church's ministry and mission in a particular congregation.

II. The Congregation

As the earthly manifestation of the body of Christ, the congregation has the responsibility for the ministry and mission of the kingdom of God. In the practice of ministry and discipleship the local congregation:

- A) **Worships:** the church exists to worship the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's people exist to glorify Him in every way, and our worship intends to reflect His glory (Romans 12:1-2).
- B) **Invites:** the church invites all people to receive the forgiveness of sins by God in Jesus Christ and to participate in the community of faith. This proclamation of the Good News includes a ministry to the whole person (II Corinthians 5:17-19)
- C) **Equips:** the church equips people for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).
- D) **Sends:** the church sends every disciple into mission as God calls. The priesthood of all believers means that wherever we go and whatever we do, we do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3.12-17).

III. The Ministry of the Whole People

The ministry of all Christians grows out of God's intended mission for the Church. The missional purpose of the entire Church and each of its members is found in our Lord's commandment to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

586 Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew
587 28:18-20).

588
589 All Christians are called to the work of ministry and mission by virtue of their baptism into the
590 disciple-making community of the Church. The Holy Spirit empowers each and every member
591 of God’s family for ministry in the Church and service to the world. Gifted by God in different
592 ways and called to a variety of ministries, the saints of God function as one body, working
593 together to fulfill the missional purpose of God in the Church.

594
595 **IV. The Nature of Servant Leadership**
596 Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of leadership, which should find full expression in
597 the church at all levels (Romans 12:8). Those whom the covenant community has recognized as
598 mature, gifted, and called will be encouraged to fill positions of leadership at all levels of the
599 church, without partiality to ethnicity, race, or gender (Galatians 3:26-29). Their responsibility,
600 consistent with the true meaning of ordination and the Reformed affirmation of the priesthood of
601 all believers, is to equip each member of the body for his or her God-ordained works of service.

602
603 Leadership within the body of Christ is different from leadership in the world. Jesus said,
604 “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first
605 among you must be your slave” (Matthew 20:26). Servant-leaders must have the same mind as
606 our Lord Jesus Christ, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God
607 as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in
608 human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to
609 the point of death— even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

610
611 God gives suitable gifts for their various duties to those called to exercise leadership. In addition
612 to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake
613 particular ministries should be persons recognized by the body for strong faith, dedicated
614 discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a
615 demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.

616
617 **V. Particular Ministries in the Church**
618 The Church throughout the ages has called certain disciples to specific leadership roles and tasks.
619 It is primarily the responsibility of the local congregation to identify those with gifts and skills in
620 disciple-making whom God may be calling into leadership ministry.

621
622 While neither Jesus nor Paul provides a definitive church structure, we recognize the leadership
623 roles to which the New Testament commonly refers as “pastor,” “elder,” and “deacon,” which
624 designate spiritual leaders and servants with functions and duties that vary somewhat in New
625 Testament usage. We understand these roles as follows.

626
627 A) Pastors, together with other ministry leaders, lead in worship, teaching, visioning,
628 discipling, caring, praying, and equipping God’s people for the missional work of
629 ministry. All congregations shall have at least one pastor or commissioned lay pastor or
630 designated elder(s) serving in a similar capacity of spiritual leadership.

631

632 B) Elders lead in governance and discipline, based on the knowledge of, and submission to,
633 God's Word (1 Timothy 3: 2 – 7). Their role is to strengthen and nurture the faith and life
634 of the local congregation. All congregations shall have a minimum of three elders elected
635 to rotating terms. Elders shall serve for terms of three years, unless the congregation
636 deems otherwise in its by-laws.
637

638
639 C) Deacons ordinarily lead in service and charity, ministering to those who are in need, to
640 the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress, both within and beyond the
641 community of faith. Each particular congregation will ensure that these ministry tasks are
642 carried out, whether by the pastors, elders, deacons, or the congregation as a whole.
643 Congregations who establish Deacon Ministries will consider the Scriptural purpose for
644 the ministry and characteristics of Deacons as outlined in Scripture (Acts 6:1-6, I
645 Timothy 3:8-13). A deacon shall serve for terms of three years, unless the congregation
646 deems otherwise in its by-laws.
647

648
649 Leadership also finds expression in other functions and spiritual gifts throughout the life of the
650 church (see Ephesians 4, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Timothy 5), as ministry leaders are
651 called of God for leadership of specific ministries within the church. The call of such leaders
652 should be validated in some manner by the local church and celebrated through a service of
653 commissioning. The term of service of all ministry leaders is limited only by the needs of the
654 ministry as determined by the local congregation.
655

656 **VI. The Session of the Congregation**
657 The congregation is led by the Session. The Session is made up of pastors and elected elders as
658 voting members serving the congregation. It is the duty of the Session to shepherd the congregation,
659 overseeing every aspect of church life. It guides the ministry and mission of the local congregation
660 as well as facilitating the participation of the local congregation in the greater church through its
661 connection to the ministry networks.
662

663 The Session of the local congregation has the responsibility to:
664

665 A) Shepherd the congregation into a discipleship that demonstrates Jesus Christ in faith,
666 word and deed, overseeing every aspect of church life including: evangelism, worship,
667 administration of the sacraments, healing ministries, equipping ministries, mission,
668 physical plant, administration, discipline, and staffing.
669

670 B) Design ministry within the local congregation so that The National Covenant becomes
671 the basis of mission and ministry of the local church.
672

673 C) Design a process that identifies, prepares, and presents to the congregation those
674 individuals who have been received by the session as members. Persons will be
675 designated as joining either by Profession of Faith, or Reaffirmation of Faith.
676

- 677 D) Monitor those participating in the life and ministry of the church so that, at regular times
678 during the year, pastoral contact may be made with those who are no longer present or
679 active. Their concerns should be expressed and responded to, and they may be
680 encouraged to recommit themselves to the life and ministry of the congregation or, in
681 some cases, to become part of another church family.
682
- 683 E) Provide for the regular review of the church records to determine whether some
684 individuals may be removed as a member after repeated contact.
685
- 686 F) Maintain records of baptisms, membership categories, leadership rolls, marriages, and
687 deaths.
688
- 689 G) Establish, according to state laws and in conjunction with the NCPC "Guide to Local
690 Church Ministry," the structure and policies of a particular congregation's life including,
691 but not limited to: congregational meetings; incorporation; standards for hiring,
692 evaluating, and discharging employees; quorum for Session meetings; child protection
693 and abuse prevention policies.
694
- 695 H) Establish regular elections of persons by the congregation to serve as Elders on the
696 Session.
697
- 698 I) Convene Session meetings at least four times per year, with the pastor or pastor-
699 designate serving as the Moderator. The number and tenure of elders serving on Session
700 may be set by church by-laws. The meetings may be ordered according to "Roberts' Rules
701 of Order" or another mutually agreed upon method. The Moderator will call a special
702 meeting when requested in writing by any two members of Session, or the Moderator
703 may initiate the call for a meeting. A quorum for regular business will be the Moderator
704 and one-half of the elders but not fewer than two elders; the congregation may establish a
705 higher quorum in its by-laws. For the examination and acceptance of new members, the
706 congregation may set a lower quorum in its by-laws.
707
- 708 J) Establish the annual budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's
709 benevolences, providing the congregation with full information of its decisions in such
710 matters.
711
- 712 K) Maintain accurate, up-to-date records, minutes, by-laws, and policies. Minutes of Session
713 and congregational meetings will be preserved and made available to the Support
714 Network for regular review and when requested in an administrative or disciplinary
715 matter.
716
- 717 L) Elect annually a treasurer, if permitted by state law, and see that accurate financial
718 records are kept, reported, and reviewed regularly.
719
- 720 M) Maintain accountability and discipline within the congregation.
721

722 N) Oversee the faithful participation of the congregation in the life and ministry of the
723 Presbytery and General Assembly.

724
725 O) Together with the pastor(s), renew endorsement of the National Covenant of Ethical
726 Imperatives annually.

727
728 **VII. The Congregation and its Meetings**

729 While the leadership of the congregation is generally the responsibility of the Session, the
730 congregation has certain responsibilities.

731
732 A) The local congregation consists of all members on the roll of the local church. A member
733 is understood to be a committed and growing disciple of Jesus Christ who participates
734 fully in the life and ministry of a particular congregation.

735
736 B) The congregation will have regular meetings to serve the body and to address business as
737 needed. All covenant members present at a congregational meeting have the right to vote.

738
739 C) In its meetings the local congregation has responsibility to:

740
741 1) Call and elect congregational and pastoral leadership;

742
743 2) Adopt by-laws;

744
745 3) Receive the annual budget;

746
747 4) Address other matters concerning the pastoral relationship, such as changing the
748 call or requesting the consent or decline to consent to dissolution;

749
750 5) Acquire, encumber, and dispose of real property;

751
752 6) Address matters related to dissolution, merger, transfer, or withdrawal of the
753 congregation from NCPC; and

754
755 8) Receive reports and highlight ministries.

756
757 D) Meetings of the congregation are called by the Session, and will be held at least annually.
758 Special meetings of the congregation may be called, as needed or deemed beneficial, at the
759 request of:

760
761 1) the Session;

762
763 2) the Presbytery; or

764
765 3) the congregation, when requested of the Session in writing by one-tenth of the
766 covenant members of the congregation, provided that the covenant members

767 requesting the meeting have brought the matter in writing to the session at least thirty
768 days before the meeting.

- 769
- 770 E) Public notice of all congregational meetings, including the business to be conducted, will be
771 announced at all worship services for at least two consecutive weeks.
- 772
- 773 F) The quorum at congregational meetings will be not less than one-tenth of the covenant
774 members. A congregation may establish a higher quorum in its by-laws. No meeting of
775 fewer than ten covenant members will be valid as a congregational meeting.
- 776
- 777 G) For passage of any proposal concerning the pastoral relationship, such as dissolving the
778 relationship, or related to dissolution, merger, transfer, or withdrawal of the congregation
779 from NCPC, a 2/3 vote of those present is necessary. For all other proposals, a majority vote
780 of those present is required, unless the congregation provides in its by-laws for a higher
781 number. If there is a tie vote, the moderator will put the question a second time; if it is tied
782 again, the motion is lost. The moderator will not vote at a meeting.
- 783
- 784 H) The pastor or pastor-designate will moderate all meetings of the congregation. The clerk of
785 session will serve as secretary for congregational meetings and keep minutes.
- 786

787 **VII. Events in the Life of a Particular Congregation**

788 Most congregations follow a discernible life cycle that includes formation, multiplication, and
789 perhaps dissolution and/or merger.

790

- 791 A) Formation: Congregations may form wherever believers gather together for the mission
792 and ministry of the local church. To become part of NCPC a Session will petition The
793 National Covenant Offices for membership by endorsing as a congregation The National
794 Covenant, and the Constitution of the NCPC. Upon receipt of the petition, the
795 Administrative Office will review and act upon the petition. If the National
796 Administrative Office concurs, it will see that the necessary Covenant papers are filed
797 and will recommend a Presbytery for the congregation to become a part of. Upon
798 approval of the Presbytery and the congregation then it will then be a part of that
799 Presbytery.
- 800
- 801 B) Multiplication: Recognizing the kingdom benefit of new church planting, congregations
802 will consider new church development as part of their strategic plans, and congregations
803 within a Presbytery will intentionally band together to enable new church development as
804 a common effort.
- 805
- 806 C) Dissolution and/or Merger: The Presbytery will provide counsel and support for
807 congregations that need to either dissolve or merge. In the case of dissolution, the
808 congregation, at a properly called and constituted congregational meeting, will by a
809 majority vote dispose of real property and other assets by sale, gift, to other charitable
810 causes or to the NCPC. In the case of merger, the new entity will follow the steps for
811 forming a new congregation.
- 812

- 813 D) Transfer from a Presbytery: A congregation may transfer from one Presbytery to another
814 if there are no pending disciplinary matters against the session or pastor. The Session of
815 the congregation seeking transfer will make application to the Presbytery which it desires
816 to join and send notice to its Presbytery of current membership. If the Presbytery
817 receiving the application concurs, it will notify the previous Presbytery of its action.
818
- 819 E) Withdrawal from the NCPC: A congregation may withdrawal from the NCPC by a 2/3
820 vote at a properly called and constituted congregational meeting. The vote of the
821 congregation is determinative of the matter and may not be challenged. Its real property
822 and other assets belong to the local congregation.
823

824



Chapter Five The Presbytery

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I. The Purpose of the Presbytery

831 A Presbytery is a relational connection between congregations and their leaders who ordinarily
832 share a common geographic proximity. The Presbytery does not exist for itself but to serve its
833 constituent congregations in their respective works of ministry and mission. Congregations will
834 be healthier when their spiritual leaders are joined in close friendships of mutual support, trust
835 and encouragement and accountability. Such relationships create a natural opportunity for
836 sharing resources, fostering spiritual growth, offering encouragement, and providing theological,
837 moral and missional accountability. Congregations will also be healthier when they are able to
838 link together in some form of common mission: sharing strengths to compensate for weaknesses,
839 sharing wisdom to offset ignorance, and sharing in collaboration to offset individualism.

840

II. Formation of Presbyteries

841

842 A) All congregations, pastors of congregations, and pastoral candidates within congregations
843 will be members of a Presbytery.

844

845 B) A Presbytery is a cluster of no more than 50 congregations, formed by mutual agreement
846 and for mutual benefit. A Presbytery is formed when at least 10 congregations, ordinarily
847 sharing geographic proximity, agree and file for Presbytery status with the National
848 Administrative Office.

849

850 C) While meetings of the Presbytery will generally be informal and of a consensual nature,
851 when matters are put before the Presbytery for formal vote, pastors, parish associates,
852 visitation pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and pastoral candidates actively serving in a
853 congregation, and elders serving on a Leadership Team have voice and vote. Clergy
854 serving outside the congregation, including retired pastors, may be members of the
855 Presbytery with voice but without vote.

856

857 D) Each Presbytery will establish Equipping and Fellowship Groups for its members, which
858 are covenanted fellowship groups that develop and review annually a group covenant (see
859 Appendix B). The Equipping and Fellowship Group exists for the purposes of worship,
860 prayer, fellowship, Bible study and theological reflection, training and equipping,
861 resource sharing, planning for cooperative ministry, and mutual submission and
862 accountability. These groups will include:

863

864 1) A Pastors' Covenant Group will consist of all pastors, pastoral candidates, parish
865 associates, visitation pastors, commissioned lay pastors and commissioned lay
866

867 pastor candidates in active ministry in a congregation, and retired pastors. The
868 Pastor's Covenant Group will meet at least twice a year for mutual support,
869 accountability, and ministry sharing.

870
871 2) If desired, Equipping and Fellowship Group(s) for elders, deacons, educators,
872 trustees, worship and music leaders, parachurch workers, and other ministry
873 leaders may be formed.

874
875 E) Each Presbytery will provide a shared ministry event for its member congregations no
876 less than two times per year. These events may include, but are not limited to, training
877 events, evangelistic events, service outreach events, shared mission partnerships, special
878 projects, concerts of prayer, and worship gatherings.

879
880 F) If a congregation wishes to join an existing Presbytery, the Session will ask the
881 Presbytery for consideration of the request. If the Presbytery approves, the congregation
882 will join after the Session signs the Presbytery Covenant.

883
884 G) Presbyteries may form, evolve and re-form in a fluid, ministry-focused manner. A
885 congregation may transfer from one Presbytery to another. The Session will make
886 application to the Presbytery that it desires to join, and send notice to Presbytery of
887 current membership. Upon receipt of the application the Presbytery will consult with the
888 Presbytery of current membership, review, and act upon the application. If approved the
889 transfer is effective.

890
891 **III. Presbytery Components**

892
893 A) A Facilitator/Moderator, elected by the Presbytery for a one year term open to re-
894 election, who leads the Leadership Team.

895
896 B) A Leadership Team, consisting of one pastor or one elder elected by each Session for a
897 one year term open to re-election, that gives direction and conducts business as needed.

898
899 C) Pastors' Covenant Groups for pastoral leaders.

900
901 D) Other Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Groups, as developed by the Presbytery.

902
903 **IV. The Leadership Team of a Presbytery:**

904
905 A) Will oversee the holding of shared congregational events and may appoint ad hoc
906 planning teams for these events.

907
908 B) Will form an Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Group for those in pastoral leadership
909 called the Pastors' Covenant Group.

910
911 C) Will encourage the formation of Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Groups for other
912 ministry leaders.

- 913
914 D) As needed, the Leadership Team in consultation with their respective Sessions, will make
915 decisions regarding the addition or withdrawal of member congregations of the
916 Presbytery and will propose changes to the Presbytery Covenant.
917
918 E) The Facilitator/Moderator will be elected annually by the Leadership Team. The
919 Facilitator/Moderator will be responsible for convening the Leadership Team meetings as
920 needed. While meetings of the Presbytery will generally be informal and of a consensual
921 nature, when matters are put before the Presbytery for formal vote, meetings will be
922 directed according to “Roberts Rules of Order” or some other agreed upon method.
923

924 **V. Equipping and Fellowship Groups**

925
926 Equipping and Fellowship Groups may include but are not limited to: pastors, elders, deacons,
927 pastoral candidates, educators, trustees, worship and music leaders and other ministry leaders.
928

929 Equipping and Fellowship Groups for congregational leaders may meet as needed to:

- 930
931 A) offer times of sharing and prayer;
932
933 B) spend time in theological reflection; and
934
935 C) hold each other accountable to the Ministry Covenant.
936

937 Equipping and Fellowship Groups will review and sign annually a group covenant (see
938 Appendix B for sample covenant).
939

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Chapter Six The General Assembly

I. The Purpose of the General Assembly

General Assembly is a broader assembly of pastors and elders connecting and consisting of all the Presbyteries within the denomination. More relational than structural, the gathering of the General Assembly will be characterized by prayer, worship, theological reflection, networking, resource sharing, equipping, and planning for shared ministry. General Assembly exists for the local churches that comprise its Presbyteries, not for itself. Staffing and structure will be minimal, set in place primarily to support the ministry and mission of the local churches, their pastors, elders, other leaders and members, and their collaborative ministry within the Presbyteries or the larger community. In addition, General Assembly will provide the necessary formal support for the Presbyteries, such as upholding certification/ordination standards and carrying out just discipline.

II. Function of General Assembly

- A) The General Assembly through its Administrative Offices certifies/ordains pastors for congregations.
- B) General Assembly encourages and provides opportunity for theological reflection and for pastoral and lay education and training, so that local churches with their elders and other leaders may be strong, healthy, and effective in the ministry and mission which they are called to undertake for the Kingdom of God.
- C) General Assembly will oversee credentials for all pastors, pastoral candidates, lay pastors, and any clergy serving in ministries that are not related to a local church for the congregations and Presbyteries of which they consist.
- E) General Assembly will propose to the Presbyteries such measures as may be of common concern to the mission and ministry of the entire National Covenant Presbyterian Church.
- F) General Assembly may employ staff to further the ministry and mission of its Presbyteries and their local churches as needed and deemed necessary.

IV. Mandated Committees

- 981 A) GA Administrative Office: to oversee pastors and their credentials and all candidates
982 being prepared for various forms of ministry.
983
- 984 1) The Administrative Office will receive and review an affirmation of the National
985 Covenant from each pastor, local church, and candidate each year.
986
 - 987 3) If it appears that a pastor, candidate, or local church seems to be failing to uphold
988 the National Covenant, the Administrative Office will engage in conversation
989 with that pastor, candidate, or congregation for the purpose of restoring the
990 covenant relationship.
991
 - 992 4) If a pastor, candidate, or local church persists in denying or failing to uphold any
993 portion of the National Covenant, the Ministry Committee will initiate further
994 review and/or a disciplinary process.
995
 - 996 5) The Administrative Office will be responsible for all ministry candidates under
997 care, and will, after appropriate examination, experience, and education that
998 satisfies the guidelines and requirements determined by the Constitution, approve
999 the candidate for examination to the Examinations Committee . All candidates
1000 will demonstrate proven ability to make disciples. All candidates will affirm the
1001 National Covenant and the Constitution without scruples.
1002
 - 1003 6) The Administrative Office will keep a roll of all active pastors within the
1004 denomination and shall, when appropriate, remove individuals from that roll
1005 through retirement or transfer and add individuals who either transfer in or are
1006 recognized through certification/ordination.
1007
 - 1008 7) The Administrative Office will keep a roll of clergy serving in ministries that are
1009 not related to a local church and of retired pastors and will encourage their
1010 participation in the Pastor's Covenant Group, Presbytery, and congregations.
1011
- 1012 B) Equipping Committee: to work with Presbyteries to provide specific nurture and training
1013 events to Presbyteries, pastors, and local churches.
1014
- 1015 C) Mission Committee: to work with Presbyteries and congregations to provide shared
1016 opportunities for local, regional, and global outreach.
1017
- 1018 D) Judicial Committee: to work with local churches, Presbyteries and General Assembly to
1019 ensure that fair and biblical discipline is carried out and to serve as the deciding body in
1020 cases that come before the Presbyteries and General Assembly.
1021
- 1022 E) Other Committees: the General Assembly may form permanent or ad hoc teams and
1023 committees as it determines.
1024
- 1025 F) Coordinating Team: consisting of the General Assembly Moderator, Clerk, and
1026 representatives from the Judicial, Mission, Equipping, and other committees and teams,

1027 whose number of meetings, size, terms and governance will be determined by the
1028 General Assembly. The Coordinating Team will either create a Nominating Committee,
1029 or act as Nominating Committee, on behalf of the General Assembly.
1030

1031 **V. Meetings of the General Assembly**
1032

1033 A) The purpose of General Assembly meetings is to support the Presbyteries and their local
1034 churches. Its meetings should be designed to promote this purpose. The General
1035 Assembly will annually.
1036

1037 B) Delegates to the General Assembly Meetings
1038

1039 1) Any covenant members from within the NCPC may attend and participate in
1040 meetings of the General Assembly; except that at meetings involving business and
1041 discipline, only elected delegates will have voice and vote.
1042

1043 2) Presbytery will elect 2 elders and 2 pastors serving congregations as delegates
1044 with voice and vote at General Assembly meetings. An elder does not have to
1045 serve on Session to serve as a delegate.
1046

1047 3) Pastors not currently serving a local church, whether retired or engaged in a
1048 ministry that is not related to a congregation, and pastoral candidates will have
1049 voice but no vote at any meeting of the General Assembly.
1050



Chapter Seven

The National Covenant Administrative Offices

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I. The Purpose of the National Covenant Administrative Offices

The NCAO is a body that does the administrative work of keeping integrity within the National Covenant churches and members. It is not a policy making branch of the denomination, but carries out the practical aspects of managing the Covenant that holds congregations and members together. It exists to serve and support the shared ministry and mission of the local churches in local, regional, contextual, national, and global partnerships. Its functions will be divided into Administrative, Judicial, and the Global Missions Network. It will be funded by the dues paid by member congregations and individuals for the Administrative and Judicial functions. Missions functions will be funded by voluntary contributions.

II. Guiding Principles

- A) The NCAO will be headed by the Coordinating Team made up of the Moderator of General Assembly, the Stated Clerk of the GA, the Administrative, Judicial, and Missions directors.
- D) The General Assembly will elect a Moderator and a Stated Clerk for three-year terms at a business meeting.
 - 1) Candidates for either office shall be pastors actively serving a congregation or elders.
 - 2) No person may be elected as Moderator or Stated Clerk for successive terms.
 - 3) No person serving in either office may be elected to serve in the other office immediately upon the end of his or her term.
- E) The Coordinating Team will establish procedures that govern the conduct of business and other meetings and the hiring, evaluating, and discharging of any employees (should there be any).

III. The Work of the National Covenant Administrative Offices

The NCAO has the following responsibilities:

- A) Overseeing the integrity and health of Presbyteries;
- B) Acting, through its Judicial Committee, as the court of final appeal for cases originating from Sessions, Presbyteries, or General Assembly;

- 1094
1095 C) Adopting a manual of procedures for disciplinary matters for all judicatories;
1096
1097 D) Recognizing, by vote in a Business Meeting, the formation, merger, and dissolution of
1098 Presbyteries;
1099
1100 E) Promoting resources to strengthen the ministry and mission of individual members,
1101 Congregations, Presbyteries, General Assembly and the Global Mission Network. The
1102 NCAO will seek to locate the best available resources, creating new resources only when
1103 it is unable to find materials in the broader Church that are effective and theologically
1104 consonant with the National Covenant.
1105
1106 F) Developing relationships with like-minded denominations and ministry entities;
1107
1108 G) Overseeing the mission partnership efforts of the Global Mission Network;
1109
1110 H) Providing guidance on seminary standards and theological preparation for the
1111 denomination;
1112

1113 **IV. Committees or Teams**

- 1114
1115 A) The NCAO may organize ad hoc committees, task forces, or ministry groups as it sees fit
1116 in order to do the business assigned to it. Should it decide to establish any committee to
1117 serve for more than two years, the national network will propose such committee by
1118 amendment to this constitution; otherwise the ad-hoc committee, task force, or ministry
1119 group will be dissolved.
1120
1121 B) The Judicial Committee will work with local congregations, Presbyteries, and General
1122 Assembly to ensure that fair and biblical discipline is carried out in compliance with the
1123 National Covenant and judicial process. The committee will serve as a final court of
1124 appeal in judicial cases that originate from Sessions and Presbyteries.
1125
1126 C) Employees must be covenant members of the NCPC.
1127

1128 **V. Meetings**

- 1129
1130 A) The NCAO staff will be in attendance at the annual GA meeting. The docket will be set
1131 by the Moderator and Stated Clerk and will include any proposal which a Presbytery
1132 sends as a common concern to the whole body.
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Chapter Eight

The Global Mission Network

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I. The Vision for Global Mission Partnerships

The National Covenant Presbyterian Church embraces a global vision for the ministry and mission of the whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world. The Global Mission Network exists to encourage collaboration for worldwide mission in new or existing partnerships with indigenous leaders and with other Christian denominations and ministries as together we seek to reach and to serve the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

II. The Biblical Basis for World Mission

We affirm and endorse the biblically-based statement of faith and commitment to world evangelization made in *the Lausanne Covenant*. Along with members of the Church of Jesus Christ from over 150 nations, participants in the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, we make public our agreement with that covenant document. We agree with the document in its entirety and highlight here selected excerpts from the document that articulate the basis and purpose of mission:

- A) God has been calling out from the world a people for himself and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses for the extension of his Kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name.
- B) We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people:
- C) To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church, and responsible service in the world.
- D) Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited.

- 1175 E) We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him
1176 and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. World
1177 evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.
1178
- 1179 F) We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also
1180 summons us to unity. We who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in
1181 fellowship, work, and witness. The responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole
1182 body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they
1183 should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the
1184 world. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that
1185 every person will have the opportunity to hear, to understand, and to receive the good
1186 news.
1187
- 1188 G) We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to
1189 his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and
1190 Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus
1191 evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. Worldwide
1192 evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church
1193 in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love, and power.
1194
- 1195 H) We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to
1196 consummate his salvation and his judgment. We believe that the interim period between
1197 Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God. Our
1198 Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with
1199 eager anticipation to that day. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of
1200 Christ and of people in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives.
1201
- 1202 I) Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant
1203 with God and with each other to pray, to plan, and to work together for the evangelization
1204 of the whole world.
1205

1206 **III. Global Mission Network**

1207 The Global Mission Network will facilitate partnerships with mission agencies and international
1208 mission structures. The Global Mission structure will be a resource for the local congregation
1209 focused on connecting individuals, congregations and networks with agencies, structures, and
1210 resources appropriate to their calling. The Global Mission Network will:

- 1211
- 1212 A) Prioritize the evangelization of those people groups that do not yet have a viable,
1213 indigenous movement for Christ in their midst;
1214
- 1215 B) Mobilize and resource local congregations and networks for greater participation in
1216 God's mission, including highlighting examples and models of effective mission;
1217
- 1218 C) Promote and facilitate international partnership development with congregations and
1219 networks in mission;
1220

- 1221 D) Develop partnerships in true mutuality with God's people in the world Church;
- 1222
- 1223 E) Facilitate church planting among ethnic groups in the United States;
- 1224
- 1225 F) Be responsive to the local congregation, to Presbyteries, and accountable to the General
- 1226 Assembly; and
- 1227
- 1228 G) Be guided by principles, values and goals, which are clearly articulated and accounting
- 1229 practices consistent with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.
- 1230



Chapter Nine Leadership Development

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I. Calling to Spiritual Leadership

1236 The National Covenant Presbyterian Church affirms the historic Reformed understanding of the
1237 four-fold call, where call is affirmed by the community, by an individual, by appropriate
1238 preparation, and by undertaking a specific form of servant ministry. It is primarily the
1239 responsibility of the local congregation to identify those with gifts and skills in disciple-making
1240 whom God may be calling into leadership ministry.

II. Elder and Deacon Commissioning/Ordination

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1244 A) Leader-candidates who have been identified by a Nominating Committee as having the
1245 spiritual maturity, gifts, and ability to serve may be presented to the congregation for vote
1246 (nominations from the floor are permitted). If elected, the candidates will enter into
1247 process for training prescribed by Session.

1248
1249 B) At the conclusion of training, the leader-candidates will again meet with the Session or a
1250 body appointed by it to review sense of call, to review completed training, to assess
1251 proficiency in the specified ministry, to confess The National Covenant without scruple,
1252 and to affirm The Constitution of NCPC. If the Session finds the person prepared for the
1253 ministry, the leader-candidate the Session shall arrange for a service of
1254 commissioning/ordaining that celebrates, with prayer and the laying on of hands, God's
1255 gifts at work in the church.

III. Pastoral Certification/Ordination

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1258
1259 A) A man or woman who senses a call to pastoral leadership will begin by discussing this
1260 with the Session of the local church. The Session will discuss and evaluate the
1261 individual's sense of call and demonstrated gifts and skills in disciple-making and other
1262 pastoral areas.

1263
1264 B) Every pastoral candidate will receive commendation by a particular local congregation of
1265 which they are a covenant member that affirms both his/her gifts for ministry and his/her
1266 confessional commitment to The National Covenant, and The Constitution.

1267
1268 C) If the Session concurs with the individual, the Session will affirm the person as a pastoral
1269 candidate. Pastoral candidates will be taken under care of a mentor who will provide
1270 accountability and support throughout a process of training. The pastoral candidate will
1271 become a participant in a particular Presbytery and the Pastoral Covenant Group.

1272

- 1273 D) Pastoral candidates will receive education consistent with their particular ministry calling
1274 as stipulated in the “Preparing for Certification/Ordination” handbook.
1275
- 1276 E) When the candidate has completed his/her preparation, the Presbytery will present the
1277 candidate and their recommendation concerning certification/ordination to the National
1278 Administrative Office. After consultation with the Pastors’ Covenant Group, and the
1279 Presbytery, the National Administrative Office will examine the candidate for evidence
1280 of a strong sense of call, completed course work, proficiency in ministry, adherence to
1281 certification/ordination standards, and ability to articulate and subscribe without scruple
1282 to The National Covenant and The Constitution. Thereafter the National Administrative
1283 Office shall act upon the candidate’s application. If denied the National Administrative
1284 Office shall report in writing to the candidate’s Pastoral Covenant Group and the
1285 Presbytery the detailed basis for not sustaining certification/ordination.
1286
- 1287 F) Pastoral candidates will receive a call to a particular congregation before ordination will
1288 be granted by the National Administrative Office. A candidate may be certified without
1289 receiving a call, but there must be a call to a congregation for ordination. A pastoral
1290 candidate may be called to his/her home church. A certified pastor will remain a
1291 covenant member of a congregation with voice, but without vote in Presbytery. An
1292 ordained pastor becomes a member of the Presbytery of service with voice and vote and
1293 is no longer considered a member of the local congregation.
1294
- 1295 G) Once approved, a time for ordination and installation may be set by the Presbytery of Call
1296 and performed on behalf of the whole denomination.
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Chapter Ten

The Exercise of Godly Discipline

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I. The Basis for Godly Discipline

In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), our Lord Jesus Christ instructed his disciples not only to teach new disciples what his commandments are but also to teach them to obey everything that he had commanded. Obedience rests upon a relationship of mutual trust and accountability, the love of Christ, and the desire to become like him.

Biblical accountability and discipline is gracious, relational, and redemptive. Our Savior sets out the elements of a grace-filled process for dealing with un-Christlike behavior (Matthew 18:15-18). The purpose is to restore the erring brother or sister through confession and repentance to the way of Christ for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the Church, to for the glory of God. The manner is gentle, and the motive is love. The exercise of discipline is an act of grace, and grace is its measure.

Discipline will be conducted with fundamental fairness and observance of due process. However, these protections should be afforded using sensible and understandable disciplinary procedures without resort to licensed attorneys.

II. The Discipline of an Individual

The Scriptures together with the Constitution, which is subject in all ways to them, serve as the basis for our life together. An offense is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, these authorities.

A) Informal Accountability

- 1) Any member may allege an offense against another member or officer of the church only after following the first two steps which Christ set out in Matthew 18: going privately to the offending individual and then, if necessary, with one or two others.
- 2) Should these steps fail to result in either clarification in the event of a misunderstanding or repentance and reconciliation in the event of wrongdoing, the allegation may be brought to the Session or Ministry Network as appropriate. This body has the discretion to begin a formal disciplinary process or to continue an informal process toward a redemptive resolution.

B) Formal Discipline

- 1) If the Session or Presbytery decides to initiate a formal disciplinary process, the person who is accused of an offense shall receive a written statement of the alleged offense, with specific information of what, where, when, and how the

1340 offense occurred, the names of witnesses, and any other evidence, which will be
1341 presented to the Judicial Committee of the NCAO.

1342
1343 2) Any person against whom an allegation of an offense has been made has the right
1344 to confront his or her accusers.

1345
1346 3) Any accused person will have the opportunity to have the presence of counsel of
1347 one or more persons. The accused person has the right to present and examine
1348 witnesses and to see, hear, and examine all evidence.

1349
1350 4) The decision by the Judicial Committee will be by a majority vote and will be set
1351 out in a written report of findings and recommendations along with its reasoning.

1352
1353 5) If the accused person is found to have committed the alleged offense, the Judicial
1354 Committee will recommend action to the Presbytery, including terms of
1355 discipline, and the process of reconciliation and the possibility of full restoration
1356 upon repentance.

1357
1358 6) If an accused person has been found not to have committed the alleged offense, the
1359 Presbytery may not appeal the decision.

1360
1361 7) No person shall be removed from an office in the church without these procedures
1362 having been observed.

1363

1364 **III. The Discipline of a Body**

1365 We recognize as a principle of faith that all human councils err. Therefore, an allegation of an
1366 offense by the body may be lodged against a body to the next larger judicatory up to and
1367 including the General Assembly, by any member of that body. The offense may be an erroneous
1368 decision or action, an omission, or a failure to act. The allegation will be handled by a judicial
1369 committee of that next larger network in a manner similar to that followed in the accusation of an
1370 individual. In the case of an allegation against a General Assembly, the allegation shall be
1371 referred to the Judicial Committee.

1372

1373 **IV. Appeals**

1374 An appeal is the transfer to a higher body of a case on which judgment has been rendered in a
1375 lower court. A party who has been found guilty of an offense may appeal to the next higher
1376 network if:

1377
1378 A) the decision was manifestly unjust;

1379
1380 B) irregular process was permitted;

1381
1382 C) there was a misinterpretation of Scripture or the Constitution;

1383
1384 D) there was manifestation of prejudice; or

1385

1386 E) proper evidence was refused admission or improper evidence was received.

1387

1388

1389 The Decision of the Judicial Committee is final and not subject to appeal.

1390

1391

1392

1393 **V. Manual of Disciplinary Procedures**

1394 In adjudicating allegations under this chapter, each judicatory will be guided by a manual of
1395 procedures adopted by the General Assembly according to the principles of this chapter. Those
1396 procedures may include provisions of support to persons involved in the disciplinary process and
1397 to their families, and it may include a process for restoration for persons committing or injured
1398 by the offense.

1399



Chapter Eleven Amendments to Constitution

I. Amendments to the Essential Tenets of the Christian Faith (Chapter 1), A Declaration of Ethical Imperatives (Chapter 3), and the Constitutional Amendment Process (Chapter 11).

An amendment to modify the Essential Tenets of the Christian Faith or The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives or procedures for amendments to the constitution or to adopt additional confessional or ethical standards shall be made only in the following manner:

- A. The approval of the amendment by $\frac{3}{4}$ (three- quarters) super-majority vote by the General Assembly, which shall vote upon any proposed amendment at its next meeting, provided that the proposal has been submitted by an endorsing Session at least 60 days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly; and
- B. The approval in writing by $\frac{3}{4}$ (three- quarters) super- majority vote of those endorsing Sessions which report their votes to the General Assembly within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the General Assembly.
- C. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the General Assembly and transmission to all endorsing congregations.

II. Amendments to Other Portions of the Constitution

An amendment to modify other portions of the Constitution shall be made only in the following manner:

- A. Approval of the proposed amendment by majority vote of the General Assembly, which shall act upon any proposed amendment at its next meeting, provided that the proposal has been submitted by an endorsing Session at least 60 days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly; and
- B. The approval in writing by majority vote of endorsing Sessions that report their votes to the General Assembly within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the General Assembly.
- C. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the General Assembly and transmission to all endorsing congregations.

III. The foregoing sections of the Constitution may also be amended upon petition from at least ten percent (10%) of the endorsing sessions and approval in writing by the specified majority votes of the endorsing sessions. Such amendments shall become effective upon mailing to all endorsing sessions a certification by the General Assembly that the amendment received the required margin of votes, calculated in the manner and time specified above. A record of each endorsing session's vote also shall be transmitted to the General Assembly.



Appendix A Sample Presbytery Covenant

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We, the Sessions of the congregations in covenant, form Presbytery. We agree to support one another's ministry through prayer and by sharing resources, nurturing fellowship, offering encouragement, and holding each other accountable.

We endorse The Essential Tenets of the Christian Faith and The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives of the National Covenant Presbyterian Church.

We agree to work with our sisters and brothers in the Presbytery by participating in equipping and fellowship groups, the Leadership Team, and shared congregational events.

1. _____
(signed by clerk of session)

of _____ Church _____
(date)

2. _____

of _____ Church _____
(date)

3. _____

of _____ Church _____
(date)



Appendix B Sample Covenant for Equipping and Fellowship Groups

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Covenant for _____ (dates)

- A. We agree to engage each other in the disciplines of the Christian life through:
1. Regular study, prayer, and worship time;
 2. Discussion at each meeting on issues of theological significance;
 3. Developing relationships as brothers and sisters in the family of God and holding each other in prayer; and
 4. Faithful attendance at our meetings. If I am unable to come, I will contact the others.
- B. We agree to engage in positive, Christ-like communication:
1. Speaking the truth in love;
 2. Affirming each other;
 3. Holding each other accountable in areas of belief and practice;
 4. Not talking about a group member in his/her absence;
 5. Keeping confidential what is heard in the group unless agreed otherwise by mutual consent;
 6. Making decisions by group consensus.
- C. We will meet at least ____ times per year on the following dates, times, and locations for a meeting length of ____:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- D. We will study the following during this year: _____
- We will complete the following homework (if any): _____
- _____
- _____

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(Signatures of participants)

(Date)



Appendix C The Lausanne Covenant

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1529 **INTRODUCTION**

1530 We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the
1531 International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation
1532 and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply
1533 stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by
1534 the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole
1535 world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all
1536 mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our
1537 resolve, and to make public our covenant.

1538 **1. THE PURPOSE OF GOD**

1539 We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy
1540 Spirit, who govern all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from
1541 the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and
1542 his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of
1543 his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our
1544 mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that
1545 even when borne by earthen vessels the gospel is still a precious treasure. To the task of making
1546 that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew.

1547 (Isa. 40:28; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:14; John 17:6, 18; Eph 4:12; 1 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 12:2;
1548 II Cor. 4:7)

1549 **2. THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE BIBLE**

1550 We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament
1551 Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms,
1552 and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to
1553 accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and
1554 women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy
1555 Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its
1556 truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the
1557 many-colored wisdom of God.

1558 (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3;
1559 Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)

1560 **3. THE UNIQUENESS AND UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST**

1561 We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of

1562 evangelistic approaches. We recognize that everyone has some knowledge of God through his
1563 general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their
1564 unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism
1565 and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus
1566 Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the
1567 only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All
1568 men and women are perishing because of sin, but God loves everyone, not wishing that any
1569 should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation
1570 and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Savior of the
1571 world" is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to
1572 affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world
1573 of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted
1574 personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other
1575 name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him
1576 Lord.

1577 (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:18-32; I Tim. 2:5,6; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-19; II Pet. 3:9; II Thess. 1:7-9; John
1578 4:42; Matt. 11:28; Eph. 1:20,21; Phil. 2:9-11)

1579 **4. THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM**

1580 To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from
1581 the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness
1582 of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence
1583 in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to
1584 listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the
1585 historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him
1586 personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to
1587 conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves,
1588 take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism
1589 include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.

1590 (I Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 2: 32-39; John 20:21; I Cor. 1:23; II Cor. 4:5; 5:11,20; Luke 14:25-33; Mark
1591 8:34; Acts 2:40,47; Mark 10:43-45)

1592 **5. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

1593 We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his
1594 concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and
1595 women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God,
1596 every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity
1597 because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express
1598 penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern
1599 as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God,
1600 nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that
1601 evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are
1602 necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our
1603 obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon

1604 every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce
1605 evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his
1606 kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an
1607 unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our
1608 personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

1609 (Acts 17:26,31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26,27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke
1610 6:27,35; Jas. 2:14-26; Joh. 3:3,5; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; II Cor. 3:18; Jas. 2:20)

1611 **6. THE CHURCH AND EVANGELISM**

1612 We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that
1613 this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our
1614 ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial
1615 service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the
1616 whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and
1617 is his appointed means of spreading the gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself
1618 be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel
1619 or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things
1620 including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an
1621 institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or
1622 human ideology.

1623 (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9,10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14,17; II Cor.
1624 6:3,4; II Tim. 2:19-21; Phil. 1:27)

1625 **7. COOPERATION IN EVANGELISM**

1626 We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us
1627 to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel
1628 of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and
1629 does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be
1630 closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes
1631 been marred by a sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a
1632 deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and
1633 functional cooperation for the furtherance of the Church's mission, for strategic planning, for
1634 mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience.

1635 (John 17:21,23; Eph. 4:3,4; John 13:35; Phil. 1:27; John 17:11-23)

1636 **8. CHURCHES IN EVANGELISTIC PARTNERSHIP**

1637 We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast
1638 disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world
1639 evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the
1640 whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they
1641 should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world.
1642 A reevaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing
1643 partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more

1644 clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological
1645 education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other
1646 specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their
1647 effectiveness as part of the Church's mission.

1648 (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; Acts 13:1-3, I Thess. 1:6-8)

1649 **9. THE URGENCY OF THE EVANGELISTIC TASK**

1650 More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of all humanity, have yet to be
1651 evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and
1652 to the whole Church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented
1653 receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-
1654 church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to
1655 achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized
1656 country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance
1657 and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from
1658 and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means
1659 and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand,
1660 and to receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are
1661 shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us
1662 who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to
1663 contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.

1664 (John 9:4; Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 9:1-3; I Cor. 9:19-23; Mark 16:15; Isa. 58:6,7; Jas. 1:27; 2:1-9;
1665 Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35)

1666 **10. EVANGELISM AND CULTURE**

1667 The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering
1668 methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely
1669 related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and
1670 women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they
1671 are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose
1672 the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of
1673 truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too
1674 frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in
1675 bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty
1676 themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and
1677 churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God.

1678 (Mark 7:8,9,13; Gen. 4:21,22; I Cor. 9:19-23; Phil. 2:5-7; II Cor. 4:5)

1679 **11. EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP**

1680 We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and
1681 divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions
1682 have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful
1683 responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will

1684 have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but
1685 of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially
1686 for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training program for
1687 pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training
1688 programs should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative
1689 local initiatives according to biblical standards.

1690 (Col. 1:27,28; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5,9; Mark 10:42-45; Eph. 4:11,12)

1691 **12. SPIRITUAL CONFLICT**

1692 We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers
1693 of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization.
1694 We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual
1695 weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies
1696 outside the Church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put people in the
1697 place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel. We
1698 acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thoughts and action, that is, to a
1699 surrender to secularism. For example, although careful studies of church growth, both numerical
1700 and spiritual, are right and valuable, we have sometimes neglected them. At other times, desirous
1701 to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers
1702 through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in
1703 our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in
1704 the Church.

1705 (Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 4:3,4; Eph. 6:11,13-18; II Cor. 10:3-5; I John 2:18-26; 4:1-3; Gal. 1:6-9; II
1706 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; John 17:15)

1707 **13. FREEDOM AND PERSECUTION**

1708 It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and
1709 liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel
1710 without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to
1711 guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in
1712 accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
1713 We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for
1714 those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for
1715 their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too
1716 will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do
1717 not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable.

1718 (I Tim. 1:1-4, Acts 4:19; 5:29; Col. 3:24; Heb. 13:1-3; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; Matt. 5:10-12;
1719 John 15:18-21)

1720 **14. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

1721 We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son;
1722 without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and Christian
1723 growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should

1724 arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is
1725 contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic
1726 possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love and
1727 power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit
1728 of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of
1729 Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole
1730 earth may hear his voice.

1731 (I Cor. 2:4; John 15:26;27; 16:8-11; I Cor. 12:3; John 3:6-8; II Cor. 3:18; John 7:37-39; I Thess.
1732 5:19; Acts 1:8; Psa. 85:4-7; 67:1-3; Gal. 5:22,23; I Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8)

1733 **15. THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

1734 We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to
1735 consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our
1736 evangelism, for we remember his words that the gospel must first be preached to all nations. We
1737 believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the
1738 mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his
1739 warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We
1740 therefore reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that people can ever build a utopia on
1741 earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with
1742 eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell
1743 and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of
1744 people in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives.

1745 (Mark 14:62; Heb. 9:28; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8-11; Matt. 28:20; Mark 13:21-23; John 2:18; 4:1-
1746 3; Luke 12:32; Rev. 21:1-5; II Pet. 3:13; Matt. 28:18)

1747 **CONCLUSION**

1748 Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with
1749 God and with each other, to pray, to plan and to work together for the evangelization of the
1750 whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to
1751 be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!