



Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Presbytery of Central Carolinas
13th Stated Meeting
Centre Presbyterian Church –
Mooresville, NC
September 25-26, 2026

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Proposed Docket
Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Thirteenth Stated Meeting
Centre Presbyterian Church
Mooreville, NC
September 25-26, 2026

Mission: Mobilizing church leaders to make disciples and plant churches for gospel-transformation

Cultivate

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. [Hosea 10:12]

Friday, September 25, 2026

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 8:30 AM | Registration & Team / Committee Meetings |
| 1:00 PM | Call to order – Moderator – TE Eric Bartel
Host Welcome – TE Logan Keck |
| 1:05 PM | Opening Prayer & Worship – Chaplain TE Bill Wade, Overbrook EPC |
| 1:40 PM | Preliminary Matters – Moderator TE Eric Bartel and Stated Clerk TE Robert Howard <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Declaration of a quorum & adoption of the docket● Communications and referrals● Welcome to first-time commissioners and corresponding members● Welcome New Congregations |
| 2:00 PM | Moderator's Report - TE Eric Bartel <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Election of Moderator and Moderator Elect<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ In nomination: TE Eric Bartel for Moderator○ In nomination: RE Mike Rashid for Moderator Elect● Announcements<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ By Laws Task Force Update○ 4 Discussion Sessions |
| 2:15 PM | Report of the Missional Director – TE Brian Land <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gospel Stories |
| 2:45 PM | Report of the PCC Stated Clerk – TE Robert Howard <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Minutes (see packet for details)● Descending Overtures – <i>1st Reading</i>● Clerk Training |
| 3:15 PM | Fellowship (15 min) |
| 3:30 PM | Order of the Day:
TE Nicole Unice, Richmond, VA |

- 5:30 PM Worship and Celebration of the Lord's Supper
- Preaching & Communion
 - Mission Offering: The Barnabas Fund
 - Prayer ministry and fellowship available after the close of the service

6:30 PM Break for Dinner

Saturday, April 26, 2026

- 9:00 AM Call to Order – Moderator TE Eric Bartel
- 9:00 AM Devotional Messages – TE George Schwab
- 9:20 AM Report of the Church Planting Committee – TE Logan Keck
- 9:50 AM Report of the Stewardship Committee – TE Donovan Campbell
- 10:05 AM World Outreach - TE Ken Thomas
- 10:20 AM Fellowship (10 min)
- 10:30 AM Church Development Committee–RE Anita Hill
- Church Health Coordinator – TE Brian Martin
- 11:00 AM Report of the Ministerial Committee – RE Butch Hill
- Examinations
 - Transfer Candidate TE Lucas Waters of the Presbytery of the Southeast.
 - Omnibus motion
- 12:15 PM Expression of appreciation to the host – TE Eric Bartel, Moderator
- 12:20 PM Doxology, Prayer, & Charge – TE Bill Wade
- 12:30 PM Adjournment, Chaplain

Fourteenth Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

Location: TBD – January 29th – 30th



Presbytery of Central Carolinas
12th Stated Meeting Minutes
April 24-25, 2026
Overbrook Presbyterian Church
919 Overbrook Drive Gaffney, SC

Mission: Mobilizing church leaders to make disciples and plant churches for gospel-transformation

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” [Romans 5:1-5]

12-01. Attendance

Altan Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Robert Childs, Stated Supply (Unexcused)
2. RE: Edwina Eubanks (Present), Fran Caldwell (Present)

Asheville Hope Mission Church

1. TE Drew McCarty – Evangelist (Present)

Banks Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Jonathan Mikule (Present)
2. RE: Vivian Presley (Present)

Bensalem

1. TE: John Stone, Stated Supply (Unexcused)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Benton Heights Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Paul Saleeby (Present)
2. RE: Jan Rowell (Present), Dianne Short (Present), Denise Hopper (Present)

Bethlehem

1. CP: Josh Herrin (Present)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Buck Hill

1. TE: Jim Hoilman (Unexcused)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Cameronian

1. CP: Phil Joines – 05/2029 (Excused)
2. RE: (Unexcused)

Centre Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Logan Keck (Present)
 2. RE: Don Kirkey (Present), Merrilynne Henderson (Present)
- Christ Church – Anderson
1. TE: Ken Hicks, Stated Supply (Excused)
 2. RE: Thad Ellett (Present), Michael Perry (Present), Dennis Burt (Present)
- Christ Community Church - Montreat
1. TE: Richard White (Excused), David Taylor (Present)
 2. RE: Dan “John” Newcomer (Present), Robert Brown (Present), David Schermerhorn (Present), Rob Schermerhorn (Present), Larry Harris (Present)
- Christ Fellowship Church – Southern Pines
1. TE: Jim Thyne, Stated Supply (Unexcused)
 2. RE: Charli Thyne (Unexcused)
- Grace Church – Brevard, N.C.
1. TE: Brian Land (Present)
 2. RE: Joe Kirk (Present), Ethan Lydon (Present), Rebecca Lunceford (Present)
- Greenville Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Donovan Campbell (Present)
 2. RE: Mary Bolen (Present), Becky Hodges (Present), Chuck Marion (Present)
- Hendersonville Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Rob McClelland (Excused)
 2. RE: (Excused)
- Kershaw Evangelical Presbyterian Church
1. CP: Tom Orred (Present) – 04/2028
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Lake Forest Huntersville
1. TE: Mike Moses (Present), Aron Gibson - Assoc. (Present), Andy Cornett - Assist. (Present)
 2. RE: Mike Rashid (Present), Darrell Lipe (Present), Allen Roes (Present), Jack Cathey (Present), Dave Gregory (Present)
- Lighthouse Evangelical Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Andy Schuster (Excused)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- McBee Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Mark Dickinson (Excused)
 2. RE: (Excused)
- McLean Presbyterian Church
1. CP: Jamie Smith (Excused)– 01/2029
 2. RE: (Excused)
- Nell Townsend Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Vacant

2. RE: (Unexcused)
- New Cut Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Scott Hilborn, Stated Supply (Excused)
 2. RE: Joe Clark (Present)
- Overbrook Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Bill Wade (Present)
 2. RE: Phil Bartscher (Present), Bob Campell (Present)
- Plumtree
1. CP: Ryan Bridgeo (Unexcused)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Riceville Valley Community Church
1. TE: Howard Quach (Present)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Rocky River Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Vacant
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Rourk Presbyterian Church
1. CP: Michael Price (Present) – 11/2028
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Siler Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Michael Krauter (Present)
 2. RE: Perry Somers (Present), Anita Hill (Present), Butch Hill (Present)
- St. Giles Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Nate Atwood (Present), Tim Carey - Assoc. (Excused)
 2. RE: Michael King (Present), Bob Clawson (Present)
- St. Matthew Presbyterian Church
1. TE: Vacant
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Storyhill Church
1. TE: Michael Flake (Excused), Gray Segars – Assoc. (Excused), Katie Mactuk – Asst. (Present)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- The Village Church
1. TE: Scott Waters (Present)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Threshold Church
1. TE: Gabe Swing (Present)
 2. RE: (Unexcused)
- Valley Hope Church
1. TE: Anthony Rodriguez (Present)

2. RE: Joe Kirkland (Present), Ryan McLellan (Present), Ted Yap (Present)
Walkersville Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Paul Rankin (Present)

2. RE: Eric Johnston (Present)

Warehouse 242 Church

1. TE: Mike Lawrie (Unexcused)

2. RE: (Unexcused)

Warrenton Presbyterian Church

1. TE: Vacant

2. RE: (Unexcused)

Active Teaching Elders

TE Jeff Cook

Active Teaching Elders (Laboring Outside of Bounds)

TE Joe Carvajal	(Excused) – WEC & Chaplin Hearth Hospice
TE Jennifer Cooper	(Excused) – U.S. Army Chaplain - 01/2029
TE Mark Hunter	(Unexcused) – Montreat Prof. & Assoc. Dean of Ac. Affairs
TE Michael J. Kruger	(Excused) – Reformed Theo. Sem., Prof. of N.T. – 01/2029
TE Brian Martin	(Present) – PastorServe – 01/2029
TE Rachel Toone Pies	(Excused) – Montreat College, Dean of Spiritual Form. – 01/2029
TE Katie Piquette	(Excused) – Chaplin Veterans Administration – Asheville
TE Jason Riggs	(Present) – Chaplin Veterans Administration – Salisbury
TE George Schwab	(Present) – Erskine Seminary, Prof. of O.T. – 01/2029
TE Nicole Unice	(Unexcused) Bible Podcast/ Pangea Technologies
TE Stephanie Vander Lugt	(Excused) – Changing Choices
TE Wesley Vander Lugt	(Excused) – Gordon-Conwell, Charlotte – 01/2029
TE Doug Vinez	(Present) – Global Training Network – 09/2028

Corresponding Member

RE Elizabeth Gibson North Hampton Church Planting Network (Present)

TE Scott Matson – Presbytery of Pacific Northwest/Transfer Candidate

Presbytery Staff

TE Eric Bartel, Moderator (Present)

TE Robert M. Howard, Stated Clerk (Present)

Associate Members (nonvoting)

TE Kevin Hartley

TE Joshua Joohyung Jo

TE Charles Reed
TE Mitch White
TE Nathan Wolcott
TE Christian Zebley (Present)

Associate Members (Laboring Outside of Bounds) (nonvoting)

TE Andrew Brunson
TE Emmett Cooper
TE Chris Furr, WOM
TE Brad Long
TE Adger McKay, WOM
TE Jim Wilken

Commissioned Pastor Laboring Out of Bounds (nonvoting)

RE Jesse McDonald – Church (ECO), Barnwell, S.C. – until 01/2029

Associate Member, Retired (Active)

TE Don Fortson (Present)
TE Larry Pittman (Excused)
TE Ken Thomas (Excused)

Associate Member, Retired (Inactive) (nonvoting)

TE Chuck Baynard
TE Carter Blaisdell
TE G. B. (Bud) Brainard
TE James Braswell
TE James (Bucky) Brown (Present)
TE Rick Brundin
TE Percy Burns
TE James L. Carr
TE Rob Chambers
TE Brian Holt
TE Jim Lankford (Excused)
TE Robert McRae
TE Ronald Read
TE Dick Robinson
TE Jerry Robinson
TE Rick Slate
TE Bill Solomon
TE Tom Sheppard

TE David F. Steele
TE Andy Wells
TE Steve Wilkinson

Inactive Roll

TE Judson Jordan
TE Andy Muhich
TE Peter Cha

Candidates Under Care

Thomas Davis - St Giles		Advisor - TE Nate Atwood
Abby Del Russo – Centre	(Present)	Advisor - Stephanie Van Lugt
Chris Godley - Grace	(Present)	Advisor - TE Howard Quach
Cesar Guerrero - Lake Forest		Advisor - TE Aron Gibson
Caroline Holden - Vally Hope		Advisor - (Needed)
Victor Leal - Lake Forest		Advisor - TE Brian Land
Ben Lillard - Valley Hope		Advisor - TE Howard Quach
Chandler Owens - Warehouse 242		Advisor - TE Mike Lawrie
Nathan Turner - Christ Church	(Present)	Advisor - TE Donovan Campbell
Robert Wallace – Hendersonville		Advisor - TE Richard White

Observers

Gary Bradley – Story Memorial PC, Marion, NC
MaryRobin deLeon-Gibson, Lake Forest - Westlake
Chris Godley – PCC Communications Director
Kayla Mikule – Banks PC
Rev. Percy Muleba – Zambia, Africa
Caitlin Richardson – Walkersville PC
Shawn Stewart – World Outreach Missionary
Magda Thomas
Abby Vinez

Friday, April 24th, 2026

12-01. The twelfth Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas was called to order by Moderator TE Eric Bartel at 1:00 PM. The Moderator welcomed the presbytery and invited the host church Pastor TE Bill Wade to welcome the court to Overbrook Church and gave logistic instructions on the use of the facility. As Chaplain, TE Bill Wade opened the meeting with a time of Prayer & Worship provided by the musicians of Overbrook EPC. The Court opened in worship by singing, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.”

TE Wade read from 1Corinthians 15:12-18, 20-23, 42-44 and led the court in small group prayers asking participants to give thanks for the resurrection and the fruit of bringing others into the knowledge of the Gospel by making out witness fruitful in our words and in our actions. Lastly, that the Church would live out our life with the ultimate thought of the glory of God to be revealed at our own resurrection. The time of worship was closed in singing “When I Survey the Wonderous Cross.”

- 12-02. The business of the court began with the recognition of Preliminary Matters by Moderator TE Eric Bartel and Stated Clerk TE Robert Howard. The Stated Clerk declared the court had a quorum to conduct the business of the meeting. The Moderator presented the proposed docket and entertained a motion to adopt the docket. The motion to adopt the proposed docket was made from the floor, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Under Communications and Referrals, the Stated Clerk reported that all has been quiet on the Central Carolinas front and there are no communications except what will be given during the State Clerk’s report on preparing for the General Assembly.

The Moderator asked first-time commissioners and corresponding members to stand and be recognized by the court.

- 12-03. Moderator's Report - TE Bartel opened the report in prayer. The Moderator encouraged the Court to remember Deut. 5. The Commandment with the most verses is the 4th Commandment. TE Bartel focused on the reminder for our people that the power of living the Christian life comes in worshipping God. The phrase “keep calm” has affected the church in the aftermath of the pandemic that has robbed the church in the spiritual gift of resting in God instead of being busy for God. TE Eric Bartel introduced or recognized the Committee Chairs of the PCC’s committees and explained the committee’s work on behalf of the PCC. The Moderator also had a brief report on the Task Force being formed to update and refresh the PCC’s By-Laws. A second Task Force that will review the PCC’s process of preparing Administrative and Judicial Commissions to carry out the work appointed by the PCC is ongoing.

- 12-04. Report of the Missional Director – TE Brian Land opened the report with prayer. TE Land referred to his job description is to keep the PCC focused on its mission. The PCC mission is “to mobile Church Leaders to make disciples and plant churches for Gospel transformation. Most new believers come to faith through new church plants. Every congregation can be involved in supporting this endeavor within the PCC. The trellis of this endeavor is based on relationships. The PCC must approach its mission by focusing on how the PCC members and committees are relating together in mobilizing church

leaders to make disciples and planting churches for Gospel transformation. TE Land introduced a motion approved by the Executive Council concerning the transition of the Church Health Coordinator position.

Motion: That the PCC appoints TE Brian Martin as the Church Health Coordinator effective April 24, 2026.

The motion did not need a second coming from Executive Council. The floor was open to discussion. Hearing none the Moderator called the question. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

- 12-05. Report of the PCC Stated Clerk – TE Robert Howard opened his report in prayer and presented the minutes of the 11th Stated Meeting of the PCC for a motion to approve them pending any corrections in spelling or grammar. The Motion was made from the floor, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Communications & Referrals – The Stated Clerk gave the following report on how to prepare for the 46th General Assembly at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church in Englewood, CO. Registration for the 46th General Assembly has a two-stage process. Each person must personally register on the website (www.epconnect.org) and pay a registration fee. To be registered as a Commissioner all Ruling Elders must be certified and remember the following criteria for the second step.

The second step is the Commissioner Certification by the Clerk of Session.

1. Ruling Elders must be elected and endorsed by the Session of a congregation to serve as Commissioners to the General Assembly. (*Sign up for “New Commissioner” opportunity.*)
2. A church may elect the same number of Ruling Elder Commissioners to General Assembly as it does to its Presbytery. The PCC approved the Parity Report at the February Stated Meeting inviting a list of churches to send one additional Ruling Elder to be a Ruling Elder Commissioner to the Stated Meeting of the PCC and the 46th G.A. for 2026. (*Please refer to the PCC packet on page PCC 7 & 8.*)
3. Once a congregation’s Ruling Elder Commissioners are elected, the Clerk of Session must submit the Ruling Elder Commissioner Certification Form no later than May 15 of each year. (<https://epconnect.org/ga2026recommissionercertificationform/>) Without this certification, a Ruling Elder will not receive voting credentials at the Assembly.
4. All Teaching Elders who are active members of their presbyteries are eligible to vote and need no additional certification. Those who are Associate Members of the PCC may attend the 46th G.A. and have voice or speak at the meeting but

Associate Members do not have vote at Stated Meetings of the PCC or the General Assembly. *(Please refer to the PCC packet on page PCC 5)*

Ascending Overtures and Parliamentary Process – Each Presbytery’s Ascending Overture has been or will be posted on the website. These overtures have not yet been examined by the G.A. Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) and are subject to change prior to the General Assembly (GA). Final recommended versions will be included in the GA Commissioner Handbook. (<https://epconnect.org/ga/ga2026documents/#overtures>)

- 12-06. Order of the Day: World Outreach Committee Member TE Doug Vinez was invited by the Moderator to lead the Court in the Order of the Day. TE Vinez introduced Rev. Percy Muleba from Zambia, Africa who has partnered with TE Doug and Abby Vinez in their work with Global Training Network. They are involved in training and discipling African Pastors and new believers who are then sent out to reach, train and disciple others in their community. Pastor Muleba spoke about what making disciples in Africa looks like and how it is still happening today so that Africa is not a mission field but a equipping filed. His outline for this presentation is TSI.

T - Testimony
S - Scripture
I - Invitation

TE Vinez invited Shawn Stewart to talk about what is happening with the Disciple Making Movement. Ordinary People, Growing Churches; From small gatherings in Africa to living rooms in the U.S.

1. Extra ordinary prayer (praying one more time than you normally pray) How people can begin praying for places they are attracted to in their community.
2. The next step is to begin salty conversations with people in that community and build a relationship with those people.
3. Next is moving to a Discovery Bible approach in reading a passage with targeted questions to discuss with those in the community. This movement is from familiarity to a house group.

To illustrate this kind of approach Mr. Stewart asked TE Drew McCarty to join him up front to discuss “Every Home an Outpost” approach of Asheville Hope Mission Church. The Christian household is the mission center of the Kingdom of God’s work in reaching people. This approach is a home cell group approach where the gathered focus on relationships in a home setting instead of the focus being on a church building. The group meets at 10:00AM with worship and meets until 2:00PM. After worship there is a communal meal with time for questions and answers. Discussion also includes relating to others in the community. There are specific teaching times on house ministry and some of the work involved. You can see their work on the webpage [HOME | Asheville Hope](#) and on the Facebook page: [Asheville Hope | Asheville NC | Facebook](#)
Equip and Encourage Households to be kingdom outposts in mission, discipleship and worship.

12-07. Church Development Committee—RE Anita Hill opened his report in prayer. RE Hill covered the proposed manual for Church Development in the PCC. The Manual contains the following information in outline:

- A. Church Health, Revitalization and Vitality
- B. Church Standards/Book of Government
- C. Presbytery Bylaws (that apply to CDC)
- D. Duties of the Missional Director and Church Health Coordinator
- E. Non-EPC Reformed Churches and Groups

Motion: That the report be approved and adopt the Church Health Manual as a policy of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas.

Motion did not need a second. The Moderator put the question before the Court. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote. The Church Development Manual is attached to these minutes as an addendum. The CDC is also wishing to improve communication through a Newsletter update and would appreciate any needed feedback from the PCC.

12-08. The Moderator entertained a motion to suspend the business portion of the Stated meeting to take a break and gather at 5:30 PM for Worship and Celebration of the Lord's Supper. TE Bill Wade preached on Psalm 107. The Mission Offering would be dedicated to The Barnabas Fund. A motion to suspend business and gather for worship was approved by unanimous consent.

Saturday, April 25th, 2026

12-09. The Court was called back to order by Moderator TE Eric Bartel at 9:00 AM on Saturday, April 25, 2026. The Moderator opened the meeting with prayer and invited TE Donovan Campbell to lead the court in a morning Devotional Message.

12-09. Report of the Church Planting Committee – TE Logan Keck opened his report in prayer. TE Keck introduced RE Elizabeth Gibson of the North Hampton Church Planting Network. RE Arron Gibson and wife gave a testimony of the history of the Lake Forest Made to Flourish is launched a two year residency staff member eventually launch as lead pastor of new church. TE Logan Keck moved that the report be accepted by the court. Motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

12-11. Report of the Stewardship Committee – TE Donovan Campbell opened his report in prayer. Online giving, Barnabus Request Form, PCC Reimbursement, Park Avenue is sold \$297,000 and will be moved into a brokerage account until PCC decides on its use. TE Campbell moved that the report to be accepted by the court. Motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

- 12-12. World Outreach - TE Doug Vinez opened his report in prayer and invited a missionary who is serving in the Middle East and reported to the PCC the ongoing work in this sensitive area of the Middle East. Details are not included in these minutes for security reasons. TE Doug Vinez closed the report in prayer and moved that the Court received the report. The Moderator entertained a second from the floor and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.
- 12-13. Report of the Ministerial Committee – RE Butch Hill opened his report in prayer. RE Butch Hill introduced Transfer Candidate TE Scott Matson of the Presbytery of Pacific Northwest who is being called by Lake Forest Community Church to be an Assistant Pastor serving in the ministry of discipleship. TE Matson is an ordained EPC Pastor. His examination by the PCC as a transferee (G. 12-3.). TE Matson was examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2, and his experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and his progress in spiritual growth. The Ministerial Committee has received confirmation of his competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of course work taken, along with the required exegesis from the Presbytery of Pacific Northwest. TE Hill invited TE George Schwab to administer the questions for examination. TE Matson was asked to share with the Court his Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth. (G. 12-2. B.). TE Matson shared his story of conversion and the impact his faith has made upon his life.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson’s Christian experience be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator entertained a second from the floor. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

TE Schwab continued the examination of TE Matson on his views concerning the categories delineated in (G. 12-2. B. C. & D.) On the topic of the English Bible TE Matson was asked how he dealt with questions individual who questioned the character of God in dealing with the violence recorded in OT. TE Matson spoke of the holiness of God and the ways in which God is seeking to redeem and judge his creation in complementing God’s Holiness and God’s justice. On the question of how he would preach through the Song of Solomon TE Matson would do so dealing with the principles of God’s love. He does not believe the method of using the book as an allegory of God’s love for the church is a proper approach. He does believe that the book teaches the story of redemption from the fall in the garden to the work of reconciliation through the cross. TE Schwab asked, “What is Paul’s point in Romans chapter one?” TE Matson recalled the principle that Gentiles and Jews are guilt before God. Paul is pointing to

homosexuality as a distortion of God's good gift of sexuality, and that it is clearly sin in Scripture. Idolatry is the distortion of human existence, and it is the result of a separation from God by our sin for all humanity. Did he consider Paul to be the author of Pastoral Letters? TE Matson affirmed that view. Arguments against Pauline authorship are not convincing. The next question was how he reconciled the doctrine of justification, not by works of the law, but by faith alone with the teaching in the Book of James of the necessity of works. TE Matson pointed out that obedience is a result of faith and listed other places in the Scriptures where those of faith obeyed out of faith. Obedience is a sign of faith. Asked what his view of the authority of Scripture, TE Matson expressed he held the classical view expressed in the Westminster Confession. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson's view of the English Bible be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion approved by voice vote.

As a transferring Teaching Elder Scott Matson was asked to submit to the Ministerial Committee and the Presbytery a written statement of any exceptions the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of this Church. TE Matson expressed does have one exception to the Westminster Confession teaching on the Sabbath Chapter 21 (Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day), paragraph 8; Larger Catechism (Q.117); Shorter Catechism (Q.60) – "recreations" – "I appreciate the Westminster Divines' insistence that God's people set apart one day in the week as a sabbath, and I fully affirm that. However, I believe it to be an overreach to forbid all forms of recreation. I see no biblical warrant to forbid a Christian from taking a nap or doing something "fun" with their children on Sunday. Furthermore, our Lord stated that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) and therefore, I believe that the consciences of God's people should not be bound to the extent that every action is governed in detail." On the question of his sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures TE Matson answered in the affirmative. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson's view of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion was approved by voice vote.

TE Schwab moved to the examination of Theology and the Sacraments. TE Matson affirmed that he subscribed to Westminster teaching on Sacraments as well as affirmed the teaching in chapter one on inerrancy and inspiration. On his views of sensationism, he explained his understanding of this view is the belief that the ecstatic and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer employed by God in revelation. TE Matson expressed that he was not a sensationist. On the issue of Egalitarianism vs. Complementarianism, TE Matson responded with an appreciation within the EPC of this issue not being an Essential of Faith and that view held in the EPC that reasonable believers may have differing opinions of this issue was appreciated. TE Matson rejects the theory of annihilation and believes the soul is eternal. On the issue of “Ordo Salutis” (Latin for “Order of Salvation.”) TE Matson holds the reformed view of regeneration and conversion. Questioned on the issue of who should be admitted to the Sacraments of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, TE Matson affirmed the Reformed expression of the expectation that those admitted to the Lord’s Supper should first confess their faith in Christ and be baptized as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Salvation. The only exception would be for those how are intellectually impaired and not able to make a profession of faith. Finally, when asked his view of the End Times. TE Matson declared “it’s going to happen” though he does not know when. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson’s view of Theology and the Sacraments be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion was approved by voice vote.

The exam turned to the topic of the History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition. TE Matson was asked what pre-reformation individual has marked him in his theology and ministry. He mentioned John Wycliff’s influence of producing a translation of the Bible in the common language as an important witness to the importance of the Word of God available to all. In reflecting on what sets apart Reformed Faith from other Christian expressions he mentioned the infallibility of the Scripture and the “high God” theology that expresses the belief of God’s absolute sovereignty. TE Schwab ask how does the “Five Sola” support him in ministry today. His response was that it informs him that the Lord Jesus is the center of all things. Questioned on what the reasoning behind the EPC’s commitment to the Westminster Standards is, TE Matson pointed out that the founders desired to keep the denomination from any liberal theological drift. Finally, TE Schwab

asked TE Matson why the EPC is considered new school Presbyterianism. He pointed out that the EPC is evangelical, open to charismatic gifts and has elements of revival thought in its theology. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson's view of History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion was approved by voice vote.

On the topic of polity and the Book of Order TE Matson was to explain the motto of the EPC. He believed the motto of EPC holds the Essentials of the Faith "with a closed fist." On the issue of salvation, the essentials are clear on the way God has offered the covenant of salvation, and it is not open to another interpretation. What if during debate someone was to bring up a nonessential. How should the Moderator respond? TE Matson pointed out that the issue would need to be declared out of order. Asked who is the current Moderator of the PCC, the answer was TE Eric Bartel. TE Schwab asked if TE Bartel was a good Moderator? In the questioning of the EPC Position Paper on the Ordination of Women, TE Matson appreciated the acknowledgement of differing views, and the issue was not painted as a liberal or conservative theological viewpoint. He is egalitarian on this issue. On the issue of Ruling Elder Training TE Matson expressed his opinion of the importance of the Session members investing in the training of new Ruling Elders. He also found the principle of congregations holding trust of their property as a singularly important issue from his experience in other denominations. When examined on the purpose of discipline, TE Matson expressed the purpose of discipline is to protect the purity of church, to glory God and give opportunity to restore offenders. Finally, TE Schwab TE Matson to expound of the meaning of the belief that the Chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Matson summarized it as the purpose of all life – to bring God glory and to have fellowship with him as the basis for joy in all of life. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson's view of polity and the Book of Order be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion was approved by voice vote.

The final portion of the exam covered the nature of the office of Teaching Elder. When asked if TE Matson would perform what is today termed a same sex wedding, his response was "absolutely not". TE Schwab asked him to explain how he approaches the

task of discipling a believer. TE Matson believed that one on one (i.e., or three) is a preferred model where a Pastor regularly walks with someone through scripture, builds an expectation of accountability that helps the believer learn lessons of obedience. In questioned on how he might counsel someone who is in a drug addiction, TE Matson said he would emphasis the truth of the love of God for person and their body. The abuse is an result of sin (separation from God's purposes) and coming to terms or reflection on why they were choosing this path would be important. Learning how to repent and possibly seeking rehab would be tools he would consider. On the issue of divorce and remarriage issues TE Matson expressed he has had a lot of experience in dealing with this issue in ministry. Uncovering the reasons, seeking wisdom in making such a decision and guiding them through the shame by emphasizing the love of God for them would be foundational. TE Schwab asked if he had a member approach him with the problem that someone has invited them to a lesbian wedding how would he counsel that person? TE Matson said he encouraged the person not to attend the occasion and would help them to discern how they could explain to the person why they would decline that invitation. TE Schwab asked TE Matson how he previously served with restrictions of the pandemic. TE Matson mentioned they had to learn who to live stream and provide opportunities for worship remotely. He also employed zoom calls with members, used masks for protection and marked safe spaces for people to observe. The last topic dealt with the issue of homosexuality in the church and how TE Matson would address it. TE Matson firmly believed that he would need to preach what the Scripture taught and clearly communicate where the church stood on the issue and the belief in traditional gender roles. TE Schwab made the following motion.

Motion: That this portion of the exam on TE Matson's view of nature of the office of Teaching Elder be approved pending any questions from the floor.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no questions, the motion was approved by voice vote.

TE Schwab made a final motion.

Motion: That the Court excuse the candidate and his family to allow the Court time to deliberate over the examination and cast a final vote on receiving TE Scott Matson into the Presbytery of Central Carolinas.

The Moderator received a second from the floor. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved by voice vote and the candidate and family were excused from the Court.

12-14. Omnibus Motion. RE Hill moved, on behalf of the Ministerial Committee, the following Omnibus Ministry. The motion did not need a second and the floor was open to questions or discussion of any item being proposed.

[Begin of OMNIBUS MOTION]

1. Approve request to be excused received from TE's, CP's and RE's:
 - TE Michael Flake
 - TE Ken Thomas
 - TE Wes Vander Lugt
 - TE Mark Dickinson
 - TE Stephanie Vander Lug
 - TE Ken Hicks
 - TE Michael Kruger
 - TE Tim Carey
 - TE Katie Piquette
 - TE Andy Schuster
 - TE Larry Pittman
 - CP Jamie Smith
2. Approve request from the following Church's to be excused:
 - McBee Presbyterian Church
 - McLean Presbyterian Church
3. Candidate Changes: None
4. **TE Changes:**
 - A. Approve change in status for TE Paul Rankin to Retired, effective June 30, 2026.
 - B. Approve TE Ken Thomas as Interim Moderator for Walkersville Presbyterian effective July 1, 2026
 - C. Approve change in status for TE Richard White to Retired, effective June 30, 2026.
5. **Other Changes:**
 - Approve TE Steve Woodworth (PCA) to administer the Lord's Supper at Valley Hope Church on May 17, 2026.
 - Approve TE Howard Quach (Riceville Valley) to moderate the Session of Valley Hope during TE Anthony Rodriguez's sabbatical.

[END OF OMNIBUS MOTION]

The Moderator put the question of the Omnibus before the Court. The Omnibus Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

12-15. RE Hill moved, on behalf of the Ministerial Committee, the following motion:

1. That, upon successful examination, the PCC approve EPC Transfer TE Scott Matson to accept the call as Assistant Pastor, Lake Forest – Huntersville as their Discipleship Pastor

A. Terms of Call:

Annual Salary	1,200
Housing Allowance	93,800
Insurance	23,042
Vacation	20 days
Study Leave	10 days
Eligibility for EPC 401k	Immediately

- B. An Administrative Commission comprised of Teaching Elders Mike Moses, Chair (Lake Forest), Wesley Vander Lugt (Grove Presbyterian) Ruling Elders, Kristin Bryan, Mike Rashid, Brian Hines, and Darrel Lipe (Lake Forest) and Ruling Elder Rusty Andrews (Storyhill) to conduct a service of installation at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday May 24, 2026, at Lake Forest – Huntersville, NC.

2. The Ministerial Committee recommends approving the requested change in status from TE Don Fortson and TE Ken Thomas who are presently listed on the PCC rolls as **Associate Member Teaching Elders**. They desire to attend and participate in the General Assembly with the ability to have voice and vote.

Book of Order G.19-2B

B. Non-voting Members of Presbytery

1. Associate Member Teaching Elders.

a. Qualifications.

*The Presbytery shall establish a roll of Associate Members. A Teaching Elder who is retired or serving in a capacity outside of bounds that may impede or prevent regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings may, upon request, within two years of this change in call, be granted the status of Associate Member. Those who are retired, serving in a capacity that prevents regular and/or required attendance, or those without a Presbytery-approved call for two years will automatically be placed on the Associate Membership roll. **Presbytery, by a 2/3 vote, may exempt a Minister from becoming an Associate Member for one year. This exemption may be granted to***



the minister on an annual basis. Presbyteries may, by 2/3 vote, receive a retired Reformed body as an Associate Member, following the normal process of examination.

b. Rights and Restrictions

*Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice and vote on all committees of the Presbytery and the General Assembly. Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice but not vote on Commissions to ordain and install pastors and to receive churches. **Associate Members shall have a voice but not vote at all Presbytery and General Assembly meetings.** Associate Members are not eligible to serve as officers of any court but do retain all rights and privileges of ordination and are to be afforded the same pastoral care as Active Members.*

Motion: That the Presbytery of Central Carolinas exempt TE Don Fortson and TE Ken Thomas from being enrolled as Associate Members (G. 19-2. B. 1.) and recognized as Voting Members of Presbytery with the status of Retired (Active) Teaching Elders (G. 19-2. A. 2.) for one year beginning April 26, 2026.

The Moderator recognized the motion did not need a second coming from committee. After some discussion the court approved the motion unanimously (vote was 41 in favor).

RE Hill motioned that the Ministerial Committee Report be received by the PPC. The Moderator entertained a seconded from the floor, and the motion to receive the report was approved by voice vote.

12-16. Expression of appreciation to the host – TE Eric Bartel, Moderator and recognition of RE Jack Cathey's role in serving as the Moderator of the 46th General Assembly the court gathered around RE Cathey and TE Arron Gibson was asked to lead the Court in prayer over him.

12-17. The Moderator entertained a motion to adjourn the Presbytery of Central Carolinas' 12th Stated Meeting with the singing of the Doxology and a closing prayer and charge given by TE Bill Campbell. The Motion to adjourn the meeting was made from the floor, seconded and approved unanimously. TE Bill Campbell closed the meeting with prayer.

12-18. The Moderator declared the Presbytery of Central Carolinas' 12th Stated Meeting adjourned. The Thirteenth Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas will be convened on September 25-26, 2026, at Centre Presbyterian Church - Mooresville, NC

Addendum: Church Development Manual

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

Church Development Committee Manual

03/31/2026

PRESBYTERY OF THE CENTRAL CAROLINAS

Church Development Committee Manual

The purpose of this manual is to:

1. Provide a central source for the Book of Government, Presbytery By-laws and Acts of Presbytery that pertain to the Church Development Committee.
2. To define the manner in which the CDC will carry out its responsibility.
3. To provide groups and churches wishing to become EPC Churches with a clear understanding of the process.
4. To identify and describe resources available to churches that want to enhance church vitality.

The Manual Contains The Following:

- A. Church Health, Revitalization and Vitality
- B. Church Standards/Book of Government
- C. Presbytery Bylaws (that apply to CDC)

- D. Duties of the Missional Director and Church Health Coordinator
- E. Non-EPC Reformed Churches and Groups

A. Church Health, Revitalization, and Vitality

The health of local congregations in the Presbytery of Central Carolinas is one of the top priorities for the CDC. The work of the Presbytery is carried out by individual local congregations and networks of congregations. The assessment of the health and vitality of our congregations is an important part of evaluating and assessing how well our churches are doing.

The process of revitalization is a necessary component in the life of all our churches. It is the goal and the desire of Presbytery that every member congregation be Evangelical, Presbyterian, Reformed, Missional, and Vital according to Scriptural principles and our Book of Order. The EPC website (<https://epc.org/about/values/>) contains clear and important descriptions of these values.

Churches should intentionally aspire to these five key attributes, which may be assessed as given below.

Five Attributes of a Healthy Congregation:

1. Evangelical
 - a. Addressed by the current minister and session exams.
 - b. Other things that may be addressed:
 - i. Does the leadership intentionally develop and equip other leaders from the congregation?
 - ii. Is evangelism integrated into other ministry programs/activities?
2. Presbyterian
 - a. We will encourage ruling elder involvement by individual churches at stated presbytery meetings and on the various committees and commissions. Each Teaching Elder is expected to be involved in a cohort based on geography. Churches could share in or jointly accomplish such things as officer training, missions, church planting, collective outreach, student ministry, etc.
3. Reformed
 - a. Addressed by the current minister and session exams.
 - b. Other things that may be addressed
 - i. What is the ongoing process for vetting and training church officers?
 - ii. How well does the congregation understand the basics of Reformed theology?
4. Missional
 - a. Fundamental attributes of the EPC and of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas:

- i. Planted by God in its own community to effectively reach those around them.
 - ii. Continually in the process of equipping its members to be missionaries sent by God.
 - iii. Constantly re-examining itself as to whether it is merely doing maintenance of existing ministries and members, or is it effectively doing the mission of reaching its own community.
 - b. Other things that may be addressed:
 - i. What ministries has your church intentionally designed and implemented to reach lost people in your neighboring communities? What results have you seen from those ministries?
 - ii. In terms of expanding the kingdom of God, what hope or dream do you have for your church? What plans do you have to move that dream toward reality?
 - iii. How do you develop and deploy disciples into meaningful outreach?
 - iv. In what ways could you see your church being involved in church planting?
5. Vital
- a. Things that may be addressed:
 - i. Does your church have a clearly defined vision/mission that is well known by both leadership and membership?
 - ii. How does your actual ministry align with your church's vision/mission?
 - iii. What is the process by which you evaluate ministry effectiveness?
 - iv. What is the role of personal and corporate prayer in your church?
 - v. How much of your ministry energy and resources (financial, talent, programming, etc.) is invested in ministry beyond your congregation?
 - vi. Is your church culture conducive to change when and where needed?
 - vii. Is the minister seen as an effective leader and teacher?
 - viii. Does the leadership deal effectively with conflict and strive to maintain unity in the church?

The Church Revitalization Lifecycle: Five Primary Stages

Birth – God plants a vision for a church in the hearts of a group (missional group, particular church, Presbytery, etc.). As the vision is shared, excitement builds and relationships are fostered around accomplishing the vision together. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its vision, or calling from God.

Growth – The ministry capacity of the church is increasing. Over time, the church is doing more and more ministry and the quality of that ministry is better and better. The Growth Stage features health, growth and multiplication. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its alignment of vision with everything that happens in the life of the church.

Recline – The ministry capacity of the church levels off into plateau. Over time, the church is doing the same ministry over and over at more or less the same level of quality. Recline is a tepid, tread water stage featuring ministry management by routine, filling in the blanks. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its programs.

Decline – The ministry capacity of the church is decreasing. Over time, the church is doing less ministry but seeking to retain the same programs. The quality of that ministry and participation in programs is more and more compromised. Decline is a weak stage featuring decreases in membership, attendance, giving and overall impact in the community. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is its structure.

Death – The ministry capacity of the church is dissolving. A church that is dying can still be meeting and worshiping but looks like a patient on hospice care. They are doing what they can to simply keep the doors open; but there is no sign of health or vitality, there is no energy or acceptance of change, and there is poor stewardship of God's resources. Everything is focused inwardly. The Primary Identity of the church in this phase is unhealthiness.

Churches on the upside of the life cycle (Birth, Growth and early Recline) are facing moderate revitalization, while churches on the downside of the life cycle (Recline or Decline) are facing a much more severe revitalization process. Churches in the Death phase need to walk the journey of lost viability (next section), make plans accordingly, and seek to impact the kingdom by finishing well.

Since vitality naturally decreases over time, church revitalization needs to be an ongoing process. It is much better for churches to embrace revitalization early in the life cycle rather than late, as revitalization is much more attainable from a position of strength than a position of weakness. The best way for a church to begin or maintain missional vitality is through Vision. Vision is achieved by continually seeking to answer four fundamental questions that are concerned with Purpose, Objectives, Goals and Structure.

- A. Purpose statements answer the question: Whom are we trying to reach?
- B. Objective statements answer the question: How are we going to reach them?
- C. Goal statements answer the question: When do these things happen?
- D. Structure statements answer the question: How do we organize to accomplish the goal?

Answering questions, A through D, helps to give rise to a church's vision, vitality and growth.

Church Viability

This policy on Church Viability provides guidance on implementing, and is supplemental to, the EPC Book of Order G.21-2.D.2.d (BOG)

It is the goal and the desire of the Presbytery of Central Carolinas that every member congregation be evangelical, reformed, presbyterian, missional, vital and healthy according to Scriptural principles and our EPC values, as identified in this manual above. However, the

Presbytery recognizes that there may be congregations whose circumstances prevent those goals from being realized. In such cases, it is not only right but the duty of Presbytery to intervene through its Ministerial or Church Development committees to assist such churches toward healthy congregational life.

RATIONALE:

Although no complaint may have been received, if in the judgment of the CDC a local congregation is having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the committee has the authority to investigate and make recommendations to Presbytery.

The following guidelines shall be used by the CDC to implement its task.

Determination of Church Viability

As a standard, the CDC considers a church to be viable when at least 4 criteria are evidenced.

They meet the following criteria:

1. Have at least 30 adults regularly in worship.
2. Can communicate and have set forth in writing God's call and vision for their church.
3. Have established clear goals for their work for the next 3 years.
4. They provide their own leadership, including elders or elder candidates ready to be ordained and installed.
5. They are fruitful in ministry and in the process of fulfilling their God-given calling.
6. They are financially self-sustaining.

Conversely, functional viability can be called into question by corporate concerns that include but are not limited to these:

- Lack of vision
- Lack of effectiveness in carrying out the mission
- Lack of converts
- People consistently leaving the church
- Only an aging population in the church
- Lack of funds
- Lack of effective leadership
- Changing community with cultural distance with the community
- Lack of outreach to community
- Sin in "the camp"

These issues may also be evidenced by personal concerns such as:

- Internal fighting
- Territorialism
- Absence of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5)
- Defensiveness
- Control struggles
- Unwillingness to seek help
- Lack of humility, faith, prayer and spiritual maturity

The above criteria (and others deemed appropriate) shall be used to determine whether a particular church is possibly “non-viable.”

The CDC will exercise utmost discernment in making a determination of viability for a local church or group, taking into account the inter-relatedness of these criteria and any other extenuating circumstances. Should the Committee determine that minimum viability does not exist, nor is there any realistic expectation that it may exist in the future, it shall recommend to Presbytery one of three options:

- The Presbytery partners with the church to begin a process of revitalization.
- A local church may be reclassified as a mission church.
- The church will be dissolved (BOG 5-9).

A Plan For Partnership, Revitalization, and Dissolutionment

Upon a determination of possible non-viable status, the CDC or CHC will enter into conversation with the church to conduct an assessment of viability. Once an assessment has been completed, the CDC or CHC will determine which of the three options stated below is best to pursue.

Option 1: Partnership for Revitalization

A partnership should normally be conducted over a period of at least one year, involving but not limited to the following actions:

1. The CDC shall appoint a partnership team of 3-5 people from the CDC and the local church.
2. The partnership team will consult with Session and congregation prior to the team’s development of a revitalization plan.
3. The partnership team will make a report of its findings and recommendations to the Session.

After the Session has received the recommendations, the report will be sent to the Chair of the Church Development Committee and Ministerial Committee for review. In some cases, the CDC may determine and recommend to the Presbytery that reclassification is necessary for the successful redevelopment of the church. In such cases, the Presbytery will follow guidelines established in the BOG, chapter 5.

Option 2: Partnership for Reclassification

The CDC may make a determination that reclassification as a Mission Church is the best option, in which case the CDC will undertake oversight and work with the mission church towards revitalization.

Reclassification should be viewed by all involved at the congregational and Presbytery levels to be the first step toward a renewal of the congregation’s vision, purpose, mission and ministry. This should never be seen as a punitive step. The local church may view this reclassification as “a step backward,” or even a sign of failure when, actually, it should be viewed as a step

forward, and received in an attitude of renewed hope and as an opportunity to correct past miscalculations, misjudgments, misunderstandings or mistakes. The faith, prayers, giving, attitude and cooperation of leadership and members are critical ingredients in the revitalization process.

The most immediate impact upon a reclassified church is the temporary dissolution of its Session and/or Diaconate. Part of Presbytery's action to reclassify a local church to mission church status is to place all active Ruling Elders and Deacons on inactive status according to BOG 14-2B.6. Such persons are eligible to serve on a newly structured Steering Committee at the approval of the administrative team. Presbytery would also re-designate any pastor(s) of a reclassified church to that of Evangelist(s) according to BOG 9-5.C.

Upon determination by the CDC, the reclassified church may apply for "local church" status once all the appropriate criteria for viability have been met.

Option 3: Dissolution

Should the CDC determine that a congregation is non-viable and a process of revitalization and/or reclassification is either not possible or unable to achieve the necessary revitalization, then the CDC will recommend to the Presbytery of Central Carolinas that the congregation be dissolved, in accordance with the Book of Order, G.5-9 and G.8-4.

The following documents are provided for churches to consider as additional resources:

Church Health and Fruitfulness

When asked to define church health, some church leaders point to traditional metrics which show "success" in a readily quantifiable or measurable way, such as:

- The number of ministry programs provided by the church
- The number of committees working within the church
- The number of people attending the church
- The size of the church budget

Others will point to metrics of faithfulness in the church that are less quantifiable but are qualitatively spiritual, such as:

- The church's engagement in spiritual disciplines
- The church's faithfulness in prayer
- The church's liturgical excellence
- The church's theological purity

Both sets of metrics (measurable and spiritual qualities) are important to the life and health of the church, but they may not be the best or most biblical way of defining church health. Within the continuum between success and faithfulness there is the biblical model of fruitfulness.

SUCCESS FRUITFULNESS FAITHFULNESS

Gospel fruitfulness is described in the Scriptures in a multiplicity of ways and particularly in:

Bearing Fruit is the Scriptural essence of vitality:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” (John 15:1–8 ESV)

Gospel fruitfulness is also described specifically in the Scriptures as:

Bearing Fruit through Ministry with the Poor:

“And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.” (Galatians 2:6–10 ESV)

Bearing Fruit through the Formation of Godly Character:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:16–24 ESV)

Bearing Fruit through Conversion

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-29)

Church Health

The Presbytery of Central Carolinas in accordance with the General Assembly of the EPC has developed a process to come alongside churches desiring to enhance their vitality and outreach effectiveness. This process is called Church Health and includes coaches that are equipped to guide and encourage.

It is helpful to identify a baseline regarding a church’s posture toward outreach and the function and attitude of its leadership. This also helps the Church Health Coordinator (or one of the coaches) to become informed on the general preparedness of church leadership (pastors, session, and key ministry leaders) to respond to the process. Knowing where you are is essential for identifying what steps are most helpful and how the presbytery can best support those steps.

It is also important for church leadership to have a clear understanding of the expectations regarding the Church Health process so the church and its leadership can determine if they can commit to participating and so they know what to expect from the presbytery. Below is the summary of the 3-Step Process that the CDC will follow with churches that may be candidates for coaching.:

Step #1 – Church Preparation

Church leadership is introduced to and is presented with the process outline. Church Leadership then determines if they are ready to participate. Church leadership will be introduced to the “Missional Posture,” and the “Ideal Church Leadership” self-assessment surveys. This information will serve to:

1. Help church leadership see where they are.
2. Help the Church Health Coordinator determine which coach should be assigned (matching the attributes and gifts of the coaches with the church). The results of these self-assessment surveys will be shared with church leadership at an initial meeting.

The church leadership should participate in the Church Lifecycle Assessment – a self-assessment of the trending vitality of the church – which of the five stages of the life cycle of a church they might find themselves in.

The church may want to attend a Regional Church Health Seminar.

Step #2 – Setting the Stage

Church leadership then chooses individuals to serve as the Vision Team to move forward with the process. The assigned coach will present to church leadership the characteristics and responsibilities of the Vision Team, which will be the church team that moves the process forward and with whom the Health Coach will work.

The first task of the Vision Team will be for each member to choose a small team of folks (3 or 4 per team member) to serve as their prayer support. This group (the Prayer Team) will be asked to pray for and with the Vision Team.

The assigned coach will present to the Vision Team the characteristics and responsibilities of the Prayer Team.

Step #3 – Follow-up (with assigned Coach)

Subsequent meetings between the coach and the Vision Team will likely be necessary and helpful. The frequency, focus, and format of these follow-up meetings will certainly vary from church to church. However, in all cases, emphasis will be on aligning vision with strategy and structure for a more effective outreach.

The Refocus Process

The Refocus Process, shown below, outlines the alignment process for developing more fruitful ministry. This process is used by the individual churches that agree to work with the CDC Health Coach. Once a church decides to work with a Health Coach, it will then follow the Refocus Process.

Phase 1 – Aligning Perception – Self-Discovery Assessment and Analysis

Key Questions:

- What will we discover about ourselves?
- What will we do in light of what we discover?

Phase 2 – Aligning Vision – Who Are We Going to Be?

Key Questions:

- How does God want to express Himself through this church in this community at this time?
- What did God mean by that? (making adjustments)

Phase 3 – Aligning Strategy – Who Are We Going to Become?

Key Questions:

- How do we make contact with those we are trying to reach?
- How will we develop those we are trying to reach once we've made contact?

Phase 4 – Aligning Structure – How Are We Going to Function? (Supporting the Strategy)

Key Questions:

- What are the criteria for decision-making and resource allocation?
- How does leadership function?

Phase 5 – Aligning People – Mobilizing Servants & Leaders

Key Questions:

- How will we get people involved?
- On whom does the future depend?

B. Church Standards / Book of Government

1. The Organization, Dissolution, Reception or Dismissal of a Particular Church -- See Book of Government, Chapter 5
2. Work of the Evangelist (From G.10-3):

C. Presbytery Bylaws: Church Development Committee

1. Core Values:

- . The mission of the Church Development Committee is to take primary leadership in the implementation of Presbytery's missional purpose: to resource, train, and hold accountable the leaders of member churches in order to fulfill the Great Commission through spiritual and numerical growth. In consultation with the Missional Director, it shall identify new strategic ministry areas within the Presbytery and establish, nurture, and support churches within the areas for the purpose of reaching the lost, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, transform members into Christ-like maturity.
- . We believe that a church of any size can expand, grow, and advance the Kingdom of God, and its leadership can become passionate about sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church Development Committee is most zealous to fuel financially those churches that demonstrate such zeal and which set and accomplish specific strategies and goals to reach the world for Christ.

2. Membership: Cf. Article VII, Section 1, B.2.

3. Duties of the Committee are delineated in the CDC Manual on file in the Stated Clerk's Office. The Committee shall make regular reports at all Stated Meetings of Presbytery, as required, of its work.
4. The Committee will report to Presbytery as described in Article VII, Section 1, E of these Bylaws.

D. Non-EPC Reformed Churches and Groups

A. INFORMAL PHASE: Inquiry made (phone, e-mail, letter, personal conversation):

("Tell me about the EPC," or "What if our church wants to join the EPC?")

- If a church inquires to someone in the presbytery (not directly to the Stated Clerk), they should be referred or directed to the Stated Clerk.

Stated Clerk

- Stated Clerk sends “Inquiring Church Packet” to the church and follows up within a month or predetermined time frame.
- Stated Clerk to verify if the church is in PCC boundaries.

MC

- Is the Church a member in good standing within their current denomination? (MC)
- Is the Pastor of the inquiring church a member in good standing in their current denomination? (MC)
- Determine if the pastor is ordainable or wants to be in the EPC. (MC)

CDC

- CDC sends the Inquiring Churches Application Packet to the interested church. The packet includes the current vision, mission statement, how many people are in attendance, goals for the next 3 years, if they agree with the essentials, and a section for questions of us.
- When the completed form is returned, several people (representatives from the CDC and the Stated Clerk) review their responses. If clarification is needed, we will meet with them (in person or zoom).
- Determine if the Church/Session affirms The Essentials of our Faith, Position Papers, EPC Statement on Scriptures, Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms and the EPC Book of Order? (CDC)

Stated Clerk

- Notify GA Office, et. al. for information purposes while observing confidentiality, if needed (Stated Clerk)

B. FORMAL PHASE. NOTE: Presbytery Stated Clerk MUST be kept informed through this phase.

- Session calls for a congregational meeting to be dismissed from the current presbytery and be received by the PCC.
- Upon approval, the Stated Clerk receives Application, Letter of Intent, and Petition to be Received from the inquiring church.
- The Stated Clerk sends a Letter of Intent to receive the inquiring church into our Presbytery.
- Teaching Elder requests reception into PCC.
- The Ministerial Committee works with TE to fulfill EPC requirements.
- The inquiring Church seeks dismissal from the current presbytery.
- The dismissing presbytery informs the church of the process to follow.
- Dismissing presbytery agrees to dismiss Church to PCC.
- CDC approaches people willing to serve on the Administrative Commission and recommends them to the presbytery. The floor will be opened for further nominations. The CDC recommends that the Administrative Commission be led by a representative of the CDC and include some members of their geographical cohort.
- Presbytery reviews and approves the Administrative Commission for the church.
- The Administrative Commission makes arrangements for a face-to-face meeting.

- Advise of EPC process and standards (i.e., CDC's requirements for RE training).
- Develop an impression of the fit of elders, minister(s) and congregation.
- Present overview of EPC, its ethos, and Presbytery theological standards.
- Address gender-office issues as needed and appropriate.
- Elders and Church Leaders trained using the EPC Leadership Guide, WC and BOO. They should use available videos and reading materials for self-study and have scheduled review sessions in which they can discuss the materials and ask questions. CDC will appoint a trainer to conduct the training.
 - We have developed a task force to develop PCC training materials and videos to accompany the curriculum. Bill Wade and David Taylor volunteered to be a part of this task force. They will evaluate materials currently available including the EPC Leadership Guide, the POA Elder Exam Handbook used by the Presbytery of the Alleghenies, videos shared earlier, etc.
- CDC will initiate the Church Health Process with the church through a Revitalization Conference or an individual assessment with their church.
- Elders and Church Leaders will be examined by the Administrative Commission.
- The Ministerial Committee examines the minister(s).
- PIF, 10 Questions, and background check before Presbytery meeting.
- Observe, appraise regarding Presbytery standards on exceptions to The Westminster Confession of Faith (any exceptions put in writing).
- Presbytery examines minister(s) at Stated Meeting.
- Presbytery declares church/group received and Administrative Commission of reception/ordination, installation appointed, date of service set.
- Conduct Installation/Ordination and reception service.
- Continue the Church Health Process.

Humbly Submitted,

TE Eric Bartel, Moderator

TE Robert M. Howard, Stated Clerk



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you, in our sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ!

We write out of love and care for those in the EPC who are curious about or troubled by our 46th General Assembly's actions concerning same-sex attraction and ordination.

Since the Assembly, some commentary has described the EPC as having "opened the door to homosexual clergy" or "approved the ordination of celibate homosexuals." We understand why that causes alarm, but we do not believe it fairly describes the question before the Assembly or the standards it approved.

We are therefore enclosing an analysis from North Park Church, a founding EPC congregation, which we think may help us cut through the advocacy and return to what the Assembly affirmed, so that we can pray, discern, and move forward together.

Although the Assembly completed its work on the Position Paper and Pastoral Letter, adopting both in June, significant work remains. The Assembly sent proposed amendments to the Book of Government to our Presbyteries as descending overtures. They must decide whether those amendments strengthen our Constitution and clarify our standards for ordained office.

The proposed amendments are best understood through two truths in our Westminster Standards that must be held together.

The first truth is that sinful desires are truly sinful. They do not become morally neutral simply because we do not act on them. The Position Paper and Pastoral Letter affirm that homosexual lust and desire are sinful. They reject embracing a homosexual identity and call Christians who experience same-sex attraction to repentance, resistance to temptation, putting sin to death, and growth in holiness (WCF 6.5; WLC 138-139).

For that reason, the standard approved by the Assembly is not mere celibacy. Outward abstinence from homosexual conduct is not enough for ordination in the EPC. The Pastoral Letter guides us to look for repentance, proven character, and the fruit of sanctification. It speaks of sinful desires that are unindulged, repented of, and put to death; temptation that is fled rather than entered into; and weakness that is mourned rather than embraced. As the Pastoral Letter says, "*Ordination is not appropriate while habitual or unresolved sexual sin persists.*"

The second truth is that remaining sin continues in believers. Sanctification is real, but it is not perfected in this life (WCF 13.1-3; WLC 78). By the power of the Holy Spirit we repent, put sin to death, grow in holiness, and experience real progress. Yet Scripture describes an ongoing conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-17). That struggle remains until glory. We know that struggle in our own lives, as we expect you know it in yours. Praise God we are no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness, by his grace.

The Assembly sought to hold both truths together. It refused to treat homosexual desire as innocent. It also declined to say that the continuing presence of this particular sinful desire, by itself and without regard to repentance or growth in holiness, must always disqualify a Christian from ordained office.

The question at the Assembly was not whether holiness matters. The question at the Assembly was what biblical holiness looks like in candidates for office who are truly being sanctified but are not yet perfected in glory.

"[S]inful desires are truly sinful. They do not become morally neutral simply because we do not act on them."

"Outward abstinence from homosexual conduct is not enough for ordination in the EPC."

"The question at the Assembly was what biblical holiness looks like in candidates for office who are truly being sanctified but are not yet perfected in glory."

The Assembly's Ad-Interim Committee on Same Sex Attraction and Ordination Standards (AIC) described sanctification as "constant warring and progressive victory against the impulses to sin, not the absence of the pressure to sin."

The Assembly has now spoken to that theological question through the Position Paper and Pastoral Letter. The question before our Presbyteries is whether the Book of Government amendments faithfully carry those convictions into our Constitution, clarify our standards for office, and strengthen our call to holiness.

To be clear, the amendments do not create a special or lesser standard for Christians who experience same-sex attraction; rather they strengthen the standards for every EPC officer. Whether single or married, officers must conform to biblical chastity and sexual purity in self-description, convictions, character, and conduct; be above reproach and Christlike; and, while recognizing that perfection awaits glory, confess and put to death remaining sin and pursue Spirit-empowered victory over sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions.

The amendments strengthen our constitutional call to holiness. They do not treat remaining sin as harmless or its continuing presence as proof that sanctification is absent. They require officers to confess and put sin to death and to show the real fruit of growth in holiness.

That distinction matters. Homosexual desire is sinful and must be put to death. But when such desire is unwanted, unindulged, repented of, and being put to death, its continuing presence does not, as a rule, mean that sanctification has failed or that person is unfaithful. "He who began the good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). It is the constitutional responsibility of each presbytery or session to assess a candidate's life to the maturity, biblical standards and holiness required for ordination.

There is no movement within our denomination seeking to liberalize our standards of human sexuality. The EPC continues to affirm marriage between one man and one woman, chastity in singleness, the sinfulness of homosexual conduct and lust, the necessity of repentance, and the call of every Christian to holiness.

"There is no movement within our denomination seeking to liberalize our standards of human sexuality."

As our Presbyteries consider the amendments, we hope we will focus on the question actually before us: whether this language gives our courts clearer and stronger constitutional guidance for applying those shared biblical convictions.

The North Park analysis says it well: "Where there is disagreement, may the true point of disagreement be clearly and charitably stated."

Let us listen to one another, search the Scriptures, test our thinking against the Westminster Standards, and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Let us pray for wisdom, humility, and faithfulness, and for Christ to guard, purify, and unite his church.

May we always refuse both to diminish the seriousness of sin and to diminish the reality of Christ's sanctifying work in his people. It is God's will that we be sanctified (1 Thess. 4:3), and we pray that the God of peace himself would sanctify us completely (1 Thess. 5:23). May we hold together the truths Scripture gives us and carry out the mission Jesus Christ has entrusted to his church: to make disciples of all nations for the glory of God (Matt. 28:18-20).

In Christ,
Coram Deo!

-Dean

D. Dean Weaver
Stated Clerk
Evangelical Presbyterian Church

-Jack

Jack Cathey
Moderator, 46th General Assembly
Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1-Page Summary of EPC's Statements Regarding Same-Sex Attraction

North Park Church is part of a family of churches known as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). On June 18th, during the annual meeting of church leaders from all over the country, we approved important updates to already existing statements related to human sexuality.¹ This was the result of reflecting more deeply on what the Bible teaches regarding same-sex attraction.

Homosexual sin begins in the heart. The statements affirm the deep, heart-level nature of sin. From its deepest roots in our heart to its ripest fruit in our behavior, and everything in between, anything oriented toward sin is itself sin and sinful. Both homosexual practice as well as same-sex attraction are sinful.

Christians should not claim a “gay” identity. While we ought to identify our sin, we ought not to be identified by it. The recently approved updates walk the biblical line of clearly identifying sin while refusing to speak of Christians as though such sin were part of their essential identity. For example: we may speak of Christians who “experience same-sex attraction,” but we should not adopt the language of “gay Christian.”

For Christians, heart transformation is both real and imperfect in this life. The statements reaffirm both biblical teaching and the EPC's practice of insisting on the need for genuine repentance from sin while also recognizing the ongoing struggle against sin that every Christian continues to experience. Christians are not captive to same-sex attraction, even though they may continue to wrestle against this throughout their life.

Same-sex attraction should be treated as seriously as any other sin when evaluating candidates for ordination. Christians who experience same-sex attraction may be considered for ordination, provided there is a clear understanding of the nature of this sin and demonstrated progress, growth, and change regarding this sin struggle. Although such sinful desires and temptations may not be utterly eradicated in this life, persons may be ordained who evidence a persistent walk in Spirit-empowered repentance (as mortification and vivification)² with respect to this sin, as in any other sin.

The EPC has NOT “approved gay ordination” nor have we considered so called “Side-B Christianity,”³ nor have we voted in favor of ordaining merely “celibate, same-sex attracted pastors.” I cannot predict whether our stated positions will be misused to justify sin. But the documents themselves articulate a high standard for church leaders. **Someone who affirms a homosexual identity or who embraces same-sex attraction may not be ordained in the EPC.**

¹ Documents approved can be found here: <https://epconnect.org/adinterimonssa/> accessed June 26, 2026.

² *Mortification* may be defined as “dying to sin” and *vivification* as “living unto righteousness.”

³ A so called “Side-B” approach to homosexuality limits biblical and Christian morality to abstaining from homosexual practice. It does not recognize same-sex attraction as sinful at a heart level. It also encourages an embrace of a gay identity.

How recent GA approved recommendations present a strong, biblical position on human sexuality.

Throughout both the Position Paper and the Pastoral Letter, we consistently point out the deep, heart-level nature of sin. Sin does not merely consist in outward behavior but also involves inward desires. These desires, even if not acted upon, are also considered sin. In fact, our sin runs even deeper than this. When we experience sinful desires, these are not implanted into us from the outside. They arise from our own hearts. We are sinfully corrupt, even before we are conscious of desiring anything sinful. From its deepest roots in our heart to its ripest fruit in our behavior, and everything in between, anything oriented toward sin is itself sin and sinful.

Here are some examples from the revised EPC statements:

From the Position Paper:

“We acknowledge that any sexual desires apart from God’s design for marriage are sinful, arise from our sinfully corrupted nature, and we must repent of them all. We also acknowledge that any temptations to fulfill sexual desire apart from God’s design for marriage must be resisted, regardless of how persistent or seemingly innate the temptation or desire is.”

From the Pastoral Letter:

“The human heart is sinfully corrupt and gives rise to disordered desires, which are also sin. Consequently, the corrupt heart, its lusts, and desires, including unbidden sinful thoughts, are to be repented of, mourned, and mortified. Same sex sexual lusts and desires are an example of such sin.”

The updates include greater clarity and biblical consistency when referring to Christians in terms of their sin struggles. While we ought to identify our sin, we ought not to be identified by it. Our identity is found in Christ, in whom we have forgiveness, in whom the reigning power of sin is broken such that we are dead to sin and alive to God, and in whom we have the promise and power to continue to grow in holiness. This is especially important in a cultural context that often absolutizes a distorted sexual “identity.” The recently approved updates walk the biblical line of clearly identifying sin while refusing to speak of Christians as though such sin were part of their essential identity. We may speak of Christians who “experience same-sex attraction,” but we should not adopt the language of “gay Christian.” For example: Phrases like “SSA person,” “those who are same-sex attracted,” and “SSA Christians” are replaced with the better “those who experience SSA [same-sex attraction]” and “Christians who experience SSA.”

From the Pastoral Letter:

“in our culture, the term ‘gay’ is normally understood as affirming or engaging in homosexual practice. Although the term ‘gay’ may refer to more than sexual activities and attractions to persons of the same sex, it does not communicate less than that. It is sinful to intentionally approve of sin and missionally foolish to invite that misunderstanding. Our identity is in Christ as his new creation, and we should not inadvertently communicate to the world that Jesus approves of sin. It is inappropriate to use terminology, including ‘gay Christian’, [sic] that welcomes confusion from the church and world.”

The statements reaffirm both biblical teaching and the EPC’s practice of insisting on the need for genuine repentance from sin while also recognizing the ongoing struggle against sin that every Christian continues to experience in this life. For example:

“While we welcome anyone to attend our churches and to participate in our various ministries, it is essential that our churches admit into their membership and into positions of leadership only those who have a credible testimony of repentant faith in Jesus Christ. People who knowingly and persistently adopt, practice, or promote sexual behaviors or desires in direct contradiction to biblical teaching and show no evidence of repentance do not have such a credible testimony. Such persons are to be loved and ministered to with pastoral care, but they are not eligible for either church membership or ordination. People who struggle with temptation and may, at times, sin sexually, but who grieve those failures, show ongoing repentance, and are progressing in sanctification, may be welcomed as members. They are to be shepherded pastorally and held accountable as they grow in holiness.”

A particularly challenging and pressing question is how all of this applies to people recommended for positions of leadership in the church, especially the offices of Deacon or Elder (which includes pastors). Throughout our life in this world, every Christian experiences an ongoing war against remaining sin down to its roots. In keeping with this, the approved statements affirm the highest expectation for experiential holiness among officers, even while they avoid the error of insisting on sin being utterly eradicated from their experience. Consider the following guidance:

From the Pastoral Letter:

*“Only those who conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct should be considered for leadership. (WLC 138-139) [sic] If candidates for office have disclosed that they experience SSA [same-sex attraction], the examining elders must first confirm that the candidates have a long record of living chaste sexual lives in their identity, behavior, desires, and attitudes. **Ordination is not appropriate while habitual or unresolved sexual sin persists;***

discernment on the part of the court should be exercised in light of repentance, fruit of sanctification, and proven character over time. Courts may consider for ordination candidates whose ongoing experience of SSA is a corrupted sin nature unindulged, repented of, and mortified; a temptation not entered into, but rather fled; a weakness not embraced, but rather mourned as they rest upon the grace and strength of the Lord.”

In line with this, we passed a preliminary approval of the following additions to our **Book of Government**, all of which reassert the EPC’s continued reception of the biblical expectations for officers:

“Whether single or married, officers must conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity (see Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 138-139) in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct... Officers in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. While office bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this life to confess and to mortify remaining sins in light of God’s work of progressive sanctification. Therefore, to be qualified for office, they must affirm the sinfulness of fallen desires, the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, and be committed to the pursuit of Spirit empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions.”

The above statements have been misunderstood and/or misrepresented in various websites and social media platforms, as well as in conversation and debate surrounding the approval of these statements. For example, the EPC has been accused of the following...“opening the door to homosexual ordination,” “approving gay ordination,” considering “gay, Side-B Christianity,” “ordaining celibate homosexuals,” “voting to allow ordination of celibate ‘same-sex attracted’ pastors,” and so forth.

These accusations have come both from outside the EPC as well as from within the denomination. **While many of the people who claim this have a godly concern for biblical faithfulness, these statements fundamentally mischaracterize what was considered and approved by the denomination.** The phrases “homosexual ordination” and “gay ordination” convey the idea that we have approved ordaining people who are engaged in homosexual practice. **This is explicitly forbidden in the EPC.** References to ordaining “celibate homosexuals” and “celibate ‘same sex attracted’ pastors” communicate that if someone’s inward desires remain unchanged and unaffected by repentance, they could still be ordained as long as they don’t engage in homosexual practice. **This is explicitly denied in the EPC’s statements.** Both repentance and saving change take place especially in the heart, not only in outward action. If someone experiences a sinful desire such as same-sex attraction but fails to identify it as sin, does not actively oppose it in dependence upon the grace of God, or has not experienced growth and change with respect to those desires, such a person is not allowed to be ordained in

the EPC. The term “Side-B” refers to an unbiblical, though sadly common, approach to homosexual sin in some churches. While agreeing with the historic, Christian understanding that homosexual practice is sinful, Side-B does not recognize the sinfulness of homoerotic desire itself. In fact, being “gay” is characterized as something inherently good and valuable to the church, rather than something to be turned from at the level of its deepest roots in our heart. ***This so called “Side-B” approach to homosexual sin is not affirmed in the statements recently approved by the EPC. So where did all this confusion come from?***

1. Both congregants and leaders within the EPC must continue to grow in holiness and in a consistently biblical witness in the world. This means you may find people within the EPC who speak and act incorrectly when it comes to issues related to same-sex attraction. This is not a sign that the denomination is slipping as much as a reminder that our ministry is necessary. May we be spurred on to the diligent use of the Word throughout our churches.
2. The committee that drafted the updates we approved went through a two-year process of writing, submitting earlier drafts, receiving feedback, and continuing to revise their work. The result is that some earlier statements needed important revisions to bring them into clear and consistent conformity to what the Scriptures teach. Much informal debate took place before the final draft was even released. The result is that opinions were formed apart from a consideration of the actual wording recommended by the committee to our denomination.
3. The committee that brought these recommendations was formed in the context of a particular church and its pastor seeking admittance into an EPC presbytery. This pastor has been at the center of significant controversy surrounding issues of sexuality, and many looked to the committee’s recommendations to do the work of barring him from ever joining our denomination. The problem is that this is entirely outside the purview of such a committee. There is no way around relying on particular sessions and presbyteries to consistently apply the constitutional standards of our denomination (EPC Book of Order, Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms). Where individuals, Sessions, or Presbyteries act contrary to these standards, then we respond accordingly using the means for accountability found in our Book of Discipline.

While there is much agreement in the EPC on these matters, there is at least one point of genuine disagreement: we are unified in our understanding that homosexual practice is sinful, that same-sex attraction is sinful, that for all who trust in Christ this sin is forgiven, that the Spirit works genuine heart level change with respect to this sin, and that real Christians may still continue to experience these sinful desires in this life. There is, however, legitimate disagreement on whether someone who continues to experience these

sinful desires may still be ordained as an deacon, elder, or pastor. - Some suggest that this sin struggle must be entirely absent or eradicated from someone's experience before they could ever be considered for ordination. Same-sex attraction is sufficiently grievous and represents a kind of distortion of God's creation that if someone continues to experience such sinful desires, this is inherently disqualifying. Those who hold this view tended to oppose the recent recommendations and interpreted them as a softening of our position on human sexuality.

Others are willing to consider such persons for ordination, provided there is a clear understanding of the nature of this sin and demonstrated progress, growth, and change regarding this sin struggle. Although such sinful desires and temptations may not be utterly eradicated in this life, persons may be ordained who evidence a persistent walk in Spirit-empowered repentance (as mortification and vivification) with respect to this sin, as in any other sin. This is the view set forth in the recent statements approved by the EPC.

How you can be praying:

- Pray for Sessions and Presbyteries to follow through on applying our high standards when evaluating and approving candidates for ordination.
- Pray for increasing unity in the way that the recent updates are described and characterized. Where there is agreement, may this be expressed as real agreement; where there is disagreement, may the true point of disagreement be clearly and charitably stated.
- Pray that God would continue to preserve and protect our denomination both from worldly compromise on issues of sexuality as well as a self-righteous preoccupation with the sins of others.
- Pray for the fruit of the Spirit to be powerfully evident, especially as some people and congregations may leave our denomination based on how they perceive these recent updates.
- Pray for the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ to be powerfully proclaimed and savingly at work as we continually recommit ourselves to the ministry of the gospel.

**Adapted with permission from a letter sent to the congregation of North Park, EPC in Wexford, PA by their pastor Rev. David O'Leary.*

Descending Overtures from the 46th General Assembly Evangelical Presbyterian Church

DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-A

That the *Book of Government* 11-2.G be amended.

Rationale: Due to changes in the accreditation of the Masters of Divinity degree over the years, the degree is no longer standard among seminaries. Some seminaries still maintain the traditional 90+ credit hour degree while others have reduced the required credit hours to the minimum 72+ credit hour threshold. This results in a significant variance when it comes to the preparation and training of our Candidates. Furthermore, we have many Candidates who have already achieved a graduate level theological degree and simply need to add a few more classes rather than pursue a different degree. Additionally, we recognize the need for a uniform standard which is why we are proposing a standard “Criteria for Ordination Requirements and Education” that all Candidates must meet. The new criteria will include 72 hours of transcribed, graduate level coursework, including original languages. It will also include a new assessment process for Candidates modeled after our current church planter and world outreach worker assessments. Finally, it will include some kind of demonstration of pastoral competencies and skills in a local ministry context.

Current Language: G.11-2.G	Proposed Language: G. 11-2.G <u><i>additions</i></u> , noted in <i>bold italics</i> , deletions
11-2.G A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery and such other standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for Candidates under extraordinary status (G.11-2I).	11-2.G A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a <u><i>graduate theological</i></u> Master of Divinity degree from an accredited <u><i>institution</i></u> seminary approved by the Presbytery and such other <u><i>requirements</i></u> standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for Candidates under extraordinary status (G.11-2I). <u><i>11-2.H The Candidate shall present evidence of satisfactory completion of the Criteria for Ordination Requirements and Education to the Presbytery. This evidence shall include:</i></u> 1. <u><i>Graduate coursework substantiated by a transcript</i></u> 2. <u><i>Participation in the EPC candidate assessment</i></u> 3. <u><i>Demonstration of pastoral competencies</i></u>
11-2.H Ordinarily, a Candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination. A Candidate, for reasons acceptable to the Presbytery, may request transfer to another Presbytery. The Candidate’s membership must also be transferred to an EPC congregation within that Presbytery.	11-2.H <u><i>I</i></u> Ordinarily, a Candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination. A Candidate, for reasons acceptable to the Presbytery, may request transfer to another Presbytery. The Candidate’s membership must also be transferred to an EPC congregation within that Presbytery.
11-2.I Currently descending from GA45 to STRIKE] A Presbytery, for reasons it judges adequate, may receive a Candidate under extraordinary circumstances for whom it may waive part or all of the total educational requirements for ordination. This action requires a two-thirds vote by the Presbytery. When such a Candidate is received, it	11-2.I <u><i>I</i></u> [Currently descending from GA45 to AMEND] A Candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in G.12-2. Any

**Descending Overtures from the 46th General Assembly
Evangelical Presbyterian Church**

is appropriate to assign courses of independent study or study under some appropriate person. 11-2.I [Currently descending from GA45 to AMEND] A Candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in G.12-2. Any Candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of G.11-2.	Candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of G.11-2.
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Descending Overtures from the 46th General Assembly Evangelical Presbyterian Church

DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-B

That the *Book of Government* 11-2.H be amended.

Rationale: Due to changes in the accreditation of the Masters of Divinity degree over the years, the degree is no longer standard among seminaries. Some seminaries still maintain the traditional 90+ credit hour degree while others have reduced the required credit hours to the minimum 72+ credit hour threshold. This results in a significant variance when it comes to the preparation and training of our Candidates. Furthermore, we have many Candidates who have already achieved a graduate level theological degree and simply need to add a few more classes rather than pursue a different degree. Additionally, we recognize the need for a uniform standard which is why we are proposing a standard “Criteria for Ordination Requirements and Education” that all Candidates must meet. The new criteria will include 72 hours of transcribed, graduate level coursework, including original languages. It will also include a new assessment process for Candidates modeled after our current church planter and world outreach worker assessments. Finally, it will include some kind of demonstration of pastoral competencies and skills in a local ministry context.

Current Language: G.11-2.G	Proposed Language: G. 11-2.G <i>additions</i> , noted in <i>bold italics</i> , deletions
11-2.G A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery and such other standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for Candidates under extraordinary status (G.11-2I).	11-2.G A Candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a <i>graduate theological</i> Master of Divinity degree from an accredited <i>institution</i> seminary approved by the Presbytery and such other <i>requirements</i> standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for Candidates under extraordinary status (G.11-2I). <i><u>11-2.H The Candidate shall present evidence of satisfactory completion of the Criteria for Ordination Requirements and Education to the Presbytery. This evidence shall include:</u></i> 4. <i><u>Graduate coursework substantiated by a transcript</u></i> 5. <i><u>Participation in the EPC candidate assessment 3.</u></i> 6. <i><u>Demonstration of pastoral competencies</u></i> 11-2.H I Ordinarily, a Candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination. A Candidate, for reasons acceptable to the Presbytery, may request transfer to another Presbytery. The Candidate’s membership must also be transferred to an EPC congregation within that Presbytery.
11-2.I Currently descending from GA45 to STRIKE]	

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

11-2.I [Currently descending from GA45 to AMEND]

A Candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in G.12-2. Any Candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of G.11-2.

11-2.IJ [Currently descending from GA45 to AMEND]

A Candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in G.12-2. Any Candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of G.11-2.

DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-C

Rationale: Due to the confusion that often surrounds our examination process at the Presbytery level, we believe it important to clarify in detail what the EPC requires. Much of what is listed here is already found in various places such as the Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees, but we believe the expectations are best spelled out in the Book of Government for the sake of consistency and clarity across presbyteries. One important change to note is the elimination of the written exegesis exam. Should our recommendations pass, we believe a passing grade in Biblical Languages and Biblical Exegesis from an accredited seminary is sufficient to meet our standard.

Current Language: G.12-2	Proposed Language: G. 12-2 <u>additions, in bold italics, deletions</u>
12.2 The examination of a Candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder A. The Candidate shall present evidence of competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of coursework taken, along with the required exegesis. B. The Candidate shall be examined in the Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.	12.2 The examination of a Candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder <u><i>The examination of a Candidate for ordination to the office of Teaching Elder shall proceed in three phases: denominational written examinations, examination before the appropriate committee of the Presbytery, and before the floor of the Presbytery.</i></u> A. <u><i>Denominational Written Examinations</i></u> 1. <u><i>Prior to sitting for oral examination before a Presbytery, every Candidate shall complete the written examinations approved by the General Assembly through its appropriate Permanent Committee in accordance with the Rules for Assembly.</i></u> 2. <u><i>The written examinations shall test competency in the following areas:</i></u> a. <u><i>Bible content</i></u> b. <u><i>Theology, Sacraments and the Reformed Tradition</i></u> c. <u><i>EPC Polity</i></u> B. <u><i>Presbytery Committee Examination</i></u> 1. <u><i>Following the successful completion of written examinations, the Candidate shall appear before the appropriate committee of the Presbytery for examination.</i></u> 2. <u><i>This examination shall include:</i></u> a. <u><i>Testimony to the Christian experience of the saving grace of</i></u>

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C. The Candidate shall be examined in writing and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, the English Bible, the Book of Order, the history of the Church and the Reformed tradition, and the nature of the office of Teaching Elder. D. The Candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery to demonstrate the ability to expound the Word of God effectively. E. If the Presbytery has previously received a Candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary, the requirements for language shall be omitted. However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.	<u>God in Jesus Christ, and progress in spiritual growth and holiness, with attention to the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.</u> b. <u>Articulation of the motives for seeking ordination, including the Candidate's sense of inward call.</u> c. <u>Demonstration of knowledge of Christian doctrine according to the following categories:</u> i. <u>Bible content</u> ii. <u>Reformed Theology</u> iii. <u>Sacraments</u> iv. <u>Church History with emphasis on the Reformed Tradition.</u> v. <u>Office of Teaching Elder</u> vi. <u>EPC Polity</u> vii. <u>Westminster Standards</u> 3. <u>The Committee shall report its findings and recommendation to the Presbytery.</u> C. <u>Presbytery Floor Examination</u> 1. <u>The Candidate shall preach a sermon before the Presbytery, on a text assigned by the appropriate committee, demonstrating ability to expound and apply the Word of God.</u> 2. <u>The Candidate shall be examined orally before the Presbytery to demonstrate knowledge of Christian doctrine according to the same categories outlined above.</u> <u>The examination must be sustained by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.</u>
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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-D

That the *Book of Government* 9-3 (9-3A, 9-3B) be amended.

Rationale: These recommendations, drawn from the PCA with some modifications, specify that officers are to have godly, biblical character as summarized in the EPC's confessional standards, particularly in terms of chastity and sexual purity. While officers of the church are still sinners growing in sanctification, they must be examples to the church in holiness and Spirit-empowered victory over sin. These recommendations codify biblical and confessional character requirements for EPC officers.

Current Language: G.9-3.A and B	Proposed Language: G. 9-3.A and B <u>additions, in bold italics</u> <u>deletions</u>
A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office. B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.	A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church <u>shall</u> should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should <u>shall</u> exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. <u>Whether single or married, officers must conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity (see Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 138-139) in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct.</u> A congregation preparing to elect persons to this <u>these</u> holy offices should <u>shall</u> carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the these offices <u>Ruling Elder</u> and be very prayerful in selecting persons to them <u>this office</u>. B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all. <u>Officers in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. While office bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this life to confess and to mortify remaining sins in light of God's work of progressive sanctification. Therefore, to be qualified for office, they must affirm the sinfulness of fallen desires, the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, and be</u>

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	<u><i>committed to the pursuit of Spirit empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions.</i></u>
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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-E

That the *Book of Government* 12 (12-2B, 12-3A, 12-3.B.1, 12-6) be amended.

Rationale: There is currently no requirement in the Book of Government that candidates for ordained office be examined in their Christian character. These recommendations require that candidates be examined to see not only that they are growing spiritually, but are faithful in their conformity to Jesus as Lord.

Current Language: G.12-2, 3, 6	Proposed Language: G. 12-2, 3, 6 <u>additions, in bold italics</u> <u>deletions</u>
G.12-2.B The Candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.	G.12-2.B The Candidates shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, <u>faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord,</u> and <u>steady</u> progress in spiritual growth.
G.12-3.A Examination of an EPC Teaching Elders seeking to transfer into a Presbytery EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2 and they shall relate their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.	G.12-3.A Examination of an EPC Teaching Elders seeking to transfer into a Presbytery EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2 and they shall relate their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, <u>faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord,</u> and <u>steady</u> progress in spiritual growth.
G.12-3.B.1 Examination of an ordained Minister from another Reformed denomination: A Minister seeking to become a Teaching Elder in a Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from another denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination in the EPC. The Minister shall be examined on views and beliefs and may be examined on knowledge.	G.12-3.B.1 Examination of an ordained Minister from another Reformed denomination: A Minister seeking to become a Teaching Elder in a Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from another denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination in the EPC. The Ministers shall be examined on views and beliefs and may be examined on knowledge <u>and shall relate experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady progress in spiritual growth.</u>
G.12-6 The Session shall confer with each person elected to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on 1) personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth, 2) theology and Sacraments of the Church, 3) the government, discipline, worship, and history of the Church, and 4) an understanding of the office to which one is elected.	G.12-6 The Session shall confer with each person elected <u>nominated</u> to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on 1) personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ <u>their faithful conformity to his character, obedience to him as Lord,</u> and <u>steady</u> progress in spiritual growth, 2) theology and Sacraments of the Church, 3) the government, discipline, worship, and history of the Church, and 4) an understanding of the office to which one is elected.

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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-F

That the *Book of Government* 9-5 be amended.

Rationale: From the “Notes For The 2024-2025 Edition” of the EPC Constitution: Volume One, “Church – when capitalized, refers to the universal church (defined in Book of Government, Chapter 1). The reference in G.9-5.D seems to be to the Universal Visible Church and should be ‘church’ rather than ‘Church.’ There may be additional instance of this terminological inconsistency (ex: G.9-5.E; G.9-6.A) that should be sought out.

The proposed revision condenses the three spheres of Administrative work: EPC church courts and agencies, or an organization deemed proper by the Presbytery.

The proposed addition mirrors the language of G.10-8.B.2.a – calls approved by the Presbytery from a church or agency outside the bounds of the Presbytery.

Current Language: G. 9-5	Proposed Language: G. 9-5 <u>additions, in bold</u> <u>italics</u> <u>deletions</u>
G. 9-5 The office of Teaching Elder D. Administrator A court of the Church or one of its agencies may call a Teaching Elder to serve in some administrative capacity. An organization deemed proper by the Presbytery may also issue a similar call. In such cases, it is always the responsibility of the Administrator to seek opportunity to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. E. Chaplain A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.	G. 9-5 The office of Teaching Elder D. Administrator A court of the Church <u>church</u> or one of its agencies, or an organization deemed proper by the Presbytery may call a Teaching Elder to serve in some administrative capacity <u>provided that the nature of the work is appropriate to the gospel ministry and requiring ordination.</u> In such cases, it is always the responsibility of the Administrator to seek opportunity to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. E. Chaplain A court of the Church <u>church,</u> a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.

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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-G

That the *Book of Government* 5-10 be amended.

Rationale: Proposed addition section “A” clarifies that under no circumstances may a congregation renounce jurisdiction since that is inconceivable in a presbyterian form of government; it must follow the procedures established in G.5-10.

The addition of the Active Roll (G.8-3.B) has the mutual benefit of encouraging the Session to ensure the rolls of the congregation are in order prior to the request for dismissal, as is their responsibility (G.8-1, 3; 18-3), and allowing the Presbytery knowledge of who has standing to vote in the congregational meeting, and who may need to be assigned to other congregations of the church in application of current provision §C and proposed provision §D.

The G.5-10 process is an initial congregational meeting, followed by a time period of 3-6 months, concluding with a meeting in continuation of the initial meeting. In the updated 12th Edition of Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR) this is considered an “Adjourned Meeting” (RONR 9:17-19). The present parliamentary verbiage of “recess” is in conflict for procedures for adjourned meetings. The proposed language would bring our procedures into conformity with parliamentary procedure.

Current Language: G. 5-10	Proposed Language: G. 5-10 <u>additions, in bold</u> <u>italics</u> <u>deletions</u>
G.5-10 The dismissal of a local church to another body or to independence. A. The Church Session shall notify the Presbytery of its desire to be dismissed. Once a Church Session has notified the Presbytery of its desire under this section, the Presbytery shall take no action to dismiss, dissolve, or divide the local church and its elders until all proceedings under this section 5-10 are fully completed. This provision shall not be construed to prohibit the Presbytery from reasonable means of access to the Session or church members in order to present its position. Nor shall this provision be construed to prohibit the presbytery from taking action under the Book of Discipline on matters unrelated to the request for dismissal.	G.5-10 The dismissal of a local church to another body or to independence A. <u>No congregation shall be dismissed to another body or to independence except by the procedures set forth in this section G.5-10.</u> B. The Church Session shall notify the Presbytery of its desire to be dismissed; <u>this notice shall include the Active Roll of the congregation as an attachment.</u> Once a Church Session has notified the Presbytery of its desire under this section, the Presbytery shall take no action to dismiss, dissolve, or divide the local church and its elders until all proceedings under this section 5-10 are fully completed. This provision shall not be construed to prohibit the Presbytery from reasonable means of access to the Session or church members in order to present its position. Nor shall this provision be construed to prohibit the presbytery from taking action under the

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B. At a duly called meeting of the congregation, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, the motion to request dismissal shall be put and discussed. The meeting shall recess for no less than three months and no more than six months, to a date determined at the meeting. C. At the time set, the congregation shall reconvene, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, and the request to dismiss shall again be put to the congregation and the floor opened for discussion. The congregation shall then vote on the motion by written ballot. If it passes by a two-thirds majority, the Presbytery shall dismiss the congregation as requested with all of its property and assets. Those not desiring to participate in the dismissal shall notify the Presbytery, which will assign them to other congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. D. If a request for dismissal fails to achieve the required two-thirds majority,⁴¹ the process of dismissal (G.5-10) may not be repeated until at least 12 months have elapsed following the vote.	<i>Book of Discipline</i> on matters unrelated to the request for dismissal. C. At a duly called meeting of the congregation, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, the motion to request dismissal shall be put and discussed. The meeting shall recess for <u>adjourn until</u> no less than three months and no more than six months, to a date determined at the meeting. D. At the time set, the congregation shall reconvene, with representatives from the Presbytery present and having the privilege of the floor, and the request to dismiss shall again be put to the congregation and the floor opened for discussion. The congregation shall then vote on the motion by written ballot, <u>provided that only those listed on the Active Roll attached to the notice given in G.5-10.B may vote.</u> If it passes by a two-thirds majority, the Presbytery shall dismiss the congregation as requested with all of its property and assets. Those not desiring to participate in the dismissal shall notify the Presbytery, which will assign them to other congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. E. If a request for dismissal fails to achieve the required two-thirds majority, the process of dismissal (G.5-10) may not be repeated until at least 12 months have elapsed following the vote.
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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-H

That the *Book of Government* 19-3 be amended.

Rationale: This eliminates and clarifies a present redundancy.

Current Language: G. 19-3	Proposed Language: G. 19-3 <u>additions, in bold</u> <u>italics</u> deletions
G.19-3 Officers of the Presbytery A. Moderator The Moderator of the Presbytery shall be elected by that court. The person elected must be a Ruling or Teaching Elder. A Ruling Elder, once elected, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected. 1. Length of Term Election may be for that stated meeting of the court or, at the discretion of the Presbytery, for one year. A Ruling Elder, once elected as Moderator, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.	G.19-3 Officers of the Presbytery A. Moderator The Moderator of the Presbytery shall be elected by that court. The person elected must be a Ruling or Teaching Elder. A Ruling Elder, once elected <u>as Moderator,</u> shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected. 1. Length of Term Election may be for that stated meeting of the court or, at the discretion of the Presbytery, for one year. A Ruling Elder, once elected as Moderator, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.

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DESCENDING OVERTURE 46-I

That the *Book of Discipline* be amended.

Book of Discipline Approved Revision (June 2026) General Notes

The first draft of a proposed revision to the *Book of Discipline* was presented to the 45th General Assembly and made available in October 2025 to all who wanted to review and comment. The Task Force received responses from 44 people and carefully reviewed over 325 individual comments. Many were incorporated in this draft submitted to the National Leadership Team and then to the Permanent Judicial Commission as required by *Book of Government* 21-3D.2. The proposed revision was approved by the 46th General Assembly. A “clean copy” of the approved revision of the *Book of Discipline* is being sent to the Presbyteries as a Descending Overture. If approved by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Presbyteries the *Book of Discipline* will come to the 47th General Assembly for ratification.

The following approved revision of the EPC *Book of Discipline* is presented in a [3-column format](#) and is available on our website www.epconnect.org to any Presbyter who wants to see the details behind the changes in the approved revision. The left-hand column is the current text of the *Book of Discipline*. The middle column is the proposed revision. The right-hand column has the rationale for the proposed changes.

For ease of comparison, the location of some sections of the current *Book of Discipline* has been changed. Those sections are indicated in italics in the “Current *Book of Discipline*” column.

In the proposed revision, all cross references to the **Book of Order** have been moved to footnotes. Amendments to the **Book of Order** sometimes necessitate changes to cross references. Footnotes may be easily changed in the editorial process without requiring additional amendments.

Abbreviations

- G** – Book of Government
- D** – Book of Discipline
- W** – Book of Worship

Book of Discipline Approved Revision (June 2026)

General Notes

The first draft of a proposed revision to the *Book of Discipline* was presented to the 45th General Assembly and made available in October 2025 to all who wanted to review and comment. The Task Force received responses from 44 people and carefully reviewed over 325 individual comments. Many were incorporated in this draft submitted to the National Leadership Team and then to the Permanent Judicial Commission as required by Book of Government 21-3D.2. The proposed revision was approved by the 46th General Assembly. A “clean copy” of the approved revision of the *Book of Discipline* is being sent to the Presbyteries as a Descending Overture. If approved by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Presbyteries the *Book of Discipline* will come to the 47th General Assembly for ratification.

The following approved revision of the EPC *Book of Discipline* is presented in a 3-column format and is available to any Presbyterian who wants to see the details behind the changes in the approved revision. The left-hand column is the current text of the *Book of Discipline*. The middle column is the proposed revision. The right-hand column has the rationale for the proposed changes.

For ease of comparison, the location of some sections of the current *Book of Discipline* has been changed. Those sections are indicated in *italics* in the “Current *Book of Discipline*” column.

In the proposed revision, all cross references to the **Book of Order** have been moved to footnotes. Amendments to the **Book of Order** sometimes necessitate changes to cross references. Footnotes may be easily changed in the editorial process without requiring additional amendments.

Abbreviations

G – Book of Government

D – Book of Discipline

W – Book of Worship

Digest of Changes in the Proposed Revision to the Book of Discipline

Substantive Changes

1-6B – Abuse has been added as one aspect of immorality.

One of the grounds for discipline is immorality, defined as “conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct as a ground for discipline.” Immorality includes but is not limited to: “bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping, hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality. One reason for forming the Task Force to review the Book of Discipline was the recognition that the instances of abuse are rising and the issue was not sufficiently addressed in the current Book of Discipline. The proposed revision adds “abuse” as an example of immorality, defining it as “the sinful use of power to harm, intimidate, exploit, or dominate another person.” In situations where abuse is the specific type of immorality being charged, the proposed revision gives Sessions and Presbyteries discretion in granting exceptions to the general requirement of going privately to a person when the person experiencing the harm would be in danger of further harm.

1-3D – “Protect those harmed by the sin of others” has been added as one of the purposes of discipline. It was added because of the increased concern regarding abuse, but ranges beyond that. It is the only purpose of discipline listed that relates to the church’s pastoral concern for those who have been harmed.

5-7C.4(c) – Requirements for forming judicial commissions in a local church have been added. The current Book of Discipline is silent on the matter. The new provisions allow for (but do not require) Pastors and Associate Pastors to be part of local church judicial commissions.

11-2A – The sanction of admonition has been renamed as “reprimand.”

The term “admonition” has been problematic in the discipline process. It is a biblical term and should be used and practiced as we encourage each other to press forward in our discipleship. For clarity, the proposed revision uses “reprimand” a separate term reserved for the time when an offender has been found guilty, and a sanction has been imposed.

11-5A – The sanction of removal from office is defined as the “offender’s ordination is permanently revoked, thus removing the offender from the office of Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon.” This clarifies the distinction between suspension, in which ordination is set aside for a time, and removal, which permanently revokes ordination. Once removed from office, there is no “restoration” because the person is no longer ordained. While it would be possible to become elected and ordained again, it would be a new process, not a “restoration.” If future restoration to office seems possible, church courts should use the sanction of indefinite suspension rather than removal from office.

Book of Discipline

Revision approved by the 46th General Assembly and sent to the Presbyteries
as a Descending Overture

— 1 — DISCIPLINE: ITS NATURE, PURPOSE, AND SUBJECTS

1-1 Definition of Church Discipline

- A. There are two kinds of authority vested in the church:
 - 1. The Responsibility of Order¹
 - 2. The Authority of Jurisdiction²
- B. Both kinds of authority are given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the Responsibility of Order, particularly regarding “reproving the erring.”³ As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights⁴ of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority may require utilizing actions for discipline.
- C. The word “discipline,” when used in this *Book of Discipline* refers to actions for discipline.⁵
- D. Church discipline does not supersede or negate the legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse to civil authorities according to local and state requirements.

1-2 Definition of “Church”:

As used in this *Book of Discipline*, the word “church” shall refer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including her General Assembly, Presbyteries (including mission churches), and local churches.

1-3 Purpose of Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to:

- A. Maintain the honor of God.
- B. Restore the sinner.
- C. Protect those harmed by the sin of others.
- D. Remove offense from the church.

¹ G.3-2: “The officers’ Responsibility of Order includes especially the sharing of the gospel, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and otherwise exhibiting to the world the fruit of the Spirit.” See G.3-2 for the full reference.

² G.3-3: “The Authority of Jurisdiction is the authority to rule and is exercised jointly in ascending Church courts.” See G.3-3 for the full reference.

³ G.3-2

⁴ Active members (G.8-3B) have the right to vote in congregational meetings (G.7-7), the right to receive the sacraments in a worthy manner (W.3-3), the right to hold office if elected and approved for ordination (G.10), and the benefits of discipline (D.1-5A). These rights could be removed by properly imposed sanctions (D.11).

⁵ See Book of Discipline Chapter 5.

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

1-4 Basis of Discipline

- A. As the revelation of God's holy will, Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline. Therefore, proper disciplinary principles as set forth in the Scriptures must be followed before any charge alleging a personal offense can be brought before a court of the church.
- B. When a charge of personal offense⁶ is brought before any court of the church, the party bringing the charge must ordinarily include a statement detailing how the principles outlined in Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 have been met. The court may waive this requirement if it deems that confronting the offender would be inappropriate or otherwise inadvisable.⁷
- C. If anyone has evidence to suggest that a Teaching Elder may be guilty of a private offense,⁸ the Teaching Elder should be warned privately. But if the offense persists, or becomes public, the matter should be brought to another Teaching Elder of the Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee.

1-5 Persons Subject to Discipline

- A. All active and inactive members of the church, confirmed, baptized, and affiliate, are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline.
- B. All Teaching Elders are subject to discipline. Teaching Elders should not be shielded from discipline or lightly sanctioned on account of their office. Neither should serious charges be received against a Teaching Elder on insubstantial grounds.

1-6 Grounds for Discipline

Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for discipline. Additionally, all Christians are prone to acts of infirmity which should be amended but do not require discipline. The offenses that require discipline and are subject to actions for discipline are as follows:

- A. **Heresy:** the expressed or implied denial, openly taught and obstinately maintained, of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity.
- B. **Immorality:** conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping,⁹ hatred, abuse, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality.
 - 1. Abuse is the sinful use of power to harm, intimidate, exploit, or dominate another person.¹⁰

⁶ D.4-2A

⁷ Waiving these requirements has in view a situation where a one-on-one meeting of the accuser with the accused may carry a high potential of physical harm, intimidation, or coercion of the accused or be otherwise inadvisable. The Court may make that determination as it sees fit. See also D.1-6B.2.

⁸ D.4-3A

⁹ The terms "bickering and "gossiping" as used herein are intended to deal with those acts that are disruptive to the peace and unity of the church.

¹⁰ See **Westminster Larger Catechism** questions 129, 130 & 151.

2. In cases charging possible abuse, a court may make reasonable accommodations to protect vulnerable parties from possible harm or distress provided that such accommodations do not interfere with the rights of the accused to present an unhindered defense. Any such accommodations may not be used as evidence of abuse in any trial, mediation, implementation of sanctions, or other action of the court.
- C. **Contempt:** willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities.

1-7 Church Members Who Are Also Employees

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

— 2 — SPIRITUAL POWERS OF THE CHURCH

2-1 The Spiritual Power of the Church

The power of the Church is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of the Church from civil government. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church does not have civil authority.¹¹

2-2 Spiritual Nurture of Members

Among other duties, it is the duty of the church to provide for the nurture of its members and their families.¹²

2-3 Retention of Authority over Church Property

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

¹¹ G.3-1

¹² G.4-4B

— 3 — JURISDICTION OF CHURCH COURTS

3-1 The Right of Private Judgment

Since “God alone is Lord of the conscience,”¹³ we consider the right of private judgment in religious matters to be universal and unalienable.¹⁴ Therefore, the church in disciplinary cases has jurisdiction only over her members.¹⁵

3-2 Definition of Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction is the authority of a church court to render a decision in a case requiring discipline. This is the exercise of the Responsibility of Order.¹⁶ A court must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision. This definition is not to be confused with the Authority of Jurisdiction. The Authority of Jurisdiction is the power to rule and is a joint power to be exercised in church courts in ascending order.¹⁷ The exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the church. The exercise of the Authority of Jurisdiction provides the court with the authority to decide issues of government, administration, or law as it pertains to the rule of the church.

3-3 Original Jurisdiction

In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply:

- A. The Session
The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of that local church.
- B. The Presbytery
The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving Teaching Elders of the Presbytery, appeals from actions for discipline decided by sessions,¹⁸ and complaints¹⁹ regarding actions or decisions of sessions within its designated area.²⁰
- C. The General Assembly
The General Assembly has original jurisdiction over complaints²¹ regarding actions or decisions of presbyteries and judicial cases referred to it by a lower court.²²
- D. Dissolved Churches
The Presbytery shall immediately assume jurisdiction in cases of discipline in process but interrupted by the dissolution of a local church or mission church.
- E. Transfer of Membership
A member of a local church or Presbytery whose membership is being transferred shall remain under the jurisdiction of the original court until received by the receiving court.

3-4 Assumption of Jurisdiction

¹³ Westminster Confession of Faith 20.2

¹⁴ G.25-2A

¹⁵ D.1-5

¹⁶ G.3-2

¹⁷ “Ascending order” is the same as “regular gradation” in G.2-1A, G.3-3, and G.9-10.

¹⁸ See D.13 on “Appeals” and D.3-4 and 3-5 on assumption of jurisdiction due to unwillingness or failure to act.

¹⁹ See D.14 on “Complaints.”

²⁰ See G.19-1

²¹ See D.14

²² See G.22-3

In the event a court shall be unable or unwilling to try a person or persons accused, the next higher court may assume jurisdiction after giving thirty days' written notice to the lower court of its intention to assume jurisdiction.

3-5 Failure to Act

When a court of original jurisdiction fails to act in an action for discipline within ninety days after receiving a written charge or notice of offense, upon request from:

- A. Any active member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from within the same Presbytery,
- B. A member of the court of original jurisdiction,
- C. An accused or accuser in an out of bounds offense,²³

the next higher court may either instruct the lower court to act or assume jurisdiction to conclude the case itself.

3-6 Termination of Jurisdiction by Renunciation

Jurisdiction in judicial cases ends upon receipt from the accused of written notice of renunciation by the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the court verifying the individual's intention to renounce jurisdiction. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days, the acknowledgement of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the signed permission of the accused.²⁴

²³ See D.4-5 regarding "Out of Bounds Offenses."

²⁴ See G.14-2B.3 and 14-4C for the effect of renunciation of jurisdiction.

— 4 — OFFENSES

4-1 Offenses

Three kinds of offenses require discipline: Heresy, Immorality, and Contempt.²⁵ Nothing ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture. **The Westminster Confession of Faith**, with the **Larger and Shorter Catechisms**, **The Essentials of Our Faith**, and the **Book of Order**, are the standards adopted by the church as expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to faith and practice.

4-2 Personal and General Offenses

- A. A personal offense is a wrong done to a person or persons, including one's own self.
- B. A general offense is a wrong that is not directed against any particular person.

4-3 Private and Public Offenses

- A. Private offenses are those known only to an individual or to a few persons.
- B. Public offenses are those that are known to more than a few persons.

4-4 Temporary Suspensions

When an action for discipline is commenced²⁶ is against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the peace and purity²⁷ of the church requires it, temporarily suspend the accused from the sacraments and/or bar the accused from church property²⁸ until the action for discipline has been concluded.

4-5 Out-of-Bounds Offenses

When an offense is alleged to have taken place in a manner or location unknown to and/or outside the bounds of the court of original jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the alleged offense occurred, after satisfying itself there is compelling evidence warranting a trial, to send notice of pending charge(s) to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be transferred for trial and imposition of sanctions, if any, to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.

²⁵ See D.1-6 for explanations of offenses that require discipline.

²⁶ See Book of Discipline chapter 5.

²⁷ See G.4-1, 5-5A, 5-6A, D.8-3A and vows taken by members and officers.

²⁸ Proposed D.2-3

— 5 — COMMENCING ACTIONS FOR DISCIPLINE

5-1 Care over the Church

It is the duty of all church courts to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses that require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved files a written charge with the court.²⁹

5-2 Commencement of Actions for Discipline

Actions for discipline are commenced by one of three means:

A. By a Person or Persons

When a person or persons file a written charge with the Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction.³⁰

B. By the Court

When the court having jurisdiction³¹ determines that a charge is in order.

C. By Confession

When any person comes forward and makes his or her offense known to the court or commission of original jurisdiction,³² a statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment may be rendered and sanctions may be imposed with or without further actions for discipline, formal trial, or mediation.

5-3 Cautions Against Biased Accusations and Testimony

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

A. Who is known to hold a malignant spirit towards the accused.

B. Who is not of good character.

C. Who is under sanction or who is the subject of an action for discipline.

D. Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused.

E. Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash, or highly imprudent.

F. Who is offering a confession for an offense which may be incomplete or not fully accurate.

5-4 Limitation on Actions

An action for discipline must commence within three years after the acts constituting the offense were committed, with certain exceptions:

A. The acts were unknown and were not reasonably knowable by the offended person or court.

B. The offended person is under the age of 18, in which case the action for discipline must commence before that person's twenty-first birthday unless the offense includes abuse.³³

²⁹ The aggrieved party should use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

³⁰ D.3-3

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ See D.1-1D regarding reporting to civil authorities.

5-5 Private Reconciliation

There are cases of personal offenses in which it will be advisable for the court to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring the accused to a sense of repentance before instituting actions for discipline. The committee may then make recommendations to the court or commission concerning further prosecution of the case.

5-6 Investigation of a Charge

- A. After an action for discipline is commenced by a person (persons) and when private reconciliation is either not advisable or has been unsuccessful:
 - 1. The Clerk of the court, or a duly appointed body, shall determine if the action for discipline is in order.
 - 2. If the action for discipline is determined to be out of order, the Clerk or a duly appointed body shall advise the accusers of the decision and its grounds. The decision shall be reported to the court, which shall sustain or not sustain the decision.
- B. If the action for discipline is determined to be in order or if the court has initiated the action for discipline, the court shall form a judicial investigative committee to conduct an investigation into charges filed.³⁴ The judicial investigative committee shall have no authority to act for the court other than as an investigative body. The judicial investigative committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the court.
- C. After the investigation is concluded, the court shall decide whether there is compelling evidence to warrant a trial.
- D. If the court does not find compelling evidence of guilt to warrant a trial, the charge will be dismissed.

5-7 Proceedings upon a Determination of Compelling Evidence Warranting a Trial

- A. The court shall appoint a prosecutor.
 - 1. In actions before the Presbytery, the prosecutor shall be a Teaching Elder who is a member of the Presbytery or a Ruling Elder who is an active member in a local church of the Presbytery.
 - 2. In actions before the Session, the prosecutor need not be a Ruling Elder of that congregation but shall be an active member of that church.^{35 36}
 - 3. In the case of a personal offense, no offended person or a potential witness having personal knowledge of an offense shall become a prosecutor.
- B. The prosecutor shall prepare an indictment³⁷ and proceed to trial.

³⁴ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

³⁵ **G.8-3B**

³⁶ See **D.3-4** and **D.3-5** in the event a local church is unwilling, unable, or fails to act on an action for discipline.

³⁷ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

1. The parties in actions for discipline are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor is always the representative of the church.
 2. Every indictment shall begin: "In the name of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church," and shall conclude, "against the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof."
 3. The indictment shall clearly state the times, places, circumstances, and names of witnesses of the actions alleged to require an action for discipline, including the names of witnesses then known to support it so that the accused will be given adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make a defense.
 4. The prosecutor shall serve a copy of the indictment either in person or by means requiring a written receipt.
- C. Actions of the Court upon appointment of a prosecutor
1. The court shall decide whether it will try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission³⁸ appointed by the court.
 2. If the court tries the case, it may elect one of its members to serve as Temporary Moderator for the case with the consent of the Moderator. The Temporary Moderator shall exercise the duties of a Moderator³⁹ only with respect to the particular action for discipline. Neither the Moderator nor the Temporary Moderator may serve if they have a conflict of interest in the case.
 3. If the case is referred to a judicial commission, the commission has the full authority of the court to act on the matter referred. Ordinarily the judicial commission will be dissolved at the stated meeting of the court following the conclusion of the trial.
 4. Composition of judicial commissions
 - a. Judicial commissions of the shall be composed of no fewer than three and no more than seven members elected by the court.
 - b. Judicial commissions of the Presbytery shall be composed of a ratio of one Teaching Elders to two Ruling Elders to the extent possible unless the court appoints the Ministerial Committee as the judicial commission.
 - c. Judicial commissions of the Session shall be composed of Ruling Elders of the congregation and may include the Teaching Elders of the congregation.⁴⁰ At least one member of the Commission must be a Ruling Elder actively serving on the Session.
 - d. Members of a judicial investigative committee should ordinarily not serve on a judicial commission to avoid any appearance of bias.

³⁸ G.21-1A, B. Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

³⁹ G.18-2A; G.19-3A

⁴⁰ Teaching Elders of the congregation are pastors and associate pastors. Assistant pastors are called by the Session, not the congregation, and therefore are not eligible to serve on a judicial commission of a local church.

- e. The court shall appoint the Moderator of the judicial commission. The Moderator is a member of the judicial commission with voice and vote.
 - f. The prosecutor is not eligible to be a member of the judicial commission.
- 5. Ordinarily the court will set a date for trial upon the appointment of the prosecutor.
 - 6. If the accused is a member of the court, the court may temporarily suspend any or all the official functions of the accused. This shall not be considered a sanction.⁴¹

⁴¹ See D.11-2A regarding temporary suspensions, which are not sanctions.

— 6 — *EX PARTE* COMMUNICATIONS

6-1 Definition of *Ex Parte* Communications

- A. An *ex parte* communication is any form of communication to the presiding court or commission or Officer of the presiding court by one party in an action for discipline in the absence of the other party to that action that relates to the merits of the action. It includes but is not limited to verbal, written, electronic, or any other form of communication.
- B. Once a court begins an action for discipline,⁴² *ex parte* communications are prohibited.
- C. This prohibition against *ex parte* communication does not include questions on procedural matters that may be addressed to the Clerk of the court or Moderator of the commission.

6-2 Actions in the event of *ex parte* communication

- A. Any attempt at *ex parte* verbal communication shall be immediately interrupted by the member of the court to whom the communication is directed.
- B. The member of the court shall:
 - 1. Make a record of the attempted communication.
 - 2. Place the record in a separate file.
 - 3. Communicate to the other party the attempted *ex parte* communication.
- C. The record of the attempted communication shall include:
 - 1. The name of the person(s) attempting to so communicate.
 - 2. The date of the attempted communication.
- D. Under no circumstances shall the content of any *ex parte* communication be added to the case file of the subject of an action for discipline.
- E. Any form of *ex parte* communication, including notes from a verbal communication, shall be placed in a separate file and communicated to the other party and members of the presiding court or commission.

6-3 Proper communication with a court, commission, or its officers

If a party desires communication with a court or a judicial commission, that party shall request a meeting in person or by audio or video conference with the court or commission. The court or commission, or its designee, shall determine if the meeting is in order, and, if so, shall schedule the meeting. The party desiring communication shall be responsible for arranging the meeting.

⁴² See Book of Discipline Chapter 5

— 7 — MEDIATION

7-1 Assignment of mediation

- A. At the sole discretion of a court or judicial commission, an action for discipline once commenced may be assigned to a qualified mediator(s) agreed upon by both parties prior to the commencement of a trial. A matter so assigned may only proceed with the written consent of all necessary individuals as determined by the assigning court or commission. The court may assign all or part of the action for discipline, allowing a portion of the charge(s) to go into mediation while remaining charges continue to trial.
- B. At least one voting member of the court or commission prosecuting the case shall represent the court or commission at mediation.⁴³ If the assigned mediator(s) is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the mediator(s) shall not be eligible to serve as a member of the court or judicial commission should it prove necessary for the matter to be brought to trial.
- C. Prior to the commencement of mediation, the mediator(s) shall obtain the written agreement of both parties, by which both parties shall be bound by the following:
 - 1. All discussions are considered confidential unless both parties and the mediator(s) agree otherwise.
 - 2. Any admissions and settlement offers made shall not be cited in any further proceeding concerning any other matter before the court, should the matter not be resolved in mediation. No participant in the mediation will call a mediator(s) as a witness to the mediation in any subsequent hearing and/or in any other forum.
 - 3. Any person who violates the terms of this agreement may be charged with contempt and subject to sanction.
 - 4. A mediator(s) may only report to the court or judicial commission whether the matter has been settled, or not settled, or partially settled. If settled, the terms of any settlement shall be disclosed to the court or judicial commission. However, no settlement can be entered into which conflicts with any provision of the Constitution of the EPC.⁴⁴ Any such settlement will be considered null and void. Written settlements are to be sealed and kept by the Clerk of the court separate from the minutes of the court or judicial commission.
 - 5. No formal record of any settlement discussions shall be made. This prohibition includes the use of any recording device or a stenographer.

7-2 Legal counsel for mediation

If either party to mediation desires to have legal counsel, the other party shall be afforded the same opportunity.⁴⁵

⁴³ The prosecutor is not a voting member of the judicial commission (D.5-7C.4(f))

⁴⁴ The Constitution of the EPC consists of the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, **Westminster Larger Catechism**, **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, and the **Book of Order** in its three parts (*Book of Government*, *Book of Discipline*, and *Book of Worship*).

⁴⁵ See provisions regarding learned counsel in D.10-3

— 8 — HEARINGS IN ACTIONS FOR DISCIPLINE

8-1 Warning to All

Every member of a court or commission engaged in an action for discipline shall bear in mind the command of Scripture: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”⁴⁶

8-2 Formal Summons

A. Issuance

The Moderator or Clerk shall issue formal summons⁴⁷ in the name of the court to the accused and to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on its behalf.

B. Contents

The formal summons shall identify the parties to the trial, shall state the time and place of the trial, and shall warn the parties and witnesses of the sanctions for refusal to obey a formal summons.

C. Service of Summons and Indictment

The Clerk of the court or commission shall deliver a copy of the summons and the indictment to the defendant in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. The Clerk shall further deliver a summons to necessary witnesses in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt.

D. Witness and Exhibits List

Both parties shall provide the other with a list of expected witnesses⁴⁸ and copies of all exhibits not later than 5 days before trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt.

8-3 Refusal to Obey a Formal Summons

A. Accused Person

When an accused person fails to respond to a formal summons, the accused shall be served with a second formal summons.

B. Second Summons

A second formal summons⁴⁹ shall be accompanied with a notice that if the accused does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact the accused shall make known to the court), or that if the accused appears and refuses to plead, the accused shall be considered in contempt.⁵⁰

C. Sanctions for Failure to Appear

When an accused person, having been twice formally summoned willfully fails to appear, the court or commission shall enter this fact into its records, together with a copy of the indictment, and shall treat the failure to appear as an act of contempt.

⁴⁶ Galatians 6:1 (New International Version, 2011)

⁴⁷ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ See D.1-6C for definition of “contempt.”

1. For a member of the church, the court or commission shall suspend the accused person from the sacraments indefinitely. If the charge is of a serious nature, the court or commission may proceed to the sanction of excommunication.⁵¹
 2. For a Teaching or Ruling Elder, the court or commission shall suspend the Officer both from office and the sacraments indefinitely. If the charge is of a serious nature, the court or commission may proceed to the sanctions of removal from office or excommunication.⁵²
- D. Failure of a Witness to Appear
- In the event a duly summoned officer or member of the church willfully fails to appear or refuses to testify, the court may treat the refusal of the witness as contempt and proceed to prosecution of the witness.

8-4 Time Periods

At least ten days must elapse between service of the first formal summons on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which the accused is to appear. The time allotted for appearance following the second summons shall be left to the discretion of the court or commission, provided that it is sufficient for reasonable compliance.

⁵¹ See D.11-2 regarding sanctions.

⁵² Ibid.

— 9 — RULES FOR TESTIMONY

9-1 Competency of Witnesses

Competency means ability to testify. All persons, including both parties, who have sufficient ability to understand the obligation of a solemn promise,⁵³ are competent witnesses.

9-2 Testimony of the Accused

The accused party cannot be required to testify.⁵⁴ No inference of guilt may be drawn from failure to testify. The person or persons who filed the charges shall be required to testify on the demand of the accused.

9-3 Family Members

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

9-4 Dismissing Witnesses

The court or commission⁵⁵ shall have broad discretion as justice may require to dismiss any witness (other than the accused or accuser) from the room while another witness is testifying.

9-5 Disqualification of Witnesses

A member of the court or commission who has given testimony in a case shall be ineligible to vote on the case if either party objects.

9-6 Credibility of Witnesses

Credibility means the degree of credit which may be given to the testimony of a witness. In assessing the credibility of a witness, the court may consider relevant matters that bear on the credibility of the witness, including, but not limited to, the witness's:

- A. Relationship to either party or other witnesses.
- B. Personal interest in the result.
- C. Weakness of understanding.
- D. Demeanor while testifying.
- E. Character for honesty or truthfulness.
- F. Belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments.

9-7 The Solemn Promise of the Witness

The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall administer a solemn promise to a witness in the following or like terms:

"Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness?"

9-8 Examination of Witnesses

⁵³ See D.9-7 regarding solemn promise.

⁵⁴ See D.2-1 regarding the spiritual power of the church.

⁵⁵ "Commission" means judicial commission throughout this chapter.

A. Examination and Cross-Examination

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

B. Witness Inconvenience

1. When the alleged offense took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either
 - a. Appoint a judicial investigative committee to take the testimony, or
 - b. Request the court within whose bounds the facts occurred to take the testimony on behalf of the court of original jurisdiction
2. Due notice of the time and place of the taking of testimony by the judicial investigative committee or the coordinate court shall be given to the opposite party. Testimony may be taken by questions asked to the witness with answers recorded in writing or recorded by electronic or other means. Both parties shall have the right to examine the witness.

9-9 Burden of Proof

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

— 10 — TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

10-1 Order of the trial

- A. Charge to the court or commission
The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall exhort the members of the court or commission to remember and consider their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to participate.
- B. Indictment
The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall read the indictment, and the accused shall be called upon to plead either “guilty” or “not guilty.” If the accused pleads “guilty,” the court or commission shall act according to its discretion. If the accused pleads “not guilty,” the trial shall proceed. The accused party may plead in writing when unable to be personally present. If the accused party is necessarily absent, the court or commission may postpone the trial or allow the accused to name an active member of the church as a representative.
- C. Service of Summons
Before proceeding to trial, the court or commission shall ascertain that its summons has been duly served.
- D. Opening Statements
Each party shall be permitted to make a brief opening statement not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court or commission. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused.
- E. Testimony
The witnesses for the prosecution and then those for the accused shall be examined.
- F. Exclusion of Prosecutor and the Accused Person
On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the prosecutor and the accused persons. When they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall announce the court’s or commission’s decision upon return of the prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom.
- G. Closing Argument
Each party shall be permitted to make a brief closing argument not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused. The prosecutor shall be permitted to close, but total amount of time allocated to each party shall be equal.
- H. Deliberations
The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinions in the case. The prosecutor and the accused may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question.
- I. The Vote
The vote shall be by secret ballot, and all members of the court or commission shall vote “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” on each charge of the indictment. A verdict of guilty shall be rendered only upon a

two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall announce the court's decision upon return of the prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom.⁵⁶

J. Imposition of Sanctions

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

Thereupon, the court or commission shall proceed to a determination of sanctions.⁵⁷ The prosecutor and the accused may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate and determine sanctions. Sanctions may be rendered upon a simple majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the court's determination of sanctions, which shall be entered upon the records, upon return of prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom.

K. Motion for New Trial

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

10-2 Challenges to the Court

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

- A. A member of the court expresses an opinion about the guilt of either party to any person not a member of the court before the conclusion of the trial.
- B. A member of the court is absent from any sitting of the trial without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered.
- C. A member of the court is found:
 - 1. To be related to the accused or other witnesses.
 - 2. To have a personal interest in the result. Or,
 - 3. To have similar impediment or conflict of interest.

10-3 Professional or Learned Counsel

A. No Paid Counsel

No person serving as counsel shall be permitted to receive compensation for services rendered to either party.⁵⁸ However, parties may reimburse counsel for reasonable expenses.

B. Professional or Learned Counsel

In the event either party shall be represented by a person who is a graduate of an accredited school of law, the other party shall be likewise permitted to be represented by learned or professional counsel. However, learned or professional counsel must be a member of the

⁵⁶ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

⁵⁷ See *Book of Discipline* Chapters 11-2 regarding sanctions.

⁵⁸ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

church.⁵⁹ A member of the court serving as counsel in the case shall not be allowed to sit in judgment on the case.

10-4 The Record of the Case

A. Importance of the Record

Keeping accurate records of actions for discipline is incumbent upon the Moderator and Clerk of the court or commission both for the history of the case and in the event of an appeal.

B. Contents of the Record

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

C. Copies of the Record:

The court or commission shall make and maintain a transcript or record of the proceedings by written or electronic means. Both parties shall be permitted to make copies (by transcript or electronic recording) of the whole proceedings.

D. Transmitting the Record on Appeal

When a case is appealed,⁶⁰ the lower court shall transmit the Record of the Case to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal. The higher court does not re-try the case but shall render its decision based only on that which is contained in the Record. On the final decision of a case by a higher court the decision shall be communicated to all lower courts.

1. Authentication of the Record

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

2. Authentication of Testimony

The testimony taken by one court or commission and regularly authenticated shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

⁵⁹ See **D.1-2**; **G.8-3**

⁶⁰ See *Book of Discipline* Chapter 13 on the process of appeal.

— 11 —DECISIONS FROM A TRIAL – DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

11-1 Exhortation to Meekness

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

11-2 Disciplinary Sanctions

- A. Disciplinary sanctions which may be administered by church courts or commissions are, in order of severity:
 - 1. Reprimand.⁶¹
 - 2. Suspension.
 - 3. Removal from church office.
 - 4. Excommunication.
- B. If the court finds on trial that the offender is guilty, but the offense may be remedied without hindering the person's ministry, the court shall take all prudent measures to remedy the offense and administer at least the sanction of Reprimand and record the remedy.
- C. Principles for the Administration of Sanctions⁶²

The administration of church sanctions shall be suited to the nature of the offense.

 - 1. Private offenses
Sanctions for private offenses should be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone, or in private by one or more members of the court or commission.
 - 2. Public offenses
The court or commission has sole discretion regarding the degree of sanction and mode of administration for public offenses.
 - 3. Escalation of offenses
When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction.
 - 4. Severity of offenses
If the charge is one of serious immorality or heresy and the offender persists in rebellion, the court or commission may proceed to administer a higher sanction.

11-3 Sanction of Reprimand

⁶¹ This category was formerly "admonition." Scripture directs us to admonish one another. In this *Book of Discipline*, "reprimand" is used for the situation in which admonishment has not been successful, and the issue rises to the level of trial and sanction.

⁶² Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

- A. Reprimand is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning of the offender's guilt and danger, and encouraging the offender to be more careful and watchful in the future.
- B. The sanction of reprimand may be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public, the reprimand shall be administered by the Moderator in the presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it appropriate.

11-4 Sanction of Suspension

- A. Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities.
- B. The goal of suspension is to impress upon the offender the evil of the offense and, under God's blessing, to lead the offender to repentance.
- C. Suspension may be either indefinite or definite in duration.
 - 1. Suspension should generally be indefinite in duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its removal.
 - 2. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though the person confesses his/her sin and gives evidence of repentance.
- D. Regarding church members
Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities.
- E. Regarding Church Officers⁶³
Suspension includes exclusion from office and may include exclusion from the sacraments.
- F. Regarding Teaching Elders
 - 1. Definite or indefinite suspension shall bar the Teaching Elder from all functions of office and places the Teaching Elder on inactive status with the Presbytery.
 - 2. When a Presbytery suspends a Teaching Elder, the Presbytery has sole discretion as to whether the sanction will include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.
 - 3. The Presbytery may suspend the Teaching Elder from all ministerial functions without dissolving the pastoral relationship if the court anticipates restoring the offender a time that does not unduly bring harm to the congregation. In such a case, the court should assist the congregation in supplying a temporary pastor in order to maintain the regular worship of the congregation.
- G. Administration of the sanction of suspension

⁶³ Church officers are Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons.

1. The sanction of suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the discretion of the court or commission.
2. The sanction of definite or indefinite suspension shall be administered by the Moderator of the court or commission in the following or similar words:

“Whereas you, _____[a Teaching Elder / Ruling Elder / Deacon, / member of the Church] are convicted by sufficient proof [or are guilty by your own confession] of the sin of [name the offense], we the Presbytery [or Session] of [name of the Presbytery or church] in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church [and from the exercise of your office], until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance.”

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer that the offender would be restored.

11-5 Sanction of Removal from Office

- A. Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender’s ordination is permanently revoked, thus removing the offender from the office of Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.
- B. When a Presbytery or General Assembly, if it has assumed jurisdiction,⁶⁴ removes a Teaching Elder from office, the pastoral relationship shall be dissolved.
- C. When a Presbytery removes a Teaching Elder from office without excommunication, it shall assign the offender to membership at some local church subject to the approval of the Session of that local church.
- D. Administration of the Sanction of Removal from Office
The Moderator of the court or commission shall administer the sanction of removal from office in the following or similar words:

“Whereas [name], a Teaching Elder of this Presbytery (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), has been proved by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of [offense], we, [name of the presbytery or local church] do adjudge you disqualified for the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, remove you from the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon) of the church and do prohibit you from exercising any of the functions thereof.”

If the sanction includes suspension or excommunication, the Moderator or Chair shall proceed to say the following or similar words:

“We do, moreover, by the same authority, suspend you from the Sacraments, and cut you off from the membership and fellowship of the Church.”

11-6 Sanction of Excommunication

⁶⁴ See D.3-4 and 3-5.

- A. Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent.
- B. The purpose of excommunication is to maintain the honor of God, to restore the sinner, to remove offense from the church and to remind the church to “not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord” (Hebrews 12:5b).
- C. When a Presbytery or General Assembly⁶⁵ removes a Teaching Elder from office with excommunication, it should request the Session of a local church to minister to the offender as it would an unbeliever in hope of leading the offender to repentance and eventual admission to membership in the church and the Lord’s table.
- D. Administration of the Sanction of Excommunication
Excommunication may be administered privately or publicly as the court decides. The Moderator of the court or commission shall make a statement of the steps which have been taken with respect to the offender, and of the decision to cut the offender off from the membership and fellowship of the church. The Moderator shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use, and consequences of this sanction. The Moderator shall then administer the sanction in the following or similar words:

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

⁶⁵ The General Assembly only has authority to remove a Teaching Elder from office if it has assumed jurisdiction under the authority given in D.3-4 and 3-5.

— 12 — REMOVAL OF SANCTIONS

12-1 Court Should Pray for the Offender

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

12-2 Restoration to the Sacraments

When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of a suspended offender, that person shall profess repentance either in the presence of the court alone or publicly, and be restored to the sacraments of the church if such be the judgment of the court. Restoration shall be declared in the following or similar words:

“Whereas, you, _____, have been suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the office of Teaching Elder, or Ruling Elder, or Deacon) but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the Session (or Presbytery) of _____ do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, restore you from the said sentence of suspension, and restore you to the full communion of the Church (and the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).”

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

12-3 Restoration of an Excommunicated Person

- A. When an excommunicated person comes to repentance and desires to be readmitted to the membership and fellowship of the church, that person may request restoration from the Session.
- B. The Session shall proceed to restore the excommunicated person if it finds sufficient evidence of sincere repentance. This may be done in the presence of the Session or the congregation as seems best to the Session.
- C. If the excommunicated person was a Teaching Elder, the Session may receive him/her into membership and fellowship of the church. The Session shall then report its action to the court that imposed the original sanction.
- D. On the day appointed for restoration, the Moderator shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose the following questions:

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

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

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

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

Here the Moderator shall give the person being restored a suitable exhortation. Then the Moderator shall pronounce restoration in the following or similar words:

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

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

12-4 Restoration to Office

A Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon suspended from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for sin, until the officer has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which shall be for not less than one year. Any officer suspended must present to the court compelling evidence that the conduct causing that suspension or removal will not occur again.

12-5 Re-election Required for Exercise of Office

A Ruling Elder or Deacon restored to office shall not exercise that office in the church without re-election by the people.

12-6 Restoration of a Suspended Teaching Elder

- A. A Teaching Elder suspended indefinitely from office shall not be restored unless there is compelling evidence of repentance and growth to justify restoration. In that event restoration shall be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent.
- B. When the Teaching Elder files an application for restoration with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the application shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee for consideration.
 - 1. A motion to restore or not restore may be brought before the Presbytery only by its Ministerial Committee. Should the Ministerial Committee choose to recommend restoration, the Presbytery shall consider the recommendation in executive session.
 - 2. The Teaching Elder seeking restoration and the Ministerial Committee will be provided with the opportunity to address the Presbytery.
 - 3. After addressing the Presbytery, the Teaching Elder seeking restoration shall be excused.
 - 4. All votes concerning Teaching Elder restoration are to be by secret ballot.
 - 5. A 4/5 affirmative vote shall be required for restoration to Office.
 - 6. Restoration may be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction, or with its consent.

12-7 Transfer of Case to More Convenient Forum

When a person under sanction moves to a place remote from the court issuing the sanction, and desires to profess repentance and obtain restoration, the court may, if it deems it appropriate, transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the person under sanction resides. The court of the person's residence shall then assume jurisdiction over the case and proceed with it as though it had original jurisdiction.

— 13 — APPEALS

13-1 Definition

An appeal is a request made to a higher court to review a judgment made by a lower court in an action for discipline (cases of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt).⁶⁶ An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher court, unless the higher court directs and authorizes that the appeal be heard in another court or by a commission created for the express purpose of hearing the appeal and rendering a decision thereupon.

13-2 The Right to Appeal

- A. Only an accused party found guilty and sanctioned by a lower court has the right to appeal the lower court's decision to a higher court.
- B. The party bringing the appeal shall be known as "Appellant." The party against whom the appeal is taken shall be known as "Appellee."

13-3 Newly Discovered Evidence

- A. Newly discovered evidence is evidence that a party did not know, nor should have known, existed during the lower court proceedings.
- B. In the prosecution of an appeal, the party seeking to introduce newly discovered evidence shall file a motion with notice to all other parties demonstrating justification for its introduction. Upon approval of the motion, the appellate court shall remand the case to the lower court for a new trial.

13-4 Grounds for Appeal

The grounds for appeal are:

- A. Any misapplication of the EPC Constitution.
- B. Any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court.
- C. Receiving improper evidence or declining to receive proper evidence.
- D. Rendering a decision before all the testimony is reasonably heard.
- E. Manifestation of prejudice in the case.
- F. Mistake or injustice in the judgment or sanction.

13-5 Notice of Appeal

Written notice of appeal⁶⁷ shall be filed no later than thirty days after the entry of judgment of the lower court. The filing of the Notice of Appeal with the Clerk of the appellate court places the appeal before that court. A copy of the Notice of Appeal also shall be filed with the lower court from which the appeal is taken.

13-6 Statement of Grounds for Appeal

⁶⁶ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

⁶⁷ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

Written statement of grounds for appeal shall be filed no later than fifteen days after the Notice of Appeal is filed. The statement must state the factual or constitutional bases forming the issues on appeal.

13-7 Filing the Record

Within thirty days after receipt of a Notice of Appeal, it shall be the duty of the Clerk of the lower court to prepare and file with the Clerk of the higher court the Record of the Case.⁶⁸

13-8 Stay of Lower Court Action Pending Appeal

The filing of a Notice of Appeal does not stay the judgment of the lower court. If, however, the sanction is suspension, excommunication, or removal from office, the sanctioned party may, for sufficient reasons provided in writing, petition the higher court to stay the sanction until the case is finally decided. The higher court in its discretion may stay the sanction or later modify the stay. In the case that a stay is imposed or later modified, the higher court will notify the lower court. The lower court will confirm receipt of the stay and its compliance with it.

13-9 Procedures on Appeal

After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be considered, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. The court shall read the complete Record of the Case as submitted by the lower court. The higher court shall provide the Record to the Appellant. Before sending the Record to the Appellant, the higher court may, at its discretion, redact the Record in order to protect confidential or sensitive information that is not relevant to the appeal.
- B. The Appellant shall file a written statement which sets forth the issues on appeal and the arguments in support thereof within thirty days of the receipt of the Record of the Case by the higher court. In addition, a copy of the written statement shall be delivered to the Appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written statement to the Appellee.
- C. The Appellee may file a written response within fifteen days of the receipt by the higher court of the Appellant's written statement. In addition, a copy of the written response shall be delivered to the Appellant. Appellee shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written response to the appellant.
- D. The Appellant may file a written reply to the Appellee's written response within fifteen days of the receipt by the higher court of the Appellee's written response, if any. In addition, a copy of the written reply shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written reply to the Appellee.
- E. The Appellant or Appellee may file a written request for oral argument, explaining why it is necessary and should be permitted. In response to such a request, or at its own discretion, the Higher Court may allow oral argument. If oral argument is allowed, the court will advise both parties of the date, time and place of oral argument, and the time allotted to each party.

In the alternative, the higher court may determine the issues on the appeal based solely on the Record of the Case, the written statements, responses, and replies.

⁶⁸ See D.10-4 regarding the Record of the Case.

- F. In every case in which oral argument is heard, a record of the oral argument shall be kept. The recording of the oral argument may be transcribed and the recording or copy of the transcription maintained by the Stated Clerk of the higher court. In the case of an appeal to the next higher court, a party may request a copy of the transcript. The cost of transcription shall be borne by the requesting party.
- G. The members of the higher court, in their deliberations, shall express their opinions, deliberate upon and vote on the issues raised.
- H. The vote shall be taken on each ground for appeal set forth in the statement⁶⁹ filed in this form: “Shall this ground for appeal be sustained?”

13-10 Decision on Appeal

- A. The higher court may
 - 1. Confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court,
 - 2. Remand the case to the lower court for the purpose of amending the Record of the Case, should it appear incorrect or defective,
 - 3. Remand the case to the lower court with instructions.
- B. If the higher court deems it wise, it may also render a written opinion which shall become a part of the Record of the Case.
- C. Any and all persons, including members of the higher court who were involved with, have intimate knowledge of, or otherwise participated in the underlying judgment of the lower court, are precluded from involvement with the higher court in its determination of the issues on appeal.

13-11 Counsel

Both parties shall have the right of counsel.⁷⁰

13-12 Abandonment of Appeal

Absent extenuating circumstances made known to the higher court beforehand, the Appellant shall be deemed to have abandoned the appeal if the Appellant does not comply with the procedures set forth above. In such cases, the judgment of the lower court will stand, unless the higher court determines that the subject matter of the appeal is so serious that the peace and purity of the church is at stake. In such a case, the higher court, in its discretion, may nonetheless decide the appeal.

13-13 Conduct of the Parties

If a member of either party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude in the appeal process, that person may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court.

13-14 Failure to File the Record

If the Clerk of a lower court neglects or willfully fails to file the Record of the Case, or any part of it, the Clerk may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. Until the complete Record of

⁶⁹ See D.13-6.

⁷⁰ See D.10-3

the Case is filed with the higher court, the judgment of the lower court may be stayed at the discretion of the higher court.

If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the Appellant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at the Appellant's expense.

— 14 — COMPLAINTS

14-1 Complaint Defined

- A. A Complaint is a written contention signed by an eligible member^{71 72} to a higher court challenging some non-judicial⁷³ act or decision made by the lower court and seeking a remedy.
- B. A Complaint may be filed with the higher court only after attempts to obtain a remedy at the lower court have been unsuccessful.⁷⁴

14-2 Eligibility to File a Complaint

- A. It is the right of any member on the active roll of the church to file a Complaint against any act or decision of a Session to whom the member is subject provided the Complainant is not under sanctions.
- B. It is the right of any Teaching or Ruling Elder to file a Complaint against an act or decision taken by a Presbytery provided that:
 - 1. The Teaching Elder is an active or Associate member of the Presbytery,
 - 2. The Ruling Elder:
 - a. Was a duly elected Commissioner at the meeting at which the action was taken or the decision was made. Or,
 - b. Is in active service on the Session of a church in the Presbytery, provided the Ruling Elder, the Session, or the church was substantially impacted by the act or decision
- C. A Complaint shall only be made to the next higher court, except with the consent of that court.

14-3 Initiation of Complaint

A Complaint initiates a case against a court in the following manner:

- A. A complaint shall only be made when the action or decision of the court is alleged to be procedurally irregular and/or in clear violation of the EPC Constitution.
- B. A complaint shall set forth with particularity all of the facts and reasons why the action or decision of the court is being challenged. This includes reference to the specific provisions of the EPC Constitution, or any applicable bylaws or rules alleged to have been violated.
- C. A complaint shall state the specific remedy being sought.
- D. Once a complaint has been filed, the provisions for *ex parte* communications apply⁷⁵

14-4 Designation of the Parties

⁷¹ See eligibility requirements in D.14-2.

⁷² A person filing a complaint should use the appropriate “Form for Discipline.” A signed copy transmitted electronically is considered a “written contention.”

⁷³ Judicial decisions may be appealed following the processes in D.13.

⁷⁴ See D.14-6.

⁷⁵ See *Book of Discipline* Chapter 6 for provisions regarding *ex parte* communications.

The party filing the complaint shall be designated as the “Complainant.” The court shall be designated as the “Respondent,” even if the action or decision being challenged is the action or decision of a commission appointed by the court.

14-5 Filing a Complaint

- A. A complaint challenging an act or decision of a court or a commission appointed by the court shall be filed with the Clerk of the next higher court.
 - 1. A complaint challenging an act or decision taken by a Session or by its duly appointed commission shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the Presbytery in which the church is located or is otherwise aligned.
 - 2. A complaint challenging an act or decision taken by a Presbytery, or by its duly appointed commission, shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the General Assembly.
- B. A copy of the complaint shall be served upon the lower court by providing its Clerk with a copy thereof at the same time that the complaint is filed with the Clerk of the next higher court.

14-6 Time Period for Filing a Complaint

- A. A complaint may be filed with the next higher court only after the eligible member of the church or court⁷⁶ has attempted to resolve the issue forming the basis for the complaint with the lower court and
 - 1. The response of the lower court has not satisfied the concern of the member, or
 - 2. The lower court has failed to respond by the close of its next stated meeting.
- B. A Complaint shall be filed with the next higher court no later than thirty days after the lower court’s response or failure to respond.
- C. Exceptions to this time period may be allowed in cases when
 - 1. The Complainant legitimately had no knowledge of the lower court action or decision within the thirty-day period, or
 - 2. The Complainant petitions the higher court to file an untimely complaint to avoid a miscarriage of justice.
 - 3. Decisions on such exceptions are solely within the discretion of the higher court.

14-7 Stay Pending Hearing on the Complaint

- A. Reception of the complaint by the higher court temporarily stays the action of the lower court. If the higher court determines that the complaint is properly filed, the stay continues until the matter is finally decided.
- B. If the higher court determines that the complaint is not properly filed, the stay will ordinarily be lifted. If the matter concerns the purity or peace of the church, the court may, either on its own

⁷⁶ See D.14-2B for eligibility requirements

motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided.

14-8 Court Procedures upon the Filing of a Complaint

- A. When a Complaint is filed with the higher court, the court shall determine whether the Complaint cites constitutional or procedural grounds⁷⁷ on which relief may be granted. If the court determines the Complaint does not cite such grounds on which relief may be granted, it may:

1. Dismiss the Complaint in its entirety.
2. Strike portions of the Complaint and proceed forward. Or,
3. Order the Complainant to provide a more specific statement of the grounds on which relief may be granted.

B. Abuse of Process

If the court determines in good faith that the filing of a complaint is a clear abuse of process, the court may dismiss the complaint. To constitute a clear abuse of process, the complaint must be:

1. Frivolous on its face.
2. Substantially duplicates a prior complaint that has been finally decided.
3. Part of a demonstrated pattern of repetitive, unmeritorious filings. Or,
4. Primarily filed for a purpose other than obtaining the relief requested.

The court shall state the specific ground(s) for its determination, including the basis on which the complaint constitutes a clear abuse of process. Any such dismissal shall itself be subject to complaint to the next higher court, where applicable.

- C. When a Complaint is filed with the next higher court and it is determined by the court that the Complaint cites constitutional or procedural grounds on which relief may be granted, the higher court has authority:

1. To void the whole or any part of the lower court action against which the complaint has been made.
2. To send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for further consideration or action.
3. To direct the lower court to appoint one or more representatives to answer the Complaint against it.
4. To direct the appointed representative(s) to file an answer to the Complaint no later than thirty days from the order of the higher court.
 - a. The lower court may request a one-time extension of fifteen days to file its answer.

⁷⁷ See D.14-3A

- b. The answer shall respond to each allegation in the Complaint and shall set forth with specificity all defenses on which the lower court relies.
- D. The Record of the Case
The lower court shall file the record of the case concurrently with its answer to the complaint. The Record of the Case shall consist of any and all documents in the lower court's possession relating to the complaint made against it. In every case a full record shall be made, and a copy of it shall be sent to the Complainant. If the Complainant, on motion duly filed, contends that the Record is incomplete or incorrect, the Complainant may file a proposed supplement to the Record of the Case within fifteen days of the filing of the Record of the Case.
- E. Reviewing the Record
Upon receipt of the full and complete record of the case as determined by the higher court, the higher court shall then review the Record in its entirety, except any part of it that may be omitted with the mutual consent of both parties and the higher court.
- F. The higher court may seek clarification of matters or direct questions to the Complainant and/or Respondent in writing.
- G. Oral Argument and Notice of Hearing
The higher court may permit oral argument. If the higher court determines oral argument will be allowed, it shall provide both parties with reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing on the complaint. This notice may be provided in person or by other means establishing proof of service.
- H. If Oral Argument is allowed, either party may file a written summary of their Argument with the higher court no later than fifteen days before the date of the hearing. The Complainant shall have the right of opening and closing the argument.
- I. Deliberations of the Court
Upon conclusion of the arguments, the members of the higher court shall convene in private, all members shall be given an opportunity to express their opinions, deliberate upon, and vote on the question.

14-9 Voting upon a Complaint

- A. Specification of the vote
In voting upon a complaint, the vote shall be either to sustain, to sustain in part, or not to sustain.
- B. Effect of a vote to sustain or not to sustain
 - 1. A vote to sustain shall be to sustain each and all of the items or counts of the complaint. A vote not to sustain shall be to deny the relief sought by each count of the complaint.
 - 2. A vote to sustain in part shall be to sustain one or more specific items or counts of the complaint.
- C. A majority vote of those members of the court present is required to sustain, not to sustain, or to sustain in part the counts of the complaint.
- D. Written opinion

The court may issue a written opinion explaining its decision, which shall become part of the Record of the Case in the lower court.

E. Right to Vote

No member of the lower court who participated in the action or decision made the basis of the complaint shall hear, deliberate upon, or vote on the allegations of the complaint being heard by the next higher court.

14-10 Abandonment of Complaint

If a Complainant does not appear before the higher court in person at the time set for the hearing, the complaint shall be considered abandoned. In such cases the act or decision of the lower court will stand, unless the Complainant can provide the court with a satisfactory explanation for failure to appear or the higher court chooses to act upon the complaint in the interests of the Church.

14-11 Unchristian Attitude

If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude, that party may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court.

14-12 Failure to File the Record

- A. If a lower court neglects to file the Record of the Case or any part of it, to the harm of the Complainant, it may receive a proper rebuke from the higher court.
- B. If the lower court files a portion of the record by electronic means, the Complainant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at the Complainant's expense.

— 15 — DISSENT AND PROTEST

15-1 Dissent

A dissent is a statement on the record by members of a minority of a court objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous act or decision of a court. Any expression of dissent shall be made before adjournment of the meeting and a written statement for the reasons should be sent to the Clerk of the court within thirty days.⁷⁸

15-2 Protest

A protest is a more solemn and formal statement on the record by members of a minority of a court, strenuously objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous act or decision of a court. Any expression of protest shall be made before adjournment of the meeting and a written statement for the reasons should be sent to the Clerk of the court within thirty days.⁷⁹

15-3 Record of Protest or Dissent

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

15-4 Right to Vote Required

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

⁷⁸ Use the appropriate *Form for Discipline*.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Chapters 13-15 – The processes for appeal, complaint, dissent, and protest have been clarified. Appeals are for decisions related to actions for discipline. Complaints are for acts of a church court that are non-disciplinary in nature.

Examples of terminology changes to remove technical and/or confusing language.

- “Actions for Discipline” replaces “Ecclesiastical Judicial Procedures.”
- “Church courts in ascending order” replaces “church courts in regular gradation.”
- “Compelling evidence warranting a trial” replaces “strong presumption of guilt.”
- “Temporary Moderator” replaces “Moderator *pro tem*.”

Reorganization for a better flow of thought

A consistent criticism of the current *Book of Discipline* is that it is difficult to follow the process. One must go from chapter to chapter to understand all that is said on a particular topic. The proposed revision significantly re-organizes the content of the *Book of Discipline* so that the reader can follow the process from beginning to end in order. This is particularly noticeable in proposed chapter 1 and in chapter 5 (which brings together elements found in current chapters 6, 7, 8, and 10).

The proposed revision recognizes that people typically refer to the Book of Discipline only when the need arises and that they are unfamiliar with or have limited memory of its contents. The proposed revision includes numerous cross references to help the reader find sections that address a particular topic, define a term, or describe a process.

Style

- Unnecessary gender-specific pronouns have been removed.
- Longer paragraphs have been enumerated for easier navigation and reference.
- Sections of the current *Book of Discipline* in *italics* indicate that the section has been moved to a new location in the proposed revision.
- Words or sentences with ~~highlight and strikethrough~~ in the current *Book of Discipline* indicate deletion or replacement by new wording in the proposed revision.
- Words or sentences **highlighted** in the proposed revision indicate new wording.
- “Church” (capitalized) refers to the Universal Church whereas “church” refers to the local church or denomination.

Chapter 1 - Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
— 1 — DISCIPLINE: ITS NATURE, SUBJECTS, AND PURPOSE 1-1 Definition of Church Discipline There are two kinds of authority vested in the church; the responsibility of order and the authority of jurisdiction. Both kinds of authority are given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the responsibility of order, particularly in regard to the reproving of the erring. As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority requires the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures. The word “discipline,” when used in the Book of Discipline, chapters 1-11, shall therefore refer to the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures.	— 1 — DISCIPLINE: ITS NATURE, PURPOSE, AND SUBJECTS 1-1 Definition of Church Discipline A. There are two kinds of authority vested in the church: 1. The Responsibility of Order¹ 2. The Authority of Jurisdiction² B. Both kinds of authority are given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide her members and to promote her purity and welfare. Discipline is the exercise of the Responsibility of Order, particularly regarding “reproving the erring.”³ As the exercise of such authority may adversely affect the membership rights⁴ of an individual who has been accused of an offense, the authority may require utilizing actions for discipline. C. The word “discipline,” when used in this <i>Book of Discipline</i> refers to actions for discipline.⁵	Chapter title changed to correspond to the proposed new order of the chapter. Little has been amended in proposed Chapter 1, but it has been significantly re-ordered to achieve clarity and better flow of thought. Sections of current 1-1 are enumerated in the Revision for clarity and for ease of reference. Capitalization used for consistency with the Book of Government (3-2 and 3-3). “Regarding” is more concise than “with regard to.” Quotation marks added to indicate quotation of G.3-2. The final sentence has been edited for conciseness. “Actions for discipline” has been substituted for “ecclesiastical judicial procedures” throughout for clarity of language. “Ecclesiastical judicial procedures” has been changed to “actions for discipline” for simplicity of language and internal consistency (see proposed chapter 5).

¹ G.3-2 “The officers’ Responsibility of Order includes especially the sharing of the gospel, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and otherwise exhibiting to the world the fruit of the Spirit.” See G.3-2 for the full reference.

² G.3-3 “The Authority of Jurisdiction is the authority to rule and is exercised jointly in ascending Church courts.” See G.3-3 for the full reference.

³ G.3-2

⁴ Active members (G.8-3B) have the right to vote in congregational meetings (G.7-7), the right to receive the sacraments in a worthy manner (W3-3, W3-3), the right to hold office if elected and approved for ordination (G.10), and the benefits of discipline (D.1-5A). These rights could be removed by properly imposed sanctions (D.11).

⁵ See *Book of Discipline* Chapter 5.

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
Church discipline does not supersede or negate the legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse to civil authorities according to local and state requirements. 1-7 Definition of “Church” <i>As used in this Book of Discipline, the word “church” shall refer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including her General Assembly, Presbyteries (including mission churches), and local churches.</i> 1-5 Purpose of Discipline <i>The purpose of discipline is to maintain the honor of God, to restore the sinner, and to remove offense from the church. Teaching Elders must instruct the officers and congregation in the use of discipline and jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and courts of the church.</i> 1-6 Basis of Discipline <i>As the revelation of God’s holy will, Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline. Therefore, proper disciplinary principles as set forth in the Scriptures must be followed before any charge alleging a personal offense can be brought before a court of the church.</i> <i>When a charge of personal offense is brought before any court of the church, the party bringing the charge must include a ex statement detailing how the principles outlined</i>	D. Church discipline does not supersede or negate the legal responsibility to report cases of suspected abuse to civil authorities according to local and state requirements. 1-2 Definition of “Church”: <i>As used in this Book of Discipline, the word “church” shall refer to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including her General Assembly, Presbyteries (including mission churches), and local churches.</i> 1-3 Purpose of Discipline The purpose of discipline is to: A. Maintain the honor of God, B. Restore the sinner, C. Protect those harmed by the sin of others,⁶ D. Remove offense from the church. Teaching Elders must instruct the officers and congregation in the use of discipline and jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and courts of the church. 1-4 Basis of Discipline A. As the revelation of God’s holy will, Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline. Therefore, proper disciplinary principles as set forth in the Scriptures must be followed before any charge alleging a personal offense can be brought before a court of the church. B. When a charge of personal offense⁷ is brought before any court of the church, the party bringing the charge must ordinarily include a statement detailing how the principles outlined in Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1	Text of current 1-7 has been moved to proposed 1-2 for better flow of thought. Text of current 1-5 has been moved to proposed 1-3 for better flow of thought. Sections are enumerated for clarity. Proposed addition of 1-3.C recognizes the need to include the topic of abuse in the <i>Book of Discipline</i>. The proposed language includes abuse but applies to other offenses as well. See proposed D.1-6C for an example of a way a person may be protected from harm. Further refinement to the Book of Discipline will be needed as additional committees deal with this topic. Text of current 1-6 has been moved to proposed 1-4 for better flow of thought. Sections have been enumerated for clarity and easier reference. Typo in current 1-6 (“ex statement”) is corrected here. See footnote for rationale for the additions.

⁶ See G.9-5A.2

⁷ Proposed D.4-2A

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
<i>in Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 have been met.</i> <i>If anyone has evidence to suggest that a Teaching Elder may be guilty of a private offense, he should warn him in private. But if the offense persists, or becomes public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other Teaching Elder of the Presbytery.</i> 1-4 Persons Subject to Discipline <i>All active and inactive members of the church, confirmed, baptized, and affiliate, are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline.</i> <i>All Teaching Elders are subject to discipline. Accordingly, no Teaching Elder should be shielded from discipline or lightly sanctioned on account of his office. Neither should serious charges be received against him on slight grounds.</i> 1-2 Grounds for Discipline <i>Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for discipline. The offenses that require</i>	have been met. The court may waive this requirement if it deems that confronting the offender would be inappropriate or otherwise inadvisable.⁸ C. If anyone has evidence to suggest that a Teaching Elder may be guilty of a private offense,⁹ the Teaching Elder should be warned privately. But if the offense persists, or becomes public, the matter should be brought to another Teaching Elder of the Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee. 1-5 Persons Subject to Discipline A. All active and inactive members of the church confirmed, baptized, and affiliate, are entitled and subject to the benefits of discipline. B. All Teaching Elders are subject to discipline. Teaching Elders should not be shielded from discipline or lightly sanctioned on account of their office. Neither should serious charges be received against a Teaching Elder on insubstantial grounds. 1-6 Grounds for Discipline Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for discipline. Additionally, all Christians are prone to acts of infirmity which should be	See footnote 8 for rationale for the waiving the Matt 18/Gal 6 requirement in some situations. Gender specific pronoun is unnecessary in this context “Ministerial Committee” has been added because in some cases, the accuser may not have reasonable access to another Teaching Elder or perhaps only to a TE working under the authority of the TE being accused. The Ministerial Committee already has responsibility and authority over TEs and, as a group, is better able to respond as a neutral source. Text of current 1-4 has been moved to proposed 1-5 for better flow of thought. For clarity, the two subjects of this section have been split into sections A and B. For conciseness, the word “Accordingly” in current 1-4 has been deleted. Gender specific pronouns deleted in the Proposed Revision. “Slight” has been changed to “insubstantial” for clarity. “Insubstantial” suggests “inadequacy or lack of significance. Text of current 1-2 moved here for better flow of thought.

⁸ Waiving these requirements has in view a situation where a one-on-one meeting of the accuser with the accused may carry a high potential of physical harm, intimidation, or coercion of the accused or be otherwise inadvisable. The Court may make that determination as it sees fit.

⁹ Proposed D.4-3A

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
<i>discipline and are subject to ecclesiastical judicial procedures are as follows:</i> A. Heresy. 1-9 Definition of “Heresy” <i>Heresy is the expressed or implied denial, openly taught and obstinately maintained, of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity.</i> B. Immorality. 1-10 Definition of “Immorality” <i>Immorality is conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping, hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality.</i>	amended but do not require discipline. The offenses that require discipline and are subject to actions for discipline are as follows: A. Heresy: the expressed or implied denial, openly taught and obstinately maintained, of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity. B. Immorality: conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping,¹⁰ hatred, abuse, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality. 1. Abuse is the sinful use of power or position to harm, intimidate, exploit, or dominate another person.¹¹ 2. In cases charging possible abuse, a court may make reasonable accommodations to protect vulnerable parties from possible harm or distress provided that such accommodations do not interfere with the rights of the accused to present an unhindered defense. Any such accommodations may not be used as evidence of abuse in any trial, mediation, implementation of sanctions, or other action of the court.	“Acts of infirmity” is terminology from current 11-2. It has been moved and explained in proposed 1-6. “Actions for discipline” has been substituted for “ecclesiastical judicial procedures” throughout for simplicity of language. Definitions of contempt, heresy, and immorality currently in 1-8, 1-9, and 1-10 are included in proposed 1-6 for better flow of thought. The inclusion of “abuse” in proposed 1-6B is in response to concerns that the current <i>Book of Discipline</i> does not sufficiently address this increasingly pressing issue. Feedback on the proposed revision was strongly in favor of including abuse as a category of immorality rather than as a separate “ground for discipline.” The definition of “abuse” in proposed 1-6B.1 was supplied by a select task force of the National Leadership Team. Additional work needs to be done on this topic by General Assembly Committees and may require future amendments to the Book of Discipline. committees on this topic provide a different definition, this section may be amended. Proposed 1-6B.2 has been added in recognition that there are some situations, especially involving abuse, where the general rule of going privately to the individual has a strong potential to inflict greater harm rather than healing. The court should have discretion to allow exceptions to the general rule in such cases.

¹⁰ The terms “bickering and “gossiping” as used herein are intended to deal with those acts that are disruptive to the peace and unity of the church.

¹¹ See **Westminster Larger Catechism** questions 129, 130 & 151.

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
C. <i>Contempt</i> 1-8 Definition of “Contempt” <i>Contempt is willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities.</i> 1-3 Church Members Who Are Also Employees <i>The employer/employee relationship is not within the scope of the Book of Discipline. Church members who are also employees of the church shall be subject to discipline as an employee under whatever procedures may be established by the church for employees. They may also be subject to discipline as a member under the Book of Discipline.</i> 1-11 Definition of “Jurisdiction” [A revised version of the first paragraph has been moved to proposed chapter 3] <i>Jurisdiction, as defined herein, is the authority of a court to render a decision in a case requiring discipline. This is the exercise of the responsibility of order. A court must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision. This definition is not to be confused with the authority of jurisdiction. The authority of jurisdiction is the power to rule and is a joint power to be exercised in church courts in regular gradation. The exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the church. The exercise of the authority of jurisdiction provides the court with the authority to decide issues of government, administration, or law as it pertains to the rule of the church.</i>	C. Contempt: willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities. 1-7 Church Members Who Are Also Employees The employer/employee relationship is not within the scope of the Book of Discipline. Church members who are also employees of the church shall be subject to discipline as an employee under whatever procedures may be established by the church for employees. They may also be subject to discipline as a member under the <i>Book of Discipline</i>.	Text of current 1-3 has been moved to proposed 1-7 for better flow of thought. Current 1-11 has been moved to proposed 3-2 for better flow of thought.

Current Chapter 1	Proposed Chapter 1	Rationale
<i>In the case of actions by a church court raising issues, misunderstandings, and disputes—which are not personal offenses requiring discipline, but which raise issues that bear upon the authority of jurisdiction— one may seek review / file a complaint (petition, request for review by) in the court having original jurisdiction thereof. Such complaint, however, will not be subject to ecclesiastical judicial procedures unless the court determines that the conduct made the basis of the complaint is willful and done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities. If such determination is made, the court will then signify the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures in all further proceedings and, upon judgment, an automatic appeal will be taken to the next higher court.</i>		

Chapter 2 - Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 2	Proposed Chapter 2	Rationale
— 2 — PASTORAL CARE 2-1 The Duty to Evangelize In terms of its work, the first duty of the church is to evangelize by extending the gospel both at home and abroad, leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to provide for the nurture of that faith that all might grow in grace and in sanctification (Book of Government 4-3).203 2-2 The Spiritual Power of the Church The power of the church is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of the church from civil government (Book of	— 2 — SPIRITUAL POWERS OF THE CHURCH 2-1 The Spiritual Power of the Church The power of the Church is moral and spiritual, thus distinguishing the government of the Church from civil government. The Evangelical	Title has been changed to better reflect the topic of the chapter. 2-1 has been deleted for conciseness. Evangelism is the first duty of the church. It is well stated and appropriately placed in the <i>Book of Government</i>. Evangelism is not within the scope of the <i>Book of Discipline</i>. “Church,” when capitalized, refers to the Universal Church (<i>Book of Government</i> chapter 1)

Government 3-1: This means that the church does not have civil authority over anyone.	Presbyterian Church does not have civil authority.¹²	For conciseness, “This means that” and “over anyone” in current 2-2 has been dropped.
2-3 Spiritual Nurture of Members Among other duties, it is the duty of the church to provide for the nurture of its members (Book of Government 4-4A).	2-2 Spiritual Nurture of Members Among other duties, it is the duty of the church to provide for the nurture of its members and their families.¹³	“And their families” was added to proposed D.2-2 for consistency with WCF 2.1: the visible church “consists of everyone in the world who professes the true religion together with their children.”
2-4 Retention of Authority over Church Property While possessing no civil authority over any person, the church does retain authority over its property and ministries. In providing a secure and nurturing atmosphere for worship and spiritual growth, the church retains the right to exclude anyone from its property, services or ministries on such terms and conditions as it may desire. Thus, for example, a particular church may require certain standards before permitting adults to teach Sunday School, lead ministries, or otherwise participate in the life and ministry of the church.	2-3 Retention of Authority over Church Property While possessing no civil authority over any person, the church does retain authority over its property and ministries. In providing a secure and nurturing atmosphere for worship and spiritual growth, the church retains the right to exclude anyone from its property, services, or ministries on such terms and conditions as it may desire. Thus, for example, a local church may require certain standards before permitting adults to teach, lead ministries, or otherwise participate in the life and ministry of the church.	Note: The Session has the responsibility to define the specific nature of a “secure and nurturing atmosphere.” “Particular” changed to “local” for consistency with the <i>Book of Government</i> 5.5. “Sunday School” omitted as unnecessary. It is included in the word “teach.”

Chapter 3 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 4	Proposed Chapter 3	Rationale
— 4 — JURISDICTION 4-1 The Right of Private Judgment Since “God alone is Lord of the conscience,” we consider the right of private judgment in religious matters to be universal and unalienable. Therefore,	— 3 — JURISDICTION OF CHURCH COURTS 3-1 The Right of Private Judgment Since “God alone is Lord of the conscience,”¹⁴ we consider the right of private judgment in religious matters to be universal and unalienable.¹⁵ Therefore,	Current chapter 4 has moved to proposed chapter 3 for better flow of thought. Title has been changed to better reflect the content of the chapter.

¹² G.3-1

¹³ G.4-4B

¹⁴ *Westminster Confession of Faith* 20.2

¹⁵ G.25-2A

Current Chapter 4	Proposed Chapter 3	Rationale
the church in disciplinary cases has jurisdiction only over her members (D.1-4). 1-11 Definition of “Jurisdiction” Jurisdiction, as defined herein, is the authority of a court to render a decision in a case requiring discipline. This is the exercise of the responsibility of order. A court must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision. This definition is not to be confused with the authority of jurisdiction. The authority of jurisdiction is the power to rule and is a joint power to be exercised in church courts in regular gradation. The exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the church. The exercise of the authority of jurisdiction provides the court with the authority to decide issues of government, administration, or law as it pertains to the rule of the church. In the case of actions by a church court raising issues, misunderstandings, and disputes— which are not personal offenses requiring discipline, but which raise issues that bear upon the authority of jurisdiction— one may seek review / file a complaint (petition, request for review by) in the court having original jurisdiction thereof. Such complaint, however, will not be subject to ecclesiastical judicial procedures unless the court determines that the conduct made the basis of the complaint is willful and done in deliberate disrespect of a	the church in disciplinary cases has jurisdiction only over her members.¹⁶ 3-2 Definition of Jurisdiction Jurisdiction is the authority of a church court to render a decision in a case requiring discipline. This is the exercise of the Responsibility of Order.¹⁷ A court must have jurisdiction over both the individual accused and the subject matter of the charge before it can issue an indictment or render a decision. This definition is not to be confused with the Authority of Jurisdiction. The Authority of Jurisdiction is the power to rule and is a joint power to be exercised in church courts in ascending order.¹⁸ The exercise of such power shall always reflect the essential unity of the church. The exercise of the Authority of Jurisdiction provides the court with the authority to decide issues of government, administration, or law as it pertains to the rule of the church.	Current 1-11 has been moved to proposed 3-2 for better flow of thought. Capitalization of Responsibility of Order and Authority of Order has been added for consistency with <i>Book of Government</i> chapter 3. “Regular gradation” in current 1-11 has been changed to “ascending order” for simplicity of language and internal consistency. Footnotes to <i>Book of Government</i> have been added. The second paragraph of current 1-11 has been deleted as being unnecessary and confusing.

¹⁶ Proposed D.1-5

¹⁷ G.3-2

¹⁸ “Ascending order” is the same as “regular gradation” in G.2-1A, G.3-3, and G.9-10.

Current Chapter 4	Proposed Chapter 3	Rationale
court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities. If such determination is made, the court will then signify the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures in all further proceedings and, upon judgment, an automatic appeal will be taken to the next higher court. 4-2 Original Jurisdiction In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply: A. The Session The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of that local church. B. The Presbytery The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving Teaching Elders of the Presbytery and jurisdiction over chapter 14 complaints regarding actions or decisions of sessions within its designated area (G.19-1). C. The General Assembly The General Assembly has original jurisdiction over chapter 14 complaints regarding actions or decisions of Presbyteries and judicial cases referred to it by a lower court (G.22-3). D. Dissolved Churches If a particular church is dissolved, the Presbytery shall assume jurisdiction with	3-3 Original Jurisdiction In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply: A. The Session The Session has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of that local church. B. The Presbytery The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving Teaching Elders of the Presbytery, appeals from actions for discipline decided by sessions,¹⁹ and complaints²⁰ regarding actions or decisions of sessions within its designated area.²¹ C. The General Assembly The General Assembly has original jurisdiction over complaints²² regarding actions or decisions of Presbyteries and judicial cases referred to it by a lower court.²³ D. Dissolved Churches The Presbytery shall immediately assume jurisdiction in cases of discipline in process	Wording has been dropped from current 4-2B for conciseness. The jurisdiction of presbyteries over appeals arising from disciplinary cases at the local church level is missing in the current version and has been added in the proposed revision. Book of Order references have been moved to footnotes.

¹⁹ See Proposed D.13, on “Appeals” and Proposed D.3-4 and 3-5 on assumption of jurisdiction due to unwillingness or failure to act.

²⁰ See Proposed D.14, “Complaints.”

²¹ G.19-1

²² Proposed D.14

²³ G.22-3

Current Chapter 4	Proposed Chapter 3	Rationale
regard to any case of discipline begun by the Session but not concluded. E. Transfer of Membership A member of a local church or a Presbytery whose membership is being transferred shall remain under the jurisdiction of the first until received by the second. 4-3 Assumption of Jurisdiction In the event a court shall be unable or unwilling to try a person or persons accused, the next higher court may assume jurisdiction after giving thirty days' written notice to the lower court of its intention to assume jurisdiction. 4-4 Failure to Act When a court of original jurisdiction fails to act in a disciplinary case before it for a period of ninety days after initiation of the case, the next higher court may, on motion by any member of the church, assume jurisdiction. It may issue instructions to the lower court, or it may conclude the case itself. 4-5 Termination of Jurisdiction Jurisdiction in judicial cases ends upon receipt of written notice of renunciation by the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the court	but interrupted by the dissolution of a local church or mission church. E. Transfer of Membership A member of a local church or Presbytery whose membership is being transferred shall remain under the jurisdiction of the original court until received by the receiving court. 3-4 Assumption of Jurisdiction In the event a court shall be unable or unwilling to try a person or persons accused, the next higher court may assume jurisdiction after giving thirty days' written notice to the lower court of its intention to assume jurisdiction. 3-5 Failure to Act When a court of original jurisdiction fails to act in an action for discipline within ninety days after receiving a written charge or notice of offense, upon request from A. Any active member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from within the same Presbytery, B. A member of the court of original jurisdiction, or C. An accused or accuser in an out of bounds offense,²⁴ the next higher court, may either instruct the lower court to act or assume jurisdiction to conclude the case itself. 3-6 Termination of Jurisdiction by Renunciation Jurisdiction in judicial cases ends upon receipt from the accused of written notice of renunciation by the Clerk or Stated Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction. In the event an individual orally renounces jurisdiction, this fact shall be confirmed by letter from the court	Wording in proposed 3-3-D has been rewritten for clarity. Wording in proposed 3-3E has been changed for clarity. Proposed D.3-5 has been rewritten for clarity and internal consistency. This section includes input from the Permanent Judicial Commission. Title of proposed D.3-6 has been changed to better reflect the content of the section. "From the accused" added for clarity.

²⁴ See proposed D.4-5 regarding "Out of Bounds Offenses."

Current Chapter 4	Proposed Chapter 3	Rationale
acknowledging that renunciation. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days, the acknowledgement of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the permission of the accused.	verifying the individual's intention to renounce jurisdiction. The letter shall be delivered in person or by form of mail requiring a written receipt. If the court receives no written response within ten days, the acknowledgement of renunciation of jurisdiction shall be deemed final. In such instances, a case already begun may be concluded only with the signed permission of the accused. ²⁵	Sentence modified for clarity. "Signed" has been added to clarify how the accused gives permission.

Chapter 4 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 5 — 5 — OFFENSES	Proposed Chapter 4 — 4 — OFFENSES	Rationale
5-1 Offenses As defined D.1-2 offenses which require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, Immorality, and Contempt for the established order of the church. Nothing ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Book of Order consisting of the Book of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Book of Worship, are the standards adopted by the church as expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to faith and practice. 5-2 Personal and General Offenses A personal offense is an offense as defined in D.5-1 in a way of wrong done to some particular person or persons, including one's	4-1 Offenses Three kinds of offenses require discipline: Heresy, Immorality, and Contempt.²⁶ Nothing ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, The Essentials of Our Faith, and the Book of Order, are the standards adopted by the church as expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to faith and practice. 4-2 Personal and General Offenses A. A personal offense is a wrong done to a person or persons, including one's own self.	Current chapter 5 has been moved to proposed chapter 4 for better flow of thought. First sentence edited for conciseness. Elaboration of "contempt" has been deleted as it is unnecessary here. "Essentials of our Faith" is part of the Constitution of the EPC (see Preface to the Book of Order." Elaboration of the "Book of Order" has been deleted as it is unnecessary here. Proposed 4-2 has been condensed for conciseness. Cross references are unnecessary here.

²⁵ See G.14-2B.3 and 14-4C for the effect of renunciation of jurisdiction.

²⁶ Proposed D.1-6

Current Chapter 5	Proposed Chapter 4	Rationale
own self. A general offense is an offense as defined in D.5-1, but not directed against any particular person. 5-3 Private and Public Offenses Private offenses are those known only to an individual or at most only to a few persons. Public offenses are those that are known to more than a few persons. 5-4 Preliminary Sanctions When it is impracticable to commence an action against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the church requires it, exclude the accused from the sacraments until the charges against him can be examined. 5-5 Out-of-Bounds Offenses When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely to otherwise become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself there is a strong presumption of guilt, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be	B. A general offense is a wrong that is not directed against any particular person. 4-3 Private and Public Offenses A. Private offenses are those known only to an individual or to a few persons. B. Public offenses are those that are known to more than a few persons. 4-4 Temporary Suspensions When an action against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the peace and purity²⁷ of the church requires it, temporarily suspend the accused from the sacraments and/or bar the accused from church property²⁸ until the action for discipline has been concluded. 4-5 Out-of-Bounds Offenses When an offense is alleged to have taken place in a manner or location unknown to and/or outside the bounds of the court of original jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the alleged offense occurred, after satisfying itself there is compelling evidence warranting a trial, to send notice of pending charge(s) to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be	For clarity, the two subjects of this section are given separate headings. Proposed 4-3 has been condensed for conciseness. For clarity, the two subjects of this section are given separate headings. The title of proposed 4-4 has been changed for clarity. The section has to do with procedures prior to trial. Sanctions occur following trial. Prior to trial a suspension is temporary. Following trial, a suspension is either “definite” or “indefinite.” The first sentence has been rewritten in proposed 4-4 to reflect the situation in which there may be a temporary suspension. There should be no temporary suspension if there is no action for discipline in process. “Edification” has been changed to “peace and purity” for consistency of language (see footnotes). Excluding a person from the property may be necessary to ensure security (proposed D.2-3). Gender specific pronoun is unnecessary. The wording change in proposed 4-5 clarifies what “at a distance” means. An offense may occur at a short distance, but outside the jurisdiction of a presbytery. “Facts” has been changed to “alleged offense” for clarity. “Strong presumption of guilt” has been changed to “compelling evidence warranting a trial” to maintain a high bar for going to trial and ensure that the accused is not presumed guilty during a trial. See also proposed 5-6B and 5-7.

²⁷ See G.4-1, 5-5A, 5-6A, D.8-3A and vows taken by members and officers.

²⁸ Proposed D.2-3

Current Chapter 5	Proposed Chapter 4	Rationale
transferred for trial and imposition of sanctions, if any, to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.	transferred for trial and imposition of sanctions, if any, to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.	

Chapter 5 - Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
— 6 — COMMENCING AN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURE INVOLVING DISCIPLINE 7-1 Investigation of a Charge A. Care over the Church <i>It is the duty of all church courts to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses that require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved by an offense shall request an investigation in writing.</i> 6-1 Commencement of Actions for Discipline An action for discipline shall commence: A. By a Person or Persons When a person files a written charge with the Clerk of the court of appropriate jurisdiction. B. By the Court	— 5 — COMMENCING ACTIONS FOR DISCIPLINE 5-1 Care over the Church It is the duty of all church courts to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses that require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved files a written charge with the court.²⁹ 5-2 Commencement of Actions for Discipline Actions for discipline are commenced by one of three means: A. By a Person or Persons When a person or persons file a written charge with the Clerk of the court of original jurisdiction.³⁰ B. By the Court When the court having jurisdiction³¹ determines that a charge is in order.	Current chapter 6 and portions of current chapters 7 and 10 have been moved to proposed chapter 5 for better flow of thought. The title for proposed chapter 5 has been simplified to “Action for Discipline.” Current 7-1A moved to proposed 5-1 for better flow of thought. Phrase edited for conciseness and clarity. First sentence of proposed 5-2 has been modified for clarity. Wording has been changed to “person or persons” for internal consistency. “Appropriate” has been changed to “original” for internal consistency.

²⁹ The aggrieved party should use the appropriate Form for Discipline.

³⁰ Proposed D.3-3

³¹ *Ibid.*

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
When the court having jurisdiction determines that a charge is in order and there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused. 11-9 Confession and Restoration A. <i>Confession</i> When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court or commission, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment rendered without judicial procedures. When an officer, before judgment is entered, shall make a confession of a matter that is marked by outrageous or scandalous crime or vice, such as substance abuse, marital infidelity, embezzlement or the like, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court or commission shall without delay suspend or remove him from his office. 7-6 Biased Accusations and Testimony <i>Great caution should be exercised by the court or commission in receiving accusations and testimony from any person:</i> A. <i>Who is known to hold a malignant spirit against the accused;</i> B. <i>Who is not of good character;</i>	C. By Confession When any person comes forward and makes his or her offense known to the court or commission of original jurisdiction,³² a statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment may be rendered and sanctions may be imposed with or without further actions for discipline, formal trial, or mediation. 5-3 Cautions Against Biased Accusations and Testimony Great caution should be exercised by the court or commission in receiving accusations and testimony from any person A. <i>Who is known to hold a malignant spirit towards the accused,</i> B. <i>Who is not of good character,</i>	“Strong presumption of the guilt of the accused” has been deleted as it is too early in the process to come to this conclusion. In proposed 4-5, 5-6B, and 5-7, “strong presumption of guilt” has been changed to “compelling evidence warranting a trial” throughout. See note on proposed 4-5 for rationale of the new terminology. Current 11-9A moved to proposed 5-2C for better flow of thought. “Or her” is necessary in this context. “Of original jurisdiction” has been added for clarity. “Full” has been deleted because it is never certain when this target has been reached. “Shall” has been changed to “may” because it is appropriate to give the court discretion in these situations. “Sanctions may be imposed” has been added for clarity. “Actions for discipline” has been substituted for “ecclesiastical judicial procedures” for internal consistency. In the situation of a confession, mandatory imposition of sanctions has been changed to discretionary. The court needs a wide range of options on how best to proceed, including the ability to impose sanctions without a trial. Experience has shown that in many cases only a small part of deeply rooted sins may be revealed in a confession. Current 7-6 has been moved to proposed 5-3 for better flow of thought. Section title has been changed to better reflect the content of the section. The word “towards” is preferred rather than “against.”

³² Ibid.

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
C. <i>Who is under sanction or who is the subject of an action for ecclesiastical judicial procedures;</i> D. <i>Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused, or</i> E. <i>Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash, or highly imprudent.</i> 6-2 Limitation on Actions An action for discipline must be commenced within three years after the acts constituting the offense were committed, unless the acts were unknown and were not reasonably knowable by the offended person or court. In the event that the offended person is under the age of 18, the action for discipline must be commenced before that person's twenty-first birthday. 7-5 Private Reconciliation When the prosecution is instituted by the court or commission the steps required by D.1-6 in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will be advisable to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring him to a sense of repentance, before instituting actual ecclesiastical judicial procedures. The committee may then make recommendations to the court or commission concerning further prosecution of the case.	C. Who is under sanction or who is the subject of an action for discipline, D. Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused, E. Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash, or highly imprudent, F. Who is offering a confession for an offense which may be incomplete or not fully accurate. 5-4 Limitation on Actions An action for discipline must commence within three years after the acts constituting the offense were committed, with certain exceptions: A. The acts were unknown and were not reasonably knowable by the offended person or court. B. The offended person is under the age of 18, in which case the action for discipline must commence before that person's twenty-first birthday unless the offense includes abuse.³³ 5-5 Private Reconciliation There are cases of personal offenses in which it will be advisable for the court to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring the accused to a sense of repentance before instituting actions for discipline. The committee may then make recommendations to the court or commission concerning further prosecution of the case.	"Actions for discipline replaces "ecclesiastical judicial procedures" throughout. Section F has been added to acknowledge that when confessing, the accused is his/her own accuser. Experience has shown that confessions are often prejudicial and incomplete. Active voice "must commence" is preferable to passive. Sections of proposed 5-4 are enumerated for clarity. Introductory phrase was added due to the new format. Statute of limitations should be extended for children who may be unable to bring an accusation during the 3-year time limitation. There is no time limitation if the offense includes abuse. Current 7-5 moved to proposed 5-5 for better flow of thought. First sentence of current 7-5 has been deleted as unnecessary in the new context. "For the court" has been added for clarity. "Actual" was deleted as unnecessary. "Actions for discipline" was added for internal consistency.

³³ See D.1-1D regarding reporting to civil authorities..

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
6-3 Preliminary Investigation of a Charge by a Person or Persons After an action is commenced by a person: A. The court or commission shall commence a preliminary investigation in accordance with D-7-1. 7-1C. Judicial Investigative Committee The court may appoint a judicial investigative committee to serve as a finder of fact, which shall report its findings to the court with its recommendations. The judicial investigative committee shall have no authority to act for the court other than as an investigative body. [6-3 continued] B. After the preliminary investigation is concluded, the court or commission shall make a determination whether or not there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.	5-6 Investigation of a Charge A After an action for discipline is commenced by a person (persons) and when private reconciliation is either not advisable or has been unsuccessful 1. The Clerk of the court, or a duly appointed body, shall determine if the action for discipline is in order. 2. If the action for discipline is determined to be out of order, the Clerk or a duly appointed body shall advise the accusers of the decision and its grounds. The decision shall be reported to the court, which shall sustain or not sustain the decision. B. If the action for discipline is determined to be in order or if the court has initiated the action for discipline, the court shall form a judicial investigative committee to conduct an investigation into charges filed. The judicial investigative committee shall have no authority to act for the court other than as an investigative body. The judicial investigative committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the court. C. After the investigation is concluded, the court shall decide whether there is compelling evidence to warrant a trial. D. If the court does not find compelling evidence of guilt to warrant a trial, the charge will be dismissed.	Title of 5-6 has been changed to reflect added content. A “preliminary” investigation is a confusing category has been deleted. A process has been added to determine whether a charge filed is in order. The process is like that of filing a complaint (proposed chapter 14). Current 7-1C has been moved to proposed 5-6A for better flow of thought. Forming a judicial investigative committee (JIC) has been changed from discretionary (may) to mandatory (shall) when an action for discipline has been commenced and determined to be in order. Forming a JIC is the appropriate next step. There is not another means by which a charge can be properly investigated by the court. A “preliminary investigation” and “finder of fact” are nebulous terms. The final sentence has been added for clarity in the process. “Preliminary” has been dropped because the investigation is intended to end with the committee’s recommendations. “Make a determination” has been changed to “decide” and “whether or not” changed to “whether” for more concise wording. See proposed 4-5 for the rationale for “compelling evidence to warrant a trial.” Proposed 5-6 D has been added to provide clarity in the process.

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
6-4 Proceedings upon a Determination of a Strong Presumption of Guilt In the event of a determination of a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused, the court or commission shall appoint a prosecutor, who shall prepare an indictment and proceed to trial in accordance with Chapters 7 through 10. 7-2 Appointment of a Prosecutor If an investigation should result in raising a strong presumption of guilt of the party accused, the court shall institute an ecclesiastical judicial procedure, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare an indictment and to prosecute the case. The prosecutor shall be a member of the court. In cases before the Session, however, he need not be a member of that court, but needs only to be a communing member of the church (as defined in D.1-7). 7-3 Selection of Prosecutor Ordinarily, no offended person (or person knowing of an offense) shall become a prosecutor of personal offenses. A church court, however, may investigate personal offenses requiring discipline under D.6-1 when they become known to members of the court. 7-4 Parties in a Case The original and only parties in a case of ecclesiastical judicial procedure are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained.	5-7 Proceedings upon a Determination of Compelling Evidence Warranting a Trial A. The court shall appoint a prosecutor. 1. In actions before the Presbytery, the prosecutor shall be a Teaching Elder who is a member of the Presbytery or a Ruling Elder who is an active member in a local church of the Presbytery. 2. In actions before the Session, the prosecutor need not be a Ruling Elder of that congregation but shall be an active member of that church.³⁴³⁵ 3. In the case of a personal offense, no offended person or a potential witness having personal knowledge of an offense shall become a prosecutor. B. The prosecutor shall prepare an indictment and proceed to trial. 1. The parties in actions for discipline are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Evangelical Presbyterian	The title of current 6-4 has been kept, substituting “compelling evidence warranting a trial.” The bulk of current 6-4 has been deleted due to redundancy with current 7-2. The repetition is unnecessary in the reorganization of the proposed revision. Current 7-2 and 7-3 have been moved to proposed 5-7 for better flow of thought. Current 7-2 has been clarified in proposed 5-7 due to questions that have arisen in past disciplinary actions. Text has been condensed and enumerated in proposed 5-7 for clarity. Proposed 5-7A.2: Gender-specific pronoun is unnecessary. “Active member” has been substituted for “communing member” for consistency with the <i>Book of Government</i> (G.8-3B). “Ordinarily” has been deleted and wording changed so that there is no exception to this conflict of interest. The final sentence of current 7-3 has been deleted as it is confusing in this context and provisions for the court commencing an action for discipline have been covered in earlier sections. Title of proposed 5-7B has been taken from the text of current 6-4. “In a case of ecclesiastical judicial procedure” has been changed to “actions for discipline” in proposed 5-7B for internal consistency.

³⁴ G.8-3B

³⁵ See D.3-4 and D.3-5 in the event a local church is unwilling, unable, or fails to act on a action for discipline.

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
<i>The prosecutor is always the representative of the church. On appeal the parties are known as appellant and appellee.</i> 8-3—Indictment A. <i>Heading of the Indictment</i> <i>Every indictment shall begin: “In the name of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church,” and shall conclude, “against the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.”</i> B. <i>Contents of the Indictment</i> <i>The indictment shall clearly state the times, places and circumstances as to the actions alleged to require disciplinary sanctions, so that the accused may have adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make his defense.</i> 8-2—Processing a Charge A. <i>Commencement</i> <i>When ecclesiastical judicial procedures are commenced in accordance with D.6-1, nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court thereafter, unless by consent of the parties, except:</i> <i>To appoint a prosecutor in accordance with D.7-1 and D.7-3.</i> <i>To order the indictment drawn and a copy, including names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, in person or by means requiring a written receipt.</i> <i>To set a date for trial. [moved to proposed D5-7C.5]</i> B. <i>Commissions</i>	Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor is always the representative of the church. - Every indictment shall begin: “In the name of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church,” and shall conclude, “against the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.” - The indictment shall clearly state the times, places, circumstances, and names of witnesses of the actions alleged to require an action for discipline, including the names of witnesses then known to support it so that the accused will be given adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make a defense. - The prosecutor shall serve a copy of the indictment either in person or by means requiring a written receipt. C. Actions of the Court upon appointment of a prosecutor	“Original and only” has been deleted for conciseness. “Appellant and Appellee” are unneeded in this context and are described in proposed chapter 13 on “Appeals.” Current 8-3A and B have been moved to proposed 5-7B.2 and 3 for better flow of thought. Heading of current 8-3B has been deleted as unnecessary. “Names of witnesses...” is language from current 8-2A.2. “Will be given” is appropriately stronger language than “may have.” Gender specific pronoun is unnecessary in this context. Much of the text of current 8-2 has been deleted as unnecessary in the reorganization of the proposed revision. Proposed 5-7B.4 has been revised for conciseness. Setting a date for trial has been moved to proposed D5-7C.5 for better flow of thought.

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
Ordinarily, the court shall decide at this time whether it shall try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission in accordance D.10-5 and G.21-1B. Commissioners shall be ordained Elders within the jurisdiction of the court involved. C. Moderator Pro-Tempore With the consent of the Moderator, and if the court so desires, it may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator Pro-Tempore for a particular case. The Moderator Pro-Tempore shall exercise the duties of a Moderator as described in G.18-2 or G.19-3 with respect to the particular judicial case only. 10-5 Judicial Commissions A. Rights and Duties A judicial commission created in accordance with D.8-2 B, shall have all the rights, privileges, duties, and obligations of the court in the matter assigned to it. B. Composition Judicial commissions shall be composed of no less than three or more than seven members elected by the court. C. Membership Judicial commissions of Presbytery shall be composed of Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling	1. The court shall decide whether it will try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission³⁶ appointed by the court. 2. If the court tries the case, it may elect one of its members to serve as Temporary Moderator for the case with the consent of the Moderator. The Temporary Moderator shall exercise the duties of a Moderator³⁷ only with respect to the particular action for discipline. Neither the Moderator nor the Temporary Moderator may serve if they have a conflict of interest in the case. 3. If the case is referred to a judicial commission, the commission has the full authority of the court to act on the matter referred. Ordinarily the Judicial Commission will be dissolved at the stated meeting of the court following the conclusion of the trial. 4. Composition of judicial commissions: a. Judicial commissions of the shall be composed of no fewer than three and no more than seven members elected by the court b. Judicial commissions of the Presbytery shall be composed of a ratio of one Teaching Elders to two Ruling Elders to the extent possible unless the court appoints the	“Ordinarily” has been deleted because determining whether to try by court or commission is essential at this point in the process. “Shall” reflects this necessity. Requirements for membership of a judicial commission have been moved to proposed 5-7C.4 for better flow of thought. Current 8-2C moved to proposed 5-7C.2 for better flow of thought. “If the court tries the case” establishes the necessary condition for possible election of a Temporary Moderator. “Temporary Moderator” has replaced “Moderator Pro-Tempore” for simplicity of language. Book of Government reference has been moved to a footnote. “Action for discipline” has replaced “judicial case” for internal consistency of terminology. The final sentence is included to prohibit conflict of interest. Authority and composition of a judicial commission in current 10-5 has been moved to proposed D.5-7C.3 for better flow of thought. The text has been rewritten for clarity. Requirements for composition of judicial commissions have been enumerated for clarity. “Fewer” is correct when referring to countable things. Additional wording is necessary to harmonize proposed D.5-7C.4(b) with G.21-2D.2(e) which authorizes the Presbytery to appoint the Ministerial Committee as a judicial commission. The Ministerial

³⁶ G.21-1A, B

³⁷ G.18-2A; G.19-3A

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
Elders to one Minister as possible in accordance with Book of Government G.21-1C. 7-7—Suspension of Official Functions When an action for discipline has been commenced against a member of a court, any or all of his official functions may be suspended at the court's or commission's discretion, but this shall never be done in the way of sanction. 6-5 Trial The court or commission shall conduct a trial in accordance with Chapters 9 and 10.	Ministerial Committee as the judicial commission. c. Judicial commissions of the Session shall be composed of Ruling Elders of the congregation and may include the Teaching Elders of the congregation.³⁸ At least one member of the Commission must be a Ruling Elder actively serving on the Session. d. Members of a judicial investigative committee should ordinarily not serve on a judicial commission to avoid any appearance of bias. e. The court shall appoint the Moderator of the judicial commission. The Moderator is a member of the judicial commission with voice and vote. f. The prosecutor is not eligible to be a member of the judicial commission. 5. Ordinarily the court will set a date for trial upon the appointment of the prosecutor. 6. If the accused is a member of the court, the court may temporarily suspend any or all the official functions of the accused. This shall not be considered a sanction.³⁹	Committee may not meet the otherwise required ratio. Language of proposed D.5-7C.4b has been added to address membership requirements for judicial commissions formed by Sessions. Pastors and associate pastors are members of the court and as such are eligible to serve on a judicial commission of the court. Assistant pastors are excluded as they are not members of the court. D.5-7C.4d has been added to rule out bias on the commission D.5-7C.4e has been added to address an area of confusion due to the silence of the current <i>Book of Discipline</i> on the matter. D.5-7C.4f clarifies that the prosecutor is not a voting member of the commission. The prosecutor is representing the court and is biased. D.5-7C.5 clarifies an issue upon which the current Book of Discipline is silent. Current D.7-7 has been moved to proposed D.5-7C.6 for better flow of thought. The text has been rewritten for clarity and internal consistency (see proposed 11-2A on temporary suspensions). Current 6-5 and 6-6 address the trial phase where proposed chapter have been deleted as unnecessary in the context of proposed chapter 5 addresses commencing actions for discipline (pre-trial).

³⁸ Teaching Elders of the congregation are pastors and associate pastors. Assistant pastors are called by the Session, not the congregation, and therefore are not eligible to serve on a judicial commission of a local church.

³⁹ See proposed D.11-2A regarding temporary suspensions, which are not sanctions.

Current Chapter 6	Proposed Chapter 5	Rationale
6-6 Decision The court or commission shall render its decision in accordance with Chapter 11.		

Chapter 6 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 3	Proposed Chapter 6	Rationale
— 3 — PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ALL ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES 3-1 Ex parte Communications A. Once any ecclesiastical judicial procedure under this <i>Book of Discipline</i> is commenced, ex parte communications are prohibited. B. An ex parte communication is any form of communication to the presiding court or commission (Session, Presbytery, Judicial Commission, or Permanent Judicial Commission, including the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly) by one party to a proceeding in the absence of the other parties to that proceeding that relates to the merits of the proceeding. It includes but is not limited to verbal, written, electronic, or any other form of communication. C. This prohibition against ex parte communication does not include questions on procedural matters that may be addressed to the Clerk of the court or commission. But otherwise the prohibition against ex parte communication on the merits of the proceeding applies to the Clerk of the court or commission.	— 6 — <i>EX PARTE</i> COMMUNICATIONS 6-1 Definition of <i>Ex Parte</i> Communications A. An <i>ex parte</i> communication is any form of communication to the presiding court or commission or Officer of the presiding court by one party in an action for discipline in the absence of the other party to that action that relates to the merits of the action. It includes but is not limited to verbal, written, electronic, or any other form of communication. B. Once a court begins an action for discipline,⁴⁰ <i>ex parte</i> communications are prohibited. C. This prohibition against <i>ex parte</i> communication does not include questions on procedural matters that may be addressed to the Clerk of the court or Moderator of the commission.	Current chapter 3-1 moved here for better flow of thought. The Latin term <i>ex parte</i> has been kept as no concise substitute was found. The term is defined in 6-1A. Title changed to reflect the content. Current 3-1 A and B are reversed in proposed 6-1A and B for better flow of thought. Parenthetical expression in current 3-1B has been deleted as unnecessary. “Officer of the presiding court” is added for clarity. “Action” substituted for “proceeding” for internal consistency. First phrase has been substituted for clarity and consistency. “Moderator of the commission” added as necessary if the court chooses to try a case by a commission. Final sentence of current 3-1C deleted as unnecessary (see addition to proposed 6-1A).

⁴⁰ See Proposed Chapter 5

Current Chapter 3	Proposed Chapter 6	Rationale
D. Therefore, the church courts, its officers, and judicial commissions shall act in accordance with the following: - Any attempt at ex parte verbal communication shall be immediately interrupted by the member of the court to whom the communication is directed. The member of the court shall make a record of the attempted communication, place it in a separate file, and communicate to the other side the attempted ex parte communication. The record of the attempted communication shall include the name of the person(s) attempting to so communicate and the date of the attempted communication; under no circumstances shall the content of any ex parte communication be added to the case file of the subject ecclesiastical judicial proceeding; - Any form of ex parte communication, including notes from a verbal communication, shall be placed in a separate file and communicated to the other parties and members of the presiding court or commission. - If a party desires communication with a court or a judicial commission, that party shall request a conference call with the court or commission. The court or commission, or its designee, shall determine if the conference call is in order,	6-2 Actions in the event of <i>ex parte</i> communication - Any attempt at <i>ex parte</i> verbal communication shall be immediately interrupted by the member of the court to whom the communication is directed. - The member of the court shall - Make a record of the attempted communication, - Place the record in a separate file, and - Communicate to the other party the attempted <i>ex parte</i> communication. - The record of the attempted communication shall include - The name of the person(s) attempting to so communicate, - The date of the attempted communication. - Under no circumstances shall the content of any <i>ex parte</i> communication be added to the case file of the subject of an action for discipline. - Any form of <i>ex parte</i> communication, including notes from a verbal communication, shall be placed in a separate file and communicated to the other party and members of the presiding court or commission. 6-3 Proper communication with a court, commission, or its officers If a party desires communication with a court or a judicial commission, that party shall request a meeting in person or by audio or video conference with the court or	For clarity, current 3-1D has been deleted and summarized as a heading in proposed 6-2. Sections have been enumerated for clarity. “Side” has been changed to “party” for internal consistency. “Action for discipline” has been substituted for “ecclesiastical judicial procedure” throughout for simplicity of language Heading added for clarity. “Conference call” has been updated to reflect current technology.

Current Chapter 3	Proposed Chapter 6	Rationale
and, if so, shall schedule the conference call . The party desiring communication shall be responsible for arranging the call and will bear the cost thereof.	commission. The Court or Commission, or its designee, shall determine if the meeting is in order, and, if so, shall schedule the audio or video conference . The party desiring communication shall be responsible for arranging the meeting .	The provision requiring the person requesting the meeting to bear the cost has been deleted as it is potentially discriminatory.

Chapter 7 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 3-2	Proposed Chapter 7	Rationale
3-2 Mediation A. <i>At the sole discretion of a court or commission (Session, Presbytery or General Assembly), an ecclesiastical judicial procedure brought under this Book of Discipline may be assigned to a mediator(s). A matter so assigned for mediation may only proceed with the written consent of all necessary individuals as determined by the court or commission referring the matter to mediation.</i> B. <i>Upon the court's assignment of a church member(s) to serve as a mediator, he will not be eligible to serve as a member of the court should it prove necessary for the matter to be brought before the court or judicial commission.</i>	— 7 — MEDIATION 7-1 Assignment of mediation A. At the sole discretion of a court or judicial commission, an action for discipline once commenced may be assigned to a qualified mediator(s) agreed upon by both parties prior to the commencement of a trial. A matter so assigned may only proceed with the written consent of all necessary individuals as determined by the assigning court or commission. The court may assign all or part of the action for discipline allowing a portion of the charge(s) to go into mediation while remaining charges continue to trial. B. At least one voting member of the court or commission prosecuting the case shall represent the court or commission at mediation.⁴¹ If the assigned mediator(s) are members of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the mediator(s) shall not be eligible to serve as a member of the court or judicial commission should it prove necessary for the matter to be brought to trial.	For clarity, current 3-2 has been placed in its own chapter (proposed chapter 7) Wording deleted for conciseness. “Discipline once commenced” was added to place a necessary condition on when the mediation process can be engaged. Proposed 7-1A gives the court or commission the discretion to use the services of qualified mediators outside of the membership of the EPC. There is no necessity to utilize only EPC members as mediators. The proposed revision clarifies that mediation, if used, happens before the trial begins. The final sentence has been added in response to a lack of clarity on this issue experienced by a presbytery. The prosecutor’s responsibility is to represent the court at trial and by virtue of that position cannot be a voting member of the court and does not carry the authority of the court to enter into an agreement. For that reason, a voting member of the court needs to be the mediator or one of the team of mediators.

⁴¹ The prosecutor is not a voting member of the judicial commission (proposed D.5-7C.4(f))

Current Chapter 3-2	Proposed Chapter 7	Rationale
C. Prior to the commencement of mediation, the mediator(s) shall obtain the written agreement of all participants in the mediation to be bound by the following: 1. All discussions are to be considered confidential unless all parties and the mediator(s) agree otherwise. 2. Any admissions made and settlement offers made will not be cited in any further proceeding concerning any other matter before the court should the matter not be resolved in mediation. No participant in the mediation will call a mediator(s) as a witness to the mediation in any subsequent hearing and/or in any other forum. Any person who violates the terms of this agreement may be subject to sanction for rebellion under Book of Discipline 1-8. 3. A mediator(s) may only report to the court or commission whether the matter has been settled, or not settled, or partially settled. If settled, the terms of any settlement will be disclosed to the court or judicial commission. However, no settlement can be entered into which conflicts shall conflict with any provision of the Constitution of the EPC. Any such settlement will be considered null and void ab initio (from the beginning). Written settlements are to be sealed and kept by the Clerk of the court separate from the court's or commission's regular minutes. 4. No formal record of any settlement discussions will be made. This prohibition includes the use of any recording device or a stenographer.	C. Prior to the commencement of mediation, the mediator(s) shall obtain the written agreement of both parties, by which both parties shall be bound by the following: 1. All discussions are considered confidential unless both parties and the mediator(s) agree otherwise. 2. Any admissions and settlement offers made shall not be cited in any further proceeding concerning any other matter before the court, should the matter not be resolved in mediation. No participant in the mediation will call a mediator(s) as a witness to the mediation in any subsequent hearing and/or in any other forum. 3. Any person who violates the terms of this agreement may be charged with contempt and subject to sanction. 4. A mediator(s) may only report to the court or Judicial Commission whether the matter has been settled, or not settled, or partially settled. If settled, the terms of any settlement shall be disclosed to the court or judicial commission. However, no settlement can be entered into which conflicts with any provision of the Constitution of the EPC.⁴² Any such settlement will be considered null and void. Written settlements are to be sealed and kept by the Clerk of the court separate from the minutes of the court or judicial commission. 5. No formal record of any settlement discussions shall be made. This prohibition includes the use of any recording device or a stenographer.	“In the mediation” deleted for conciseness. “Will” has been changed to “shall” throughout this chapter to be consistent with its usage in the Book Order indicating mandatory provisions. Wording changed in 7-1.3C for clarity and consistency. “Contempt” rather than “rebellion” is the proper terminology. “Shall” deleted as unnecessary. Latin term <i>ab initio</i> deleted for clarity. Wording changed for clarity. “Shall” is consistently used in the Book of Order for mandatory provisions.

⁴² The Constitution of the EPC consists of the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, **Westminster Larger Catechism**, **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, and the **Book of Order** in its three parts (*Book of Government*, *Book of Discipline*, and *Book of Worship*).

Current Chapter 3-2	Proposed Chapter 7	Rationale
5. If any party to mediation desires to have legal counsel, the other party shall be afforded the same opportunity. The provisions of D.10-3 shall apply to all counsel.	7-2 Legal counsel for mediation If either party to mediation desires to have legal counsel, the other party shall be afforded the same opportunity. ⁴³	Heading added for clarity. There are two parties, so “either” is correct.

Current Chapter 7 – Book of Discipline

Current Chapter 7		Rationale
— 7 — PRE-HEARING PROCESS IN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES INVOLVING DISCIPLINE 7-1 Investigation of a Charge A. Care over the Church It is the duty of all church courts to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall, with care and discretion, investigate reports concerning alleged offenses that require discipline. This duty is imperative when a person claiming to be aggrieved by an offense shall request an investigation in writing. B. Written Charges No investigation against an accused offender shall be commenced unless some person files a written charge with the Clerk of the court, or unless the court finds it necessary under Book of Discipline 1-5 and 1-6 for itself to undertake an investigation. C. Judicial Investigative Committee The court may appoint a judicial investigative committee to serve as a finder of fact, which shall report its findings to the court with its recommendations. The judicial investigative committee shall have no		Content of current Chapter 7 has been moved to proposed Chapter 5, rearranged, and condensed. Proposed chapter 5 now contains all the content related to the time frame of commencing a charge to appointing a prosecutor.

⁴³ See provisions regarding learned counsel in Proposed D.10-3

Current Chapter 7		Rationale
authority to act for the court other than as an investigative body. 7-2 Appointment of a Prosecutor If an investigation should result in raising a strong presumption of guilt of the party accused, the court shall institute an ecclesiastical judicial procedure, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare an indictment and to prosecute the case. The prosecutor shall be a member of the court. In cases before the Session, however, he need not be a member of that court, but needs only to be a communing member of the church (as defined in D.1-7). 7-3 Selection of Prosecutor Ordinarily, no offended person (or person knowing of an offense) shall become a prosecutor of personal offenses. A church court, however, may investigate personal offenses requiring discipline under D.6-1 when they become known to members of the court. 7-4 Parties in a Case The original and only parties in a case of ecclesiastical judicial procedure are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor is always the representative of the church. On appeal the parties are known as appellant and appellee. 7-5 Private Reconciliation When the prosecution is instituted by the court or commission the steps required by D.1-6 in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases,		

Current Chapter 7		Rationale
however, in which it will be advisable to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the accused and endeavor to bring him to a sense of repentance, before instituting actual ecclesiastical judicial procedures. The committee may then make recommendations to the court or commission concerning further prosecution of the case. 7-6 Biased Accusations and Testimony Great caution should be exercised by the court or commission in receiving accusations and testimony from any person: A. Who is known to hold a malignant spirit against the accused; B. Who is not of good character; C. Who is under sanction or who is the subject of an action for ecclesiastical judicial procedures; D. Who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or E. Who is known to be litigious, contentious, rash, or highly imprudent. 7-7 Suspension of Official Functions When an action for discipline has been commenced against a member of a court, any or all of his official functions may be suspended at the court's or commission's discretion, but this shall never be done in the way of sanction.		

Chapter 8 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 8	Proposed Chapter 8	Rationale
— 8 — HEARINGS IN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICIAL PROCEDURES INVOLVING DISCIPLINE	— 8 — HEARINGS IN ACTIONS FOR DISCIPLINE	Title modified for conciseness and internal consistency.
8-1 Warning to All	8-1 Warning to All	

Current Chapter 8	Proposed Chapter 8	Rationale
Every member of a court or commission engaged in an ecclesiastical judicial procedure shall bear in mind the command of Scripture: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” Galatians 6:1 (NIV). 8-2 Processing a Charge A. Commencement When ecclesiastical judicial procedures are commenced in accordance with D.6-1, nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court thereafter, unless by consent of the parties, except: 1. To appoint a prosecutor in accordance with D.7-1 and D.7-3. 2. To order the indictment drawn and a copy, including names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, in person or by means requiring a written receipt. 3. To set a date for trial. B. Commissions Ordinarily, the court shall decide at this time whether it shall try the case or refer the case for trial and decision to a judicial commission in accordance D.10-5 and G.21-1B. Commissioners shall be ordained Elders within the jurisdiction of the court involved. C. Moderator Pro-Tempore With the consent of the Moderator, and if the court so desires, it may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator Pro-Tempore for a particular case. The Moderator Pro-Tempore shall exercise the duties of a Moderator as described in G.18-2 or G.19-3 with respect to the particular judicial case only.	Every member of a court or commission engaged in an action for discipline shall bear in mind the command of Scripture: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Sprit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”⁴⁴	“Action for discipline” has been substituted for internal consistency. Quotation from the NIV has been changed to the 2011 version. This is in keeping the revision’s attempt to remove gender-specific terminology when it is unnecessary. The EPC does not have a designated Bible translation for the Book of Order. Current 8-2, 8-3, 7-2 and 7-3 have been combined and rewritten for conciseness and clarity in proposed 5-6 and 5-7.

⁴⁴ Galatians 6:1 (New International Version, 2011)

Current Chapter 8	Proposed Chapter 8	Rationale
8-3 Indictment A. Heading of the Indictment Every indictment shall begin: “In the name of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church,” and shall conclude, “against the peace, unity, and purity of the church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.” B. Contents of the Indictment The indictment shall clearly state the times, places and circumstances as to the actions alleged to require disciplinary sanctions, so that the accused may have adequate notice of the charges and the opportunity to make his defense. 8-4 Formal Summons A. Issuance of Formal Summons The Moderator or Clerk shall issue formal summons in the name of the court or to the accused and to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf. B. Contents The formal summons shall identify the parties to the trial, shall state the time and place of the trial, and shall warn the parties and witnesses of the sanctions for refusal to obey a formal summons. C. Service of Summons and Indictment The Clerk of the court or commission shall deliver a copy of the summons and the indictment to the defendant in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. The Clerk shall further deliver a summons to necessary witnesses in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. D. Witness and Exhibits List	8-2 Formal Summons A. Issuance The Moderator or Clerk shall issue formal summons in the name of the court to the accused and to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on its behalf. B. Contents The formal summons shall identify the parties to the trial, shall state the time and place of the trial, and shall warn the parties and witnesses of the sanctions for refusal to obey a formal summons. C. Service of Summons and Indictment The Clerk of the court or commission shall deliver a copy of the summons and the indictment to the defendant in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. The Clerk shall further deliver a summons to necessary witnesses in person or by form of delivery requiring a signed receipt. D. Witness and Exhibits List	“Or removed as a typographical error. Gender-specific pronoun is unnecessary in this context

Current Chapter 8	Proposed Chapter 8	Rationale
Each of the parties shall provide the other with a list of expected witnesses and copies of all exhibits not later than 5 days before trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt. 8-5 Refusal to Obey a Formal Summons A. Accused Person When an accused person shall refuse to obey a formal summons, he shall be served with a second formal summons. B. Second Summons A second formal summons shall be accompanied with a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court), or that if he appears and refuses to plead, he shall be dealt with for his rebellion. C. Sanctions for Failure to Appear When an accused person, having been twice formally summoned in accord with D.8-5B shall fail to appear, the court or commission shall enter this fact upon its records, together with a copy of the indictment, and shall suspend the accused person from the sacraments for his rebellion in failing to appear.	Both parties shall provide the other with a list of expected witnesses and copies of all exhibits not later than 5 days before trial (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) by personal delivery or by means requiring a written receipt. 8-3 Refusal to Obey a Formal Summons A. Accused Person When an accused person fails to respond to a formal summons, the accused shall be served with a second formal summons. B. Second Summons A second formal summons shall be accompanied with a notice that if the accused does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact the accused shall make known to the court), or that if the accused appears and refuses to plead, the accused shall be considered in contempt.⁴⁵ C. Sanctions for Failure to Appear When an accused person, having been twice formally summoned willfully fails to appear, the court or commission shall enter this fact into its records, together with a copy of the indictment, and shall treat the failure to appear as an act of contempt. 1. For a member of the church, the court or commission shall suspend the accused person from the sacraments indefinitely. If the charge is of a serious nature, the court or commission may proceed to the sanction of excommunication.⁴⁶ 2. For a Teaching or Ruling Elder, the court or commission shall suspend the Officer	Changed for conciseness Fails to respond is a broader category and does not assume the worst. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. “The accused” has been substituted for “he/his.” “Contempt” has been substituted for “rebellion” for internal consistency. Cross reference in current 8-5C deleted as unnecessary. “Willfully fails” seeks to capture the meaning of the traditional but not widely understood term “contumacy.” “Into” rather than “upon” its records is preferred. Failure to appear after being twice summoned is an act of contempt warranting sanctions. Proposed 8-3C.1 has been edited for clarity and conciseness. The proposed wording adds the specificity of an indefinite suspension with the possibility of excommunication if the situation warrants.

⁴⁵ Proposed D.1-6A

⁴⁶ See Proposed 11-2 regarding sanctions.

Current Chapter 8	Proposed Chapter 8	Rationale
In the event the accused person shall be an officer, the court or commission shall remove him from office and suspend or excommunicate him from the church. In the event the accused person shall be a member but not an officer and the charge be one of a serious nature as described in D.1-2, the court may proceed to removal of the accused person from the membership and fellowship of the church. D. Failure of a Witness to Appear In the event a duly summoned officer or member of the church willfully fails to appear or refuses to testify, the court may treat the refusal of the witness to appear as rebellion, and may proceed to admonish, suspend, remove from office, and/or expel him from the membership and fellowship of the church without need for further action. 8-6 Time Periods The time which must elapse between the serving of the first formal summons on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear shall be at least ten days. The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent summons shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it is quite sufficient for a reasonable and convenient compliance with the summons.	both from office and the sacraments indefinitely. If the charge is of a serious nature, the court or commission may proceed to the sanctions of removal from office or excommunication.⁴⁷ D. Failure of a Witness to Appear In the event a duly summoned officer or member of the church willfully fails to appear or refuses to testify, the court may treat the refusal of the witness as contempt and proceed to prosecution of the witness. 8-4 Time Periods At least ten days must elapse between service of the first formal summons on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which the accused is to appear. The time allotted for appearance following the second summons shall be left to the discretion of the court or commission, provided that it is sufficient for reasonable compliance.	In the proposed revision “removal” is permanent. Indefinite suspension, which carries the possibility of restoration, is the appropriate sanction at this point. The last sentence reflects the escalation of sanctions described in proposed chapter 11. “Contempt” has replaced “rebellion” for internal consistency. The last phrase has been condensed for clarity and conciseness. Sanctions should not be imposed without trial. The first sentence has been condensed for for conciseness Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 9 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 9 — 9 — EVIDENCE	Proposed Chapter 9 — 9 — RULES FOR TESTIMONY	Rationale
9-1 Competency of Witnesses Competency means ability to testify. All persons, including the parties, who have sufficient intelligence to understand the obligation of an oath or affirmation, are competent witnesses.	9-1 Competency of Witnesses Competency means ability to testify. All persons, including both parties, who have sufficient ability to understand the obligation of a solemn promise,⁴⁸ are competent witnesses.	Title has been changed to better reflect the content of the chapter. “Intelligence” has been changed to “ability” to avoid any unintended negativity. See rationale for “solemn promise” in proposed D.9-7.
9-2 Testimony of the Accused The accused party may be allowed but not compelled to testify. No inference of guilt may be drawn from his failure to testify. The person or persons who filed the charges under D.6-1A shall be required to testify on the demand of the accused.	9-2 Testimony of the Accused The accused party cannot be required to testify.⁴⁹ No inference of guilt may be drawn from failure to testify. The person or persons who filed the charges shall be required to testify on the demand of the accused.	Edited for conciseness. “His” has been deleted as unnecessary.
9-3 Families Husbands and wives, parents and children, shall not be required to testify against each other.	9-3 Family Members Husbands and wives, parents and children, shall not be required to testify against each other.	“Family members” is more limiting than “families.”
9-4 Exclusion of Witnesses Any witness to be examined, other than the accused or a member of the court, may be excluded from the examination of any other witness in the same case if any party objects.	9-4 Dismissing Witnesses The court or commission⁵⁰ shall have broad discretion as justice may require to dismiss any witness (other than the accused or accuser) from the room while another witness is testifying.	“Dismissing” is more descriptive of the content of this section than “exclusion.” Proposed 9-4 has been rewritten for clarity and, following the input of the Permanent Judicial Commission, to give the court broad discretion in this matter.
9-5 Disqualification of Witnesses A member of the court who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified for sitting as a judge if either party objects.	9-5 Disqualification of Witnesses A member of the court or commission who has given testimony in a case shall be ineligible to vote on the case if either party objects.	“Or commission” was added for internal consistency. “Shall be ineligible...” has been substituted for clarity.

⁴⁸ See proposed D.9-7.

⁴⁹ See proposed D.2-1.

⁵⁰ “Commission” means judicial commission throughout this chapter.

Current Chapter 9	Proposed Chapter 9	Rationale
9-8 Credibility <i>Credibility means the degree of credit which may be given to the testimony of a witness. In assessing the credibility of a witness, the court may consider any matter that bears on the credibility of the witness, including, but not limited to, the witness's relationship to the parties or other witnesses, his interest in the result, his weakness of understanding, his demeanor while testifying, his character for honesty or truthfulness, and his belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments.</i> 9-6 Oath or Affirmation The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms: "Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?" If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court and for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so. 9-7 Examination of Witnesses A. Examination and Cross-Examination Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party, after which any party or member of the court may ask additional questions. No question shall be asked or answered except by permission of the Moderator subject to an appeal to the court or	9-6 Credibility of Witnesses Credibility means the degree of credit which may be given to the testimony of a witness. In assessing the credibility of a witness, the court may consider relevant matters that bear on the credibility of the witness, including, but not limited to, the witness's A. Relationship to either party or other witnesses, B. Personal interest in the result, C. Weakness of understanding, D. Demeanor while testifying, E. Character for honesty or truthfulness, F. Belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments. 9-7 The Solemn Promise of the Witness The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall administer a solemn promise to a witness in the following or like terms: "Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness?" 9-8 Examination of Witnesses A. Examination and Cross-Examination Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party, after which either party or any member of the court may ask additional questions. No question shall be asked or answered except by permission of the Moderator subject to an appeal to the court or	Current D.9-8 has been moved to proposed 9-6 for better flow of thought. "Relevant matters" replaces "any matter" for clarity. Relevant matters bearing on the credibility of a witness have been enumerated for clarity. Gender-specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context. Title of proposed 9-7 has been changed and the section rewritten to remove potential objections of conscience to taking an "oath." There are two partes, so "either" is the proper word.

Current Chapter 9	Proposed Chapter 9	Rationale
commission. The court or commission shall not permit cumulative or repetitive questions or questions which are frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue. B. Witness Inconvenience When the alleged offense took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either appoint a judicial investigative committee or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it. Due notice of the time and place of the taking of testimony by the judicial investigative committee or the coordinate court shall be given to the opposite party. Testimony may be taken by questions asked to the witness with answers recorded in writing or recorded by electronic or other means. All parties shall have the right to examine the witness. [Current D.9-8 has been moved to proposed D.9-6] 9-10 Burden of Proof The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to prove an allegation of the indictment. However, if in addition to the testimony of one witness, other supporting evidence is proved, the allegation may be considered to be proved.	commission. The court or commission shall not permit repetitive questions or questions which are frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue. B. Witness Inconvenience 1. When the alleged offense took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either a) appoint a judicial investigative committee to take the testimony, or b) request the court within whose bounds the facts occurred to take the testimony on behalf of the court of original jurisdiction 2. Due notice of the time and place of the taking of testimony by the judicial investigative committee or the coordinate court shall be given to the opposite party. Testimony may be taken by questions asked to the witness with answers recorded in writing or recorded by electronic or other means. Both parties shall have the right to examine the witness. 9-9 Burden of Proof The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to prove an allegation of the indictment. However, if in addition to the testimony of one witness, other supporting evidence is proved, the allegation may be considered to be proved.	“Cumulative” was deleted as redundant and to simplify language. 9-7B has been enumerated for clarity. Rewritten for clarity and simplicity.

Chapter 10 - Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
— 10 — THE TRIAL 10-1 Trial Proceedings When a court or commission proceeds to trial of a case, the following order shall be observed: A. The Charge to the Court or Commission The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall exhort the members to remember and consider their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to participate. B. Indictment The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall read the indictment, and the accused shall be called upon to declare whether he is guilty or not. If the accused pleads guilty, the court or commission may deal with him according to its discretion. If he pleads not guilty the trial shall proceed. Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Accused parties necessarily absent shall have counsel assigned to them. C. Service of Summons Before proceeding to trial, the court or commission shall ascertain that its summons has been duly served. D. Opening Statements Each party shall be permitted to make a brief opening statement not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court or commission. The prosecutor shall	— 10 — TRIAL PROCEEDINGS 10-1 Order of the trial A. Charge to the court or commission The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall exhort the members of the court or commission to remember and consider their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to participate. B. Indictment The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall read the indictment, and the accused shall be called upon to plead either “guilty” or “not guilty.” If the accused pleads “guilty,” the court or commission shall act according to its discretion. If the accused pleads “not guilty,” the trial shall proceed. The accused party may plead in writing when unable to be personally present. If the accused party is necessarily absent, the court or commission may postpone the trial or allow the accused to name an active member of the church as a representative. C. Service of Summons Before proceeding to trial, the court or commission shall ascertain that its summons has been duly served. D. Opening Statements Each party shall be permitted to make a brief opening statement not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court or commission. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused.	Title changed for clarity. Heading changed to avoid redundancy with the title. First sentence of current 10-1 deleted as unnecessary. “Pro-tem” has been changed to “Temporary Moderator” throughout for simplicity of language. “Of the court or commission” clarifies “members.” “Temporary Moderator” substituted for internal consistency (Proposed D5-7.C2). Edited for clarity substituting “plead” for “declare” for internal consistency. The tone of “shall act” is preferred to “may deal with him” The final sentence has been rewritten for clarity. The practice of the court assigning counsel should not be carried over from the secular to ecclesiastical court.

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
proceed, followed by the accused party or parties. E. Testimony The witnesses for the prosecution and then those for the accused shall be examined in accordance with Chapter 9. F. Exclusion of Prosecutor and the Accused Person On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the prosecutor and the accused persons. When they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. The Moderator shall announce the court's or commission's decision upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom. G. Closing Argument Each party shall be permitted to make a brief closing argument not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused party or parties. The prosecutor shall be permitted to close, but total amount of time allocated to each party shall be equal. H. Deliberations The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinions in the case. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. I. The Vote	E. Testimony The witnesses for the prosecution and then those for the accused shall be examined. F. Exclusion of Prosecutor and the Accused Person On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the prosecutor and the accused persons. When they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall announce the court's or commission's decision upon return of the prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom. G. Closing Argument Each party shall be permitted to make a brief closing argument not longer than 15 minutes unless a longer time shall be granted by the court. The prosecutor shall proceed, followed by the accused. The prosecutor shall be permitted to close, but total amount of time allocated to each party shall be equal. H. Deliberations The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinions in the case. The prosecutor and the accused may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the question. I. The Vote The vote shall be by secret ballot, and all members of the court or commission shall	Cross reference has been deleted as unnecessary.

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
The vote shall be by secret ballot, and all members of the court or commission shall vote “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” on each charge of the indictment. A verdict of guilty shall be rendered only upon a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The Moderator (or Moderator Pro-Tempore) shall announce the court’s decision upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom. J. Imposition of Sanctions Before sanctions are determined, the prosecutor and accused person found guilty shall be given the opportunity to present evidence or argument bearing on the administration of sanctions only. Thereupon, the count or commission shall proceed to a determination of sanctions pursuant to Chapter 11. The prosecutor and the accused persons may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and determine sanctions. Sanctions may be rendered upon a simple majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the court’s determination of sanctions, which shall be entered upon the records, upon return of prosecutor and accused parties to the courtroom. K. Motion for New Trial If after trial before any court, new testimony is discovered which the accused believes is important, he shall have the right to ask for a new trial. The court shall have the power to grant his request. 10-2 Challenges to the Court	vote “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” on each charge of the indictment. A verdict of guilty shall be rendered only upon a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. The Moderator (or Temporary Moderator) shall announce the court’s decision upon return of the prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom. J. Imposition of Sanctions Before sanctions are determined, the prosecutor and the accused found guilty shall be given the opportunity to present evidence or argument bearing on the administration of sanctions only. Thereupon, the court or commission shall proceed to a determination of sanctions.⁵¹ The prosecutor and the accused may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate and determine sanctions. Sanctions may be rendered upon a simple majority of the votes cast. The Moderator shall announce the court’s determination of sanctions, which shall be entered upon the records, upon return of prosecutor and the accused to the courtroom. K. Motion for New Trial If after the trial new testimony is discovered which the accused believes is important, the accused shall have the right to ask for a new trial. The court shall have the power to grant the request. 10-2 Challenges to the Court	“Temporary Moderator” substituted for internal consistency (Proposed D5-7.C2). Typographical error (“count”) has been corrected. “Pursuant to Chapter 11” has been deleted as unnecessary. “Upon” has been deleted as unnecessary. Gender-specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context.

⁵¹ See Proposed chapter 11-2 regarding sanctions.

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
Any party may, for cause hereinafter described, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case. The question shall be decided by other members of the court. A challenge for cause against a member of the court shall be granted when: A. Disclosure of Opinion: The member of the court expresses his opinion of the guilt of any party to any person not a member of the court before the conclusion of the trial. B. Absence: The member of the court shall absent himself from any sitting of the trial without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered. C. Conflict of Interest: The member of the court appears to the court to be related to the parties or other witnesses, to have an interest in the result, or to have similar impediment or conflict of interest. 10-3 Professional or Learned Counsel A. No Paid Counsel No person serving as counsel shall be permitted to receive compensation for services rendered to any party. However, parties may reimburse counsel for their reasonable expenses. B. Professional or Learned Counsel In the event any party shall be represented by a person who is a graduate of an accredited school of law, the other parties shall be likewise permitted to be represented by learned or professional counsel. However, learned or professional counsel must be a member of the church as church as defined in	Either party may, for cause hereinafter described, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case. The question shall be decided by other members of the court. A challenge for cause against a member of the court shall be granted when A. A member of the court expresses an opinion about the guilt of either party to any person not a member of the court before the conclusion of the trial. B. A member of the court is absent from any sitting of the trial without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered. C. A member of the court is found - To be related to the accused or other witnesses, - To have a personal interest in the result, or - To have similar impediment or conflict of interest. 10-3 Professional or Learned Counsel A. No Paid Counsel No person serving as counsel shall be permitted to receive compensation for services rendered to either party. However, parties may reimburse counsel for reasonable expenses. B. Professional or Learned Counsel In the event either party shall be represented by a person who is a graduate of an accredited school of law, the other party shall be likewise permitted to be represented by learned or professional counsel. However, learned or professional counsel must be a member of the church.⁵² A member of the court serving as	“Any” changed to “either” because there are only two parties in the case. The indefinite pronoun is better for this section. Gender-specific pronoun is unnecessary in this context. Headings of current A, B, and C have been deleted as unnecessary. The indefinite pronoun is better for this section. “Shall absent himself” has been changed to “is absent” for simplicity of language. A challenge must be made regarding an actual, not apparent, conflict of interest. The section has been enumerated for clarity. “Personal” is needed to specify the “interest”. All members of the court should have interest in a just verdict. There are only two parties, so “either” is correct. There are only two parties, so “either” and “party” are the correct terms

⁵² Proposed D.1-2; G.8-3

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
D.1-7. A member of the court serving as counsel in the case shall not be allowed to sit in judgment on the case. 10-4 The Record A. The Record The Clerk or other person designated by the court or commission shall, within thirty days after the trial, make and maintain as part of the permanent records of the court or commission, a complete record of the proceedings, including the charges, the indictment, the answer (if any), all the testimony, whether transcribed or prepared in summary form, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the court or commission relating to the case including the written ballots evidencing the decision and the determination of sanctions. These documents shall constitute the Record of the Case and should ordinarily be maintained separately from the Minutes of the court or commission. B. Expenses of the Record: The court or commission shall make and maintain a transcript or record of the proceedings by written or electronic means. The parties shall be permitted to make copies (by transcript or electronic recording) of the whole proceedings at their own expense. C. Appeals When a case is appealed or removed to a higher court by complaint, the lower court	counsel in the case shall not be allowed to sit in judgment on the case. 10-4 The Record of the Case A. Importance of the Record Keeping accurate records of actions for discipline is incumbent upon the Moderator and Clerk of the court or commission both for the history of the case and in the event of an appeal. B. Contents of the Record The Clerk or other person designated by the court or commission shall, within thirty days after the trial, make and maintain as part of the permanent records of the court or commission, a complete record of the proceedings, including the charges, the indictment, the answer (if any), all the testimony, whether transcribed or prepared in summary form, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the court or commission relating to the case including the written ballots evidencing the decision and the determination of sanctions. These documents shall constitute the Record of the Case and should ordinarily be maintained separately from the Minutes of the court or commission. C. Copies of the Record: The court or commission shall make and maintain a transcript or record of the proceedings by written or electronic means. Both parties shall be permitted to make copies (by transcript or electronic recording) of the whole proceedings. D. Transmitting the Record on Appeal	“Of the Case” has been added for internal consistency Heading of the section has been changed to better reflect the main topic. “Copies” better describes the content of the revised section. “At their own expense” has been deleted as potentially discriminatory. Title has been changed to better reflect the content.

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
shall transmit the Record of the Case to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint. The higher court shall render its decision based only on that which is contained in the Record. On the final decision of a case by a higher court the decision shall be communicated to all lower courts. 9-9 The Record A. <i>Authentication</i> <i>The records of a court or commission, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the Moderator and Clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in any other court. Authentication shall be in writing in the following or similar form:</i> <i>I, _____ Clerk [or Moderator] of the _____ [name of court] do hereby certify that the foregoing are true, correct, and complete copies of the Record in the Case of .</i> Signed: Date: B. <i>Testimony</i> <i>The testimony taken by one court or commission and regularly authenticated shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.</i> 10-5 Judicial Commissions A. Rights and Duties A judicial commission created in accordance with D.8-2 B, shall have all the rights, privileges, duties, and obligations of the court in the matter assigned to it.	When a case is appealed,⁵³ the lower court shall transmit the Record of the Case to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal. The higher court does not re-try the case but shall render its decision based only on that which is contained in the Record. On the final decision of a case by a higher court the decision shall be communicated to all lower courts. 1. Authentication of the Record The records of a court or commission, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the Moderator and Clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in any other court. Authentication shall be in writing in the following or similar form: I, _____ Clerk [or Moderator] of the _____ [name of court] do hereby certify that the foregoing are true, correct, and complete copies of the Record in the Case of _____. Signed: Date: 2. Authentication of Testimony The testimony taken by one court or commission and regularly authenticated shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.	References to “complaint” have been removed as it is not the topic of this section. “Does not re-try the case” has been added for clarity. Current 9-9 has been moved to proposed 10-4D.1 for better flow of thought, bringing content related to the Record of the Case in one place. Title has been changed to better reflect the content of the section Current 10-5 has been moved to proposed 5-5 for better flow of thought, moving rules for judicial commissions into one place..

⁵³ See Book of Discipline chapter 13 on the process of appeal.

Current Chapter 10	Proposed Chapter 10	Rationale
B. Composition Judicial commissions shall be composed of no less than three or more than seven members elected by the court. C. Membership Judicial commissions of Presbytery shall be composed of Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Minister as possible in accordance with Book of Government G.21-1C.		

Chapter 11 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
— 11 — DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS 11-1 Exhortation to Meekness When any person shall be found guilty of an offense, the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother or sister in the spirit of meekness. The members are exhorted to watch themselves, so that they may avoid temptation. 11-2 Disciplinary Sanctions Disciplinary sanctions which may be administered by church courts or commissions are admonition, suspension, removal from church office, and excommunication. <i>When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction.</i> [Last sentence moved to proposed 11-2C.4]	-- 11 -- DECISIONS FROM A TRIAL – DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS 11-1 Exhortation to Meekness When any person shall be found guilty of an offense, the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother or sister in the spirit of meekness. The members are exhorted to watch themselves, so that they may avoid temptation. 11-2 Disciplinary Sanctions A. Disciplinary sanctions which may be administered by church courts or commissions are, in order of severity: 1. Reprimand⁵⁴ 2. Suspension 3. Removal from church office 4. Excommunication.	Title change to better reflect content of the chapter Sanctions enumerated for clarity in proposed 11-2 “In order of severity” added for clarity and internal consistency. Admonition is a word used broadly within the scripture and our tradition outside of formal disciplinary actions. Reprimand has been substituted in the proposed revision as a category for the mildest sanction of a formal action of discipline.

⁵⁴ This category was formerly “admonition.” Scripture directs us to admonish one another. In this *Book of Discipline*, “reprimand” is used for the situation in which admonishment has not been successful and the issue rises to the level of trial and sanction.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
If the court finds on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the person's ministry, it shall take all prudent measures to see that the infirmity is amended. 11-7 Principles for the Administration of Sanctions <i>The administration of church sanctions shall be suited to the nature of the offense. For private offenses, sanctions should be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone, or in private by one or more members of the court or commission. In the case of public offenses, the degree of sanction and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court or commission, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular sanctions.</i> If the charge is one of serious immorality or heresy and the accused person persists in his rebellion, the court or commission may proceed to inflict the highest sanction. 11-3 Definition of Admonition Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning of his guilt and	B. If the court finds on trial that the offender is guilty, but the offense may be remedied without hindering the person's ministry, the Court shall take all prudent measures to remedy the offense and administer at least the sanction of Reprimand and record the remedy. C. Principles for the Administration of Sanctions The administration of church sanctions shall be suited to the nature of the offense. 1. Private offenses Sanctions for private offenses should be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone, or in private by one or more members of the court or commission. 2. Public offenses The court or commission has sole discretion regarding the degree of sanction and mode of administration for public offenses. 3. Escalation of offenses When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction. 4. Severity of offenses If the charge is one of serious immorality or heresy and the offender persists in rebellion, the court or commission may proceed to administer a higher sanction. 11-3 Sanction of Reprimand A. Reprimand is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning of the offender's	"Reprimand" is more broadly understood than "admonition." It is not appropriate to find a person guilty with no sanction. If the offender is guilty, a sanction should be recorded with the remedy also recorded. "Acts of infirmity" has been retained and explained in proposed D.1-6. Portions of current 11-7 moved to proposed 11-2C for better flow of thought. Sections enumerated for clarity. Proposed 11-2C.3 edited for conciseness. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. "Inflict" changed to "administer" for internal consistency. The comparative "higher" is correct in this context Proposed 11-3 brings references to admonition scattered through current chapter 11 together in one section.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
danger, and encouraging him to be more careful and watchful in the future. 11-8 The Sanction of Admonition <i>The sanction of admonition may be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public, the admonition shall be administered by the Moderator or Chair in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it appropriate.</i> 11-4 Definition of Suspension Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities. <i>11-10 (first paragraph)</i> <i>The goal of suspension is to impress the offender of the evil of his sin and, under God's blessing, to lead him to repentance.</i> <i>11-4 (third paragraph)</i> <i>Suspension should generally be indefinite in its duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its repeat. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though he confesses his sin and gives evidence of repentance.</i>	guilt and danger, and encouraging the offender to be more careful and watchful in the future. B. The sanction of reprimand may be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public, the reprimand shall be administered by the Moderator in the presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it appropriate. 11-4 Sanction of Suspension A. Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities. B. The goal of suspension is to impress upon the offender the evil of the offense and, under God's blessing, to lead the offender to repentance. C. Suspension may be either indefinite or definite in duration. 1. Suspension should generally be indefinite in duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its removal. 2. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though the person confesses his/her sin and gives evidence of repentance. D. Regarding church members	"Sanction" has replaced "Definition" for consistency and because the proposed new 11-3 ranges beyond "definition." See note on proposed 11-2 for rationale on "reprimand." Gender specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context. Sections are enumerated for clarity in proposed 11-3. See note on 11-3 regarding "sanction." First paragraph of current 11-10 moved to proposed 11-4B for better flow of thought. The sentence has been smoothed out and gender specific pronouns have been replaced. Title of proposed 11-4C has been added for clarity. "Repeal" in current 11-4 has been changed to "removal" in proposed 11-4C for consistency in terminology (see proposed chapter 12). Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. The impact of suspension differs from members to Ruling Elders/Deacons and Teaching Elders. A

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
11-4 (second paragraph) <i>With respect to church officers, suspension may include the exclusion of the officer from office and the sacraments. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration.</i> 11-7 When a Teaching Elder is removed from office, his pastoral relationship shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the sanction shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship 11-10 (second paragraph) <i>Definite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's or commission's discretion.</i> 11-11 Indefinite suspension <i>Indefinite suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public</i>	Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities. E. Regarding Church Officers⁵⁵ Suspension includes exclusion from office and may include exclusion from the sacraments. F. Regarding Teaching Elders 1. Definite or indefinite suspension shall bar the Teaching Elder from all functions of office and places the Teaching Elder on inactive status with the Presbytery. 2. When a Presbytery suspends a Teaching Elder, the Presbytery has sole discretion as to whether the sanction will include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. 3. The Presbytery may suspend the Teaching Elder from all ministerial functions without dissolving the pastoral relationship if the court anticipates restoring the offender a time that does not unduly bring harm to the congregation. In such a case, the court should assist the congregation in supplying a temporary pastor in order to maintain the regular worship of the congregation. G. Administration of the sanction of suspension 1. The sanction of suspension shall be administered in the presence of the court or commission alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the discretion of the court or commission.	section relating specifically to church members was added for clarity. Footnote added to clarify “church officers.” “May” has been deleted as exclusion from office is necessarily included in suspension. The final sentence of the second paragraph of current 11-4 is unnecessary in this context (see proposed 11-4C). Past experience has shown the need for the addition of proposed 11-4F. Before trial, suspension is temporary (D.5-7C.6) and the court has discretion regarding its extent. Following trial with a verdict of guilty, suspension is from all functions of office. Text from current 11-7 (underscored portion) has been utilized here for better flow of thought and condensed for clarity. Language has been added to bring clarity to the role of the presbytery in caring for the congregation when a pastor has been suspended and the pastoral relationship has not been dissolved. “The sanction” inserted for consistency of terminology. Language from current 11-10 and 11-11 has been incorporated in proposed 11-4H for better flow of thought and condensed for clarity.

⁵⁵ Church officers are Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
<i>announcement thereof shall be at the court's or commission's discretion.</i> When the court or commission has resolved to pass the sentence, the Moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose: "Whereas you, [here describe the person as a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, Deacon, or member of the Church] are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin [here insert the offense], we the Presbytery (or Church Session) of [here insert name of the presbytery or church] in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance." 11-5 Definition of Removal from Office Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender's ordination and election are set aside, and the offender is removed from all church offices without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.	2. The sanction of definite or indefinite suspension shall be administered by the Moderator of the court or commission in the following or similar words: "Whereas you, _____ [a Teaching Elder / Ruling Elder / Deacon, / member of the Church] are convicted by sufficient proof [or are guilty by your own confession] of the sin of [name the offense], we the Presbytery [or Session] of [name of the Presbytery or church] in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church [and from the exercise of your office], until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance." To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer that the offender would be restored. 11-5 Sanction of Removal from Office A. Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender's ordination is permanently revoked, thus removing the offender from the office of Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.	See note on proposed 11-3 regarding "sanction." Sections of current 11-5, 7, and 12 have been combined in proposed 11-5 for better flow of thought and enumerated for clarity. "Election" has been deleted in proposed 11-5A for clarity. Removal from office changes the effect but not the fact of election to office. Removing the word also takes any possibility of interpreting "election" in its theological sense. Removal from office is defined as "permanently revoked," rather than "set aside" (current 11-5). If there is a possibility of restoration, the sanction should be that of "indefinite suspension," mpt "removal from office." "Removal" in the proposed revision is reserved for the most serious situations where restoration to office is not possible.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
11-7 (final 2 paragraphs) <i>When a Teaching Elder is removed from office, his pastoral relationship shall be dissolved; [the following has been moved to proposed 11-4F] but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the sanction shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relationship</i> <i>When a Presbytery shall remove a Teaching Elder from his office without excommunication, it shall assign him to membership at some local church subject to the approval of the Session of that local church.</i> 11-12 Removal from Office <i>The sanction of removal from office shall be administered by the Moderator or Chair in the words following:</i> <i>“Whereas [here insert name], a Teaching Elder of this Presbytery (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), has been proved by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of [insert the offense], we, the Presbytery (or Church Session) of [here insert name of the presbytery or local church] do adjudge him disqualified for the office of Minister (or Ruling Elder or Deacon), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, remove him from the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon) of the said and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof.”</i>	B. When a Presbytery or General Assembly, if it has assumed jurisdiction,⁵⁶ removes a Teaching Elder from office, the pastoral relationship shall be dissolved. C. When a Presbytery removes a Teaching Elder from office without excommunication, it shall assign the offender to membership at some local church subject to the approval of the Session of that local church. D. Administration of the Sanction of Removal from Office The Moderator of the court or commission shall administer the sanction of removal from office in the following or similar words: “Whereas [name], a Teaching Elder of this Presbytery (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), has been proved by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of [offense], we, [name of the presbytery or local church] do adjudge you disqualified for the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, remove you from the office of Teaching Elder (or Ruling Elder or Deacon) of the church and do prohibit you from exercising any of the functions thereof.”	“Teaching or Ruling Elder” in proposed 11-5A replaces “all church offices” for clarity. Text from 11-7 incorporated in proposed 11-5B and C for better flow of thought. Active voice replaces passive voice and gender-specific pronouns have been replaced. The additional wording envisions a situation in which the General has assumed jurisdiction of a case due to a presbytery’s inability or unwillingness to act. “Shall” removed for conciseness. Gender specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. Text from current 11-12 moved here for better flow of thought. Active voice replaces passive voice and the sentence reworded accordingly. “Or similar” has been added to give the Moderator discretion. The wording below is a template but not mandatory. Gender specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context. “Minister” has been changed to “Teaching Elder” for internal consistency,

⁵⁶ See proposed D.3-4 and 3-5.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
<i>If the sanction includes suspension or excommunication, the Moderator or Chair shall proceed to say: “We do, moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said _____ from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the membership and fellowship of the Church.”</i> The sentence of removal from office ought to be accompanied by solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication. 11-6 Definition of Excommunication Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent. The purpose of this sanction is to reclaim the offender, to deliver the church from the disgrace and injury of his offense, and to motivate the church with fear by the example of his discipline. 11-13 Excommunication Excommunication may be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or it may be inflicted in public as the	If the sanction includes suspension or excommunication, the Moderator or Chair shall proceed to say the following or similar words: “We do, moreover, by the same authority, suspend you from the Sacraments, and cut you off from the membership and fellowship of the Church.” 11-6 Sanction of Excommunication A. Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent. B. The purpose of excommunication is to maintain the honor of God, to restore the sinner, to remove offense from the church and to remind the church to “not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord” (Hebrews 12:5b). C. When a Presbytery or General Assembly⁵⁷ removes a Teaching Elder from office with excommunication, it should request the Session of a local church to minister to the offender as it would an unbeliever in hope of leading the offender to repentance and eventual admission to membership in the church and the Lord’s table. D. Administration of the Sanction of Excommunication Excommunication may be administered privately or publicly as the court decides. The Moderator of the court or commission shall	See note above. See note on proposed 11-3 regarding “sanction.” Wording of proposed 11-6B makes this section consistent with Proposed 1-3. Proposed 11-6 C added for clarity. Restoration is always the goal of discipline, even if the sanction is excommunication. Any restoration to office following excommunication begins with membership in a local church. Text of current 11-13 incorporated here for better flow of thought.

⁵⁷ The General Assembly only has authority to remove a Teaching Elder from office if it has assumed jurisdiction under the authority given in proposed D.3-4 and 3-5.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
court may decide. In administering this sanction, the Moderator of the court or Chair of the commission shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending person, and of the decision to cut him off from the membership and fellowship of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use, and consequences of this sanction. He shall then administer the sanction in the words following: “Whereas _____ a member of this Church, has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of _____ and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church and has manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of the Church of _____ do pronounce him to be excluded from the Sacraments and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.” 11-9 Confession and Restoration [11-9A moved to proposed 5-2C] A. Confession When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court or commission, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment rendered without judicial procedures. When an officer, before judgment is entered, shall make a confession of a matter that is marked by outrageous or scandalous crime or vice, such as substance abuse, marital infidelity, embezzlement or the like, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court or commission shall without delay suspend or remove him from his office.	make a statement of the steps which have been taken with respect to the offender, and of the decision to cut the offender off from the membership and fellowship of the church. The Moderator shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use, and consequences of this sanction. The Moderator shall then administer the sanction in the following or similar words: “_____ a member of this Church, has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of _____ and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church and has manifested no evidence of repentance. Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of the Church of _____ do pronounce you to be excluded from the Sacraments and the fellowship of the Church.”	Gender-specific pronouns are not necessary in this context. “Or similar” has been added to give the Moderator discretion. What follows is a template, not words that are required. Gender-specific pronoun is unnecessary in this context. “Cut off from” was deleted as unnecessary. “Excluded” applies to both the Sacraments and fellowship.

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
[11-9B moved to proposed 12] B. Restoration An officer suspended or removed from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which, in the case of removal from office, shall be for not less than one year. Any officer must present evidence that it is virtually certain that the conduct causing his suspension or removal from office will not occur again. C.— Restoration of a Teaching Elder A Teaching Elder removed from office shall not be restored until it appears that the general sentiment of the church is strongly in his favor and demands his restoration. In that event restoration shall be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent. When an application for restoration and a statement of support from the Session of the church to which the former Teaching Elder has been assigned is filed with the clerk of the Presbytery, the application will be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee for its review and recommendation. Consideration of the application will proceed as follows: 1. Should the Ministerial Committee choose to recommend restoration to the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall consider the recommendation for restoration in executive session. 2. The Teaching Elder seeking restoration and the Ministerial Committee will be provided the opportunity to address the Presbytery. 3. Upon hearing from the Teaching Elder seeking restoration he shall be excused. 4. A motion to restore or not restore may be brought before the Presbytery only by its Ministerial Committee.		Current 11-2C has been deleted because removal from office is defined in the proposed revision as permanent revocation of ordination, thereby nullifying “restoration.” If a Teaching Elder is ordained again it is not by way of being “restored.”

Current Chapter 11	Proposed Chapter 11	Rationale
5. All votes concerning Teaching Elder restoration are to be by secret ballot. 6. A 4/5 affirmative vote shall be required for restoration to office. 7. Restoration may be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction, or with its consent. To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.		

Chapter 12 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
— 12 — REMOVAL OF SANCTIONS 12-1 Court Should Pray for the Offender After any person has been suspended from the sacraments, it is proper that the Elders of the church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him and for him, that it would please God to give him repentance. 12-2 Restoration to the Sacraments When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of a suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance either in the presence of the court or commission alone or publicly, and be restored to the sacraments of the church, and to his office, if such be the judgment of the court or commission, which restoration shall be declared to the penitent in words of the following import:	— 12 — REMOVAL OF SANCTIONS 12-1 Court Should Pray for the Offender After any person has been suspended from the sacraments, it is proper that the Elders of the church should frequently converse with the person as well as pray with and for the person, that it would please God to grant repentance and restoration. 12-2 Restoration to the Sacraments When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of a suspended offender, that person shall profess repentance either in the presence of the court alone or publicly, and be restored to the sacraments of the church if such be the judgment of the court. Restoration shall be declared in the following or similar words:	Gender-specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context. “Restoration” was added because it is the ultimate goal of the disciplinary process. Gender-specific pronouns are unnecessary in this context. “Or office” has been deleted, as this section deals only with restoration to sacraments. Restoration to office is in proposed 12-4. The word “similar” is added to clarify that the declaration is mandatory, but not the specific wording, which may be modified to fit the specific situation.

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
“Whereas, you, _____, have been suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the office of Teaching Elder, or Ruling Elder, or Deacon) but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the Session (or Presbytery) of _____ do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, restore you from the said sentence of suspension, and restore you to the full communion of the Church (and the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).” After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving. 12-3 Restoration of an Excommunicated Person Subject to the provisions of D.12-7, when an excommunicated person shall be so moved with his excommunication that he is brought to repentance and he desires to be readmitted to the membership and fellowship of the church, he may request that the Session restore him. The Session shall proceed to restore him if it finds sufficient evidence of his sincere repentance. This may be done in the presence of the court or commission or of the congregation as seems best to the Session.	“Whereas, you, _____, have been suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the office of Teaching Elder, or Ruling Elder, or Deacon) but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the Session (or Presbytery) of _____ do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, restore you from the said sentence of suspension, and restore you to the full communion of the Church (and the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).” After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving. 12-3 Restoration of an Excommunicated Person A. When an excommunicated person comes to repentance and desires to be readmitted to the membership and fellowship of the church, that person may request restoration from the Session. B. The Session shall proceed to restore the excommunicated person if it finds sufficient evidence of sincere repentance. This may be done in the presence of the Session or the congregation as seems best to the Session. C. If the excommunicated person was a Teaching Elder, the Session may receive him/her into membership and fellowship of the church. The Session shall then report its action to the court that imposed the original sanction.	Proposed 12-3 edited for conciseness and to remove unnecessary gender-specific pronouns. Cross reference in current 12-3 is unnecessary in the proposed revision. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. The word “commission” is unnecessary. Proposed 12-3C has been added for clarity. While the Presbytery alone (or a Commission thereof) may sanction a Teaching Elder with removal from office and excommunication, those sanctions end any membership in the Presbytery and, in the case of excommunication, a local church. The Session has authority to restore the former Teaching Elder to church membership and sacraments. Only the

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
On the day appointed for his restoration, the Moderator of the court or Chair of the commission shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him the following questions: “Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God and in refusing to hear His Church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and sorrow for your sin and rebellion: and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humility of mind and carefulness to avoid sin, and to attempt to live a lifestyle that will glorify God our Savior?” Answer, “I do.” Here the Moderator or Chair shall give the person being restored a suitable exhortation, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words: “Whereas you, _____, have been shut out from the membership and fellowship of the Church, but now have demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we, the Session of this Church, do declare you restored from the sentence of	D. On the day appointed for restoration, the Moderator shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose the following questions: “Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God and in refusing to hear His Church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and sorrow for your sin and rebellion: and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?” Answer, “I do.” “Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humility of mind and carefulness to avoid sin, and to attempt to live a lifestyle that will glorify God our Savior?” Answer, “I do.” Here the Moderator shall give the person being restored a suitable exhortation. Then the Moderator shall pronounce restoration in the following or similar words: “Whereas you, _____, have been shut out from the membership and fellowship of the Church, but now have demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we, the Session of this Church, do declare you restored from the sentence of	Presbytery that imposed the sanctions may consider possible restoration to office. Words deleted from current 12-3 are unnecessary. “Chair” is unnecessary. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. See note on proposed 12-2 regarding addition of “similar.”

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the membership and fellowship of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.” After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving. [Current 11-9B] <i>An officer suspended or removed from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which, in the case of removal from office, shall be for not less than one year. Any officer must present evidence that it is virtually certain that the conduct causing his suspension or removal from office will not occur again.</i> <i>When an officer who has been removed from office makes public confession in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the restoration of an excommunicated person, he may be restored to office. His restoration to office shall be announced to him by the Moderator or Chair as follows:</i> <i>“Whereas, you, _____, formerly a Teaching of this Presbytery (or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Church), have been removed from your office, but have now demonstrated such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the Presbytery of _____ (or the Session of this Church) do declare you restored from the said sentence of removal from office formerly pronounced against you;</i>	excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the membership and fellowship of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.” After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving. 12-4 Restoration to Office A. A Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon suspended from office for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for sin, until the officer has demonstrated an exemplary, humble, and edifying lifestyle for a considerable amount of time, which shall be for not less than one year. Any officer suspended must present to the court compelling evidence that the conduct causing that suspension or removal will not occur again.	Current 11-9B moved to proposed 12-4A for better flow of thought. Sections of proposed 12-4 have been enumerated for clarity. “Officers” have been listed in the opening sentence for clarity. Gender-specific pronouns deleted as unnecessary. “Removed” has been deleted for internal consistency. In this proposed revision, restoration only takes place from suspension, not from removal from office (see rationale for proposed D.11-5) “Compelling evidence” has replaced “virtually certain” as the latter is an impossible standard. The section of current 11-9B regarding restoration following removal from office has been deleted for internal consistency. In this proposed revision, restoration only takes place from suspension, not from removal from office (see rationale for proposed D.11-5). If there is a possibility that the officer could be restored, the sanction should be indefinite suspension, not removal from office.

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
<i>and we do furthermore restore you to your office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be duty called."</i> <i>After this there shall be prayer and thanksgiving, and the members of the court or commission shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.</i> 12-5 Reelection Required for Exercise of Office When a Ruling Elder or Deacon has been pardoned from the sanction of removal from office, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without reelection by the people. Current 11-9C C. Restoration of a Teaching Elder A Teaching Elder removed from office shall not be restored until it appears that the general sentiment of the church is strongly in his favor and demands his restoration. In that event restoration shall be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent. 12-6 Special Provisions for the Restoration of a Minister In the restoration of a Teaching Elder who has been suspended or removed from office, it is the duty of the Presbytery to proceed with great caution. In conjunction with the Presbytery and the church to which he has been assigned, pursuant to D.11-7, Presbytery and the Session of that church should first admit him to the	12-5 Re-election Required for Exercise of Office A Ruling Elder or Deacon restored to office shall not exercise that office in the church without re-election by the people. 12-6 Restoration of a Suspended Teaching Elder A. A Teaching Elder suspended indefinitely from office shall not be restored unless there is compelling evidence of repentance and growth to justify restoration. In that event restoration shall be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction or with its consent.	Rewritten for conciseness. Current 11-9C moved to Proposed 12-6 for better flow of thought. "Suspended" has been added for internal consistency. Restoration to office is not possible for someone removed from office. Additional wording added for internal consistency, Sections of proposed 12-6 enumerated for clarity. "The church is strongly in favor..." has been removed because it is unnecessary and easily subject to misinterpretation. A Teaching Elder removed from office is assigned to a local church with the consent of the Session and is no longer a member of the Presbytery that removed him/her. Current 12-6 has been condensed and moved to proposed 12-6B. If the Teaching Elder was also excommunicated, the TE cannot be assigned to membership in a local church but only referred for the purpose of pastoral ministry intended to lead him/her to repentance. Teaching Elders always begin their path toward ordination with the endorsement of their local

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
sacraments, if he has been suspended from them, and afterwards should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time. The court shall oversee his lifestyle so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness. When the Presbytery is satisfied in these respects it shall restore him to his office. When an application for restoration and a statement of support from the Session of the church to which the former Teaching Elder has been assigned is filed with the clerk of the Presbytery, the application will be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee for its review and recommendation. Consideration of the application will proceed as follows: 1. Should the Ministerial Committee choose to recommend restoration to the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall consider the recommendation for restoration in executive session. 2. The Teaching Elder seeking restoration and the Ministerial Committee will be provided the opportunity to address the Presbytery. 3. Upon hearing from the Teaching Elder seeking restoration he shall be excused. 4. A motion to restore or not restore may be brought before the Presbytery only by its Ministerial Committee. 5. All votes concerning Teaching Elder restoration are to be by secret ballot. 6. A 4/5 affirmative vote shall be required for restoration to office.	B. When the Teaching Elder files an application for restoration with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the application shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee for consideration. 1. A motion to restore or not restore may be brought before the Presbytery only by its Ministerial Committee. Should the Ministerial Committee choose to recommend restoration, the Presbytery shall consider the recommendation in executive session. 2. The Teaching Elder seeking restoration and the Ministerial Committee will be provided with the opportunity to address the Presbytery. 3. After addressing the Presbytery, the Teaching Elder seeking restoration shall be excused. 4. All votes concerning Teaching Elder restoration are to be by secret ballot. 5. A 4/5 affirmative vote shall be required for restoration to Office.	church. Only when the Session deems the offender to be repentant and fit to serve may the Presbytery begin its deliberations on restoration to office. Current provisions 1 and 4 have been combined in proposed #1 for better flow of thought. Proposed 12-6D.3 added for clarity of procedure. Current #4 combined with proposed #1 above

Current Chapter 12	Proposed Chapter 12	Rationale
7. Restoration may be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction, or with its consent. Current 12-6, last paragraph The case shall remain under judicial consideration until the sentence of restoration has been pronounced. 12-7 Transfer of Case to More Convenient Forum When a person under sanction shall move to a place which is remote from the court by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, the court may, if it deems it appropriate, transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the person under sanction resides. The court of the person's residence shall then assume jurisdiction over the case and proceed with it as though it had original jurisdiction.	6. Restoration may be pronounced only by the court imposing the sanction, or with its consent. 12-7 Transfer of Case to More Convenient Forum When a person under sanction moves to a place remote from the court issuing the sanction, and desires to profess repentance and obtain restoration, the court may, if it deems it appropriate, transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the person under sanction resides. The court of the person's residence shall then assume jurisdiction over the case and proceed with it as though it had original jurisdiction.	Text from the last paragraph of current 12-6 has been deleted. "Judicial consideration" is nebulous. "Shall move" deleted for clarity. "Sentence" has been dropped because a sanction is not a "sentence."

Chapter 13 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
— 13 — APPEALS 13-1 Definition An appeal is a request made to a higher court to review a judgment made by a lower court by and through the use of ecclesiastical judicial procedures (cases of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt). An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher court, unless the higher court directs and authorizes that the appeal be heard in another court or by a commission created for the express purpose	— 13 — APPEALS 13-1 Definition An appeal is a request made to a higher court to review a judgment made by a lower court in an action for discipline (cases of heresy, immorality, and/or contempt). An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher court, unless the higher court directs and authorizes that the appeal be heard in another court or by a commission	Edited for clarity and internal consistency.

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
of hearing the appeal and rendering a decision thereupon. 13-2 Standing to Appeal; Parties to Appeal A. Only an accused party, found guilty and sanctioned by a lower court, has standing to appeal the lower court’s decision to a higher court. B. The party bringing the appeal shall be known as “Appellant.” The party against whom the appeal is taken shall be known as “Appellee.” 13-3 Newly Discovered Evidence Newly discovered evidence is evidence that a party did not know, nor should have known, existed during the lower court proceedings. If, in the prosecution of an appeal, newly discovered evidence is sought to be introduced, a party seeking its introduction must file a motion with notice to all other parties demonstrating justification for its introduction. Upon approval of the motion, the appellate court may remand the case to the lower court for a new trial; or may receive the evidence and proceed with the case. 13-4 Grounds for Appeal The grounds for appeal are: A. Any misapplication of the EPC Constitution; B. Any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court; C. Receiving improper evidence or declining to receive proper evidence; D. Rendering a decision before all the testimony is reasonably heard; E. Manifestation of prejudice in the case; and F. Mistake or injustice in the judgment or sanction.	created for the express purpose of hearing the appeal and rendering a decision thereupon. 13-2 The Right to Appeal A. Only an accused party, found guilty and sanctioned by a lower court, has the right to appeal the lower court’s decision to a higher court. B. The party bringing the appeal shall be known as “Appellant.” The party against whom the appeal is taken shall be known as “Appellee.” 13-3 Newly Discovered Evidence A. Newly discovered evidence is evidence that a party did not know, nor should have known, existed during the lower court proceedings. B. In the prosecution of an appeal, the party seeking to introduce newly discovered evidence shall file a motion with notice to all other parties demonstrating justification for its introduction. Upon approval of the motion, the appellate court shall remand the case to the lower court for a new trial. 13-4 Grounds for Appeal The grounds for appeal are A. Any misapplication of the EPC Constitution, B. Any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court, C. Receiving improper evidence or declining to receive proper evidence, D. Rendering a decision before all the testimony is reasonably heard, E. Manifestation of prejudice in the case, F. Mistake or injustice in the judgment or sanction.	“Standing” has been changed“ to The right” to appeal for simplicity. Edited for conciseness. “May” has been changed to “shall,” as the Appellate court does not re-try the case. The last sentence has been deleted accordingly.

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
13-5 Notice of Appeal Written notice of appeal shall be filed no later than thirty (30) days after the entry of judgment of the lower court. The filing of the Notice of Appeal with the Clerk of the appellate court places the appeal before that court. A copy of the Notice of Appeal also shall be filed with the lower court from which the appeal is taken. 13-6 Statement of Grounds for Appeal Written statement of grounds for appeal shall be filed no later than fifteen (15) days after the Notice of Appeal is filed. The statement must state the factual or constitutional bases forming the issues on appeal. 13-7 Filing the Record Within thirty (30) days after receipt of a Notice of Appeal, it shall be the duty of the Clerk of the lower court to prepare and file with the Clerk of the higher court the Record of the Case as defined in D.10-4. 13-8 Stay Pending Appeal The filing of a Notice of Appeal does not stay the judgment of the lower court. If, however, the sanction is suspension, excommunication, or removal from office, the sanctioned party may, for sufficient reasons provided in writing, petition the higher court to stay the sanction until the case is finally decided. The higher court in its discretion may stay the sanction or later modify the stay. In the case that a stay is imposed or later modified, the higher court will notify the lower court. The lower court will confirm receipt of the stay and its compliance with it.	13-5 Notice of Appeal Written notice of appeal shall be filed no later than thirty days after the entry of judgment of the lower court. The filing of the Notice of Appeal with the Clerk of the appellate court places the appeal before that court. A copy of the Notice of Appeal also shall be filed with the lower court from which the appeal is taken. 13-6 Statement of Grounds for Appeal Written statement of grounds for appeal shall be filed no later than fifteen days after the Notice of Appeal is filed. The statement must state the factual or constitutional bases forming the issues on appeal. 13-7 Filing the Record Within thirty days after receipt of a Notice of Appeal, it shall be the duty of the Clerk of the lower court to prepare and file with the Clerk of the higher court the Record of the Case.⁵⁸ 13-8 Stay of Lower Court Action Pending Appeal The filing of a Notice of Appeal does not stay the judgment of the lower court. If, however, the sanction is suspension, excommunication, or removal from office, The sanctioned party may, for sufficient reasons provided in writing, petition the higher court to stay the sanction until the case is finally decided. The higher court in its discretion may stay the sanction or later modify the stay. In the case that a stay is imposed or later modified, the higher court will notify the lower court. The lower court will confirm receipt of the stay and its compliance with it.	Deleting parenthetical numbers has been done throughout as unnecessary (Chicago Manual of Style Online).

⁵⁸ See Proposed D.10-4

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
13-9 Procedures on Appeal After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be considered, the following procedures shall be followed: A. The court shall read the complete Record of the Case as submitted by the lower court. The higher court shall provide the Record to the Appellant. Before sending the Record to the Appellant, the higher court may, at its discretion, redact the Record in order to protect confidential or sensitive information that is not relevant to the appeal. B. The Appellant shall file a written statement which sets forth the issues on appeal and the arguments in support thereof within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the Record of the Case by the higher court. In addition, a copy of the written statement shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written statement to the appellee. C. The Appellee may file a written response within fifteen (15) days of the receipt by the higher court of the appellant's written statement. In addition, a copy of the written response shall be delivered to the Appellant. Appellee shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written response to the appellant. D. The Appellant may file a written reply to the appellee's written response within fifteen (15) days of the receipt by the higher court of Appellee's written response, if any. In addition, a copy of the written reply shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written reply to the appellee.	13-9 Procedures on Appeal After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be considered, the following procedures shall be followed: A. The court shall read the complete Record of the Case as submitted by the lower court. The higher court shall provide the Record to the Appellant. Before sending the Record to the Appellant, the higher court may, at its discretion, redact the Record in order to protect confidential or sensitive information that is not relevant to the appeal. B. The Appellant shall file a written statement which sets forth the issues on appeal and the arguments in support thereof within thirty days of the receipt of the Record of the Case by the higher court. In addition, a copy of the written statement shall be delivered to the Appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written statement to the Appellee. C. The Appellee may file a written response within fifteen days of the receipt by the higher court of the Appellant's written statement. In addition, a copy of the written response shall be delivered to the Appellant. Appellee shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written response to the appellant. D. The Appellant may file a written reply to the appellee's written response within fifteen days of the receipt by the higher court of the Appellee's written response, if any. In addition, a copy of the written reply shall be delivered to the appellee. Appellant shall also provide to the higher court a certificate of delivery of its written reply to the Appellee.	

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
E. The Appellant or appellee may file a written request for oral argument, explaining why it is necessary and should be permitted. In response to such a request, or at its own discretion, the higher court may allow oral argument. If oral argument is allowed, the court will advise all parties of the date, time and place of oral argument, and the time allotted to each party. In the alternative, the higher court may determine the issues on the appeal based solely on the Record of the Case, the written statements, responses, and replies. F. In every case in which oral argument is heard, a record of the oral argument shall be kept. The recording of the oral argument may be transcribed and the recording or copy of the transcription maintained by the Stated Clerk of the higher court. In the case of an appeal to the next higher court, a party may request a copy of the transcript. The cost of transcription shall be borne by the requesting party. G. The members of the higher court, in their deliberations, shall express their opinions, deliberate upon and vote on the issues raised. H. The vote shall be taken on each ground for appeal set forth in the statement filed pursuant to D.13-6 above in this form: “Shall this ground for appeal be sustained?” 13-10 Decision on Appeal A. The higher court may:	E. The Appellant or Appellee may file a written request for oral argument, explaining why it is necessary and should be permitted. In response to such a request, or at its own discretion, the Higher Court may allow oral argument. If oral argument is allowed, the court will advise both parties of the date, time and place of oral argument, and the time allotted to each party. In the alternative, the higher court may determine the issues on the appeal based solely on the Record of the Case, the written statements, responses, and replies. F. In every case in which oral argument is heard, a record of the oral argument shall be kept. The recording of the oral argument may be transcribed and the recording or copy of the transcription maintained by the Stated Clerk of the higher court. In the case of an appeal to the next higher court, a party may request a copy of the transcript. The cost of transcription shall be borne by the requesting party. G. The members of the higher court, in their deliberations, shall express their opinions, deliberate upon and vote on the issues raised. H. The vote shall be taken on each ground for appeal set forth in the statement⁵⁹ filed in this form: “Shall this ground for appeal be sustained?” 13-10 Decision on Appeal A. The higher court may	Punctuation of numbered lists has been edited throughout for consistency and to conform to a consensus of published style guides.

⁵⁹ See Proposed D.13-6.

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
1. Confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court; or 2. Remand the case to the lower court for the purpose of amending the Record of the Case, should it appear incorrect or defective; or 3. Remand the case to the lower court with instructions. B. If the higher court or commission deems it wise, it may also render a written opinion which shall become a part of the Record of the Case. C. Any and all persons, including members of the higher court who were involved with, have intimate knowledge of, or otherwise participated in the underlying judgment of the lower court, are precluded from involvement with the higher court in its determination of the issues on appeal. 13-11 Counsel All parties shall have the right of counsel consistent with D.10-3. 13-12 Abandonment of Appeal Absent extenuating circumstances made known to the higher court beforehand, the appellant shall be deemed to have abandoned his appeal if he does not comply with the procedures set forth above. In such cases, the judgment of the lower court will stand, unless the higher court determines that the subject matter of the appeal is so serious that the peace and purity of the church is at stake. In such a case, the higher court, in its discretion, may nonetheless decide the appeal.	1. Confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court, 2. Remand the case to the lower court for the purpose of amending the Record of the Case, should it appear incorrect or defective, 3. Remand the case to the lower court with instructions. B. If the higher court deems it wise, it may also render a written opinion which shall become a part of the Record of the Case. C. Any and all persons, including members of the higher court who were involved with, have intimate knowledge of, or otherwise participated in the underlying judgment of the lower court, are precluded from involvement with the higher court in its determination of the issues on appeal. 13-11 Counsel Both parties shall have the right of counsel.⁶⁰ 13-12 Abandonment of Appeal Absent extenuating circumstances made known to the higher court beforehand, the Appellant shall be deemed to have abandoned the appeal if the Appellant does not comply with the procedures set forth above. In such cases, the judgment of the lower court will stand, unless the higher court determines that the subject matter of the appeal is so serious that the peace and purity of the church is at stake. In such a case, the higher court, in its discretion, may nonetheless decide the appeal.	“Commission” has been deleted as unnecessary in this context. There are only two parties, so “both” is correct. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context.

⁶⁰ See Proposed D.10-3

Current Chapter 13	Proposed Chapter 13	Rationale
13-13 Conduct of the Parties If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude in the appeal process, he may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. 13-14 Failure to File the Record If the Clerk of a lower court neglects or willfully fails to file the Record of the Case, or any part of it, the Clerk may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. Until the complete Record of the Case is filed with the higher court, the judgment of the lower court may be stayed at the discretion of the higher court. If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the appellant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at his own expense.	13-13 Conduct of the Parties If a member of either party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude in the appeal process, that person may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. 13-14 Failure to File the Record If the Clerk of a lower court neglects or willfully fails to file the Record of the Case, or any part of it, the Clerk may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. Until the complete Record of the Case is filed with the higher court, the judgment of the lower court may be stayed at the discretion of the higher court. If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the Appellant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at the Appellant's expense.	There are only two parties Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context. A court is one of the parties and only a person can be disciplined. Gender-specific pronoun unnecessary in this context.

Chapter 14 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
— 14 — COMPLAINTS 14-1 Complaint Defined A complaint is a written contention made to a higher court challenging some act or decision of a lower court that seeks a remedy.	— 14 — COMPLAINTS 14-1 Complaint Defined A. A Complaint is a written contention signed by an eligible member⁶¹⁶² to a higher court	Wording changes clarify who may file a complaint and that a complaint may not be filed regarding a

⁶¹ See eligibility requirements in Proposed D.14-2.

⁶² A person filing a complaint should use the appropriate “Form for Discipline.” A signed copy transmitted electronically is considered a “written contention.”

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
14-2 Standing to File a Complaint A. It is the right of any member of the church in good standing to make complaint against any action of a lower court to whose jurisdiction he is subject. <i>[Following sentence moved to proposed 14-2C]</i> A complaint shall not be made to any court other than the next higher court, except with the consent of the next higher court. B. Notwithstanding the above, a member of the church shall not have standing to file a complaint under this chapter in the following circumstances: 1. When an ecclesiastical judicial proceeding has been appealed pursuant to Chapter 13 of this Book of Discipline and the member is a party to that ecclesiastical judicial proceeding; or 2. When the member is a Teaching or Ruling Elder who was present at the meeting at which the challenged action was taken, unless a prompt written dissent or protest to the decision by the lower court or commission made the basis of the complaint has been submitted. 14-3 Initiation of Chapter 14 Case	challenging some non-judicial⁶³ act or decision made by the lower court and seeking a remedy. B. A Complaint may be filed with the higher court only after attempts to obtain a remedy at the lower court have been unsuccessful.⁶⁴ 14-2 Eligibility to File a Complaint A. It is the right of any member on the active roll of the church to file a Complaint against any act or decision of a Session to whom the member is subject provided the Complainant is not under sanctions. B. It is the right of any Teaching or Ruling Elder to file a Complaint against an act or decision taken by a Presbytery provided that 1. The Teaching Elder is an active or Associate member of the Presbytery, 2. The Ruling Elder a) Was a duly elected Commissioner at the meeting at which the action was taken or the decision was made, or b) Is in active service on the Session of a church in the Presbytery, provided the Ruling Elder, the Session, or the church was substantially impacted by the act or decision. C. A Complaint shall only be made to the next higher court, except with the consent of that court. 14-3 Initiation of Complaint	decision in an action for discipline. Remedies for judicial decisions come through Appeal (chapter 13). 14-1B has been added to ensure that attempts have been made to resolve issues before escalating the matter to a higher court. “Eligibility” has been substituted for “standing” throughout for simplicity of language. The phrase “act or decision” has been incorporated throughout for internal consistency. “In good standing has been dropped and instead defined as on the active roll and not under sanctions. Experience has shown that the wording of current 14-2B is difficult to understand and apply. Proposed 14-2B includes input received from the Permanent Judicial Commission, broadening the eligibility requirements for filing a Complaint and making the boundaries for eligibility more clear. In the proposed revision, it is no longer necessary to file a dissent or protest to be eligible to file a complaint. Text from current 14-2A has been moved to proposed 14-2C.

⁶³ Judicial decisions may be appealed following the processes in Proposed D.13.

⁶⁴ See proposed D.14-6.

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
A complaint initiates a case under this Chapter 14 against a court in the following manner: A. A complaint shall only be made when the action or decision of the court is alleged to be procedurally irregular and/or in clear violation of the EPC Constitution. B. A complaint shall set forth with particularity all of the facts and reasons why the action or decision of the court is being challenged. This includes reference to the specific provisions of the EPC Constitution, or any applicable bylaws or rules alleged to have been violated. 14-4 Designation of the Parties The party filing the complaint shall be designated as the “Complainant.” The court shall be designated as the “Respondent,” even if the action or decision being challenged is the action or decision of a commission appointed by the court. 14-5 Filing a Complaint A. A complaint challenging an action or decision of a court or a commission appointed by the court shall be filed with the Clerk of the next higher court. 1. A complaint challenging an action or decision taken by a Session or by its duly appointed commission shall be	A Complaint initiates a case against a court in the following manner: A. A complaint shall only be made when the action or decision of the court is alleged to be procedurally irregular and/or in clear violation of the EPC Constitution. B. A complaint shall set forth with particularity all of the facts and reasons why the action or decision of the court is being challenged. This includes reference to the specific provisions of the EPC Constitution, or any applicable bylaws or rules alleged to have been violated. C. A complaint shall state the specific remedy being sought. D. Once a complaint has been filed, the provisions for <i>ex parte</i> communications apply⁶⁵ 14-4 Designation of the Parties The party filing the complaint shall be designated as the “Complainant.” The court shall be designated as the “Respondent,” even if the action or decision being challenged is the action or decision of a commission appointed by the court. 14-5 Filing a Complaint A. A complaint challenging an act or decision of a court or a commission appointed by the court shall be filed with the Clerk of the next higher court. 1. A complaint challenging an act or decision taken by a Session or by its duly appointed commission shall be commenced by filing	“Complaint” has been substituted for “Chapter 14 Case” for clarity. Proposed 14-3C has been added for clarity and internal consistency. The definition of “complaint” (proposed 14-1) includes seeking a remedy to the effects of the decision in question. 14-3D has been added in response to questions that have arisen about the Complaint process. “Act” has been substituted for “action” throughout.

⁶⁵ See proposed chapter 6 for provisions regarding *ex parte* communications.

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
commenced by filing a complaint with the Presbytery in which the church is located or is otherwise aligned. 2. A complaint challenging an action or decision of the Presbytery, or by its duly appointed commission, shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the General Assembly. B. A copy of the complaint shall be served upon the lower court by providing its Clerk with a copy thereof at the same time that the complaint is filed with the Clerk of the next higher court. 14-6 Time Period for Filing a Complaint A complaint shall be filed with the next higher court no later than thirty (30) days after the date of the lower court action or decision made the basis of the complaint. Exceptions to this time period may be allowed in cases when: A. The Complainant legitimately had no knowledge of the lower court action or decision within the thirty (30)-day period. B. The Complainant may otherwise petition the higher court to file an untimely complaint to avoid manifest injustice. The decision on such	a complaint with the Presbytery in which the church is located or is otherwise aligned. 2. A complaint challenging an act or decision taken by a Presbytery, or by its duly appointed commission, shall be commenced by filing a complaint with the General Assembly. B. A copy of the complaint shall be served upon the lower court by providing its Clerk with a copy thereof at the same time that the complaint is filed with the Clerk of the next higher court. 14-6 Time Period for Filing a Complaint A. A complaint may be filed with the next higher court only after the eligible member of the church or court⁶⁶ has attempted to resolve the issue forming the basis for the complaint with the lower court and 1. The response of the lower court has not satisfied the concern of the member, or 2. The lower court has failed to respond by the close of its next stated meeting. B. A Complaint shall be filed with the next higher court no later than thirty days after the lower court's response or failure to respond. C. Exceptions to this time period may be allowed in cases when 1. The Complainant legitimately had no knowledge of the lower court action or decision within the thirty-day period, or 2. The Complainant petitions the higher court to file an untimely complaint to avoid a miscarriage of justice.	The added stipulation in D.14-6 ensures that there is an attempt to resolve the issue at the lower court before escalating the matter to a higher court. Parentetical number is unnecessary (Chicago Manual of Style Online). "Miscarriage of justice" has been substituted for "manifest injustice" for simplicity of language.

⁶⁶ See proposed D.14-2B for eligibility requirements

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
a petition is solely within the discretion of the higher court. 14-7 Stay Pending Hearing on the Complaint A. When a complaint is properly filed regarding a judgment made in a disciplinary action, rather than an appeal under D.13, notice of filing of the complaint shall have the effect of suspending the judgment of the lower court until the case has been finally decided in the higher court. If, however, the matter concerns the purity or peace of the church, the court may, either on its own motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided. B. When a complaint is properly filed challenging the action or decision of a lower court in a non-disciplinary proceeding, notice of filing the complaint shall not automatically stay the action or decision of the lower court. However, the higher court, in which the complaint is filed, may, either on its own motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided. 14-8 Court Procedures upon the Filing of a Complaint A. When a complaint is filed with the higher court, the court shall determine whether the complaint states grounds on which relief may be granted. If the court determines the	3. Decisions on such exceptions are solely within the discretion of the higher court. 14-7 Stay Pending Hearing on the Complaint A. Reception of the complaint by the higher court temporarily stays the action of the lower court. If the higher court determines that the complaint is properly filed, the stay continues until the matter is finally decided. B. If the higher court determines that the complaint is not properly filed, the stay will ordinarily be lifted. If the matter concerns the purity or peace of the church, the court may, either on its own motion or in response to an application filed by a party to the action and for sufficient reasons duly recorded, stay the action of the lower court until the case is finally decided. 14-8 Court Procedures upon the Filing of a Complaint A. When a Complaint is filed with the higher court, the court shall determine whether the Complaint cites constitutional or procedural grounds⁶⁷ on which relief may be granted. If	Proposed D.14-6C.3 has been added for clarity in the process. The text of current 14-7 A has been enumerated for clarity. Proposed 14-7A and B clarify what happens to the action of a lower court during the Complaint process. Much of current D.14-7A has been deleted because in the proposed Revision, Complaints may only be filed regarding non-judicial actions (proposed D.14-1A). Filing a Complaint temporarily stays the action of the lower court upon reception of the complaint. If the Complaint is not in order, the action of the lower court will ordinarily resume, but the higher court has discretion to continue the temporary stay if the situation warrants. If the Complaint is in order, the action remains stayed until there is a decision in the case. See current 14-13. Current 14-7 B has been deleted as unnecessary due to proposed 14-7A. “Constitutional or procedural” has been added throughout for clarity in the process of the Higher

⁶⁷ See proposed D.14-3A

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
against which the complaint has been made or send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for further consideration or action. 2. To direct the lower court to appoint one or more representatives to defend the complaint against it, and further direct the appointed representative to file an answer to the complaint no later than thirty (30) days from the order of the higher court. The lower court may request a one-time extension of fifteen (15) days to file its answer. The answer shall respond to each allegation in the complaint and shall set forth with specificity all defenses on which the lower court relies. C. The Record of the Case The lower court shall file the record of the case concurrently with its answer to the complaint pursuant to B.2 above. The Record of the Case shall consist of any and all documents in the lower court's possession relating to the complaint made against it. In every case a full record shall be made, and a copy of it shall be sent to the Complainant. If the Complainant, on motion duly filed, contends that the record is incomplete or incorrect, the Complainant may file a proposed supplement to the Record of the Case within fifteen (15) days of the filing of the Record of the Case. D. Reviewing the Record Upon receipt of the full and complete record of the case as determined by the higher court, the higher court shall then review the record in its entirety, except any part of it that may be	1. To void the whole or any part of the lower court action against which the complaint has been made, 2. To send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for further consideration or action, 3. To direct the lower court to appoint one or more representatives to answer the Complaint against it, 4. To direct the appointed representative(s) to file an answer to the Complaint no later than thirty days from the order of the higher court. a) The lower court may request a one-time extension of fifteen days to file its answer. b) The answer shall respond to each allegation in the Complaint and shall set forth with specificity all defenses on which the lower court relies. D. The Record of the Case The lower court shall file the record of the case concurrently with its answer to the complaint. The Record of the Case shall consist of any and all documents in the lower court's possession relating to the complaint made against it. In every case a full record shall be made, and a copy of it shall be sent to the Complainant. If the Complainant, on motion duly filed, contends that the Record is incomplete or incorrect, the Complainant may file a proposed supplement to the Record of the Case within fifteen days of the filing of the Record of the Case. E. Reviewing the Record Upon receipt of the full and complete record of the case as determined by the higher court, the higher court shall then review the Record in its entirety, except any part of it that may be	"Answer" is more descriptive than "defend" and is internally consistent. Current 14-8B.2 has been split into proposed 14-8C.3 and 4 for clarity. Parenthetical numbers are unnecessary (Chicago Manual of Style Online). Phrase deleted as unnecessary.

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
omitted with the mutual consent of the parties and the higher court. E. The higher court may seek clarification of matters or direct questions to the Complainant and/or Respondent in writing. F. Oral Argument and Notice of Hearing The higher court may permit oral argument. If the higher court determines oral argument will be allowed, it shall provide all parties with reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing on the complaint. This notice may be provided in person or by other means establishing proof of service. G. If oral argument is allowed, either party may file a written summary of their argument with the higher court no later than fifteen (15) days before the date of the hearing. The Complainant shall have the right of opening and closing the argument. H. Deliberations of the Court: Upon conclusion of the arguments, the members of the higher court shall convene in private and each member shall be given an opportunity to express his opinions, deliberate upon, and vote on the question.	omitted with the mutual consent of both parties and the higher court. F. The higher court may seek clarification of matters or direct questions to the Complainant and/or Respondent in writing. G. Oral Argument and Notice of Hearing The higher court may permit oral argument. If the higher court determines oral argument will be allowed, it shall provide both parties with reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing on the complaint. This notice may be provided in person or by other means establishing proof of service. H. If Oral Argument is allowed, either party may file a written summary of their Argument with the higher court no later than fifteen days before the date of the hearing. The Complainant shall have the right of opening and closing the argument. I. Deliberations of the Court Upon conclusion of the arguments, the members of the higher court shall convene in private, all members shall be given an opportunity to express their opinions, deliberate upon, and vote on the question.	“Both” has been used throughout as there are only 2 parties in a complaint. Gender-specific pronoun deleted as unnecessary in this context.
14-9 Voting upon a Complaint A. Specification of the vote In voting upon a complaint, the vote shall be either to sustain, to sustain in part, or not to sustain. B. Effect of a vote to sustain or not to sustain A vote to sustain shall be to sustain each and all of the items or counts of the complaint. A vote not to sustain shall be to deny the relief sought by each count of the complaint.	14-9 Voting upon a Complaint A. Specification of the vote In voting upon a complaint, the vote shall be either to sustain, to sustain in part, or not to sustain. B. Effect of a vote to sustain or not to sustain 1. A vote to sustain shall be to sustain each and all of the items or counts of the complaint. A vote not to sustain shall be to	Current 14-9B has been enumerated for clarity.

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
A vote to sustain in part shall be to sustain one or more specific items or counts of the complaint. C. A majority vote of those members of the court present is required to sustain, not to sustain, or to sustain in part the counts of the complaint. D. Written opinion. The court may issue a written opinion explaining its decision, which shall become part of the Record of the Case. E. Right to Vote No member of the lower court who participated in the action or decision made the basis of the complaint shall hear, deliberate upon, or vote on the allegations of the complaint being heard by the next higher court. 14-10 — Counsel All parties shall have the right of counsel as described in D.9-3. 14-11 Abandonment of Complaint A Complainant shall be considered to have abandoned his complaint if he does not appear before the higher court in person or by counsel at the time set for the hearing. In such cases the act or decision of the lower court will stand, unless the complainant can provide the court with a satisfactory explanation for his failure to appear or the higher court, in its discretion, chooses to act upon the complaint in the interests of the Church. 14-12 Unchristian Attitude	deny the relief sought by each count of the complaint. 2. A vote to sustain in part shall be to sustain one or more specific items or counts of the complaint. C. Majority vote requiredA majority vote of those members of the court present is required to sustain, not to sustain, or to sustain in part the counts of the complaint. D. Written opinion The court may issue a written opinion explaining its decision, which shall become part of the Record of the Case <u>in the lower court.</u> E. Right to Vote No member of the lower court who participated in the action or decision made the basis of the complaint shall hear, deliberate upon, or vote on the allegations of the complaint being heard by the next higher court. 14-10 Abandonment of Complaint If a Complainant does not appear before the higher court in person at the time set for the hearing, the complaint shall be considered abandoned. In such cases the act or decision of the lower court will stand, unless the Complainant can provide the court with a satisfactory explanation for failure to appear or the higher court chooses to act upon the complaint in the interests of the Church.	“In the lower court” has been added for clarity in the process. Counsel is not needed in the non-judical situations that give rise to a Complaint. First sentence edited for clarity. “His” deleted as unnecessary. “In its discretion” deleted as unnecessary.

Current Chapter 14	Proposed Chapter 14	Rationale
If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude, he may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. 14-13 Failure to File the Record If a lower court shall neglect to file the Record of the Case or any part of it, to the harm of the complainant, it may receive a proper rebuke from the higher court. Thereupon, the act or decision upon which the complaint is based shall be suspended until the record is produced upon which the issue can be fairly heard. If the lower court shall file a portion of the record by electronic means, the complainant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at his own expense.	14-12 Unchristian Attitude If any party willfully fails to comply with these rules or demonstrates a litigious or otherwise unchristian attitude, that party may be subject to appropriate discipline by the higher court. 14-13 Failure to File the Record A. If a lower court neglects to file the Record of the Case or any part of it, to the harm of the Complainant, it may receive a proper rebuke from the higher court. B. If the lower court files a portion of the record by electronic means, the Complainant shall have the right to prepare a written transcript of it at the Complainant's expense.	Gender-specific pronoun not necessary. "Shall" deleted as unnecessary. Final sentence of the first paragraph current 14-13 unnecessary due to proposed 14-7A. When a complaint is received with clear and proper grounds, the act or decision of the Lower Court is paused.

Chapter 15 – Proposed Book of Discipline Revision

Current Chapter 15	Proposed Chapter 15	Rationale
— 15 — DISSENT AND PROTEST 15-1 Dissent A dissent is a statement on the record by members of a minority objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any expression of dissent shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for dissent. 15-2 Protest A protest is a more solemn and formal statement on the record by members of a minority, strenuously objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous judgment. Any protest shall be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for protest. 15-3 Record of Protest or Dissent If a protest or dissent contains temperate language, and is respectful to the court, it shall be placed in the Record of the Case. The court may, if it believes it is necessary, respond to the protest or dissent. The matter shall be ended unless the persons protesting obtain permission to withdraw or amend their protest. 15-4 Right to Vote Required None can join in a dissent or protest against a decision of any court except those who had a right to vote in the case.	— 15 — DISSENT AND PROTEST 15-1 Dissent A dissent is a statement on the record by members of a minority of a court objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous act or decision of a court. Any expression of dissent shall be made before adjournment of the meeting and a written statement for the reasons should be sent to the Clerk of the court within 30 days 15-2 Protest A protest is a more solemn and formal statement on the record by members of a minority of a court, strenuously objecting to what they believe to be an ill-advised or erroneous act or decision of a court. Any expression of protest shall be made before adjournment of the meeting and a written statement for the reasons should be sent to the clerk of the court within 30 days. 15-3 Record of Protest or Dissent If a protest or dissent contains temperate language and is respectful to the court, it shall be placed in the Record of the court. If the court believes it is necessary, it may respond to the protest or the dissent. The matter shall be ended unless the persons protesting obtain permission to withdraw or amend their protest. 15-4 Right to Vote Required None can join in a dissent or protest against a decision of any court except those who had a right to vote in the case.	“Of a court” added for clarity. “Act or” added throughout for internal consistency The additional language clarifies the process of registering a dissent. The dissent must be expressed before the meeting adjourns and a written statement must be sent to the Clerk within 30 days. It is not reasonable to require a written statement at the meeting itself, especially if the action prompting dissent occurs near the end of the meeting. “Of a court” added for clarity. The additional language clarifies the process of registering a protest. The process for dissent and protest are the same A protest or a dissent is not a “case,” but it is necessary to have a record of it in the minutes.

SURVIVAL GUIDE for Clerks of Sessions

If you have served as a Clerk of Session, you already know the expectations of your office described in the Book of Government. If you'd like to see them in one manageable piece, you will find the relevant sections inserted below.

BOG § 8-6 Record of rolls

The Clerk of Session shall record all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding members.

BOG § 18-2 B. Clerk of Session

Each Session shall elect a Clerk.

1. Eligibility

The Clerk of Session must be a Ruling Elder, but does not need to be currently serving on the Session.

2. Minutes

The Clerk of Session shall ensure that a careful record of the proceedings of the court is kept. When the Session has approved the minutes, they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall submit the minutes to the Presbytery annually.

3. Church Registry

The Clerk of Session shall ensure that a careful record is kept in the minutes and in a separate registry of all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding membership.

4. Property transactions

The Clerk of Session shall ensure that all transactions regarding real and personal property have been properly recorded with civil authorities as required unless this responsibility has been committed to the church Trustees, Deacons, or Treasurer.

BOG § 18-4 C. Minutes

A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Clerk of Session, who bears responsibility for providing certified extracts when required. When the Church Session has approved the minutes, they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall submit the minutes to the Presbytery annually.

Reporting Requirements
for
Clerks of Sessions

The Clerk of Session sends and receives all correspondence on behalf of the Session. In that capacity, there are certain forms and reports each Clerk must submit to Presbytery or General Assembly at certain times of the year.

Report	Date Due	Goes to	Contents
Annual Church Report	February	GA	Membership and Financial data ¹
Terms of Call changes	January ²	Ministerial Ch.	Changes in terms of call for each Teaching Elder
Faith Commitment Form	January ³	Treasurer	Pledged giving for Presbytery causes
Commissioner Registration	February, May, October ⁴	Stated Clerk	Ruling Elders selected by Session to attend Presbytery meeting
Commissioner Registration	May	GA office	Ruling Elders selected by Session to attend General Assembly meeting ⁵
Session Minutes	at least quarterly	Session Review Committee floridapresbytery@gmail.com	Final version of minutes for all Session & Congregational meetings
Endorsement of Candidate	as needed	Ministerial Ch.	Session endorsement of candidate seeking ordination
Endorsement of Nominee	on request	GA Nominating Committee	Session endorsement of RE nominated for Permanent GA Committee
Memorial Record	April	GA office	record of TEs or REs who passed away since the previous General Assembly

¹ Prepared with help of Church Treasurer and filed electronically online.

² Following Annual Congregational Meeting

³ As soon as Session approves the annual budget

⁴ Presbytery holds Stated Meetings on the 3rd Saturday of February, May, & October. Each Session selects Ruling Elders for each Presbytery meeting and the Clerk of Session sends in the registration form.

⁵ General Assembly sends information packets to all Churches. Registration may be made online but certification of Commissioners must be signed by Clerk of Session and mailed or faxed to GA

Keeping Things Moving

The Clerk of Session is more than a recording secretary and record keeper. The Clerk is also the one who reminds staff and Elders in advance of upcoming deadlines. You may need to remind the Session to schedule the Annual Congregational Meeting or to activate the Nominating Committee.

In matters regarding Presbytery, you will want to remind all ordained staff to fill out the Annual Report of Ministers of the Word each year, generally around the end of the year.

You will need to remind the Session by January to elect Ruling Elders to attend the February Stated Meeting of Presbytery. Likewise in April for the May meeting and September for the October meeting. Selecting Commissioners to General Assembly should begin in April so that travel plans and registration are not rushed.

My office sends out information packets to all Teaching Elders, Clerks of Sessions, and Presbytery Committee members before each Stated Meeting. Your Teaching Elder Commissioners may get that packet directly, but assume that you are the single point of contact for your church. The packet will have all necessary forms attached, plus the forms will be available on the Florida Presbytery Dropbox folder. If you are not yet signed on to Dropbox, let me know and I'll resend your invitation. **YOU MUST MAKE** sure that all Commissioners to Presbytery and General Assembly have hard copies of necessary papers. For Presbytery that means any advance reports plus the current Docket. For General Assembly it may mean printing the Commissioners Handbook for those who haven't received it in time.

Most of the addresses you will need can be found in the Presbytery Directory on the Dropbox folder. This file is regularly updated and has meeting dates, Committee lists, contact information for all Churches and Ministers including Stated Clerk, Treasurer, Moderator, and Committee Chairmen.

Contact me whenever you have a question via my email pastorgarment@gmail.com and **PLEASE LET ME KNOW IMMEDIATELY** if your Church changes personnel for Clerk of Session.

PCC Committee List

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

40 people

Report Date: September 23, 2026

Name	Primary Email	PCC Committee Member	PCC Executive Council
Tim Burns	timburnscpa@gmail.com	Stewardship Committee	Treasurer
Mike Rashid	mrashid@lakeforest.org	Stewardship Committee	
Joseph Clark	Newcutepc47@gmail.com	Stewardship Committee	
John Brown	jbrown@theobedproject.org	Stewardship Committee	
Donovan Campbell	pastordonovanepc@gmail.com	Stewardship Committee	Stewardship Chair
Dennis Burt	dburt48@gmail.com	Stewardship Committee	
Thomas Davis	tdavis1520@gmail.com	Mission Committee	
Shawn Stewart	Shawn.s@epcwo.org	Mission Committee	
Kevin Hartley	kevin.hartley@my.gcu.edu	Mission Committee	
Kenneth Thomas	KenDThomas53@gmail.com	Mission Committee	Mission Chair
Gabe Swing	gabeswing@thresholdchurch.com	Mission Committee	
Doug Vinez	dkvinez@gmail.com	Mission Committee	
Dan Newcomer	johnnewcomer48@gmail.com	Mission Committee	
Cyndie Howard	cyndiehoward@gmail.com	Mission Committee	
Abby Vinez	aavinez@gmail.com	Mission Committee	
Paul Saleeby	Paul@bhpres.org	Ministerial Committee	
Michael Price	pricemk83@gmail.com	Ministerial Committee	
Karen Crowell	kcgrits@aol.com	Ministerial Committee	
Howard Quach	ricevillehq@gmail.com	Ministerial Committee	
George Schwab	schwab@erskine.edu	Ministerial Committee	
Eric Bartel	dr.eric.bartel@gmail.com	Ministerial Committee	Moderator
Butch Hill	mincom@carolinasepc.org	Ministerial Committee	Ministerial Chair
Nicole Unice	nicole@nicoleunice.com	Church Planting	
Michael Krauter	mikekrauter@gmail.com	Church Planting	
MaryRobin Gibson	mgibson@lakeforest.org	Church Planting	
Logan Keck	logan@thecentrechurch.org	Church Planting	Church Planting Chair
Katie Piquette	katie.piquette@gmail.com	Church Planting	
Jesse McDonald	jcmbychristolone@gmail.com	Church Planting	
Anthony Rodriguez	anthony@valleyhope.church	Church Planting	
Robert Wallace	robertbigfrog@gmail.com	Church Development	
Rob McClelland	rmcclelland@hendersonvillepc.org	Church Development	
Mark Dickinson	preachermpc@gmail.com	Church Development	

Name	Primary Email	PCC Committee Member	PCC Executive Council
Laura Morris	familiamorris@gmail.com	Church Development	
David Taylor	david@cccmontreat.org	Church Development	
Brian Martin	bmartin061@gmail.com	Church Development	Church Health Director
Bill Wade	bill@overbrookpres.com	Church Development	Chaplain
Anita Hill	ahh704@gmail.com	Church Development	Church Development Chair
Robert Howard	statedclerk@carolinasepc.org		Stated Clerk
Chris Godley	communications@carolinasepc.org		Communications Director
Brian Land	brianland@gmail.com		Missional Director



CHURCH PLANTER REGIONAL DIRECTOR REPORT

AUGUST 2026

REGIONAL DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

The goal of the Regional Director/NHCPN Executive Director is to help create momentum, strategy and guidance for church planting in each presbytery, developing a long-term plan for all components needed for a sustainable and self-perpetuating church planting system.

This role will also provide soul care and relational support for church planter couples. This is accomplished by using a review process for gospel transformation, planter couple health and leadership development in each church plant funded by the network.

Funding for this role is split between each presbytery and NHCPN.

YEARLY TASKS will include but not limited to the following:

- Casting church planting vision and identify strategic target areas for church planting within the region
- Coach individual churches and presbyteries on effective church multiplication strategies.
- Coach and encourage individual church planters in the region
- Create a church planter pipeline by recruiting new church planters
- Assist in fund raising for regional church planting
- Educate existing churches on how to become a parent, partner, or patron of EPC church planting
- Serve on the national church planting leadership team to ensure collaboration in church planting across the EPC, meeting 2 times in person with monthly check ins with the director over zoom.
- Network, train and connect with planters and pastors at GA.
- Provide care, support and equipping at the national CP retreat.

- Engage in Incubator training and coaching, in person 2 x a year, also with monthly zoom meetings.
- Attend at least 2 presbyteries 3x a year with the goal of presenting on the floor about the RD work, and engaging planter couples for conversation and connection,
- Meet with the board 6 x a year with one in person meeting annually.
- Connect with the MD of each presbytery to keep them apprised of the work.
- Attend church development meetings in the each presbytery when possible over zoom or in person.
-

2026 UPDATES:

- We have 6 planters from the region currently attending City to City Incubator Training in person 2x a year and monthly over zoom. We will have 1 new planter joining in 2026. NHCPN has paid \$1300 for each of these planters and \$2500 for two to be trained as coaches.
- We are praying and recruiting for a planter in Myrtle Beach SC and Mebane NC.
- We will have a regional retreat in Asheville NC from October 5-8 2026.
- We have a growing Latino church planting pipeline(25) and hope to bring in a new Latino planter to each presbytery in the next 2 years.
- Direct and administrate our Church Planting assessment at least 1 a year, with the goal of collaborating with WO for 2027.

		2027 Request	2026 Budget	2026 Actual as of 8.31	Change
<u>Revenues</u>					
POI Church Giving		\$ 185,000	\$ 183,500	\$ 75,405	\$ 1,500
Individual		\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -
Presbytery Offering		\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,258	\$ -
GA - Church Health Coord.		\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 6,000	\$ -
	Budgeted Revenue	\$ 200,000	\$ 198,500	\$ 83,663	\$ 1,500
					\$ -
<u>Executive Council</u>					
Missional Director Salary		\$ 36,000	\$ 36,000	\$ 18,000	\$ -
Missional Director Travel		\$ 6,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 2,358	\$ (1,000)
Communications Director		\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 6,000	\$ -
Stated Clerk Salary		\$ 36,000	\$ 36,000	\$ 18,000	\$ -
Stated Clerk Travel		\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,090	\$ -
Church Health Coord. Salary		\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 8,000	\$ -
Church Health Coord. Travel		\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000		\$ 500
GA Travel		\$ 5,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 2,890	\$ (2,000)
Council Expenses		\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 48	\$ -
Office Expenses		\$ 500	\$ 900		\$ (400)
	Total Executive Council	\$ 111,000	\$ 113,900	\$ 56,386	\$ (2,900)
<u>Ministerial Committee</u>					
Committee Expenses		\$ 6,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,075	\$ 2,000
Commissioner Assistance		\$ 500	\$ 500		\$ -
Chaplain Travel		\$ 500	\$ 500		\$ -
Pastoral Needs (Barnabas)		\$ 5,250	\$ 5,250	\$ 1,375	\$ -
	Total Ministerial	\$ 12,250	\$ 10,250	\$ 4,450	\$ 2,000
<u>Stewardship Committee</u>					
Committee Expenses		\$ 150	\$ 150		\$ -
Zoom & IT		\$ 500	\$ 600	\$ 173	\$ (100)
Quickbooks		\$ 500			\$ 500
Web & Database		\$ 500	\$ 1,200	\$ 141	\$ (700)
Treasurer Stipend		\$ 12,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000
Treasurer Expenses		\$ 800	\$ 800		\$ -
Payroll Expenses		\$ 400	\$ 500	\$ 133	\$ (100)
Liability Insurance		\$ 700	\$ 900	\$ 305	\$ (200)
Misc Travel		\$ 500	\$ 600		\$ (100)
	Total Stewardship	\$ 16,050	\$ 14,750	\$ 5,752	\$ 1,300

		2027 Request	2026 Budget	2026 Actual as of 8.31	Change
<u>Church Development Committee</u>					
Presbytery Mtgs.		\$ 3,500	\$ 4,000	\$ 993	\$ (500)
Cohort Gatherings		\$ 4,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 49	\$ 1,500
Coaches Training, Resourcing & Trav		\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000		\$ -
Small Church Network Grants			\$ 2,000	\$ 90	\$ (2,000)
CDC/MC Transitional Training & Supp		\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		\$ -
	Total CDC	\$ 11,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 1,132	\$ (1,000)
<u>Church Planting Committee</u>					
Buen Samaritano		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Valley Hope Residency		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -
West Lake Residency		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -
UCity		\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000
Training and Events		\$ 7,000			\$ 7,000
Regional Director		\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 3,000	\$ -
Church Planting Network Dinner		\$ 1,000	\$ 600		\$ 400
Development			\$ 4,000		\$ (4,000)
GA Church Planting Conference			\$ 5,000	\$ 800	\$ (5,000)
	Total Church Planting	\$ 49,000	\$ 45,600	\$ 18,800	\$ 3,400
<u>Missions Committee</u>					
Committee Expenses		\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500		\$ -
	Total Missions	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ -
					\$ -
	Budgeted Expenses	\$ 201,300	\$ 198,500	\$ 86,520	\$ 2,800
	NET	\$ (1,300)	\$ -	\$ (2,857)	

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Statement of Revenues and Expenses
January-August, 2026

	Actual	Budget	Variance
Income			
40000 POI Church Giving	117,131.62	122,333.33	(5,201.71)
41000 Individual Giving	1,300.00	666.67	633.33
43000 Presbytery Offering	1,257.83	1,333.33	(75.50)
44000 Church Health Coordinator- GA	6,000.00	8,000.00	(2,000.00)
Total for Income	\$125,689.45	132,333.33	(6,643.88)
Gross Profit	\$125,689.45	132,333.33	(6,643.88)
Expenses			
60000 Executive Council			
60100 Missional Director Salary	24,000.00	24,000.00	-
60200 Missional Director Travel	3,008.77	4,666.67	(1,657.90)
60300 Communications Director	8,000.00	8,000.00	-
60400 Stated Clerk Salary	24,000.00	24,000.00	-
60500 Stated Clerk Travel	1,089.77	1,000.00	89.77
Salary	10,000.00	8,000.00	2,000.00
Travel	0.00	666.67	(666.67)
60800 GA Travel	4,132.83	4,666.67	(533.84)
60850 Council Expenses	227.23	333.33	(106.10)
60875 Office Expenses	0.00	600.00	(600.00)
Total for 60000 Executive Council	\$74,458.60	75,933.33	(1,474.73)
61000 Ministerial Committee			
61100 Committee Expenses	3,074.94	2,666.67	408.27
61200 Commissioner Assistance	0.00	333.33	(333.33)
61300 Chaplain Travel	0.00	333.33	(333.33)
61400 Pastoral Needs and Support	2,192.40	3,500.00	(1,307.60)
Total for 61000 Ministerial Committee	\$5,267.34	6,833.33	(1,565.99)
62000 Stewardship Committee			
62100 Committee Expenses	0.00	100.00	(100.00)
62200 Zoom and IT Expenses	172.69	400.00	(227.31)
62300 Web & Database Expenses	140.78	800.00	(659.22)
62400 Treasurer- Stipend	6,666.64	6,666.67	(0.03)
62450 Treasurer- Expenses	0.00	533.33	(533.33)
62500 Payroll Expenses	209.00	333.33	(124.33)
62600 Liability Insurance	406.56	600.00	(193.44)
62700 Travel	0.00	400.00	(400.00)
Committee	\$7,595.67	9,833.33	(2,237.66)
63000 Church Development Committee			
63100 Presbytery Meetings	992.94	2,666.67	(1,673.73)

63200 Cohort Gatherings	49.04	1,666.67	(1,617.63)
63300 Coaches Training and Travel	0.00	2,000.00	(2,000.00)
63400 Small Church Network	89.91	1,333.33	(1,243.42)
63500 CDC/MC Transitional Training & Support	0.00	666.67	(666.67)
Total for 63000 Church Development Committee	\$1,131.89	8,333.33	(7,201.44)
64000 Church Planting Committee			
64100 El Buen Samaritano-Lake Forest	6,666.68	6,666.67	0.01
64200 Valley Hope Residency	5,000.00	6,666.67	(1,666.67)
64300 Westlake Residency	5,000.00	6,666.67	(1,666.67)
64400 Development	0.00	2,666.67	(2,666.67)
64500 Regional Director	3,000.00	4,000.00	(1,000.00)
64599 GA Church Planting Conference	800.00	3,333.33	(2,533.33)
64700 Networking Dinner	0.00	400.00	(400.00)
Total for 64000 Church Planting Committee	\$20,466.68	30,400.00	(9,933.32)
65000 Missions Committee			
65200 Committee Expenses	0	1,000.00	(1,000.00)
Disaster Relief	14,725.00		14,725.00
Total for 65000 Missions Committee	\$14,725.00	\$1,000.00	\$13,725.00
Total for Expenses	\$123,645.18	\$132,333.33	\$(8,688.15)
Net Operating Income	\$2,044.27	\$0.00	\$2,044.27
Other Income			
47100 Sale of Park Avenue	280,772.00		280,772.00
Interest Income	2,285.71		2,285.71
Total for Other Income	\$283,057.71	\$0.00	\$283,057.71
Other Expenses			
Bank Service Charges	138.96		138.96
Park Avenue Expenses	16,621.74		16,621.74
Total for Other Expenses	\$16,760.70	\$0.00	\$16,760.70
Net Other Income	\$266,297.01	\$0.00	\$266,297.01
Net Income	\$268,341.28	\$0.00	\$268,341.28

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas
Percentage of Income Giving
January-August, 2026

	Total
Altan Presbyterian Church	450.00
Asheville Hope Community	
Banks Presbyterian	1,500.00
Bensalem EPC	2,011.21
Benton Heights	3,100.00
Bethlehem Presbyterian Church	1,561.00
Buck Hill Presbyterian	
Cameronian	
Centre Presbyterian	2,916.64
Christ Church	1,000.00
Christ Community Church	13,204.62
Christ Fellowship Church	500.00
Garden Memorial EPC	1,401.00
Grace Brevard	4,000.00
Grace Haven	
Greenville Presbyterian	2,500.00
Hendersonville	
Indian Hill	
Kershaw	1,100.00
Lake Forest	35,780.00
Lighthouse	
McBee Presbyterian	2,500.00
McLean Presbyterian	1,500.00
Nell Townsend Presbyterian	
New Cut Presbyterian	1,000.00
New Vision Church	
Overbrook	
Plumtree Church	
Riceville Valley Community	1,900.00
Rocky River Presbyterian	
Rourk Presbyterian Church	
Siler Presbyterian	4,500.00
St. Giles	800.00
St. Matthews Presbyterian	
Storyhill Church	18,500.00
The Village Church	
Threshold	3,336.00
Valley Hope Church	6,646.46

Walkersville	1,200.00
Warehouse	3,166.64
Warrenton Presbyterian	
TOTAL	\$116,073.57

Cash Basis Friday, September 18, 2026 06:50 PM GMT-04:00

Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

Statement of Financial Position

As of Aug 31, 2026

	Total
Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
10000 Operating Account	141,815.63
10100 Savings Account	81,029.55
10200 Fidelity Investments	402,214.66
Total for Bank Accounts	\$625,059.84
Other Current Assets	
12000 Deposits in Transit	0.00
Total for Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total for Current Assets	\$625,059.84
Total for Assets	\$625,059.84
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	
Total for Liabilities	
Equity	
33000 Temp. Restricted Net Assets	
33100 Donor Designated	
33110 Barnabas Fund	8,661.83
33115 Disaster Relief	14,779.63
33120 Missionary Emergency Fund	5,076.62
33130 Women's Ministry	3,655.76
Total for 33100 Donor Designated	\$32,173.84
33200 Board Designated Funds	
33210 Benevolence	0.00
33220 Reserves	388,533.38
33230 Park Avenue Presbyterian	0.00
Total for 33200 Board Designated Funds	\$388,533.38
Total for 33000 Temp. Restricted Net Assets	\$420,707.22
Unrestricted Net Assets	(63,988.66)
Net Income	268,341.28
Total for Equity	\$625,059.84
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$625,059.84