

# **Office-Bearers’ Handbook**

**Containing Decisions of Synods of the  
Reformed Churches of New Zealand  
1953–2022**

National Publishing Committee  
of the  
Reformed Churches of New Zealand

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## Preface

Synod 1971 decided “that a booklet be prepared to contain all the existing rules and by-laws of synodical committees plus any major decisions of previous synods, to be updated after every synod” (Acts 1971, Art. 80).

The first edition appeared in 1972 as a Church Order Booklet and also included a topical index of synodical decisions.

In the second edition, published in 1990 under the title *Office-Bearers’ Handbook*, some changes and additions in format and content were made. The topical index of synodical decisions was left out. It was published as a separate booklet for ease of updating.

The third edition has been published in 1994, sooner than expected because the demand exhausted the supply of the second edition. Since a reprint was necessary, it was decided to change to the smaller A5 size to correspond to our other publications.

Subsequent editions have been prepared in response to amendments to the Church Order and other synodical decisions. We pray that it may continue to be a useful reference tool for office-bearers and for members and committees of presbyteries and synod.

The sixth edition has been updated with the addition of the Guidelines for Sessions Having to Deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children, adopted in 2014; a new section on Ministers and Wives’ Conferences; and changes arising from the 2021/22 Synod.

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To distinguish between regulations and guidelines the following notes are added as per Acts 2011, Art. 96.2:

**Regulations (or Rules)** are procedures and processes designed to give the church clear ways of doing things. They are binding on the churches and may not be ignored by a session or church without seeking counsel thoroughly and widely. As a consequence, such a decision should be tested at the next synod.

**Guidelines** are not necessarily binding on a session or church but should be seen as a practical and biblically appropriate way to deal with the matter in question and have a direct or indirect reference to Scripture and/or our church polity documents (church order, confessional standards). Guidelines should not be ignored without good reason.

**Change Register**

<i>Edition</i>	<i>Date of change</i>	<i>Synod(s) changes arise from</i>	<i>Stated Clerk</i>
3.2	Nov 2002	1995, 1998, 2002	Bruce Hoyt
4	Aug 2013	2005, 2008, 2011	Pieter van der Wel
4.1	Mar 2016	2014	Pieter van der Wel
5	Jul 2018	2014, 2017	Pieter van der Wel
6	Mar 2022	2014, 2021	John van Dyk

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the Church Order

#### Article 1

In accordance with the apostolic injunction (1 Cor. 14:40) that in the Church of Christ all things are to be done decently and in order, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, in this *Church Order*, regulate their organisation and activities, so that they may fulfil their calling according to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions.

The main subjects treated in this Order are the Church's Offices, Assemblies, Worship and Discipline.

## Offices of the Church

### Two Kinds of Offices

#### Article 2

The ordinary and perpetual offices of the Church, as instituted by the authority of Christ for the Church, may be classified under two heads, as Elders and Deacons.

### Eligibility for Office

#### Article 3

Only Communicant Members of the Church who meet the biblical requirements for office-bearers are eligible for office. No one shall hold and exercise an office in the Church without a lawful call and ordination or installation.

### Legal Call to the Office

#### Article 4

The call to an office shall be executed by the session as follows:

1. Prior to making nomination, the session shall ordinarily give the congregation an opportunity to place names in nomination.
2. From these names and/or nominations made by the session, twice the number to be elected shall ordinarily be presented to the congregation.
3. The names of those being presented by the session shall be announced to the congregation on two successive Lord's Days to allow for lawful objections.
4. After prayer the election by the congregation shall take place under supervision of the session.
5. The right to vote shall be limited to communicant members in good standing.

**Ordination/Installation****Article 5**

All office-bearers shall be ordained or installed in public worship services with the use of the prescribed forms.

**Duration of Office****Article 6**

Elders and Deacons shall ordinarily serve a term of three years or more, according to local regulations.

**Re-election or Extension of Office****Article 7**

Retiring Elders and Deacons shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the well-being of any church render re-election or extension of time advisable.

**Installation Only****Article 8**

When any office-bearer has already been ordained, upon re-election to the same office, he shall be installed only.

**Form of Subscription****Article 9**

When office-bearers are ordained or installed, they shall be required to sign the Synodically accepted Form of Subscription.

## **Ministers of the Word**

**Who Is Eligible for Call****Article 10**

The following shall be eligible for call as Ministers of the Word and Sacraments:

1. Those who have followed the Synodically prescribed course of study and have subsequently been declared candidates by Presbytery;<sup>1</sup>
2. Those who are already in the ministry of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand or a sister-church;
3. Ministers of other denominations who have been declared eligible for call by Presbytery;
4. Those who have been declared candidates according to Article 12 of this Church Order.

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<sup>1</sup> Theological candidates are eligible for call who have successfully completed the prescribed course of study at the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, or its equivalent (Acts 1989, Art. 19.b).



**Colloquium Doctum****Article 11**

No Minister shall be received from any other denomination without a *colloquium doctum* prior to his installation (a *colloquium doctum* is understood to be a thorough investigation of the theological training and ministerial record and a careful examination regarding soundness in the Reformed Faith, exemplariness of life, and motives for seeking the ministry in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand).<sup>2</sup>

**Exemptions in the Case of Exceptional Gifts****Article 12**

Persons who have not pursued the regular study in preparation for the ministry of the Word shall not be admitted to the ministry, unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion, as also gifts of public address.

When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the Presbytery, with the consent of Synod, shall first examine them, and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the Churches.

**Credentials Necessary to Move Elsewhere****Article 13**

A minister once lawfully called may not leave the congregation with which he is connected to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the session and knowledge of the Presbytery.

Likewise, no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the Church and the Presbytery where he served.

**Proper Support, No Rash Dismissal****Article 14**

The session, as representing the congregation, shall provide for the proper support of its ministers and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the Presbytery and Synodical Examiners.

**Secular Vocation****Article 15**

Ministers of the Word may not enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of Presbytery.

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<sup>2</sup> The *colloquium doctum* for ministers coming from sister-churches is to be understood as not being the equivalent of a final examination, but is to focus on soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life and knowledge and appreciation of the practice and usage of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (Acts 1989, Art. 19.d).

**Temporary or Permanent Release from Service to a  
Congregation (Acts 2014, Art. 127.3,4)**

**Article 16**

1. A minister who for weighty reasons desires a temporary release from service to the congregation must have his application for release approved by his session, which continues to have supervision over him.
2. A minister who is not eligible for retirement or worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from service in a congregation through action initiated by himself or by his session. Such release shall be given only with the approval of presbytery, with concurring advice of the synodical examiners and in accordance with synodical regulations.
  - a. The session shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of presbytery.
  - b. A minister of the Word who has been released from service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the presbytery, with the concurring advice of the synodical examiners, shall declare him to be released from ministerial office. (re 2a and b, see Acts 2005, Art. 99.5)

**Emeriti Ministers' Title Retained**

**Article 17**

Ministers who by reason of sickness or otherwise are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office, shall nevertheless retain the honour and title of a Minister, and the Church which they have served shall provide honourably for them (likewise, for the orphans and widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general regulations of the churches.

**Preaching Elsewhere Without Consent**

**Article 18**

A minister shall not be permitted to conduct worship services in the locality of a Reformed Church other than his own without the consent of the session of that church.

A minister shall not conduct a worship service in a non-sister church without informing the session of the local Reformed Church.

**Duties in Regular Service**

**Article 19**

The task of the minister is: to expound the Holy Scriptures, to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors, to administer the sacraments, to continue in prayer, to watch over his brethren, the elders and deacons as well as the congregation, to catechise the youth, and with the other elders to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in order.

**Licensed Students to Exhort in Public** **Article 20**

Only students who are licensed according to Synodical regulations shall be permitted to exhort in the public worship services.

**Students Conducting Worship Services** **Article 21**

Students who have received permission, according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have, according to Article 12, been judged competent to be prepared for the Ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training and for the sake of becoming known to the congregations, be allowed to conduct worship services under proper supervision.

**Christian Education** **Article 22**

The Session shall encourage the parents to make every possible effort that the children of believers receive proper Christian education and catechetical instruction.

## **Ruling Elders**

**Duties of Elders** **Article 23**

The task of the elders is to rule in the name of the ascended King and, as servants of the great Shepherd, care for the flock.

They shall therefore: ensure that the Gospel is preached every Sunday, see to it that the Sacraments are faithfully administered, exercise Christian discipline, resist false doctrine and error, visit the members of the congregation at least annually in order that they may comfort, instruct and encourage each one according to need, visit the sick and the bereaved, promote evangelism, see to it that everything is done decently and in order and that their fellow office-bearers faithfully discharge their respective offices, having particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the Minister of the Word.

## **Deacons**

**Duties of Deacons** **Article 24**

The task of the deacons is: to diligently collect alms and other contributions of charity, to faithfully and diligently distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require after mutual counsel, to visit and comfort the distressed, to encourage the congregation to show Christian mercy to those in need at home and abroad, to render an account to the session.

## **Assemblies of the Church General**

### **Three Kinds of Assemblies**

### **Article 25**

The assemblies of the church are: the Session, the Presbytery and the Synod.

### **Legal Matters to Consider**

### **Article 26**

In major assemblies, only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be determined in minor assemblies: or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.

In all assemblies, only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with.

### **Decisions by Common Consent Preferred**

### **Article 27**

Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration and whenever possible by common consent; if unanimity on an issue cannot be reached, the minority shall abide by the judgment of the majority.

### **Appeal to Major Assemblies**

### **Article 28**

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major assembly.

### **Compliance on Matters of Conscience**

### **Article 29**

Assemblies may not compel compliance on the part of a minority in matters of conscience not clearly defined in the Word of God and the Forms of Unity.

### **Devotionals**

### **Article 30**

All assemblies shall begin and end their sessions with prayer.

### **Credentials and Instructions**

### **Article 31**

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them (or cause to be sent to the clerk of the assembly beforehand) their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their own persons or churches (Acts 20:17, Art. 39).

**Advisory Members****Article 32**

All office-bearers may be seated at major assemblies as advisory members, but only those delegated shall have the right to vote.

**Duty of the Clerk****Article 33**

In all assemblies there shall be not only a Moderator, but also a Clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters.

**Duties of the Moderator****Article 34**

The task of the Moderator is to state and explain the business to be transacted and to see that good order is maintained. In the case of major assemblies this function shall cease when the assembly is dismissed.

**Authority of Major Assemblies****Article 35**

Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the Church by Christ; the authority of sessions being original, that of major assemblies being delegated. The Presbytery has the same authority over the Session as the Synod has over the Presbytery.

## Session

**Constituency of Session****Article 36**

In all churches there shall be a session, composed of elders (ruling and teaching) who shall meet regularly according to local regulations, but at least once a month.

According to local regulations, the deacons may meet with the session and shall invariably do so whenever the total number of elders is less than three.

**Formation of a Session****Article 37**

In places where the session is to be constituted for the first time, this shall only take place with the advice of the Presbytery.

**Where There Is No Session****Article 38**

Where, as yet no session can be constituted, groups of believers shall be placed under the care of a neighbouring session.

**Vacant Church Counsellor****Article 39**

When a church is without a minister, the session shall request presbytery to designate a minister of a neighbouring church as counsellor. The session shall consult the counsellor on all important matters, especially regarding the calling of a minister. The counsellor shall attend the session meetings whenever requested to do so.

**Meetings of Deacons****Article 40**

The deacons shall meet regularly according to local regulations but at least once per month to transact the business pertaining to their office.

**Cooperation of the Congregation****Article 41**

The session, besides seeking the co-operation of the congregation in the election of office-bearers, may also invite its judgment about other matters, except those which pertain to the supervision and discipline of the congregation.

**Congregational Meeting****Article 42**

The session shall call a meeting at least annually of all members entitled to vote. Such a meeting shall be conducted by the session.

**Authority Remains with the Session****Article 43**

Although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority of making and carrying out final decisions remains with the session as the governing body of the Church.

**Congregational Judgment on Property****Article 44**

In matters of acquiring and disposing of property, the session shall not act against the judgment expressed by the majority of the congregation.

## **Presbytery**

**Constituency of Presbytery****Article 45**

The presbytery meetings shall consist of neighbouring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, at least two office-bearers (ordinarily a minister and an elder) to meet at such time and place as was determined at the previous presbytery meeting.

**Regularity of Meetings****Article 46**

Presbytery meetings shall ordinarily be held at least once in four months.

**The Task of Presbytery****Article 47**

At least annually the moderator shall present the following questions to the delegates of each church:

1. Are the session meetings regularly held in your church and are they held according to the needs of the congregation?
2. Are all the office-bearers individually and collectively striving earnestly to serve the congregation?
3. Is church discipline faithfully exercised?
4. Does the session diligently promote the cause of Christian education (including Christian day schools)?
5. Does the session diligently promote the cause of missions, both at home and abroad?
6. Does the session seek presbytery's advice on any matter?

**Church Visitation****Article 48**

Presbytery shall make provision for church visitation at least once per year. Each church shall be visited by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). The synodically approved questionnaire shall be followed in general and a report of each visit rendered to presbytery (Acts 2008, Art. 114).

## Synod

**Constituency and Meetings of Synod****Article 49**

The churches shall meet in General Synod at least once every three years.

**The Calling Church****Article 50**

At the close of each synod the time and place of the next synod shall be fixed and a particular church designated to convene it. The calling church, by request of a majority of the other churches, may reset the time and/or place.

**Synodical Committees****Article 51**

Synod shall appoint such committees as it deems expedient to execute its decisions.

**Delegates to Synod****Article 52**

Each church shall be represented in Synod by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). Under exceptional circumstances one delegate may be a deacon.

## **Supervision of Public Worship**

### **The Call to Corporate Worship**

**Article 53**

The session shall call the congregation for corporate worship ordinarily twice on the Lord's Day. Corporate worship services on other days than the Lord's Day are left to the freedom of the churches.

### **Supervision of Worship Services**

**Article 54**

The worship services shall be conducted under the supervision of the session and shall be in keeping with synodical regulations.

### **Sermons for Reading Services**

**Article 55**

In reading services, only sermons approved by the sessions shall be used.

### **Exposition of Confessional Standards**

**Article 56**

Ordinarily at one of the services on each Lord's day the Word shall be expounded as summarised in the Confessional Standards.

### **The Administration of the Sacraments**

**Article 57**

The sacraments shall be administered by the authority of the session in a public worship service (ordinarily by a minister of the Word) with the use of the prescribed forms.

### **Baptism**

**Article 58**

The Covenant of God shall be sealed by Holy Baptism unto children of believers, including children legally adopted by members of the congregation. The session shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

### **Public Profession of Faith**

**Article 59**

Members by baptism and adults who have not been baptised shall be admitted to communicant membership upon public profession of faith with the use of the prescribed form. Before the profession of faith, the session shall examine them concerning motives, doctrine and conduct. Those who have not been baptised, shall receive holy baptism upon profession of faith.



**Certificates of Membership****Article 60**

Communicant members coming from other Reformed Churches of New Zealand shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life. The same rule shall apply to those coming from other denominations with which the Reformed Churches of New Zealand maintain sister church relationships.

**Guests at the Lord's Table****Article 61**

Persons belonging to denominations other than sister churches may be admitted as guests at the Lord's Table only if the session has ascertained that they profess the true religion and walk uprightly.

**Admitting Members from Non-sister Churches****Article 62**

Persons coming from denominations other than sister churches shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the session has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct.

The session shall determine in each case whether or not public profession of faith shall be required.

**Lawful Objections to Profession of Faith Candidates****Article 63**

The names of those who wish to make a public profession of faith shall be announced to the congregation at least one Lord's Day beforehand, so that lawful objections may be raised, should any exist.

**Lord's Supper****Article 64**

The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least once every three months.

**Marriages and Funerals****Article 65**

Ministers shall not solemnise any marriage which is not approved beforehand by the session of the church. Upon request, the session should provide for the preaching of the Word of God at the funeral of deceased members of the congregation (Acts 2011, Art. 124.7).

**Psalms and Hymns****Article 66**

In the worship services of the church only the 150 Psalms and the collection of Hymns for church use, approved and adopted by Synod, shall be sung. However, while the singing of Psalms in divine worship is a requirement, the use of the approved hymns is left to the freedom of the churches.

## Christian Discipline General

### The Purpose of Discipline

**Article 67**

The purpose of Christian discipline is:

1. To vindicate the honour of the Lord,
2. To maintain the purity of the Church, and
3. To promote the welfare of the believer.

### Who Is Subject to Christian Discipline

**Article 68**

All members of the church are subject to Christian discipline respecting both doctrine and life. Likewise, all members are responsible to watch over and admonish one another in love.

### The Means of Christian Discipline

**Article 69**

Christian discipline is exercised exclusively by spiritual means, which are:

1. **Admonition:** Tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his sin, warning him of his danger and exhorting him to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **Rebuke:** A form of censure more severe than admonition, which consists in setting forth the serious character of the offence, reproving the offender and exhorting him to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to Christ.
3. **Suspension:** Depriving of the privileges of membership in the church, or office, or of both, either for a definite or an indefinite time.

Suspension of an officer-bearer from the privileges of membership shall always be accompanied by suspension from office, but the latter does not necessarily involve the former.

4. **Deposition:** Depriving an office-bearer of his office.
5. **Excommunication:** A solemn declaration by a church assembly that it no longer regards the offender as a member of the Body of Christ.

### Disciplinary Steps only after Investigation

**Article 70**

Disciplinary measures shall be applied only after an adequate investigation has been made and the accused has been given ample opportunity to present his case.

### Private and Public Offences

**Article 71**

Christian discipline is concerned with offences that are either private or public.

**Private Offences****Article 72**

Private offences are those which are known to an individual only or, at most, to a very few individuals. In these cases, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18:15–17 shall be followed.

**Public Offences****Article 73**

Such private sins as have been dealt with according to the previous article shall be deemed to have assumed the character of public offences if the admonition and rebuke of the Session also is despised.

**What is a Public Offence****Article 74**

Public offences are such as have become widely known.

**Reconciliation of the Offender****Article 75**

Those who have committed a public offence shall be reconciled to the church by the session upon sufficient evidence of repentance. In the case of an extremely grave offence a session may demand public confession of the sin. This shall not take place without the concurrence of presbytery.

**Suspension of Members****Article 76**

Communicant members who obstinately reject the admonition and rebuke of session shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership.

**Excommunication of Members****Article 77**

Communicant members who have been suspended and persist in disregarding the admonition and rebuke of the session, shall finally be excommunicated with the use of the prescribed form.

**Announcement before Excommunication****Article 78**

The session, before excommunicating anyone, shall make three announcements in which the obstinacy of the sinner and the nature of his offence are explained, and the congregation is urged to pray for him and to admonish him.

1. In the **first** announcement neither the name of the sinner nor the sin shall be mentioned;
2. In the **second** announcement (with the concurrence of the presbytery) the name of the sinner and the sin shall be made known;
3. In the **third** announcement, the congregation shall be informed that, unless the sinner repents, he will be excommunicated at a specified date.

**Reconciliation of the Excommunicant****Article 79**

When anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church, the session, having satisfied itself as to the sincerity of his repentance, shall announce this fact to the congregation. If no valid objections are presented, he shall be restored to the fellowship of the church, with the use of the prescribed form.

**Rebuke of Baptised Members****Article 80**

Mature members by baptism who are delinquent in doctrine or life, shall be rebuked and, if they persist, shall be excluded from the Church of Christ.

**Return into the Membership of Baptised Members****Article 81**

Members by baptism who have been excluded from the church and who later repent of their sin, shall be received again into the church only upon public profession of faith.

## **Discipline of Office-Bearers**

**Suspension and Deposition from Office****Article 82**

Office-bearers, besides being subject to general discipline with all other members of the church, are also subject to special discipline which consists of suspension and deposition from office.

**Special Discipline of Office-Bearers****Article 83**

Special discipline shall be applied to office-bearers if they violate the form of subscription, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office or in any other way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.

**Concurrence of Suspension from Nearest Session****Article 84**

Suspension from office shall ordinarily precede deposition and shall be imposed by the session only with concurrence of the session of the nearest church in the same presbytery.

**Deposition with Concurrence of Presbytery****Article 85**

If the suspended office-bearer does not give heed to repeated admonition and rebuke on the part of both the session and the presbytery, the session shall depose him with the concurrence of presbytery.

**Deposition of a Minister****Article 86**

In case of a minister such a deposition shall not take place without the consent of presbytery and all the synodical examiners.

**Suspension Lifted upon Repentance****Article 87**

The suspension of an office-bearer shall be lifted either upon sufficient evidence of repentance or by successful appeal.

**Prerogative of Assembly****Article 88**

The lifting of suspension upon sufficient evidence of repentance is the prerogative of the assembly which imposed the suspension.

**Restoration of Deposed Office-Bearer****Article 89**

A deposed office-bearer shall not be restored unless he gives sufficient evidence of repentance and it be evident that this restoration will be for the good of the church.

**Censura Morum****Article 90**

Office-bearers shall, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, exercise Christian censure (*censura morum*) among themselves and in a brotherly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

## Administration

**Certificate of Membership****Article 91**

Communicant members who move to another Reformed Church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the session, concerning their doctrine and life.

**Who Receives the Certificate****Article 92**

Certificates of membership shall ordinarily be given to the member concerned and, in addition, a notice shall be sent to the church nearest to their residence.

**Certificate of Membership by Baptism****Article 93**

Members by baptism who move to another Reformed Church shall be granted a certificate of membership by baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall, as a rule, be mailed to the church of their residence.

**Those Who Move without Requesting a Certificate****Article 94**

In cases of communicant members and members by baptism, who move to another area without requesting a certificate, notice shall be sent to the nearest Reformed Church.

**Lording over One Another****Article 95**

No church shall in any way lord it over another church and no office-bearer shall lord it over another office-bearer.

**Revision of the Church Order****Article 96**

This Church Order, having been adopted by common consent, shall be faithfully observed and any revision thereof shall be made only by Synod.

## Section II – Church Courts

### Rules for Synodical Procedures

(Acts of Synod 1955, Art. 14, Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 77,  
Acts of Synod 2014, Arts.18, 28)

#### I. Convening and Constituting Synod

- A. 1. Synod shall convene and be constituted as prescribed by the church order.
2. If at least a majority of the churches deem it necessary that the synod meet either earlier or later than the regular times, the local church charged with convening the synod shall in due season determine when and where it is to meet.
3. A special synod shall be convened if at least three churches (or two churches and the convening church) so desire.
- B. 1. Each synod shall designate a convening church.
2. The duties of the convening church are to announce the next succeeding synod in the official publications of the church, three months before the date of the meeting.
3. It shall also provide all the facilities needed for the synodical meetings, make arrangements for the lodgings of the delegates etc. Expenses thus incurred shall be paid by the Synodical Treasurer.
- C. 1. On the evening preceding the opening of synod a service of prayer, in the charge of the convening session, shall be held. The minister of the convening church shall preach an appropriate sermon and lead in prayer. All members of synod are expected to attend this service of prayer for synod. In the absence of the minister or the counsellor of the convening church, the past moderator shall lead the Prayer-service.
- D. The minister of the convening church (or in the event of a vacancy, its counsellor) shall officiate as Moderator *pro tem*.  
His duties shall be:
1. At the designated time on the appointed day and at the appointed place, he shall:
- call synod to order and
  - conduct the opening devotions.
2. Thereafter he shall call for the prescribed credentials of the delegates. Provided that a quorum (i.e. two thirds of the

membership) is present, he shall declare that the synodical assembly has opened.

3. The Moderator and Vice Moderator of Synod shall be chosen by the delegates from their own number, by ballot.

The First and Second Clerk of Synod shall be chosen, by ballot, by the delegates from their own number, and the Stated Clerk (even if not a delegate) may be considered for either of these positions.

Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes shall be elected.

4. The Moderator *pro tem* shall thereupon request the elected officers to take their places upon the rostrum and introduce the moderator and the other officers to the assembly.
5. While synod is in session, its members may not leave the assembly without permission from the chair; neither is it permissible for any member to withdraw himself and return home without the consent of the assembly.

## II. Duties of the Officers

### A. The Moderator

1. He shall request the members of synod and the advisory members of synod to stand and so signify their agreement with the Confessional Standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. A delegate who assumes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his individual agreement.
2. He shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time and shall see that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. He shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible and that members observe the rules of order and decorum.
4. He shall welcome fraternal delegates, or other guests of delegates and synod, respond to greetings received or appoint members of synod for this purpose.
5. He shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded. He shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken.
6. He shall remain impartial on any pending question. In case he feels the need of expressing himself on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice moderator and not resume it until the question has been disposed of.

He may speak while holding the chair, to state matters of fact or to inform synod regarding points of order (Acts 1986, Art. 104, pt. i).



7. He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. In case his ruling is disputed, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling by majority vote.
8. When an oral vote is a tie, the Moderator may cast the deciding vote.
9. The Moderator shall not preside in any matters that concern himself.
10. The Moderator rules on all points of order. His ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor.
11. The Moderator shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

#### **B. The Vice Moderator**

1. In the absence of the Moderator, the Vice Moderator shall assume his duties and privileges.
2. The Vice Moderator shall render all possible assistance to the Moderator as circumstances may require.

#### **C. The First and Second Clerk**

1. The FIRST CLERK shall each day call the roll immediately after the opening devotions. Thereupon the minutes of the previous day shall be read.
2. The Clerk shall keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings.
  - a. Opening and closing of sessions and roll call;
  - b. All main motions whether carried or lost; all appeals whether sustained or lost.
  - c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod;
  - d. The names of fraternal delegates and others who address synod;
  - e. Any documents, any phase of discussion on the floor of synod, or any address that synod by a majority vote decided to insert into the minutes.
  - f. Any decisions of synod that need to be implemented by the Stated Clerk state this clearly in the body of the decision (Acts 2017, Art. 43.2).
3. The record shall not contain:
  - a. any rejected motions, except it be a main motion;
  - b. any motion that is withdrawn.
4. The SECOND CLERK shall serve in the absence of the First Clerk. He shall also render assistance to the First Clerk as circumstances may require.

### **III. Duties of Non-delegated Functionaries**

#### **A. Advisory Members of Synod**

1. The synod has the right to appoint advisory members or committees.
2. They have the same privileges of the floor as the regular members of synod, subject to the accepted rules. On important questions, the chair or any member of synod may request their advice.
3. The advisory members may present their advice as a body, either in writing, or by one of their members acting as spokesman or they may express their opinions individually. They have no casting vote.
4. The advisory members are required to serve as advisors on advisory committees.

#### **B. The Stated Clerk**

1. Synod appoints a Stated Clerk for the term of the inter-synodical period who is ex officio a member of the Synodical Interim Committee.
2. It shall be his task to compile the material for the agenda and, in collaboration with the officers of synod, he shall compile the Acts of Synod.
3. Except when synod is in Session, he shall
  - a. have charge of all synodical correspondence;
  - b. serve as general secretary of the Synodical Interim Committee.
4. The Stated Clerk shall have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office. He shall be present during all executive sessions of synod.
5. The Stated Clerk shall serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters which come to the floor of synod.

#### **C. The Synodical Treasurer**

The Synodical Treasurer is appointed by synod for each interim period to administer its finance and to submit a plan to synod for the distribution of synodical expenses among the churches. The Synodical Treasurer, where practicable, is to present the synodical treasurer's report personally at every synod (Acts 2011, Art. 125.5). The Synodical Treasurer is to prepare a draft budget prior to each synod and include it in the report to the sessions (Acts 1998, Art. 111.2).

## **IV. Fraternal Delegates and Reporters**

- A. Fraternal delegates shall be accorded an advisory vote.
- B. The task of the reporters is to prepare reports of the happenings at synod for the church papers. Ordinarily the editors of these papers serve as reporters. In case these brothers cannot serve, the Moderator shall appoint a substitute to do so.
- C. Press reporters may be admitted to the synod meetings by decision of the synod.

## **V. Matters Legally before Synod**

- A. Reports of committees, including boards, appointed by previous meetings.
- B. Overtures or communications of individuals or sessions or presbyteries, on matters which have been carried as far as possible in the minor assemblies.
- C. Appeals or protests of sessions or individual members who cannot yield to presbytery decisions and who have given notice of such appeals or protests to the presbyteries concerned.

The following rules shall pertain in all matters of appeal and protest which concern persons and not their views on issues and programmes.

1. The appellant or protestant shall submit notice and copies of all appeals and protest to the ecclesiastical bodies, and/or persons concerned, in time for them to submit their response for consideration by synod.
2. Appeals and protests to synod must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk three months prior to synod. Allowance shall be made, however, for protests and appeals with reference to actions occurring too late to meet this deadline.
3. The SIC may appoint a pre-advisory committee prior to synod.
  - a) The task of a pre-advisory committee shall be limited to aiding a smooth and even-handed hearing of the case; it may include such things as:
    - ensuring that all relevant documents shall be on the table of the chairman
    - assessing which documents submitted should be distributed to the sessions
    - producing a chronology of relevant events and decisions

- meeting with the various parties involved so as to produce such a clear chronology of events
- making recommendations as to procedure and order in which various items may be dealt with
- indexing documentation to the various items of appeal
- giving advice on relevant matters of Church Order.

In all events the pre-advisory committee shall avoid any and all evaluation of the merits of the case, and it shall provide a report to the sessions not later than three weeks before the synod, which shall include an outline of the committee's procedure.

- b) The pre-advisory committee shall be composed of presently serving office-bearers from disinterested presbyteries/sessions; it may co-opt further disinterested communicant members in good standing, if needed, for special expertise.
  - c) The membership of the pre-advisory committee shall be ratified by two-thirds of the disinterested sessions.
4. When it sits, synod may appoint a further advisory committee before which the appellant and the defendant shall have the right to appear and be heard. They shall be expected to indicate whether and when they will so appear.
  5. The appellant and the defendant shall have the right of hearing the case on the floor of synod and they shall have the privilege of explaining and defending their position on the floor of synod, if synod so decides, upon the recommendation of the advisory committee.
  6. The appellant and the defendant shall have the right to be represented by a spokesman.
  7. The advisory committee shall present a clear and adequate statement of the content of each appeal to the entire synod.
  8. Copies of the protests and appeals not appearing on the agenda and, if possible, the principal related documents shall be sent to the members of the pre-appointed synodical advisory committee as soon as possible.
- D. Overtures or communications which have failed to gain the endorsement of presbytery but which the session or individual sponsoring the same desire to submit for synod's consideration.
  - E. Overtures or communications of individuals when they have been unable first to present them to lower session and presbytery.

- F. Synod urges our assemblies and members to refrain from overtures, appeals or communications which are repetitious, or mere expressions of agreement or disagreement with matters already on the agenda of synod. Synod authorises the Stated Clerk to omit such items from the printed agenda at his discretion. In such cases they shall merely be listed and accepted as informative communications. The senders shall be notified and their materials shall be given to one of the advisory committees of synod to be received as information. Matters received as information will not ordinarily be mentioned in advisory committee reports or the Acts of Synod.
- G. No overtures or study reports received by the Stated Clerk within two months prior to synod shall be considered for decision by synod except those overtures, which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the printed agenda. Any other overture or study report shall be considered only by special decision of synod on the basis of the weightiest grounds.
- H. The agenda shall be published not later than one month prior to synod. All materials for the agenda: reports of standing or special committees; overtures of presbyteries or sessions; protests of presbyteries or sessions, notices of protests of individuals; the names of delegates, etc. shall be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not later than two months prior to synod.
- I. All other matters which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.

## **VI. Synodical Committees**

### **A. The Advisory Committees**

- 1. Status of these committees: They serve only for the duration of synod for the purpose of facilitating the work of synod.
- 2. Organisation and rules governing these committees:
  - a. The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be its chairman and the one named second its reporter.
  - b. The chairman shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings and see that it functions properly.
  - c. Any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
  - d. Committee reports shall be signed by the chairman and the reporter of the committee. In case of a minority, each report must be signed by the members who favour it.

- e. The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the committee. After the committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and seconded, the minority report shall be read and received as information.
  - f. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed in printed form and the members of synod have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. In such case, the reporter, when the moderator calls for his report, shall state that the report has been placed in the hands of synod in printed form and shall move that the report be accepted for consideration.
  - g. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairman and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
  - h. Recommendations of a committee may be recommitted whenever the work of synod can be thus expedited.
3. After the advisory committees have been appointed, in order that they may have sufficient time for their work, synod may recess until a time specified for resuming its sessions.
  4. Besides the advisory committees, each synod shall also have a:
    - a. Appointments Committee
    - b. Obituary Committee
    - c. Reception Committee
    - d. Program Committee
    - e. Budget Committee
    - a. The Appointments Committee shall prepare the personnel of all standing committees and study committees.
    - b. The Obituary Committee, appointed by the moderator, shall draw up appropriate resolutions of grateful appreciation and condolence in loving memory of departed ministers.
    - c. The Reception Committee, appointed by the moderator, shall attend to the proper reception of fraternal delegates. It can advise synod, and synod must decide, whether the representatives of various organisations should be received on the floor of synod.
    - d. The Programme Committee shall consist of the moderamen of synod. It shall be the duty of this committee to classify all the reports, overtures and other communications into various groups, and to advise which matters shall be laid directly before synod and which shall be placed in the hands of the advisory committees. This committee shall also nominate the members of these advisory committees.

- e. The Budget Committee shall function as an advisory committee to which the various Deputies and boards and all agencies seeking synodical recommendations shall submit their respective budgets.
- f. The advisory committees shall summarise matters before them and formulate recommendations with respect to these matters.
- g. Special committees that serve during the synodical session shall be appointed by the moderator.

## **B. Committees Appointed by Previous Synods**

These committees include those appointed to study and to report concerning matters that concern the whole denomination, to carry out certain resolutions of past synods, or to supervise the missionary, educational or other activities of the denomination. Reports of these committees should ordinarily be in the hands of the Stated Clerk six months prior to the meeting of synod with the exception of a financial report.

1. These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokesman of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as the chairman and reporters of the advisory committees.
2. With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence, if the recommendations of the advisory committee are radically different.

## **VII. Rules of Order**

In our ecclesiastical assemblies “ecclesiastical matters only shall be matters transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner” as article 26 of our church order stipulates.

Our synods should therefore not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies, which demand a large measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, a few general rules of order may serve a good purpose.

### **A. Closed Sessions of Synod**

1. An executive session shall ordinarily mean a session of synod at which only the delegates and the advisors recognised in our Rules for Synodical Procedures, are present. Fraternal delegates from fully recognised sister churches shall be extended the same courtesy as our own aforesaid advisors. Synod shall not exercise the right to go into executive session except in unusual or delicate situations.

2. Strict executive sessions of synod: synod retains the right to go into strict executive session whenever in its judgement such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the church in very unusual situations. In such executive sessions only the delegates shall be present. Synodical ruling will apply to any advisors.

## **B. Main Motion**

This is a motion that presents a certain subject to synod for its consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. if the mover has been recognised by the moderator;
  - b. if the motion has been recognised as acceptable by the moderator;
  - c. if, at the request of the moderator, the motion has been presented in written form.
2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. if it conflicts with the Church Order or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted in our forms of Unity;
  - b. if another motion is before synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by synod;
  - c. if it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no disposal was made.

## **C. A Motion to Amend**

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out; to insert; to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion.

## **D. A Motion to Defer or Withhold Action**

1. When synod deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily. Tabling a motion implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later date.



2. If a matter has been deferred to a definite time and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of postponed matters, if these can wait until the question before synod has been disposed of.
3. If synod prefers not to take action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to withhold action.

#### **E. Objection to the Consideration of a Question**

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the moderator, the matter is referred to synod for decision.

#### **F. Right of Protest**

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of synod. Protests should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protest must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken.

#### **G. Call for a Division of the Question**

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary.

#### **H. Motions to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod**

If any member of synod for weighty reasons desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, the following course may be pursued:

1. A motion may be offered to RECONSIDER the matter; the purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote;
2. A motion may be made to RESCIND a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse such a previous decision. Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion, which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.
3. Broader assemblies cannot overturn a local session's decision. Rather, it is the responsibility of the local session to abide by the decision of the broader assemblies as a part of the essence of belonging to this federation of churches (as per C.O. Art. 35) (Acts 2017, Art. 89.1).

## **I. Discussion**

1. Speaker to obtain the floor must be recognised by the moderator.
2. If a member having the floor should fail to adhere to the point under discussion or should become unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the moderator shall call his attention to these faults and insist on pointedness and brevity.
3. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall ordinarily be given priority by the moderator.
4. When the moderator believes that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.
5. Any member of synod, when he deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken only after those who have requested the floor have been recognised.
6. A seated delegate at a meeting of one of the church assemblies cannot be compelled to leave the meeting. The chairman, at the request of the meeting, may ask a delegate to leave the meeting, but cannot compel him to do so (Acts 2017, Art. 83.1).

## **J. Voting**

The various methods of voting are:

1. By voice (Yes or No). This is the ordinary method of voting.
2. By rising or raising the right hand whenever the chair is unable to determine from the "Ayes" and "Nays" which opinion has prevailed, or if the moderator's judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the moderator shall ask the members to vote by rising or raising the right hand.
3. By ballot.

In delicate cases of discipline and other matters of critical nature and of great importance it is advisable that synod decide to vote by ballot.

## **K. Amendments to These Rules**

These Rules for Synodical Procedure may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority of synod.

## **Appointments to Synodical Committees** (Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 21.H)

1. Appointments of synodical committees may appear to be made by the moderamen of synod but in actual fact the moderamen only proposes them; they are then ratified by synod as a whole.
2. This has a two-fold advantage:
  - a. It guards against bias in synodical committees;
  - b. It enables committee members to take particular notice of the membership of any committee they are involved in and even allows preliminary discussion in many cases;
3. Appointments to synodical committees are traditionally regarded as irrevocable commitments which can be relinquished only by permanent departure of the appointee, either to another life or another country;
4. Once synod is dismissed, so is the moderamen, and former members of the moderamen then have no more authority to request changes in committee personnel than any other synodical delegate or any session member.

## **Synodical Study Committees** (Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 55)

In the appointing of synodical study committees, synod should be careful to preserve as much manpower and man-hours as is possible, by making use of the findings of sister churches (e.g. in their study of Bible translations).

# **Rules for the Stated Clerk of Synod**

**(Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 80, Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 18)**

## **1. Job description**

- a. He shall be ex officio a member of the Synodical Interim Committee and shall serve as its general secretary;
- b. He shall have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of his office. He shall be present during executive sessions of synod.

## **2. Supervision**

The Stated Clerk shall work under the supervision of the Synodical Interim Committee and shall be ultimately responsible to synod.

## **3. Appointment**

- a. The Stated Clerk shall be appointed by synod;
- b. The term of the appointment shall be the interim period of each synod; he shall be eligible for reappointment to additional terms.

## **4. Duties and Responsibilities**

- a. Responsibilities to synod
  - 1) The Stated Clerk shall edit, and have suitably printed, the synodical agenda, Acts of Synod and such other official publications as the synod or the Synodical Interim Committee shall authorize;
  - 2) The Stated Clerk shall have synodical papers, including correspondence, surveys, questionnaires, materials, reports, minutes, etc., produced for the synod and shall keep a file of synodical correspondence. He shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of synod and the Synodical Interim Committee;
  - 3) The Stated Clerk shall inform all persons who have been appointed by synod to serve on committees, providing them with relevant data concerning their assignment;
  - 4) The Stated Clerk shall receive reports from the committees appointed by synod;
  - 5) The Stated Clerk shall serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters which come to the floor of synod.

- b. Responsibilities to the denomination
  - 1) The Stated Clerk shall handle the general correspondence of the denomination;
  - 2) The Stated Clerk shall, when called upon, give advice and information regarding the provisions of the Church Order and the decisions of synod. In matters of major proportions, this advice shall be given in consultation with the Synodical Interim Committee;
- c. Responsibilities on behalf of the denomination
  - 1) The Stated clerk shall represent the denomination and act in accordance with approved policies of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. In cases where there is a question, the Synodical Interim Committee should be consulted;
  - 2) The Stated Clerk, as agent of the Synodical Interim Committee or synod, shall prepare news or information bulletins for the (church) news media which will inform the public of the work and witness of the church.
  - 3) The Stated Clerk, as secretary for the denomination, is responsible for the annual renewal of the marriage celebrant licences for the ministers of the denomination with the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Stated Clerk is also responsible to arrange for the registration of newly ordained or installed ministers as marriage celebrants.

## **Rules for the Synodical Interim Committee**

**(Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 80; 1992, Art. 9)**

The Synodical Interim Committee is:

1. To execute all matters, committed to it by definite instruction of synod;
2. To execute all synodical matters which cannot be postponed until next synod;
3. To supervise the work of the Stated Clerk and Synodical Treasurer and advise them in respect to the discharge of their work;
4. To be responsible for expediting the work which synod does directly;
5. To be responsible for the preparation and distribution of the synodical agenda, the Acts of Synod and such other official publications as synod shall authorise;
6. To be available for consultation with standing committees of synod and denominational agencies;
7. To present a full report of its actions to each synod;
8. To be authorised to appoint delegates to corresponding churches in cases overlooked by synod or that arise in the interim between synods;
9. To give notice through the denominational magazine of all weighty correspondence or actions performed by the committee that demand (speedy) publicity.

## **Rules for the Interchurch Relations Committee** (Acts of Synod 1992, Arts. 9, 88)

The Interchurch Relations Committee is:

1. To execute all matters, committed to it by definite instruction of synod;
2. To present a full report of its actions to each synod;
3. To maintain correspondence with other churches, receive and acknowledge letters addressed to the Reformed Churches by other churches, to give general publicity where this is appropriate;
4. To correspond with sister churches during the inter-synodical period on matters that may be of concern to our churches on the understanding that care be taken to gather information only.
5. To recommend, for appointment by the Synodical Interim Committee, delegates and observers to sister and corresponding churches in cases overlooked by synod or that arise in the interim between synods;
6. To give notice through the denominational magazine of all weighty correspondence or actions performed by the committee that demand (speedy) publicity.

## **Objectives for Interchurch Relationships** (Acts of Synod 1989, Art. 44, Pt. o)

1. Fraternal delegates to present their speech/remarks in writing for inclusion in the Acts/Minutes of Synod. Such an address to include material of mutual concern and questions.
2. If unable to send delegates, send written greetings and information on current life and state of the church, on matters before the church that would be of interest and concern to the other church, and also on any significant actions of the most recent synod/general assembly.
3. To consult each other prior to making amendments or additions to confessional standards.
4. To consult with each other concerning relationships with third parties (denominations and/or ecumenical bodies).
5. To share insights in matters of pastoral concerns and make use of each other's studies on theological issues and other ecclesiastical matters.
6. To find ways and means to cooperate in areas of evangelism and mission overseas.

## **Rules for Sister Church Relationships** (Acts of Synod 1962, Art. 28D)

The sister church relationship involves:

1. The appointment of delegates to each other's synods or general assemblies, if possible, as a token of mutual friendship and interest in the Lord.
2. Keeping each other duly informed of our *gesta ecclesiastica*, (i.e. events, developments and decisions) through the exchange of the Acts of Synods or General Assemblies.
3. Bringing to each other's attention our spiritual and ecclesiastical problems together with our attempts at their scriptural solution; and offering each other help upon request thereof.
4. Warning each other in respect of spiritual dangers that arise and spread and imperil the Church of Christ.
5. Correcting each other in love in the event of unfaithfulness whether by commission or omission on the score of profession and/or practice of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.
6. Consulting each other regarding the eventual revision of our respective ecclesiastical standards (i.e. the Confessions, Catechism).

## **Rules for Ecumenical Fellowship** (Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 84.1, 2)

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies. If feasible, the interchurch relations committees should meet at least once in the inter-synodical period.
2. The eligibility of call of ministers from each other's churches, subject to our current practice of holding a preliminary evaluation before a call is issued and a *colloquium doctum* (see Church Order Article 10).
3. Occasional pulpit exchange as a means of maintaining and/or developing understanding and relationships, subject to session examination; longer-term pulpit supply should be subject to presbytery evaluation.
4. Joint exchange of information and, when considered mutually beneficial, co-operation in areas of common responsibility (e.g. diaconal works, mission work, theological education).
5. A willingness to interact and share resources with a view to advancing the Reformed faith (e.g. conferences, teaching, publication ventures).
6. Communication on major issues with mutual respect for the differences that exist and a willingness to consider one another's concerns.



# **Rules for the National Publishing Committee**

(Acts of Synod 1989, Art. 67, Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 18, 138.11)

## **1. General**

- a. The National Publishing Committee shall consist of up to seven members and shall meet annually (Acts 1998, Art. 84.2; Acts 2008, Art. 111.2,3; Acts 2017, Art. 23.4).
- b. A separate Editorial Advisory Committee shall be appointed by synod to advise the Editor when called upon (Acts 1998, Art. 84.3).
- c. The National Publishing Committee is responsible for all the RCNZ Denominational Publications and the RCNZ website.
- d. To facilitate production of the Acts of Synod, synod encourages the presentation of all future reports and overtures as electronic files. Instead of reprinting the Acts of Synod at some future date these shall be made available as electronic files (Acts 1995, Art. 14.4, Acts 2014, Art. 18.6).

The following are the rules for the denominational monthly magazine *Faith in Focus*.

## **2. Advertising**

- a. Advertising shall be accepted and charged for both personal and commercial;
- b. The policy for acceptance of advertising shall be determined by the National Publishing Committee.

## **3. Funding**

- a. *Faith in Focus* shall be paid out of subscription;
- b. Synod shall be responsible for capital expenditures up to \$2,000 during the inter-synodical period with the approval of the Synodical Interim Committee;
- c. Profits from any publications shall be returned for developments.
- d. The financial statements of the National Publishing Committee shall be audited (Acts 1995, Art. 14.7).

## **4. Purpose and Editorial Direction**

- a. The magazine shall uphold, defend and promote the Reformed Faith;
- b. The magazine shall consist primarily of local content;
- c. The magazine shall be the vehicle for denominational news and information;
- d. The magazine shall function as a forum for debate;
- e. The magazine shall address current issues in society;
- f. The magazine shall address home and overseas missionary issues.

## **Committee for Contact with Political Bodies** (Acts of Synod 1962, Art. 37; 1989, Art. 18, 1998, Art. 32, 2008, Art. 118)

*This Committee is currently in recess (see below)*

Synod charged Wellington Presbytery to be the Body for Contact with the Government, to make known, whenever imperative, the Reformed Churches' view to the House of Representatives and/or other Government institutions concerned.

The membership of the committee is to include also members of the churches whose abilities qualify them to contribute to the public defence of the Christian faith (Acts 1989, Art. 18).

The committee is given the mandate to make representations and power to establish contributing study-groups in various places.

It is hereby stipulated that:

- a. In every case such a representation is made, approval is sought from the other Reformed Churches in New Zealand, prior to any such representation.
- b. Presbyteries and/or churches, feeling the need for such a representation, approach the Wellington Presbytery which, after deliberation, will present it to the other churches.
- c. After having gained the churches' approval, Presbytery of Wellington is responsible for the proper presentation of the matter concerned.
- d. Wellington Presbytery will, at the first following synod, present a report of the representations made under this arrangement.

### **Synod 1998 decided (Art. 32)**

1. Approval of statements
  - a. That the committee sends their proposed statements to the sessions and requests a response by a set date or else the communication will be sent.
  - b. That the committee be required to obtain a 2/3 affirmative vote from the sessions.
  - c. That the committee has the right to assume that no response is an affirmative response.
2. Synod decided that the committee also be given the authority to exercise its mandate without having to gain approval from individual sessions when:
  - a. the Word of God is publicly attacked within the political arena
  - b. time is of the essence and is not adequate to allow for consultation with all sessions.

Under such circumstances the submissions, letters, etc., produced by the Committee are to be approved by two ministers, liaisons from the other presbyteries, with the chairman of the Synodical Interim Committee having a casting vote in the event of disagreement among the liaisons.

**Synod 2008 decided** (Art. 118.2)

1. Not to appoint a Committee for Contact with Political Bodies.

## **Rules for Synodical Examiners**

**(Acts of Synod 1983, Art. 115, Acts of Synod 2022, Art. 81, 104)**

In connection with their presence at the examinations of those seeking entrance into the ministry of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

1. Synodical examiners and alternates shall be appointed by respective presbyteries.
2. Synodical examiners shall be present at all examinations where candidates are entering the ministry of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand from overseas, or are seeking ordination in terms of articles 10, 11, 12 of the Church Order.
3. A synodical examiner shall be present from at least two outside presbyteries.
4. Synodical examiners may be requested to assist in the examination of candidates.
5. No examinee shall be ordained or installed without the majority concurrence of the synodical examiners that:
  - a. The candidate has shown sufficient competence in all the areas of the examination (Acts 2022, Art. 104).
  - b. The credentials of the examinee are in proper order.
  - c. The examination has been properly conducted.
  - d. The person examined is in thorough agreement with the Reformed faith and the whole system of doctrine contained in the four Confessional Standards.
  - e. For the first preliminary examination both synodical examiners must concur with presbytery and for the second final examination the majority of synodical examiners must concur (Acts 2022, Art. 104).
6. Where approval cannot be given, the following procedure shall be complied with:
  - a. Immediate informal consultation between presbytery, examinee and synodical examiners explaining the reasons for failure to approve.
  - b. Within two weeks of the examination, full reports from both presbytery and synodical examiners stating the issues of disagreement shall be forwarded to the Synodical Interim Committee to be sent to all sessions. One copy shall be supplied to the examinee.
  - c. Within one month the examining presbytery or the synodical examiners may request all sessions to respond to the SIC on these

points of difference, giving instruction to the synodical examiners (Acts 2022, Art. 104).

- d. A further examination shall be held, including the synodical examiner alternates (if requested by the examinee), on these and related issues. Should the synodical examiners remain dissatisfied, the examinee will neither be ordained or installed.
- e. Throughout this period of consultation, the monetary support of the examinee shall be the responsibility of the local session in consultation with the presbytery.

# Credentials for Delegates to Presbytery/Synod SAMPLE

## Credentials

To the Presbytery/Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

To convene the \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_

The Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_ has chosen

\_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_

as primary delegates and

\_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_

as alternate delegates.

By order of the Reformed Church of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Done in meeting of session

Date \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

# **Ecclesiastical Adjudication of Formal Charges**

(Acts of Synod 1998, Arts. 22 & 29, Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 16.9)

## **Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Assemblies in the Formal Adjudication of Written and Formal Charges**

### **A. Preamble**

*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church ... (Matt 18.15–17).*

We acknowledge that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in her various assemblies, has been appointed as the representative of Christ upon the earth, and that as such she will at various times be called upon in the name of her Lord to settle disputes and give judgments. So that the judgment of written charges and appeals may be done in a proper and orderly manner and that impartial justice may be obtained, it is good for us to lay down the following principles from the Word of God.

### **B. Scope of These Guidelines**

1. These guidelines will only apply when written and formal charges are brought to an assembly of the churches.
2. The admonition and discipline of the church which does not involve the hearing of written charges requiring formal adjudication are not governed by these guidelines.
3. The first determination that must be made by the assembly before whom the written charges are filed is this: Does this matter **require** formal adjudication? In making this determination, the assembly would ordinarily be in a position to know that informal means have been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing a formal hearing while further informal efforts are employed.
4. The specific purpose of these guidelines is to assist the assemblies when they proceed in the formal adjudication of written and formal charges.  
As such, they may be used
  - a. by local sessions when a member brings a written and formal complaint against another member;

- b. by presbyteries when a member of the churches brings a written and formal complaint against a session;
- c. by synods when a member or session lays a written and formal charge against a presbytery;
- d. in the hearing of appeals. Appeals against judgment of the assembly shall be made to the assembly next in order.

## C. Definition of Terms

*Complainant*...The person or assembly bringing the complaint

*Defendant*.....The person or assembly against whom the complaint is brought

*Assembly*.....The session, presbytery or synod

*Complaint*.....A written formal charge

*Appeal*.....An written formal appeal against the judgment of an assembly

*Appellant* .....The person or assembly appealing the judgment of an assembly  
(When the pronoun "his" is used herein, it refers either to an assembly or to an individual irrespective of gender.)

## D. Guidelines

1. All assemblies called upon to pass judgment in disputes shall begin their assemblies in earnest prayer to the Lord for the wisdom of His Word and the illumination of His Spirit to bring about justice.
2. No matter shall be brought to an assembly for judgment unless the matter is specific and carefully stated in writing and is supported by witnesses. Delegates to the assembly should have adequate time (at least two weeks) to consider the written evidence before the assembly convenes. Accusations shall not be entertained unless they are supported by two or three witnesses (c.f. Deuteronomy 19:15, 1 Timothy 5:19).
3. A charge should not allege more than one offence. Several charges, whether brought by one or more complainants against the same individual or assembly, with the specifications under each of them, may, however, be presented at the same time and may, at the discretion of the assembly, be heard together. When several charges are heard at the same time, a decision on each charge must be made separately.
4. A hearing for an alleged offence shall begin as soon as possible, but no later than one year from the time the charge is filed.
5. If an assembly considers that a matter brought to it has good grounds to be heard, then the assembly shall be careful to retain a spirit of impartiality until both sides of the matter have been properly heard. The assembly which hears the charge (session, presbytery or synod) shall be



so constituted so as to avoid conflicts of interest.<sup>1</sup> No matter how serious a charge may be, the onus is upon the complainant to prove the guilt of the defendant, unless guilt is confessed. If at any stage of proceedings, guilt is confessed, the matter may then be dealt with pastorally.

6. If in any case, the defendant, after due notice has been given him, shall refuse or neglect to appear at the time and place set forth for the hearing, the investigation or hearing may proceed in his absence. In all cases sufficient time shall be allowed for the defendant to appear at the given place and time and to prepare for the hearing. The assembly shall decide what constitutes "sufficient time."
7. In order for a matter to be heard impartially, the church assembly shall give both the complainant and defendant equal and adequate opportunity to present the evidence for their case.
  - a. The administration of oaths will not be required.
  - b. Both the complainant and defendant may call upon witnesses to speak on their behalf.
  - c. Both the complainant and defendant may be represented or counselled by a communicant member of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
  - e. When the assembly has given both sides equal and adequate opportunity to present their case, the disinterested members of the assembly may have the opportunity to ask questions of complainants, defendants and witnesses.
  - f. Both the complainant and defendant shall have opportunity to make a closing statement before the assembly goes on to make its decision.
8. When the assembly has given adequate time for all sides of the case to be heard, the disinterested members of the assembly shall consider the evidence presented and come to a conclusion/judgment in the matter. Any member who has not attended all the sessions and has not heard the case in its entirety shall read the record before a vote is taken. The assembly has the right to make its judgment in closed session. The assembly has the right to vote by means of secret ballot.
9. The testimony shall be recorded verbatim if requested by any party to the proceedings. The record, including all exhibits, papers, evidence and findings in the case shall be certified by the chairman and shall be the

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<sup>1</sup> "A conflict of interest" shall be interpreted in the widest possible sense, and shall include, for members of a larger (wider) assembly, their participation in the minor assembly which considered the matters. In the interests of preserving the impartiality of those involved in judging the matter, members of the minor assembly which has heard the matter shall not discuss the matter in any way with those who become members of the major assembly hearing the appeal.

basis of any appeal which may be taken. The appellant and the defendant may have reasonable access to the record.

10. The judgment of the assembly should be unanimous, but where unanimity cannot be reached, the minority shall abide by the judgment of the majority (Church Order article 27).
11. The judgment of the assembly is considered to be settled and binding upon the parties involved. If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major assembly (Church Order Art. 28) but shall in the meantime abide by the judgment made.

## **E. Appeals**

1. In all cases of appeal, the appellant shall have fifteen days to issue notice of appeal to the stated clerks of the assemblies appealed against and appealed to. He shall have another thirty days to furnish to both stated clerks a written statement of the grounds of his appeal. The stated clerk of the assembly appealed against shall forward to the stated clerk of the assembly appealed to the record of guideline 9 above. The hearing of the appeal shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the statement and the record. The assembly shall consider this statement and the record, also giving opportunity for oral argument.
2. An appeal by an involved party shall not be heard in any case when the appellant has without just cause failed or refused to be present at his hearing on appeal.
3. If the appellant, having shown good cause, desires to introduce additional evidence, the assembly appealed to may return the case to the original assembly for a new hearing.
4. Final decision on an appeal shall be by majority vote of the assembly.
5. The synodical interim committee may appoint a pre-advisory committee.

## **F. Suggested Procedure**

The above guidelines necessitate the various assemblies of the church to form their own procedure when the need arises. This gives assemblies the liberty to act according to specific circumstances. The following procedure is suggested as a format to assist assemblies in adopting a procedure.

1. The complainant shall repeat concisely his charge and his supporting evidence. The chairman may permit the form of the charge to be amended, but not its content.

2. The chairman shall request the defendant to plead to the charge, and his plea shall be recorded.
3. If the defendant pleads guilty, the hearing need not be continued. If the defendant denies the charge, the hearing shall proceed.
4. The defendant shall state concisely his defence and his supporting evidence.
5. The complainant shall first produce his evidence and witnesses. The defendant shall then produce his evidence and witnesses. All witnesses may be questioned by both the complainant and the defendant.
6. The disinterested members of the assembly shall have the opportunity to ask questions of complainants, defendants and witnesses after both sides have presented their case.
7. The complainant and the defendant shall, in turn, summarise their cases either by oral or written argument.
8. When all sides have been heard, the assembly shall consider the evidence presented and come to a judgment in the matter. The final decision shall be by majority vote of the assembly.
9. If either party objects to the regularity of the proceedings, the objection must be entered in the record. The chairman may sustain or disallow the objection. In any case he must be sustained by a majority of the assembly.

## **Section III – Ministers**

### **Students for the Ministry**

(Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.3, Acts of Synod 2022, Art. 90, 104)

#### **A. Selection and Training**

##### **1. Suitability**

In respect of prospective students for the ministry (Acts 2005, Art. 38.4):

- a) Sessions are to make a careful evaluation of the men they send to train for the ministry in order to send them with a clear recommendation as to their intention and suitability;
- b) Sessions are to make a careful study of the appendix which follows this section which was adopted by the Churches as guidance in assessing men seeking the recommendation/support of the Churches for training for the ministry;
- c) The assessment of such men shall involve not only his own session but also his presbytery via a small sub-committee consisting of a minister and elder from different churches appointed for that purpose. Following their concurrence and the notification of the Deputies for Students to the Ministry, he can then be recommended with the explicit endorsement of his session and the presbytery committee.

##### **2. Theological Training Institutions**

Churches sending men to study for the ministry should first consider sending them to the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. Other institutions used by our sister churches may be considered in consultation with the Deputies for Students to the Ministry.

Synod authorises the Deputies for Students for the Ministry to give more information to the faculty of the theological college about the student when he begins his theological training (Acts 2022, Art. 104.4c).

In order to be considered for a vicariate in the RCNZ, students must complete a minimum of two years of on-site study. Exceptions to this rule can be made by the Deputies for Students to the Ministry in consultation with the sending church (Acts 2022, Art. 90).

## **B. Oversight**

### **1. By the Deputies for Students to the Ministry**

For those students studying at the RTC, the deputies, in consultation with the faculty of the RTC, are to assess and evaluate each New Zealand student, annually, and inform the session of the home church by a confidential report. For those students studying at other institutions, the same will be attempted in consultation with the faculty, annually, and using electronic means of communication when an actual visit is not feasible.

### **2. Pastoral**

The sessions of the home congregations are encouraged:

- a) To ask the session of a local church of sound Reformed/ Presbyterian persuasion to provide pastoral oversight, and
- b) To endeavour to make it possible for one or two visits with the home congregation and presbytery during the course of study at the college (Acts 1983, Art. 17).

## **C. Membership**

New Zealand students are encouraged to remain communicant members of their home congregation.

## **D. Criteria for Student Interviews**

### **Preamble**

Deputies for Students to the Ministry have drawn up a brief statement outlining the criteria used to interview students with respect to their suitability as potential ministers in our denomination.

### **1. Purpose of Annual Interviews**

- a) To establish and/or maintain oversight over the student and his family on behalf of the churches.
- b) To discuss with the student:
  - 1) his spiritual life and wellbeing,
  - 2) his academic progress and ability to cope,
  - 3) his relationship with his fellow students, faculty, home and local congregation,
  - 4) his financial situation, ability to cope, needs,
  - 5) any special concerns.

- c) To assess students' suitability for continuing their ministry in Reformed Churches.

(For New Zealand only)

- d) To report, in writing, to the home church our findings and assessment.
- e) This report should be used by local churches when deciding either to support students or recommending the student to the presbytery or Student Aid Committee for support.

## 2. Criteria to Be Used at Interviews

### a) Spiritual

This should include discussion of the student's personal relationship with his Lord, his growing commitment to the Lord's calling and his understanding of and enthusiasm for Scripture in accord with the whole system of doctrine contained in the confessional standards of our churches.

### b) Academic

An examination of his academic record and his ability to achieve at the very least the minimum standards of the RTC. The student's own assessment should be discussed with him and any problems identified.

### c) Financial

The student and/or his wife be asked to give an honest assessment of financial situation and ability to cope as well as reasons for aid sought if applicable.

### d) Psychological

- 1) Personality factors and gifts as per 1 Tim. 3:1ff and Titus 1:5ff.
- 2) Communication ability (preaching, teaching and counselling) based on faculty report, self-assessment and where necessary expert assessment.
- 3) Ability to form relationships with peers, faculty, Christians in local congregation and non-Christians. Self-assessment to be tested against reports from faculty and others.
- 4) Attitude to ministry by spouse. Self-assessment as well as verification by faculty and/or others.

### e) Ecclesiastical

The student's relationship to the local church and his participation in its activities should be discussed with the student and the local session or reported on by these parties.

## **E. Financial Support for Students** (Acts 2002, Art. 78.3; Acts 2017, Art. 21.5)

1. Denominational financial assistance may be given failing other sources of income, viz. the student's own ability to earn or use his resources while studying, assistance from his relatives, home church and presbytery.
2. Denominational financial assistance would be available to students approved by their session who are studying for the ministry whether by distance or at a theological college.
3. Only students studying for the ministry of the word and sacraments in the Reformed Churches shall be eligible for assistance.
4. Financial assistance will only be granted to those students who have a clear recommendation as to their suitability for training for the ministry from their home session and the concurrence of their presbytery.
5. Financial assistance to students shall be granted on a year-by-year basis and may be renewed upon evidence of satisfactory progress.
6. Requests for financial assistance should be directed to the deputies and should contain the following information:
  - a) The amount of assistance required,
  - b) A statement of anticipated income and expenditure,
  - c) The name of the college or seminary at which the student is enrolled or intends to enrol.
7. Such requests will be considered by, "the Student Assistance Committee", comprising the two Deputies for Students to the Ministry, the alternate(s) and one member of the Church Extension Committee (Acts 2014, Art. 29.4).
8. If a man does not enter the ministry of the word in a Reformed Church he may be required to repay the financial assistance given to him, at the discretion of the Student Assistance Committee in conjunction with the deputies.

## **F. Administration** (Acts 2002, Art. 81; Acts 2017, Art. 21.5)

1. The Student Assistance Fund shall be maintained by way of a quota levied on the churches as required.
2. The Church Extension Committee shall determine when a quota is needed and set the quota amount.
3. The quota shall be collected by the Church Extension Committee.

4. The fund shall be administered by the Church Extension Committee (Acts 2014, Art. 29.3).
5. The level of financial assistance to be granted to each student will be determined by the Student Assistance Committee taking into account the financial needs of the student, his capacity to earn during the academic year, financial assistance received from other sources, and the funds available to the committee.
6. The Church Extension Committee shall provide a full statement of income and expenditure as part of their report to each synod.

## **G. Preaching in Reformed Churches of New Zealand**

All students who have completed the first year of their studies to the satisfaction of the faculty and the Deputies for Students to the Ministry, and who are members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand shall be authorised to preach in our churches.

Their sermons should be submitted to the local minister or session for approval before being preached.

## **H. Students' Public Relations with the Churches**

Each student is requested to provide an annual newsletter for *Faith in Focus* church magazine (Acts 1980, Art. 87).



## **Appendix**

(Acts of Synod 2005, Report 17, Appendix 2)

### **Considerations for Sessions When Evaluating Prospective Students**

#### **1. Call**

Our Church Visitation questionnaire asks; “*Are suitable young men in the congregation encouraged to enter the ministry...*” (Q. 40). This annual question reminds us as sessions of this need and our responsibility. We need to look out for men with the qualities of character and the necessary gifts for the ministry. Some may not present themselves (perhaps they are like Timothy who had “*a spirit of timidity*” (2 Tim.1:6f), so we need to approach them. Are we active enough in challenging suitable men to consider this call to the ministry of the Word?

Another will present himself as having a call. Sessions need to examine his motive, character and gifts. Does the love of Christ constrain him? Does he desire to preach and teach others because he loves Christ? Does he love Christ's Word and Christ's people? Is it his desire to see people grow in their faith? Does he have a genuine concern for the lost? Does he have the intellectual gifts and capability that are necessary for a lifetime of study in the Scriptures?

#### **2. Character**

Sessions should evaluate a man using the qualifications for an elder listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Christian leadership is primarily a matter of Christian character. Much harm has been done in the Christian church by leaders who have failed in their character. We need to do all we can to screen men before they embark on a long period of study for the ministry. Most of these character qualities are well-known and familiar but some bear elaboration.

**Temperate** refers to his use of drink but also covers restraint of speech and an orderly and disciplined lifestyle. There ought to be evidence of some sort of progress in the man's life, not having flitted from one job to another, begun but not even settled into any particular career, changed courses of study already and not finished one or put it to any use.

**Prudent/self-controlled** in the use of his tongue, money and opportunities in life so far. Yes, we may give allowance for some youthful mistakes, but Timothy was told to “*let your progress be evident to all*”. The candidate is not to be a new convert for, to keep ourselves free from responsibility for the sins of others, we are not to be “*hasty in the laying on of hands*” (1 Tim.5:22). The AV translates this as “*sober*.” Does the man have, not a sombre, but a sober,

sensible, thoughtful approach to life? Hebrews tells us we are to “*consider the outcome of (our leaders’) way of life*” (13:7); that requires that some life has been lived before others so that some results of godly living have had time to become apparent.

**Not self-willed/overbearing** in his manner and dealing with others. A minister, as any elder, will have to be able to fight for the truth (1 Tim 1:18, 6:12), but not, or at least very rarely, on behalf of himself. Furthermore, he must also be able to choose his issues; “my conscience,” like love but in a different way, may also cover a multitude of sins! This attribute may further be explained as humility, Augustine’s first three Christian virtues. Sessions must ask themselves, and others who know him; “is he teachable? Or does he have his own agenda and, by hook or by crook, pursue it?” The opposite of this negative is its positive. Does he have a shepherd’s heart? Does he love the Lord’s people? Is he a servant? Has he showed that in his life so far? Titus says we must be “*as God’s steward*” (Titus 1:7), one who exercises the authority God has given him for the sake of God’s household, not his own benefit, and hence for the sake of God’s people. Does he already live as one who knows himself not to be his own but bought with a price, the blood of Jesus? The following words express this well; “*If he really cares, then he will be able always to bear all the follies and the foolishness which he will encounter; he will even be able uncomplainingly to accept the slights and hurts he will receive. If he really cares, then all the work involved both in the study and in pastoral duty will become a delight. And if he really bears his people on his heart, he will find that they bear him on theirs and that they will forgive his failures and mistakes and accept his inadequacies.*”

**Patient/gentle:** the man must be able to take a certain amount on the chin, not just without retaliation but also perhaps without seeking redress under the rubric of Matthew 18. Rather, “*A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger; and it is his glory to overlook a transgression*” (Pr.19:11, cf. Eccl.7:21f; 10:4).

**Loving what is good:** is he a positive man or does he tend to the negative? We do have different personalities, yet we are called to think about what is true, honourable, righteous, pure, lovely, reputable, excellent, praiseworthy (Phil.4:8).

**Hospitable:** this is not an optional extra, not even for private Christians; it is mandatory (Ro.12:13). Nor is it only to be shown to one’s friends for it is not then hospitality (Heb 13:2). Thus, obviously, the man’s wife comes under review also. A hospitable home is a great asset to a useful ministry.

### 3. Qualifications/Abilities

**Able to manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.** If a man is still single this should not preclude him from training for the ministry or from serving in it. Even so, his own life must

give evidence of order rather than disorder; if he is to manage the church he must be able to manage himself and his own time.

**Able to teach:** Paul told Timothy to “*pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.*” If he believes he has been called has he been laying a foundation of reading in the Bible? Has he already done some study to show himself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth? It is, after all, “*to faithful men*” that Timothy was to entrust the things Paul had taught him “*so they would be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim.2:2). He should be questioned closely as to what he believes the ministry is in its essence. It is symptomatic of our times that it is too often called “ministry,” without the definite article. It is *the* ministry, the ministry of the Word of God, in its preaching and pastoral aspects. As Allan M. Harman says,

Students in training for the ministry must sense that nothing can be more practical for ministry than basic biblical skills. This is assuming that the role of the pastor has primary reference to proclamation of the Word of God. His task is to testify to the gospel of God's grace and to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:24, 27). Acquiring other skills should not take precedence over ones which enable expository ministry to be carried out. For anyone looking forward to extended years in Christian ministry, skills in biblical exegesis must provide the very foundation for fulfilling that ministry with increasing satisfaction and competence. (“The Place of Biblical Languages in the Theological Curriculum”, *Reformed Theological Review*, p. 96f.)

**Public reading, exhortation and teaching:** he must have some signs of the “*gifts of public address*” (CO.12).

**Perseverance:** this also is a general Christian virtue but applies especially to a minister. These words express this well; “... *the ministry needs that very rare ability... to do routine work without ever slackening, without ever losing enthusiasm, and without ever putting it off or pushing it through without interest and without thrill. Unless a man has in him that consecration which 'makes drudgery divine' he need hardly begin upon the ministry at all.*”

## Some Suggestions for Preliminary Preparation and Testing

As mentioned above, some men will sense a call to the ministry of themselves. In some cases, men are eager to go to the College immediately. Yet Synod 1998 urged “*Sessions to make a careful evaluation of the men they send to the RTC to train for the ministry in order to send them with a clear recommendation as to their intention and suitability.*” If there are no questions about his character and he has served as an elder and has evident gifts then the session may have no hesitation about making such a recommendation. In the case of younger men, however, we would suggest that any prospective BTh/BMin student with any idea of the ministry in mind be kept back at least

one year. This will give the session time to evaluate his character, assess his gifts, and give him some preparatory training. If he balks at this then that should sound an alarm bell about his suitability. The church must train "*faithful men*" who are prepared to have their faithfulness examined and tested (2 Tim 2:2).

Here are a few practical suggestions: have him teach catechism, lead youth club Bible studies, do some supervised visiting, conduct reading services. Have the minister of the church supervise him as he exegetes a few passages from his English Bible and puts the results together in a logical flow of thought, bringing it to a conclusion. This allows the pastor to discern whether he can see the main point of the passage and some application arising out of it. Does he have a grasp of English comprehension and composition? This is a pre-requisite and if he doesn't have it he should be prepared to get it first. It is not the Church's calling to give primary education.

We believe there is immense value in having young men pursue an undergraduate degree as preparation for the ministry. This would provide them with knowledge and skills that would be very useful in this calling. We are in hearty agreement with the sentiments expressed by Dr Sally Davey in the Appendix to Report 2 (Investigation of Theological Education in NZ) presented to the 2002 Synod, viz., "Some Thoughts on Undergraduate Education in the Humanities as Preparation for the Preaching Ministry." We would recommend these comments to our brothers for their consideration.

Our experience as churches over the last couple of decades highlights the importance of testing men before they take up their formal training. Once a man goes to theological college he will get caught up in the momentum of the study, which is aimed at the preaching and pastoral ministry. Assumptions will build up in his own mind and these will be fostered by the expectations of others. But none of that is a call to the ministry. If it is necessary to raise cautions or even say "No", that is much more gracious (and easier for all involved) at the beginning of the process than nearer or at the end.

## Vicariate

**(Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.4; Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 127.6,  
Acts of Synod 2022, Art. 73, 81, 90, 104, 111)**

The vicariate is considered an integral part of the theological training. The student shall serve this period after the completion of the final college examination.

In order to be considered for a vicariate in the RCNZ, students must complete a minimum of two years of on-site study at either the Reformed Theological College or another theological institution used by our sister churches. Exceptions to this rule can be made by the student deputies in consultation with the sending church (Acts 2022, Art. 90).

The Deputies for Students for the Ministry shall evaluate whether a student is ready for a vicariate, especially if he has not trained through a Reformed theological college/seminary such as the RTC or MARS. The deputies may consider recommending that the candidate study at an approved Reformed theological college for as long as deemed necessary (Acts 2022, Art. 104).

All correspondence concerning the vicariate shall in the first place be addressed to the convener of the Deputies for Students to the Ministry of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

### **A. Form of Subscription**

Vicars (including those who do summer internships) are required to sign the Form of Subscription prior to the commencement of their duties. (Acts 1971, Art. 87).

### **B. Duration and Purpose of Vicariate**

In keeping with the decisions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, every graduating theological student who desires entry into the ministry of these churches and is deemed suitable to serve as a vicar in one of the congregations of the RCNZ shall serve a vicariate for a period of at least twelve months (Acts 1986, Art. 95c).

The purposes of the vicariate are (Acts 2022, Art. 73.2):

- a. to help transition the student from his theological studies to fulltime ministry by providing him with 12 months practical experience in the various areas of ministry under the supervision of the session and an experienced pastor;
- b. to provide a final test of the candidate's suitability for ministry in the RCNZ with a view to making him eligible for call.

## C. Deputies

The Deputies for Students to the Ministry have the right to approach a church which they believe could provide suitable vicariate training.

## D. Guidelines for Vicariate Training

### 1. Principles Regarding Vicariates

- a. After the deputies' interviews with final year students the vicariate committee shall inform all the churches that the candidate is available for vicariate and the churches shall be asked to send their applications by return mail.
- b. Except in exceptional circumstances vicars should not be placed in vacant congregations or in isolated settings where they cannot be properly supervised and trained.
- c. A vicariate is an important and essential part of preparation for the ministry. A local church may benefit greatly from a vicar's work, but this should be seen as a 'fringe benefit' to the vicariate; the main purpose is to train the vicar.
- d. This training ought to be provided by experienced and able ministers. Some ministers have more experience and/or ability to train a vicar than others. The vicariate committee and the RCNZ deputies ought to consider the suitability of the supervising minister in the placement of vicars and the deputies may approach churches and ministers with a request to take a vicar. Supervising ministers ought to be aware that training a vicar will take a significant amount of time; time saved in a reduced preaching load will need to be spent in evaluating the vicar's sermons and supervising other areas of his ministry.
- e. The written information from the process of the evaluation and training of a student shall be collated by the deputies and passed on to the session of the vicariate church (Acts 2022, Art. 73.1).
- f. A vicar will need adequate time to prepare for his presbytery exam. Sessions should discuss this with the vicar so that he has time during his vicariate and as his exam approaches. The examination should not be too early in the vicariate as the vicar needs sufficient time for preparation, under the direction of the supervising minister.
- g. The supervising minister
  - 1) The minister may expect to spend between two to four hours per week with the vicar, excluding session meetings, joint visits etc. This time would be spent in sermon evaluation, planning and

reporting on pastoral visitation, advice and guidance on the work of the ministry, e.g. devotions and prayer, church order and the functioning of the session and presbytery, time management, filing system etc.

- 2) Vicars need to be encouraged in a regular programme of reading and study. The supervising minister and vicar should agree on a programme, perhaps in an area of interest or weakness.
  - 3) The vicar's work should be closely supervised, especially in the early part of the vicariate. As time goes on he should be given more and more freedom to work on his own and be given more responsibility in certain areas.
- h. The Supervising session
- 1) It may be very helpful to have the vicar meet regularly (say, once a month) with an experienced and able elder who can give him some advice and input.
  - 2) The session should also evaluate the vicar's sermons and development in the ministry. Both the minister and the session should make a careful evaluation of a vicar's progress. Honest advice, encouragement and criticism ought to be given in a sensitive manner. Time should be set aside for this at a session meeting not less than once every three months.
  - 3) The session should take account of helpful feedback from the congregation and should seek this using sermon evaluation forms.
  - 4) At the time of his presbytery exam the session should provide the presbytery with a written report and evaluation of the vicar's training and progress.

## 2. Elements of Vicariate Training

### a. Preaching

This is obviously a crucial area of his training and much time needs to be spent here. A vicar will be expected to preach once a Sunday through his vicariate and twice a Sunday on occasions towards the end of the time. The supervising minister should ensure that he has experience in preaching "Catechism" sermons as well as in an expository manner. Vicars have found it very helpful to follow the discipline of preaching through a book of the Bible. It would be good experience for the vicar to preach in some of the other churches of the presbytery and to have experience at preaching at special occasions where possible, e.g. a funeral, wedding, baptism and Lord's Supper. Sermons and their supporting exegesis are to be closely evaluated primarily by the minister, but also by the session, with input from members of the congregation via

evaluation forms. Some vicars have found it helpful to have a “sermon workshop” with other ministers (and vicars) of the presbytery.

Sermon content is to be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- 1) accuracy of exegesis,
- 2) does the outline carry the text?
- 3) is the context, including the historical redemptive, taken into account?
- 4) is the basic thrust Christ-centred?
- 5) is the sermon doctrinally sound?
- 6) is the teaching applied in a manner consistent with the teaching of the text?
- 7) is the theme developed in a coherent, logical manner?

The delivery of the sermon is to be evaluated for evidence of gifts of communication and contribution to edifying worship (Acts 1986, Art. 57e).

#### **b. Pastoral work**

- 1) Visitation with the minister: In the early part of the vicariate a vicar will find it helpful to visit members of the congregation with the minister. As time goes on the vicar will be able to visit on his own. In larger congregations the vicar has been assigned a certain number of families as his pastoral responsibility, while in smaller congregations he has been expected to visit through the congregation.
- 2) Visitation with elders: A vicar will gain much experience by participating in the home visits with the elders, especially if he can visit with a number of elders and be exposed to various styles and approaches.
- 3) Counselling: Training and practice at counselling will be valuable for a vicar. Much can be learned from watching and listening to an experienced minister helping people through their problems and struggles (if a congregational member was agreeable to the vicar listening in). Vicars may be asked to counsel members on their own depending on the experience and maturity of the vicar.

#### **c. Session and Presbytery**

Vicars are expected to attend all meetings of the elders, session and presbytery and be prepared to take assigned responsibilities as deemed helpful. E.g. Prepare a paper, chair a meeting, draft a letter. It would be profitable for vicars to attend some of the deacons' meetings for his own experience and for their benefit.

#### **d. Wife and Family**

Where a vicar is married it would be helpful for the vicar and his wife to meet with the supervising minister and his wife on a regular basis for



encouragement, fellowship and advice. It would also be helpful for the vicar's wife to meet with the wives of senior elders (Titus 2:3–5). She should be encouraged to take an active part in the life of the congregation, as family responsibilities permit (e.g. Ladies' Bible studies, service opportunities)

#### **e. Other Activities**

- 1) Catechism: Part of the training will involve teaching at least one weekly catechism class; this to be evaluated by the minister or the elder supervising the catechism classes.
- 2) Bible studies: Bible study groups are an important part of congregational life and the vicar ought to attend these groups on a regular basis and take a turn at leading them.
- 3) Evangelism: The vicar will find it helpful to learn from the insights of the supervising minister regarding the work of evangelism and to participate in such work as he has opportunity. He may be able to train a group in evangelism.
- 4) Youth work: The minister and session may want to encourage the vicar to attend or be involved in the youth work of the congregation as part of his training. E.g. Sunday school, Cadets and Calvinettes, youth club.
- 5) Other activities outside of the church may include a ministers' fraternal/association and useful conferences.

## **E. The Financial Support of Vicars**

(Acts 1998, Report 18, Art. 74.3,4; Acts 2008, Art. 53.1,2,3).

### **1. Salary**

A married vicar is to receive not less than two thirds of the recommended salary of a minister and a single vicar half the recommended salary, plus the synodically recommended allowances, and be provided with free accommodation, vehicle and phone. (This to take into account the specific needs of each family and current government regulations.)

### **2. Travel and Accommodation**

Travelling expenses and accommodation are the responsibility of the church concerned.

### **3. Denominational Support**

- a. That the denomination administers a central fund to provide financial support to churches who have a vicar.
- b. This fund is supported by quota levied on all the churches.
- c. Churches may apply to the Vicariate Fund for up to two thirds of the costs of the vicariates (i.e. travel, accommodation, vehicle, phone and stipend).

Applications are to include a copy of official notification from Deputies for Students to the Ministry that a prospective candidate has been granted a Vicariate in their congregation; a financial budget for that Vicariate for that period; a date when funds are required by, and an indication of the minimum level of financial support required for the Vicariate (the latter deemed helpful to the committee in the event of pressure on the Vicariate Fund from other Vicariate applications) (Acts 2008, Art. 53.1).

- d. The maximum amount of the fund is to be \$100,000. The churches will not be levied beyond this until the amount falls below this figure (Acts 2022, Art. 114).
- e. Funding for summer internships is available from the Vicariate Fund for up to two thirds of the total cost up to a cap of \$10,000 per summer internship (Acts 2022, Art. 114).
- f. The Vicariate Fund is administered by the Church Extension Committee.
- g. Should a vicariate be initiated directly by a local church it will not be eligible for assistance from the Vicariate Fund (Acts 2017, Art. 82).

#### **4. Health Care**

Sessions are responsible for investigating health care provisions for those undertaking vicariates, especially in the case of non-residents (particularly those on temporary visas).

#### **5. Relocation**

If a vicar does not receive a call after the completion of his vicariate and if he wishes to relocate, the local church, with the support of the Vicariate Fund, will provide him with sufficient funds to enable him to move with his family and belongings to his place of residence immediately prior to coming to the congregation where he served his vicariate. Another location may be selected but the maximum provision made will not exceed the cost incurred in bringing him to the congregation where he served.

## **F. Rules for Preliminary and Final Examinations**

### **Examinations in Homiletics** (Acts 2022, Art. 104, 111)

(Further rules for homiletics examination at the preliminary and final junctures are noted in the relevant sections below.)

The candidate shall be required to deliver a specimen sermon, especially prepared for the examination. This sermon is to be complete and its delivery shall require not more than 25 minutes.

The candidate is also required to submit two other (supporting) sermons from texts of his choice that he has prepared and preached in the past year. Ordinarily the three sermons presented by a candidate should cover an Old Testament text, a New Testament text and a confessional sermon.

The specimen sermon, along with the supporting sermons, shall be forwarded to the stated clerk of the presbytery who shall forward them to the homiletics examiner, the synodical examiners from the other presbyteries and the sessions of the presbytery not less than two weeks prior to the examination.

Sermon content is to be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- 1) accuracy of exegesis,
- 2) does the outline carry the text?
- 3) is the context, including the historical redemptive, taken into account?
- 4) is the basic thrust Christ-centred?
- 5) is the sermon doctrinally sound?
- 6) is the teaching applied in a manner consistent with the teaching of the text?
- 7) is the theme developed in a coherent, logical manner?

The delivery of the sermon is to be evaluated for evidence of gifts of communication and contribution to edifying worship (Acts 1986, Art. 57e).

Ordinarily the presbytery shall appoint two sermon examiners in both exams so they can compare notes.

It is recommended that the candidate preaches his sermon, and then the presbytery has a recess and then the rest of the exam continues. The presbytery will evaluate the entire examination at the end after all the areas have been examined.

The role of the supporting sermons:

- a. The specimen sermon presented and preached at the exam ought to receive the main focus at the examination.
- b. If there is a weakness evidenced in the specimen sermon or the supporting sermons the presbytery may decide to fail the sermon section of the exam.
- c. If the supporting sermons meet the criteria for sermon evaluation the presbytery may decide to sustain the sermon section of the exam.

## **I. Preliminary Examination**

### **A. General**

(Acts 2022, Art. 73)

The first examination shall ordinarily be conducted after eight months of the vicariate have been served.

One purpose of the examination is to identify areas of weakness in the candidate that may require further work in the remainder of the vicariate, whether these be in his character, academic ability, or in his preaching.

The examination tests a man's theological and academic ability, but also confirms his character and suitability for the ministry.

Sustaining the examination enables the presbytery to declare him eligible to sit his final examination.

## **B. Requirements**

1. A request by a candidate to the convening church or the stated clerk of the presbytery, to be examined in order to be declared eligible for call. At least one month shall elapse between the request and the examination.
2. A statement of the Reformed Theological College (or equivalent institution), indicating that the candidate has successfully completed the regular, prescribed study in theology, and testifying to his Christian conduct while a student.
3. A statement of the session(s) of the church(es) to which the candidate belonged during the last two years, regarding his doctrine and conduct.
4. A statement of a doctor about the candidate's physical fitness.
5. A statement from the synodical Deputies for Students to the Ministry who have discussed with the candidate the motives causing him to seek the ministry.
6. A report from his session about his vicariate work undertaken so far. (This report must be based on a period of work of at least six months).

## **C. Subjects**

### **1. A Specimen Sermon**

See "Examinations in Homiletics" above.

The text for the specimen sermon shall be assigned by the homiletics examiner. The candidate must have the examiner's requirements at least four weeks before the examination. Examiners are discouraged from assigning an obscure or very difficult text to a candidate, which would be challenging for an experienced preacher, let alone a candidate who is still learning (Acts 20:22, Art. 104.2c).

The candidate's supporting sermons must have been prepared without input from his mentors.

## **2. Exegesis**

The examination in the exegesis of both Old and New Testaments shall cover one or two passages from one chapter in each Testament. The assignment of the two chapters shall be made at least three weeks prior to the examination. The reading of the Bible in the original languages and a lengthy discussion of introductory problems shall be omitted. The presbytery shall satisfy itself that the candidate is able to expound the Scriptures. The candidate shall be examined in each Testament for 20 minutes.

## **3. Dogmatics**

The manner in which each candidate is to be examined must be practical not just academic in nature. The purpose is not to repeat the final college examination. The churches may leave this to the college or equivalent institution. The churches have to assure themselves that the candidate is sound in doctrine and is capable of giving a clear exposition of the Reformed doctrines and of defending the Reformed position over against heresies which are popular in our time, in order that as a shepherd of Christ's flock he may be able to protect that flock and 'hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it' (Titus 1:9, NIV). The candidate shall be examined for at least 30 minutes in this subject.

# **II. Final Examination**

## **A. General**

(Acts 2022, Art. 81, 104)

The final examination shall ordinarily be conducted after eleven months of the vicariate have been served. It is to take place in the vicariate church.

Two synodical examiners from each presbytery shall be present.

If the final examination is sustained the candidate shall be declared eligible for call. After he has accepted a call, he may be ordained in the calling church without further examination.

If the final examination is not sustained, the vicar will need to continue his vicariate training with the help of his supervising pastor until he is ready to re-sit this exam. During this time the vicariate church will need to provide for him. This may mean that the vicariate will be extended to 14 months, or even more. In this case the vicariate church may seek further funding from the Vicariate Fund administered by the Church Extension Committee.

The purpose of this final examination shall be to ascertain whether or not the candidate is able to pursue the work of the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Reformed Churches to the edification of the people of God and the progress of the church, so that the presbytery in good conscience can consent to his ordination. While the presbytery must be assured of the

candidate's competency in the academic disciplines requisite to the ministry, it is for entry to the ministry that the candidate is being examined. The emphasis must therefore be on the ecclesiastical and practical use of those disciplines for the growth in grace of the people of God.

The presbytery in which the final examination is conducted shall have the discretion as to how much of the preliminary examination, besides the sermon, shall be repeated, when the final examination is held in the same presbytery as the preliminary examination (Acts 2008, Art. 115.2).

## **B. Requirements**

1. If the candidate's preliminary examination was conducted in a different presbytery, a statement from that presbytery as to his successful passing of said examination.
2. A statement of the session(s) of the church(es) to which the candidate belonged since his preliminary examination, including one from the session in which he served his vicariate, regarding his doctrine and conduct. A copy of the statement to the presbytery at the time of the preliminary examination may be presented if the date of the final examination is less than half a year after the preliminary examination.

## **C. Subjects**

### **1. A Specimen Sermon**

See "Examinations in Homiletics" above.

The text for the specimen sermon shall be chosen by the candidate himself.

### **2. Exegesis**

As at the preliminary examination (20 minutes in each Testament).

### **3. Dogmatics**

As at the preliminary examination: for dogmatics 30 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for ethics and 10 minutes for symbolics

### **4. Knowledge of Holy Scripture (10 minutes)**

### **5. Church History (15 minutes)**

### **6. Church Polity (10 minutes)**

## **D. After the Examination**

1. After the successful completion of the examination, the candidate shall subscribe to the Confessional Standards of the Reformed Churches in the presence of the presbytery.
2. After a satisfactory result of this examination, the presbytery shall declare the candidate eligible for call.

3. The presbytery that declares a candidate eligible for call shall immediately inform the other churches of this decision. The candidate shall not accept a call within six weeks.
4. The presbytery shall give the candidate a statement, which allows him to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments.

# Ministers and Wives' Conferences

## General

A ministers and wives' conference will be held in each inter-synodical period (Acts 1992, Art. 8). The conference organisation and location will rotate between the presbyteries (Acts 2005, Art. 14).

Ministers and wives' travel and catering costs will be synodically funded, with accommodation being the participants' expense (Acts 2002, Art. 18). Reasonable costs of a guest speaker will also be synodically funded (Acts 1992, Art. 8).

A report of each conference will be sent to the sessions (Acts 1983, Art. 137).

## Guidelines for those invited to attend

### (Acts of Synod 2022, Article 13)

Those invited to attend

- Ministers of the RCNZ currently in fulltime ministry
- Emeritus ministers of the RCNZ residing in New Zealand
- Vicars of the RCNZ
- Ministers-elect of the RCNZ
- Widows of ministers of the RCNZ residing in New Zealand

*In all the above cases of men invited to attend it is understood that their wives are also invited to attend.*

Those not invited to attend

- Students for the ministry in the RCNZ
- Ministers from other denominations, whether a sister church or not

Rationale

- The purpose of the conference is for fellowship, enrichment, mutual encouragement and in-service training of the RCNZ ministers, and providing a forum for in-house conversations.
- This is not the forum for the furtherance of inter-church relationships or interdenominational ecclesiastical fellowship.



## **Rules for Long Service Leave**

### **Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.5**

1. Every minister, serving in a congregation, shall accrue one week of long service leave, additional to annual holidays, for every year of qualifying service.
2. Ordinarily, long service leave will not be taken until a minister has served a period of five years of qualifying service in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Long service leave shall be taken at a time mutually agreed to by the minister and session.
3. Qualifying service shall begin or continue to accrue from the most recent of the following dates:
  - a. The date of ordination as a minister of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
  - b. The date of installation after returning from having served in another church overseas.
  - c. In the case of currently serving ministers who have already taken at least one period of long service leave, the date leave was most recently taken.
4. Each session will maintain a record of the long service leave their minister has accrued. In the case of a minister accepting a call to another congregation, a record of the accrued leave that is yet to be taken shall be transferred by the previous session to the new session.
5. Leave is granted for the purpose of refreshment and recuperation and must be taken. Payment in lieu of leave will not be granted.
6. Each church shall continue to care for her minister in the ordinary way during his leave (this includes regular stipend, use of manse or housing allowance, car or travelling allowance and other benefits).
7. That long-service leave that is accrued by a minister while serving in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia will continue to be recognised in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, notwithstanding the change in our ecclesiastical relationship effective from Synod 2011 (Acts 2014, Art. 127.7).

# Rules for the Provision of Emeritation Benefits for Ministers and Missionaries

(Acts of Synod 2016, Articles 11, 14–23; Acts of Synod 2017, Article 16)

## A. Introduction

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (the RCNZ) have established the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Emeritus Savings Fund (the Fund), which is a 'defined contribution scheme' under a Master Trust managed by Smartshares Limited (originally SuperLife Limited), to enable the churches to fulfil their obligations under Church Order Art. 17 which states that:

*Ministers, who by reason of sickness or otherwise are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office, shall nevertheless retain the honour and title of a minister and the church which they have served shall provide honourably for them (likewise for the orphans and widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches according to the general regulations of the churches.*

The RCNZ entered into a Deed of Participation (including Schedules) with SuperLife Limited and SuperLife Trustees Limited, effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. These rules are to be read in conjunction with the current Deed and Schedules. A Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) and a Summary document are provided to members on joining and are also available on request.

## B. Membership

The following are eligible for membership in the RCNZ Emeritus Savings Fund:

- a. A minister of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand who has been duly and lawfully ordained installed or appointed as a minister of God's Word for any Reformed Churches in New Zealand and who pursuant to such appointment takes up his office as such PROVIDED THAT a minister in New Zealand for a temporary period and who is a member of a superannuation fund outside New Zealand shall not be a member.
- b. A missionary who has been duly and lawfully installed or appointed as a missionary by any member church of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and who pursuant to such appointment takes up his or her role as such PROVIDED THAT:
  - i. such missionary is specifically designated a member of the Fund by the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Overseas Mission Board; and
  - ii. for whom contributions are paid by the calling church.

## C. Employer Contributions

Where a church is making compulsory contributions to the member's KiwiSaver or contributing a similar amount to the member's other retirement savings, their contribution is set at 5% of the current Standard Minimum Stipend per annum comprised of:

- the 4% employer contribution to the Fund, plus
- a 1% contribution towards fund expenses and life and disability insurance premiums

Where a church is not otherwise contributing to the member's retirement savings, they will contribute 9% of the current Standard Minimum Stipend per annum comprised of:

- the 4% employer contribution to the Fund, plus
- a 1% contribution towards fund expenses and life and disability insurance premiums, plus
- a 4% contribution equivalent to Kiwisaver contributions

Church contributions to be remitted monthly.

## D. Death/Total Permanent Disablement Benefits

Members are insured at a rate of \$7,500 for each year of service remaining until their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. This insurance amount is offset by the amount accumulated in the member's Employer Account. i.e. the actual sum insured is the difference between the insured benefit and the balance of their Employer Account. The total amount a member would receive in the event of death or total permanent disablement is the total balance of their Member account and the greater of the death benefit or the full balance of their Employer account.

Indicative insured benefits at five yearly intervals are shown in the table below.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Death &amp; TPD Payable</b>
30	\$262,500
35	\$225,000
45	\$150,000
50	\$112,500
55	\$75,000
60	\$37,500

## E. Early Retirement Benefit

Members may retire as of right from age 60 and will be eligible for the normal retirement benefit. Death and Total Permanent Disablement insurance cover ceases at retirement.

## F. Retirement Due to Ill Health

Members may retire at any time due to ill health with the consent of their employing church and will be eligible for the normal retirement benefit. Death and Total Permanent Disablement insurance cover ceases at retirement.

## G. Late Retirement

Members may continue to work beyond normal retirement age. Church contributions will continue while they continue in active service.

## H. Withdrawal Benefit

When a member ceases service within the Reformed Churches of New Zealand before age 60 and does not take up service in a church with which we have ecumenical relations, they will be eligible for a withdrawal payment as follows:

- The total accumulated in their Member account plus
- Ten percent (10%) of their Employer account for each completed year of service up to the full amount of their Employer account, provided that they have completed at least five years' fulltime service.

This would produce the following entitlements:

<b>Length of service</b>	<b>Entitlement to Employer Account accumulated balance</b>
Less than 5 years' service	0%
5 years' service	50%
6 years' service	60%
7 years' service	70%
8 years' service	80%
9 years' service	90%
10 or more years' service	100%

## I. Transfer to a Church in Ecumenical Relations

Where a member leaves service in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to take up service in a church with which we have ecumenical relations, they are eligible to receive the full balance of their *Member Account* or at their discretion leave it invested in the Fund.

In respect of their *Employer Account*, members also have the following options, subject to the approval of the Superannuation Committee:

- Freeze their Employer Account. Church contributions cease while the account is frozen but it will continue to attract an investment return and incur admin fees. Any death or disablement insurance would cease upon leaving service. If the member re-joins the RCNZ as a minister or missionary the account is unfrozen, contributions begin again and insurance cover would resume.
- They may transfer their Employer Account to their KiwiSaver account.
- They may transfer their Employer Account to an overseas superannuation account if this is possible and practical.
- They may elect to receive their Employer Account as a lump sum, under exceptional circumstances as determined by the Remuneration Committee.

## J. Oversight of the Fund

The Fund is part of a Master Trust. The RCNZ has appointed Smartshares Limited (originally SuperLife Limited) as the manager and day-to-day administrator of the Fund and has established a Remuneration Committee which, among other things, is responsible to:

- Hold SuperLife to account with the Service Level Agreement
- Manage the Rules of the Fund
- Liaise with SuperLife on behalf of the RCNZ
- Monitor the Fund's investment performance
- Choose the mix of investments used and update this as required
- Manage the movements of members into and out of the Fund
- Respond to enquiries from members
- Report and make recommendations to synod

# Letter of Call

## Sample

### Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.6

To \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Brother

At a congregational meeting held on *dd mmm yyyy*, the congregation of the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_ voted with a clear majority to call you to serve as our minister of the Word and Sacraments.

On behalf of our congregation we therefore extend to you the call that the Lord has laid on our hearts and we urge you to “come over and help us” (Acts 16:9).

Should it please the Lord to lead you to take up our call, our expectations of you (which we believe to be in line with Scripture and the doctrinal standards of our churches) would be as follows:

- Preaching the Lord’s Word to us twice each Sunday
- Administering the sacraments
- Teaching (some of) the catechism classes
- Pastoral visiting among the congregation
- Visiting of the sick, lonely, frail and housebound
- All things that pertain to the work of a faithful and diligent servant of the Lord.

For our part, we undertake to provide for you in such a way that you are free to pursue your work in the church without the need to seek secular work outside of your calling. Convinced that “the worker deserves his wages” (1 Timothy 5:18), we will:

- Pay you the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ annually (as per RCNZ stipendiary guidelines.)
- Grant you free use of the manse/Provide you with a housing allowance of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_
- Provide you with free telephone/internet

- Grant you \_\_\_ weeks of paid leave per year
- Grant you free use of a church vehicle suitable to your needs

We will pay all reasonable removal costs for yourself, your family and your belongings as stipulated in the Church Order and the synodical regulations of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

May the King of the Church impress this call on your heart and give you a clear sense of His will, that you may arrive at a decision that is pleasing to Him. We pray that it may be His will for you to join us in the work of the Lord here in \_\_\_\_\_. Please be assured of our prayers for you as consider this call.

Your brothers in Christ

The session of the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

Done in Session this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_

Signature of Presbytery Counsellor

Signatures of the Elders

Signatures of the Deacons

**Minister's Credentials**  
**Sample**  
**Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.7**

The session of the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_ at its meeting on *dd mmm yyyy* declared that the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ has faithfully served as minister of Word and Sacrament in this church from *dd mmm yyyy* to *dd mmm yyyy*. During this time, he has worked diligently and has set an example in his life and doctrine. He has preached and taught in accordance with the Word of God, as interpreted by our Reformed Standards and Church Order.

Sufficient reasons have been put forward for the Session to assent to his acceptance of the call of the Church of \_\_\_\_\_.

We recommend him without hesitation to the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery and to the church of \_\_\_\_\_. We pray that the great King of the Church, who says to one of His servants "go" and he goes, and to another "come" and he comes, may make Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ as rich a blessing in his new congregation as he has been to us.

Resolved to agree to Rev. \_\_\_\_\_'s request for release at our meeting of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

The Session of the abovenamed church

\_\_\_\_\_, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

-oOo-



The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ in which the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ belongs, approves the above credential and transfers our beloved brother in the ministry to the Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ in whose midst our brother expects to serve the church of \_\_\_\_\_ as pastor and minister.

On behalf of the said Presbytery

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Done this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_, having examined the above credentials, approves them and herewith authorises the counsellor of the church of \_\_\_\_\_ to proceed to the ordination/installation.

On behalf of the abovenamed presbytery

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

## **Form of Subscription** **(Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 76)**

We, the undersigned, office-bearers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that the whole system of doctrine as taught in the Belgic and Westminster Confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, does fully agree with the Word of God.

We therefore promise to teach diligently and to defend faithfully the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.

We declare moreover that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.

And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Session, Presbytery or Synod, that the same may be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Session, Presbytery or Synod, under penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

Furthermore, if at any time the Session, Presbytery or Synod, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular doctrine of any of the afore mentioned standards, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves however the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Session or the Presbytery, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

NOTE: Synod 1977 adopted the Form of Subscription with only one change, viz, to accept "the whole system of doctrine" instead of the old reading "the whole system of truth," in the latter part of the first paragraph.

## Guidelines to Form of Subscription

(Acts of Synod 1971, Art. 45; 1977, Art. 76.6)

Guidelines as to the meaning of subscription to the confessions by means of the Form of Subscription.

Synod 1971 declared that subscription by office-bearers is understood in the following way:

- a. That the person making subscription subscribes to ALL the doctrines set forth in the confessions, as being doctrines which are the teaching of the Word of God.
- b. That the subscriber, so subscribes to all these doctrines, be they understood in the eyes of men as being *major or minor* doctrines of the Christian Faith, without any reservation on his part and that he confesses these doctrines to be his own understanding of the teaching of the Word of God, desires to maintain such, and rejects all other teachings which would contradict the same;
- c. That the subscriber **does not** by his subscription declare that the statements of these doctrines are formulated in the best manner, or with the use of the best words, or that the Confessional Standards of our denomination cover **all** the teaching of the Scriptures on the matters confessed, or that every teaching of Scripture is dealt with by the Confessional Standards, or that the Confessional Standards of our denomination refute all the heresies that now exist (Acts 1969, Report 17.2, p. 79 slightly amended);
- d. That only the doctrines intentionally conveyed are binding and not such allusions, or incidental remarks, or propositions which can derived from the Confessions are binding. Nevertheless no one is free ultimately to decide for himself or for the Church what is and what is not a doctrine contained in the Standards. If such a question shall arise the Form of Subscription itself specifies quite clearly that it is the decision of the court of the Church that shall be sought, reached and acquiesced in, in every case.

NOTE: Guidelines as to the meaning of subscription on the Confessions, were adopted by Synod 1971. Synod 1977 directed that they be appended to the Form of Subscription.

## Calling Ministers from Non-Sister Churches (Acts of Synod 1995, Arts. 22 & 112)

### A. Requirements

To ensure compliance with the Church Order Arts. 10 & 11, the following requirements for calling ministers from non-sister denominations are to be followed.

1. A minister from a non-sister church cannot be called before he has been declared eligible for call by one of our presbyteries.
2. In order to be declared eligible for call a minister from a non-sister church shall:
  - a. Have to provide:
    - proof of having followed an acceptable course of training and instruction;
    - proof of being regularly ordained;
    - proof that he is now serving the Lord in an acceptable manner (either in the regular ministry or some other function in the church);
    - references from office-bearers who are members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand or sister church, and from his own session, with regard to both doctrine and life;
    - advice of difficulties being experienced with his present session or congregation if any.
  - b. Sustain a preliminary *colloquium doctum* (learned discussion, or examination).  
  
(This will require him to meet with a presbytery in New Zealand, or by some other means prove to the presbytery that he is of such theological and pastoral persuasion that he may be considered for the ministry of the word and sacraments in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.)
3. Such a declaration of eligibility for call and subsequent call do not rule out the normal procedure of a *colloquium doctum* to be sustained by all ministers coming from another denomination, before being installed.

### B. Practical Guidelines for Sessions

1. Ensure that the minister you have in mind is sound in doctrine and life.
2. Advise him of the necessity of being declared eligible for call by the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

3. Advise him of the procedure and of the need to sustain a *colloquium doctum* after accepting a call (which is not a mere formality).
4. Arrange for him to be declared eligible by your presbytery.
5. Extend a call (when the above have been taken care of).
6. While the call is being considered, come to agreement on who will do what if *colloquium doctum* is not sustained (does calling church pay for the return of the minister or does minister come over solely for the *colloquium doctum* before moving family), come to agreement on when minister would move with family and/or household.
7. When the call is accepted, arrange with presbytery for a *colloquium doctum* and obtain go-ahead for installation.
8. It is suggested that the minister come over on his own for the *colloquium doctum* and not move his family before sustaining the *colloquium doctum*.

## **Section IV – Mission and Evangelism**

### **Rules for Overseas Mission Board**

(Acts of Synod 1971, Art. 61, Recomm. 5; Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 24.13)

For additional information on Mission Policies etc. please consult the *Mission Policy Handbook* on the RCNZ home page.

#### **A. Introduction**

1. It is the sacred duty, as well as the blessed privilege of all individual Christians and all churches to take part in the fulfilment of Christ's Great Commission to evangelise the world. That order and unity may be maintained in the mission work of the Churches, the following rules and regulations shall be observed.

#### **B. The Work of Synod**

2. Pursuant to Art. 51 of the Church Order, and proceeding upon the principle that synod shall control all mission work which demands denominational co-operation:
  - a. Synod determines the fields where mission work is to be done, and makes final decisions regarding the expansion or retrenchment of the work;
  - b. Synod determines matters which are related to the work, such as: the financial support of its missionaries and their helpers, allowances for children and their education, car allowances, housing, pensions, vacation, furlough, etc.;
  - c. Synod determines the annual budget for the work, designating the quota of the churches and/or the number of collections required;
  - d. Synod appoints the members of the Overseas Mission Committee, which is called the Overseas Mission Board (OMB)

#### **C. The Overseas Mission Board**

3. The OMB is the agency of synod. It shall carry out synodical decisions pertaining to overseas missions, and act on behalf of synod in matters that may arise, and call for action in the interim period between synods.
4. The OMB shall consist of at least five synodical deputies, all resident in one presbytery if possible. The term of membership shall be for the period between two successive synods. Reappointment is possible after this period.
5. The OMB shall be assisted by advisors, one from each of the other presbyteries. The advisors shall be appointed by the presbytery.

6. The OMB shall act on behalf of synod in supervising and regulating the mission work of the churches, and to that end shall be authorised by synod to acquire, hold and convey property, take charge of offerings and expenditure, and control all moneys raised for, donated or bequeathed to the Overseas Missions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. All this shall be carried out under the name of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
7. The OMB shall act on behalf of synod in the interim period between synods to do what belongs to the province of synod in the matter of calling missionaries namely, to designate sending churches, and to present a nomination to them (both to be done in consultation with the advisors). A letter of call shall be issued by the sending church in consultation with the OMB, and over the signatures of both.
8. Where the Board deems it necessary in the best interest of the work, that there be a change in the location or nature of the work of any missionary, such change shall only be made in consultation with the missionary and the church or Missions Council on the mission field.
9. The members of the OMB shall elect from their midst a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer. Each of these shall be responsible for the duties generally appertaining to these offices.
10. The OMB shall meet at least once every three months.
11. If deemed necessary by the Board or requested by the advisors, the Board shall have the right to invite the advisors to attend a Board meeting.
12. All actions of the OMB shall be recorded in its minutes, copies of which shall be sent to all members and advisors.
13. The advisors shall function as a link between the Mission Board and the churches in those presbyteries where no members of the OMB have been appointed by synod. From the minutes of the Board's meeting received by them they shall inform the churches at each presbytery meeting in order to promote the interest in the Mission work at the local level.
14. The OMB shall issue at least four bulletins per year to keep the members of the churches informed of its work and to serve as a link between missionaries and the churches.
15. The advisors shall inform the OMB as to the views of the churches regarding mission work.
16. The advisors, having been consulted by the OMB on all major matters, shall send their advice within the time limit requested in order to enable the OMB to reach final decisions.

## **Home Mission Committee**

**(Acts of Synod 1998, Art. 91; Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 25;  
Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 15.3)**

The Home Mission Committee is to:

- a. Evaluate evangelism resources, and investigate means of spreading the gospel, including radio ministry, tracts, pamphlets and magazines.
- b. Facilitate the sharing of appropriate evangelism resources and ideas around the churches.
- c. Encourage the churches in their task of home mission and evangelism.

As per Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 15.3 the Home Mission Committee is currently in recess.



## **Home Mission Principles**

**(Acts of Synod 1986, Art. 14)**

### **I. Home Mission the Work of the Local Congregation**

#### **A. Establishing the Work**

1. Promotion  
The elders of the local congregation shall promote the work of home missions:
  - a. In the preaching,
  - b. By teaching
  - c. By engaging in the work where possible
  - e. Providing a library
  - f. Encouraging people to get involved in the work even to the point of motivating a move to a certain area to get a Home Mission started.
2. Starting  
Congregational members may be a part of starting a work, but they must always be under the authority of the session responsible for that area.
3. Establishing  
The work must be established under the direction and supervision of an elder.

#### **B. Calling and Oversight of the Missionary**

1. Calling  
The home missionary must be called by the local congregation, the calling church shall submit to presbytery the following details; for information:
  - a. Remuneration to be offered to the person nominated
  - b. Proposed arrangement for housing and transportation
  - c. Specific tasks to be given to the person nominated
2. Supervision  
The home missionary is under the supervision of the session of the calling Congregation in doctrine and life and all matters to do with the Home Mission work.
3. Reports  
The local session shall require a quarterly report of the work and a quarterly report of the finances.

## **C. Financial**

### 1. Responsibility

The local church should support the work by raising at least two thirds of the cost for the home missionary (with the help of presbytery if necessary). If financial assistance is needed for the remainder, application may be made to the Church Extension Committee for assistance, from funds set aside for this purpose by synod (Acts 1969, Art. 74). The details of I.B.1 above must be submitted with such a request.

### 2. Records

The nucleus of the Home Mission shall keep separate financial records and shall be expected to contribute at least 20% of the total cost of the home missionary in the first year. The financial responsibility should be transferred to the nucleus of the Home Mission as soon as possible.

## **II. Home Missionary an Ordained Office-Bearer Qualified to Teach and Preach the Word**

### **A. Leadership by Word and Deed**

1. He must lead his flock to maturity so that in their lives they mirror the glory of Mount Zion, in worship and lifestyle.
2. Evangelism  
He must equip the believers to do the work of ministering to the community that those elected of God might be gathered together.
3. Hospitality  
He must encourage his people to hospitality, so that they can show the world the work of the Spirit in their homes.
4. Strategy  
He must encourage his people to plan and execute a missionary strategy in their community.

### **B. Prepare Leadership**

He shall prepare those who show the requisite qualifications for office.

### **C. Relation to Higher Bodies**

1. He shall present a quarterly progress report to session.
2. He shall confer regularly with the session from the calling church.

### **III. Role of Presbytery and Synod in Support and Consultation**

#### **A. Finance**

1. Presbytery Help  
Where the local congregation is unable to totally support the work, presbyterial help can be requested.
2. Denomination Supplement  
The sum donated by the churches in the first year shall be reduced by a ratio of 20% each successive year.  
e.g. 1st year – \$25,000  
2nd year – \$20,000  
3rd year – \$15,000  
4th year – \$10,000  
5th year – \$5,000

#### **B. Presbyterial Assessment and Consultation**

If the presbytery or synod is providing financial support then the presbytery with the local session is to assess the readiness of the charge for a home missionary.

### **IV. Methodology Should Arise from Biblical Principles**

It should stress the sovereignty of God.

It should stress the importance of the covenant.

It should stress a sanctified lifestyle.

It should stress missions as a vital part of being a church.

It should stress the unity of Word and Deed.

It should not neglect the doctrine of the church, namely: “commitment to Christ should not be separated from commitment to His Church”.

It should stress the responsibility of man to repent and believe.

# **Rules for Home Missionary**

**(Acts of Synod 1971, Art. 87.A2)**

## **1. Who Eligible**

A home missionary called and ordained as described under these regulations must be a person eligible for or working in the ministry in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as described in the accepted Church Order.

## **2. By Whom Engaged**

- a. A home missionary may be engaged by:
  - 1) A local church
  - 2) A local church with the co-operation of one or more neighbouring churches;
  - 3) A presbytery, when the work is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches;
  - 4) A synod, for such activities as are beyond the scope and resources of minor assemblies.
- b. A home Missionary shall be called by a local church in the area where he is to serve, also when he is engaged by a presbytery or a synod.

In the latter case, the local church shall act in co-operation with the appropriate committees of presbytery or synod. Although the duties of a home missionary may be regulated through such co-operation, the supervision of his doctrine and life shall rest with the calling church.

## **3. Financial Arrangements**

When a local church wishes to call a home missionary and needs financial assistance, the call may be issued only with the approval of presbytery. To obtain such approval the local church shall submit a request in writing stating the following details:

- a. Name and qualifications of the person nominated;
- b. Remunerations to be offered to the person nominated;
- c. Proposed arrangement for housing and transportation in the area;
- d. Details of specific tasks to be given to the person nominated.

#### **4. Church Extension Financial Assistance**

- a. When a local church or presbytery wishes to call a home missionary and needs financial assistance, application may be made to the Church Extension Committee for assistance from funds set aside for this purpose by synod (Acts 1969, Art. 74).

This application shall be supported by the same details and documents as described in Article 3 of these regulations, together with a statement of the amount of support per year requested;

- b. The Church Extension Committee shall be authorised to grant financial support, providing the total support granted to all the churches and presbyteries does not exceed the amount stipulated by synod for this purpose.

#### **5. Duties of Home Missionary**

Where a home missionary has been placed on behalf of presbytery with the financial assistance of the Church Extension Committee, the home missionary shall send a monthly financial report to the Church Extension Committee and a monthly financial report and a monthly progress report to the calling church. The calling church shall make a report to each meeting of presbytery.

## **Financial Support for Home Missionaries**

**(Acts of Synod 1980, Art. 65.3, 2011, Art. 96.8)**

1. If a local church is unable to meet the full costs involved for a Home Mission Project, an application for assistance may be lodged with the Church Extension Committee.
2. The Committee has authority to levy all the churches for such a project provided that two thirds of the total cost is underwritten and met by the local church or its presbytery.
3. Such assistance will be given for the duration of five years, the amount to be reviewed annually by the Committee.

# **National Diaconate Committee**

**(Acts of Synod 1998, Art. 92)**

## **Mandate**

### **1. Preamble covering Principles of Diaconal Aid**

- 1.1. Diaconal aid is designed to cater for the spiritual and physical needs of those in distress.

Accordingly, it consists of a word and deed ministry, in which the Gospel of sovereign grace is proclaimed alongside the furnishing of material aid, in order to both rightly interpret it (giving glory to God) and effectively point beyond it (to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of mankind).

- 1.2. In the administration of diaconal aid, in line with a Word and deed ministry, first consideration is to be given to needs associated with Reformed missions which are under the auspices of the Overseas Mission Board, and then other Reformed missions.
- 1.3. In the provision of diaconal aid, first consideration is to be given to the needs of those who are of "the household of faith" (i.e. fellow believers); c.f. Gal. 6:10.

### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1. The purpose of the NDC is to extend diaconal aid and relief into areas beyond local aid rendered by the deacons of individual churches of the RCNZ.
- 2.2. The NDC aid and RELIEF shall normally be extended to overseas causes on behalf of the RCNZ.

### **3. The Committee (NDC)**

- 3.1. Synod shall appoint the members of the NDC, its members serving from synod to synod, but may be re-appointed.
- 3.2. Vacancies arising during an inter-synodical period may be filled by the Synodical Interim Committee upon recommendation from the NDC.
- 3.3. The NDC shall consist of a minimum of four members who shall be communicant members in good standing of the RCNZ.
- 3.4. The NDC shall have the power to co-opt person(s) with special knowledge and/or expertise as required.

- 3.5. The NDC shall elect from within its ranks a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.
- 3.6. Meetings shall be held four times per annum but extra meetings may be called as and when required.
- 3.7. A quorum shall consist of two office-bearers and one member which shall be required for all meetings.

#### **4. Income**

- 4.1. The individual churches of the RCNZ shall supply the NDC with regular contributions from collections and/or church funds to allow the NDC to perform its basic tasks.
- 4.2. Special collections may be solicited from the churches of the RCNZ for specific projects and/or disaster relief as deemed advisable and necessary by the NDC.

#### **5. International Relief Projects**

- 5.1. The NDC aims to support community-based development programmes which may include medical, agricultural, educational and construction projects.
- 5.2. Projects shall be aimed at:
  - a. Initiating and sustaining programmes which create and support Christian values and hopes for community life through selected programmes.
  - b. Meeting the basic needs and raising the quality of life of people in low-income situations.
- 5.3. Advances toward emergency relief may be made from the General Fund, provided a special appeal is launched simultaneously.

#### **6. National Emergency Relief**

- 6.1. The NDC shall consider initiating relief when approached by a presbytery with a specific need that is beyond the scope or ability of the Churches within that presbytery to effect assistance and/or relief.
- 6.2. Aid gathered from the Churches by the NDC shall be channelled through the local Church nearest to the "need" are and/or through a relief organisation of the kind which will administer the aid in the name of Christ.
- 6.3. Advances toward national emergency relief may be made from the General Fund, provided a special appeal is launched simultaneously.



## **7. Relationship with other Agencies**

- 7.1. Wherever possible, co-operation with Reformed (or if not available, Evangelical) relief and/or development Agencies shall be established and maintained.
- 7.2. A mutual information service with other relief/development agencies shall be initiated.
- 7.3. Relationships with other Christian, Secular and/or Government Agencies shall be developed as required and considered appropriate.
- 7.4. The NDC shall make available to synod details of the distribution of aid by the agencies it works through.

## **8. Promotion and Education**

- 8.1. The NDC shall keep the Churches informed of its activities and current issues facing the diaconate via newsletters and/or articles in *Faith in Focus*.
- 8.2. The NDC shall encourage the deacons of the individual Reformed Churches of New Zealand to support and promote the NDC Appeals within their congregations as called up.
- 8.3. The NDC shall organise one inter-synodical National Deacons' Conference in a location that is most suitable in terms of personnel, travel and accommodation resources, the cost of which shall be shared by all the churches on the then current quota percentage basis (Acts 2011, Art. 117.3).

The travelling cost of a maximum of two deacons (office-bearers) per congregation only shall be claimed and reimbursed.

## **9. Guidelines for disaster relief (Acts 2017, Art. 63.2)**

- 9.1. When a disaster strikes, deacons are encouraged to initiate an immediate appeal if they consider it appropriate and to advise the donors that the monies raised will be sent to NDC forthwith.
- 9.2. Responses to natural disasters usually have two phases, the relief phase and the rebuilding phase.
  - a. The relief phase or initial emergency response phase consists of ensuring that the victims of the disaster receive the food, medicine and shelter that is required in the days and first few weeks of a disaster.

- b. The rebuilding phase involves rebuilding the homes and churches damaged or destroyed by the disaster and typically takes much longer than the relief phase, i.e. months or years.

The NDC's response will, as a rule, be addressed to that second (rebuilding) phase and be targeted through local churches or relief agencies that combine 'word and deed' work consistent with the requirement of the NDC mandate.

## **Section V – Spiritual Oversight**

### **Church Visitation Questionnaire**

(Acts of Synod 1992, Art. 70; Acts of Synod 1995, Art. 22.5)

#### **Preamble**

The Church Order Article 48 stipulates that “Presbyteries shall make provision for church visitation at least once per year. Each church shall be visited by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). The synodically approved questionnaire shall be followed in general, and a report of each visit rendered to presbytery.” The following regulations and questions have been adopted for such visitation.

The nature and purpose of church visitation is clearly stated in Article 44 of the older Church Order. The visitors are “to take heed whether the minister and the session perform all the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote, as much as in them lies, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation in particular the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance, help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding and greatest profit of the churches.”

#### **General Regulations**

1. The presbytery shall authorise experienced and competent office-bearers to visit the churches once a year in accordance with the Church Order.
2. The visitors shall inform the session of the date and time of the visit. The session shall inform the congregation of the visit at least a fortnight beforehand.
3. At a session meeting before the visitation, the questions shall be discussed and the answers determined.
4. Concerns of church members regarding matters which they have raised with the session, may be put verbally by those concerned after having informed the session thereof. It would be helpful, however, if the church visitors could be advised in writing of the concerns before the meeting. This would assist them in providing the help needed to resolve matters
5. All office-bearers shall be present at the visitation. In case of legitimate absence, a written apology shall be forwarded, giving the reasons of absence. At least two thirds of the office-bearers shall be present to enable the visitation to take place.

6. The chairman of the session shall preside, taking care beforehand that all the books of church are tabled for the visitors' inspection. These books shall include:
  - a. the session's minutes
  - b. the signatures to the Form of Subscription
  - c. the register of baptised and communicant members
  - e. the financial records of the church
7. One of the church visitors shall ask the questions, the other shall keep a record of the principal answers.
8. The visitors shall peruse the books.
9. At the conclusion of the meeting the clerk of the visitors shall read the minutes of the church visitation which shall be signed by the session and the visitors.
10. A copy of these minutes shall be sent to the session and the clerk of presbytery.
11. The sessions shall note the visitation in its minutes.
12. In special circumstances a further meeting may be called for.
13. The expenses of the ordinary visitation are to be charged to the presbytery.

## **I. Introductory Questions**

1. Has the congregation been informed of this visitation?
2. Are all the office-bearers present?
3.
  - a. Are all the books of administration on the table?
  - b. Are all the records, kept by the session, in order?
  - c. Are all the archives kept in good order?
4.
  - a. Are there any matters you wish to be advised about?
  - b. Are there any specific problems in the congregation that you need help with?
  - c. Are there any concerns that members of the congregation wish to raise with the visitors?

## **II. The Session**

### **A. Administration**

5. Has the election and calling of office-bearers been conducted according to the church order?
6. Do the members of session subscribe to the standards of the church?
7.
  - a. How many members does the congregation consist of and how many of these are communicant, and baptised?
  - b. Is the number of elders and deacons sufficient to deal with the needs of the congregation?
8. Does the session meet at least once a month, and is the time and place of the meeting announced to the congregation beforehand?
9. Is the congregation notified beforehand about things such as the celebration of the sacraments, admission of new members, the ordination or installation of office-bearers, marriages and congregational meetings?
10. Does the session maintain the resolutions of the major assemblies?
11. Are all the offerings gathered faithfully and being counted in the presence of a member of the session?
12. Do you keep the funds and deeds in such a way that no irregularities can occur in case of resignation or death?
13.
  - a. Is the church incorporated in a legal way?
  - b. Is the session itself acting as the trust board of the church?

14. Is the session assisted in its financial matters by a committee of administration?
15. Are all matters dealt with in accordance with the Word of God, the standards of the church and the Church Order?

### **B. Spiritual Oversight**

16. Does the life of the congregation manifest a godly response to the proclamation of the Word in the areas of: worship, witness/outreach, Bible study/mutual encouragement, liberality towards the church/need?y?
17.
  - a. Are all the members and families of the church being visited at least once a year? How are these visits conducted?
  - b. Does the minister take part in home visitation as much as possible?
  - c. Are all the members of the family urged/encouraged to be present for the home visitation?
  - d. Are these home visits reported on at the session meetings?
  - e. Are these visits beneficial, both for the elders and those visited?
18. Do you exercise church discipline according to the Word of God and the Standards of the church?
19. Is *censura morum* (the mutual supervision of the office-bearers) being held before every Lord's Supper, particularly with regard to the way they perform their task as office-bearers?
20.
  - a. Is there good cooperation between all the office-bearers in all matters in the session?
  - b. Are difficult matters resolved in a spirit of humility and love?
21. Were there any members under (formal) church discipline during the past year? Have they been regularly visited? Has this work been spiritually beneficial?
22.
  - a. Do the young people of the church, having come to their years of discretion, seek admission to the Lord's Table?
  - b. How many professed their faith publicly in the past year?
23. Does the session examine those who desire to profess their faith publicly?
24. What is being done for the spiritual care of church members living in the country, serving in the army and so on?
25.
  - a. Do you give communicant members who move to the district of another congregation a certificate of membership and do you inform the other church of their move?

- b. When baptised members move, do you inform the other church of their move and send them a certificate of baptism?
  - c. What do you do when members decide to move to an area where there is no Reformed church?
26. Is instruction given to those about to be married?
27. a. What principles do you follow when dealing with requests for marriage?
- b. When one or both of the parties are baptised members, does the session seriously urge them to prepare for public profession of faith?
  - c. What is the session doing to encourage young people to court (only) believers?

### **C. Instruction**

28. Are the parents reminded that they have a duty to instruct their children in the things of the Lord?
29. a. Are the children of the church being instructed in the Scriptures in Sunday school and youth clubs?
- b. What lesson material is being used?
  - c. Are the Sunday school and youth clubs assisted financially by the church?
30. Is the catechism instruction given by the minister (or elders) to the children of the congregation?
31. What material is being used for instruction, and do you use the standards of the church?
32. How often is catechism instruction given and how do you promote faithful attendance?
33. Does the session supervise the work of the Sunday school, youth clubs and catechism instruction, ensuring that this is done by able and faithful teachers and leaders?

## **III. Office-bearers**

### **A. Minister (to be answered by an elder)**

34. Does the minister preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments in accordance with the Word of God and the standards of the church?
35. Is it clear from the preaching of the gospel that the minister is diligent in the study of the Holy Scriptures and aware of the needs of the congregation?

36. Is he loyal to the vows of his ordination?
37. Does your minister behave in a godly manner and faithfully carry out his official duties?
38. Does the session see to it that the minister has adequate time for family, rest and recreation?
39. Does the session pay the minister at least the synodically recommended minimum? Is this adequate and is this matter discussed with the minister?
40. Are suitable men in the congregation encouraged to enter the ministry and, to further that calling, to pursue ministerial training by attending a suitable theological training institution? (Acts 20:17, Art. 24).

### **B. Elders**

41. Are the elders diligent in their attendance at worship services and the session meetings?
42. Do the elders diligently seek to be better equipped for their task?
43. Do the elders faithfully pay attention to the doctrine and conduct of their minister?
44. Are the elders faithful to their calling, namely, in visiting and praying for, the members under their care, especially the sick, admonishing irregular members and those under discipline, and upholding the doctrines of the church?
45. Do the elders behave in a godly manner in their home and public life?
46. Does the session hold leadership training courses for members of the session, as well as for young men, (in order) to prepare them for office in the church?
47. In the case of vacant churches
  - a. Is the session diligent in trying to call a minister?
  - b. Is the counsellor fulfilling his duty as regulated by the presbytery, and do you seek his assistance in important matters.
  - c. Do you remunerate his church adequately?

### **C. Deacons**

48. Are the deacons regular in their attendance at the worship services, the session meetings and, if such are held, deacons' meetings?
49. a. Do they meet the needs of the poor and care for the physically and/or mentally handicapped members when these cannot be supported by their own relatives?



- b. Do they take gifts to the poor in person?
  - c. Do they comfort the distressed and pray with them?
50. a. What do the deacons do to make the members of the church conscious of their diaconal responsibilities, locally and elsewhere?
- b. What are the deacons themselves doing to alleviate distress in the local community?
51. a. Do they administer the financial affairs of the church?
- b. Do they give account to the session?
  - c. Are there sufficient funds to enable them to provide for those in financial need?
52. Do they behave in a godly manner in their home and public life?

## **IV. The Congregation**

### **A. Worship Services**

53. a. Are two services conducted every Lord's Day?
- b. How are these services attended?
  - c. To what extent do the children attend? How are they catered for as covenant youth? Are they made aware that they are members?
  - d. How many churches and preaching places are under your care?
54. a. Does the minister preach from both the Old and New Testaments?
- b. Is the preaching by the minister both relevant and edifying?
55. Is the Word expounded as summarised in the confessional standards at one of the services each Lord's Day? (See C.O. 56)
56. Does the session ensure that only synodically approved Bible versions, liturgical forms and approved psalms and hymns are used in the worship services?
57. Do you allow only persons who have been authorised by the churches to preach the gospel from your pulpit?
58. How does the session take care that for reading services only sound Reformed sermons are being read?
59. Are the sick, weak and aged people who are unable to attend worship services visited and ministered to in their homes?
60. a. How does the session deal with members who do not regularly attend the worship services on the Lord's Day?

- b. What does the session do to encourage people to join in worship twice on the Lord's Day?
- 61. Are parents encouraged to request that their children receive the sign and seal of God's covenant promise in baptism, as soon as feasible?
- 62. Is baptism administered only to children whose parents (or parent) are communicant members and in a public worship service?
- 63. Is the Lord's Supper celebrated regularly (at least four times a year) after proper preparation, and is it faithfully attended?
- 64. How does the session deal with communicant members who do not regularly partake of the Lord's Supper?
- 65. Are baptised members, when they profess their faith, admitted to the Lord's Supper?
- 66. Whom do you admit to the Lord's Supper (apart from communicant members of your church)?
- 67. a. Are the liturgical forms as adopted by synod, being used when the sacraments are administered?
- b. Do you use the questions of the synodically approved forms when a public profession of faith is made?

## **B. Church Activities**

- 68. Does the session meet with the congregation at least once a year?
- 69. Do you have any clubs, societies or associations based on Reformed principles, and what oversight does the session have over these?
- 70. Does the session encourage and oversee the work of the senior youth of the congregation?

## **V. Evangelism**

- 71. How many people attend the worship services as regular visitors?
- 72. What does the session do to encourage members to proclaim the gospel of Christ?
- 73. Are outsiders presently being reached with the gospel?
- 74. Are session and congregation committed to the concept of church planting?
- 75. a. What support do you give to mission work?
- b. By what means is the congregation encouraged to prayer and liberality for the mission work of the church?

76. Do members of the church teach Bible in public schools?

## **VI. Christian Education**

77. Does the session actively promote the Christian schooling of the church's covenant children?

78. If children attend public schools, does the session encourage their parents to counteract the influence of secular humanist education?

## **Preaching by Elders**

**(Acts of Synod 1983, Art. 12, Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 23)**

1. The great commission of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, given to it by the Lord Himself when he was on earth in the flesh, is to: 'preach the gospel to all creation' (Mark 16:15). The preaching of the gospel is the first mark of a true church (Belgic Conf. Art. 29) It is also the key that 'opens' the Kingdom of Heaven (Rom. 10:14) and these keys were entrusted by the Lord to his Church (Matt 16:19). It is therefore obvious that the task of preaching the gospel belongs to the church.
  
2. From the very earliest days of the church the task of preaching has been delegated to specially charged officers of the church (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). Even those in our churches who maintain that there are basically only two offices readily admit that from the beginnings of the New Testament Church some elders were set apart for preaching and the sacraments (1 Tim. 5:17). These have sometimes been referred to as "teaching elders". We believe this to be an unfortunate term which has led to considerable confusion. Since 'ability to teach' is a requirement for all elders (1 Tim. 3:2) it is obvious that "teaching" is not just the task of a selected few.

All elders should, and most do, spend a lot of time "teaching", for instance, in home visitation, with young people, in Bible studies etc. We believe the proper term to indicate the special task ministers have is "preaching elder", i.e. the elder charged with the official proclamation of the gospel.

3. In later times Reformed Churches have insisted that their ministers in order to qualify for the office of "preaching elders" follow a prescribed course of study. This is undoubtedly in recognition of the great responsibility that rests on the minister of a congregation and also of the complexity of the task of preaching when properly discharged. Preaching must be centred around the work of the Lord and Saviour and thus be clearly recognisable as the mark of a true church, yet at the same time it must bear relevance to contemporary society and take the nature and needs of each specific congregation into account.
  
4. Where no minister is available to conduct worship services, the church order stipulates that only sermons approved by the session shall be read. In practice it is very difficult for session to examine and approve a sermon before it is presented.

The churches traditionally solved this difficulty by insisting that only sermons prepared by ministers are read. In this way they opt perhaps unintentionally but nevertheless effectively for a studied and considered

rather than a more charismatic, personalised presentation. This appears very consistent with the general tone of Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus (see for instance 2 Tim. 4:3,4.).

5. Nevertheless, there does appear to be sufficient flexibility in the church order stipulation for a gifted elder to prepare the occasional sermon for a local congregation with the co-operation of his session.

This must be totally at the discretion of a local session and no governing rules appear to be required. In exceptional cases, gifted elders can seek entry into the ministry via Art. 12, Church Order.

6. Although acknowledging the right of local sessions to allow individual elders to prepare their own sermon, caution is nevertheless advised, as in practice this can lead to many difficulties:
  - a. Any experienced elder with a sound knowledge of Scripture and doctrine would be able to produce some very good sermons to easily qualify for the privilege, often putting a minister to shame.
  - b. Few elders however have the necessary depth of knowledge and vision, nor the essential time for study and meditation to continue to produce acceptable sermons.
  - c. It is much easier to grant a privilege than to withdraw it in the case of unsatisfactory performance.

At Synod 2011 the report "Who May Preach?" was presented and synod decided (Art. 23)

1. To maintain as the norm that only ministers, students and emeritus ministers be permitted to preach in our churches.
2. That decision 2 is not in conflict with Acts 1983, Article 12, re the exception of ruling elders preaching (which is represented above as per Report 9 to Synod 1983).

## **Guidelines for Guests at the Lord's Supper** **(Acts of Synod 1992, Art. 61; Acts of Synod 1998, Art. 88.1)**

1. It is the responsibility of the session to identify guests in order to supervise properly the Lord's Supper.
2. It is the responsibility of the session to inform guests as to the requirements for participation in the Lord's supper and as to the consequence of partaking in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).
3. In admitting guests to the Lord's Table, the session should take into account that the corporate unity expressed in the Lord's Supper is also a unity in the truth that we profess.
4. The session should ensure that guests to the Lord's Supper do not openly oppose the truth that is taught in our Confessions.
5. It is the responsibility of the session to ascertain the following before it grants permission to guests and visitors to participate in the Lord's supper:
  - a. That the guest is a communicant member in good standing in his own church;
  - b. That the guest lives a repentant, upright and godly life;
  - c. That the guest trusts in Christ, and in Christ alone, for his salvation.

# **Guidelines for Issuing a Certificate of Membership**

## **Contents**

- A. General (Art. 1–2)
- B. Certificates of Membership (Art. 3–19)
- C. Certificates of Baptism (Art. 20–29)
- D. Travel Certificates (Art. 30–31)
- E. Overseas Travel Certificates (Art. 32–33)
- F. Duration Validity (Art. 34–35)
- G. Adoptive and Other Relationships (Art. 36)

## **A. General**

1. A certificate of membership is an attestation from the session, that a communicant member of that congregation, who transfers to another Reformed Church or Sister church, is sound in doctrine, and of a godly walk.
2. Communicant members are those who on account of their baptism and public confession of faith belong to the church.

Baptised members are those who have not as yet made a public confession of faith but who belong to the church on account of their baptism.

## **B. Certificate of Membership**

### **Request for Certificate**

3. A communicant member who transfers elsewhere applies to his session for a certificate of membership.

### **Contents of Certificate**

4. A certificate should contain the following information:

Christian names of parents and children;  
 Dates of birth and place;  
 Dates of baptism and church;  
 Dates of public confession of faith (when applicable) and church;  
 Date of marriage and church;  
 Date of departure of membership;  
 Old residential address;  
 New residential address;  
 Address of new session clerk.

5. It is also advisable that on the certificate any other information concerning the member(s) is mentioned.
6. In the case that in the departing family one of the parents is a communicant member and the other a baptised member, this information must be supplied on the same certificate. The certificate must clearly show who is the communicant member and who is not.

In case one of the parents is a communicant member and the other is not a member at all, this information must also be shown clearly on the same certificate.

### **Signing the Certificate**

7. A certificate shall be signed by two members of the session.

### **Advice to the Churches**

8. The session issuing the certificate of membership advises the session of the congregation to which the member removes himself/herself.
9. Should a member transfer without first applying for a certificate, the receiving session is to urge the member to make application as soon as possible to their previous session for such a certificate.

In the meantime, the previous session would have communicated to the receiving session the intended transfer of that member, subject to them being aware of the member's intention to transfer.

### **Incorrectly Signed and Unclear Certificates**

10. Certificates which are not correctly signed and not very clear are only accepted on the condition that the contents will be updated in line with the articles of this guide.

The session of the congregation in which the member now resides and who has received the certificate of membership, shall return the incorrect certificate to the session who issued the certificate, so that it may be corrected and/or altered and if the contents of the certificate are still obscure, the session shall request further information.

### **Confidential Advice to the Churches**

11. Where confidential and personal information is to be conveyed regarding a member who is not under discipline, this must not appear on the certificate.
12. If a departing communicant member is under discipline, then only a concise note will be made on the certificate. Such a note would be expanded in a separate confidential letter to the new session.



13. Personal information of a pastoral nature which has nothing to do with discipline or admonition may also be given to the session of the new congregation.

The contents of such information which is of a personal nature ought also to be given to the departing member at the same time.

Contravention of the above rules may only be allowed if such information may harm the interest of the church or the departing member.

### **Patients in Rest Homes**

14. Admittance to a rest home in a neighbouring location requires contact to be maintained with the church of origin regardless of the duration of stay in the rest home.
15. Those who, because of a lengthy duration of nursing, have been placed in a rest home elsewhere, generally remain a member of the church to which they originally belonged.
16. If during the stay of a patient in a rest home, the family to which the patient belongs, has transferred elsewhere, the certificate of membership of the patient shall be issued to the new church.

### **The Aged**

17. For the aged who have moved into a rest home, there are no particular rules. When a member transfers from one rest home to another, the certificate of membership will be conveyed to the new church, when applicable, in the normal way.

### **Students**

18. Students who study elsewhere, often remain members of the church they originally belonged to, though they should be encouraged to participate fully in the church closest to the place they live.

When during their study period, the family to which the student belongs transfers elsewhere, the certificate of membership of the student will be issued at the same time and given to the new church also or the student may become a member of the church they live closest to.

Married students who transfer elsewhere will receive their certificate of membership for the church in the place where they are going to live.

19. In all cases where young people are going to study elsewhere, the information will be given to the student's pastor in the city where the study is held.

## **C. Certificate of Baptism**

20. An adult baptised member who transfers elsewhere applies to his session for a baptismal certificate.

Adult baptised members are those who are self-supporting and independent in determining their place of residence.

The certificate of baptism of a baptised member who is not yet an adult, shall normally be requested by the parents.

If a baptised member, who is not yet an adult, requests a certificate the session shall contact the parents.

### **Forwarding the Certificate of Baptism**

21. The certificate of baptism is usually not to be given into the hands of the baptised member who requests it.

The certificate of baptism is usually sent directly to the new session. The member by baptism who requests the certificate will be informed that his certificate has been sent to the new session.

### **Contents of Certificate of Baptism**

22. A Certificate of baptism contains the following information:

Name and Christian name;  
Date of birth and place;  
Date of baptism and church;  
Address of the member by baptism in the new place of residence.

23. If a baptised member is married, then the information of the spouse, as far as is known, is also entered on the certificate of baptism.

On the certificate of baptism of a married baptised member, all the information of any children is also entered on the certificate.

This above rule does not apply if one of the parents is a communicant member (see article 6).

### **Signing of the Certificate of Baptism**

24. A certificate of baptism shall be signed by two members of session.

### **Advice of the Churches**

25. For those who transfer without a certificate of baptism the old session supplies the information to the new session.

This letter contains the same information that would normally be contained in a certificate of baptism. This letter is for information only.

The session shall, if it deems this necessary, inform the parents of the baptised member concerned, of his or her departure elsewhere.

The session of the congregation to which the baptised member has moved, shall contact the baptised member and urge him/her to request their previous church to send a certificate of baptism to the new church.

### **Incorrectly Signed and Unclear Certificates**

26. Certificates of baptisms which are incorrectly signed and not very clear are only accepted on condition that the contents will be updated in line with the articles of this guide.

The session of the congregation in which the member now resides and who has received the certificate of membership, shall return the incorrect certificate to the session who issued the certificate so that it may be corrected and/or altered and if the contents of the certificate are still obscure, the session shall request further information.

### **Confidential Advice to the Churches**

27. For information of a confidential nature the same rules apply as are found in articles 11, 12 and 13.

### **Patients and the Aged**

28. For patients and the old aged who are baptised members of the church the same rules apply as are found in articles 14–17.

### **Students**

29. For students who are baptised members the same rules apply as in articles 18 and 19.

## **D. Travel Certificate**

30. Communicant members who are in the Armed Forces or are continuously travelling can, because of the nature of their work, receive a certificate of membership by which they are able to be admitted to the Lord's Table, if they desire to do so in the place where they happen to be at that time.
31. The session may supply to members who transfer to places or areas where there is no church identical to the Reformed Church in confession and church government, a certificate of membership.

The session may also issue such a certificate to members who frequently change their places of residence because of the type of work they are in.

## **E. Overseas Travel Certificate**

32. The session may issue a certificate of membership or baptismal certificate to those who transfer to churches overseas. This certificate must then be handed in by them to a church in that country with which our churches have a sister church relationship or to a church which is identical to ours in confession and church government.
33. The session shall inform the general secretary of the denomination of the departure of such a member to enable the general secretary to advise the church overseas of the new address of the departing member. All the necessary information as is usually found in the certificate must be supplied to that church.

## **F. Duration Validity**

34. All certificates issued under these guidelines will remain valid for one year and six weeks.
35. If a certificate has been handed in an abnormally long time after being issued, the receiving session shall be at liberty to seek an explanation.

## **G. Adoptive and Other Relationships**

36. Where in these articles parents are mentioned this also includes adoptive parents, guardians and others who have charge over baptised members.

# Certificate of Membership

## Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 96.9

### Sample

To the session of the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

Brethren

As the session of the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

we inform you that Br \_\_\_\_\_

and Sr \_\_\_\_\_

have requested that their/his/her certificate of membership be transferred to the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

We hereby declare that both, neither, only the brother, only the sister are/is a member(s) in full communion of our church, and we hereby recommend them/him/her to your pastoral care and supervision, and to the fellowship of the church.

Details for brother .....:

Date and place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of profession of faith \_\_\_\_\_

Details for sister .....:

Date and place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of profession of faith \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

According to our latest information, their address will be: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Baptised children:

Name	Date of Birth	Date of Baptism	Place of Baptism
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Remarks:

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For the Session:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

Date \_\_\_\_\_

.....

The certificate of \_\_\_\_\_

from the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

has been duly received and accepted by the Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_

For the session

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk      Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guidelines for Country Members**

**(Acts of Synod 1977, Art. 79)**

The following guidelines concern members residing further, or moving to reside further, from a worship centre than 60km.

To retain their membership in full communion, members must demonstrate their faithfulness:

- a. By regular attendance at worship services;
- b. By support in offerings for the denomination (to the level of the national quota) and for local Church work.
- c. By prayer and interest for denominational endeavour in such as Missions (home and overseas), Christian education support, diaconal support, church magazines, etc.

Country members, unless they can convince the session otherwise, could be regarded as members not in full communion. Their privileges would be curtailed in respect to voting, baptism, Lord's Supper. Access to the Lord's Supper would not necessarily be prohibited, but would be determined as for bona fide guests in the light of faith and godliness of life.

Baptism of children would be dependent on the serious response, especially to question 3 of the Form of Baptism.

Sessions should nevertheless realise their responsibility to serve (by family visits, pastoral oversight and providing church papers and news) those living in the country, so that they might be kept for Christ and for the Reformed Faith and be encouraged to exercise the utmost responsibility.

For Quota Percentages no church may deduct any member whom they deem a financial liability, because of residence beyond a determined proximity of the place of worship.

## Home Visitation

Excerpts from *Taking Heed to the Flock* by Rev Peter Y de Jong

### Contents

- A. The nature of home visitation
- B. The spiritual purpose of home visitation
- C. The necessity of home visitation
- D. The value of home visitation for the elder
- E. The value of home visitation for the believing church
- F. The proper practice of home visitation

### A. The Nature of Home Visitation

Home visitation is a unique type of pastoral work carried on by the Church of Christ.

It is not a social visit for the purpose of paying respects to those who hold membership in the visible church.

The elders, in tending the flock of God, and in order that they may be able to discharge their duty to the glory of God and the welfare of the church, have received spiritual authority to perform this task of home visitation.

All matters with which they must deal are strictly confidential. It is never their duty to pry into the secrets of the heart. Yet they must be able to form some adequate conception of the level of spirituality found among the members of the church.

This is in a true sense “shepherding the flock”.

The elders must lead and guide, instruct and exhort, warn and comfort all those whom God in His providence has entrusted to their spiritual care.

### B. The Spiritual Purpose of Home Visitation

The elders must not regard themselves as policemen of the congregation. It is not their duty to uncover all the sins which mar the hearts of God's people, who as yet are imperfect.

But they visit the families for the purpose of helping all to see their duty more clearly.

This makes for the closest possible fellowship between the officers and members of the church on the one hand and between the members among each other on the other.

They must learn to stand shoulder to shoulder in the great spiritual struggle against the common foe and learn to wage this war more successfully.



### **C. The Necessity of Home Visitation**

The mandate of God's word, which insists upon the duty of watching for the souls of the believers and their children, makes home visitation a real necessity for the spiritual well-being of the Church of Christ.

The elders must know the spiritual conditions and needs of the flock over which they have been placed. And to enable them to do this there must be some form of close contact between them and the members of the congregation.

### **D. The Value of Home Visitation for the Elder**

The first benefit for the elders is that it enables them to know the spiritual condition of the members of the congregation.

Secondly, by conducting the work prayerfully and regularly, the elders will also know whether or not the believers over whom they have been placed make spiritual progress by using the means of grace, such as church attendance.

Thirdly, these visits likewise give the elders a much-needed opportunity for engaging in preventative work, with the result that instances of glaring defection from the rule of gospel become more infrequent among the people of God.

Fourthly, such visits stimulate the spiritual unity of believers.

Fifthly, this custom enables the elders to demonstrate in a practical way the spirit of Christian love and helpfulness.

### **E. The Value of Home Visitation for the Believing Church**

The church will experience that by means of this they are built up in faith and increased in love.

Firstly, as members of the living church they will see more clearly the value of discussing matters pertaining to spiritual life.

Secondly, these visits will build up the confidence of the people in the leadership of the church.

Thirdly, the preventative work in which the elders engage at the time of home visitation will help the believers live more consistently Christian lives.

Fourthly it is a good opportunity to learn more about the Christian way of life.

Fifthly, the elders can effectively point out the high ideal of living together as a Christian family from day to day.

## **F. The Proper Practice of Home Visitation**

The following guide is a definite plan in order that the discussion may be guided properly.

First of all, there are questions of a general nature which should be asked of everybody present at the home visit.

Then attention should be directed to the father, followed by certain questions to the mother. And finally, the children are to be addressed.

However, practice is often that the children are first addressed after which they leave the room and the discussion is then continued with the parents and/or older children.

## Home Visitation Guide

### A. General Questions for All

1. Are all the members faithful in attending divine worship and using the means of grace?
2. Are you interested in the service of the Lord?
3. Is there a measure of spiritual growth with each according to age and circumstances?
4. Is there peace and unity in the home?
5. Do the members in the family manifest love and helpfulness in their relations to each other?
6. Do the father and mother set an example of love and godliness in the home?
8. Are spiritual matters discussed in the home, especially on the Lord's Day?
9. Is provision made for good reading material for old and young alike?
10. Does the father supervise the reading of his children?
11. Does what is heard over the radio and seen on television particularly on the Lord's Day, contribute to the spiritual edification of the family?
12. Is family worship faithfully and profitably conducted?
13. Does the father lead in audible prayer, read the scriptures reverently and if possible comment on the significance of the passage for the family?
14. Do the children and young people who have not yet professed Christ in the church faithfully attend the catechetical classes?
15. Is the Catechetical study (and Sunday School work) of the children properly supervised by one or both of the parents?
16. Does the proper spiritual relation exist between the members and the church, particularly the officers?
17. Do the parents by their words and works set an example of honouring the minister, the elders and the deacons for the sake of the holy offices to which these men have been called?
18. Do the members of the family make use of the societies of the church, such as Bible study groups, youth clubs, Cadets and Calvinettes, women's fellowships, etc.?
19. What is the relation of the family to the neighbours?

20. Do the members of the family witness for Christ whenever and wherever possible in their neighbourhood?
21. How do the several members of the family conduct themselves in their daily life?  
Are they aware that they are “living epistles” read of all men?
22. Does the family faithfully and according to its ability support the causes of the Kingdom of God?
23. Do the parents teach their children Christian stewardship, so that when they grow up and make their own living, they realise their obligations to God in financial matters too?
24. Does the head of the family try to promote the sense of true Christian distinctiveness among the various members, especially the young people?

## **B. Questions to the Father**

1. Is he mindful of his position as the head of the family and does he daily strive to do justice to the obligations involved?
2. Is his authority in the home properly respected by all?
3. Does he execute his priestly duties in the home, praying for himself and his family and the church both privately and publicly?
4. Does he concern himself with the spiritual development of his wife and children, also seeing to it that the children faithfully attend church, Sunday school and catechetical classes?
5. Does he provide good Christian literature in the home?
6. Does he see to it that the Christian school is attended if there is one available? If not, why not?
7. Does he set a good example in his personal life and in his relations to his family and his neighbours?

## **C. Questions to the Mother**

1. Is she as a Christian mother aware of her position and influence in the family, especially in regard to the training of the children?
2. Does she seek to assist her husband in every way possible in his important work as head of the home?
3. Does she give all her time to her calling as wife and mother? If not, are there legitimate reasons for her to seek employment outside the home?

4. Is she aware of the peculiar difficulties involved in trying to be gainfully employed and still keep up her home?
5. Does her home, particularly the children, suffer in any way if this is the case?

#### **D. Questions to the Children**

1. Are they obedient to their parents and superiors, for the Lord's sake?
2. Are they conscious of their peculiar covenant relationship to God?
3. Are they faithful in attending the Sunday school and catechetical classes, and do they benefit from these as well as from the preaching of the Word in accordance with their age and training?
4. Are the young people preparing for Profession of Faith?
5. Do they understand the church's position on the Christian's relationship to the world in general and to the use of amusements in particular?
6. For what calling in life are they preparing themselves?
7. Have they given any consideration to the possibility of entering fulltime Kingdom service in one form or another?

## Alternate Home Visitation Guide

### Suggested Scripture Passages

#### Faith and Doubt

John 20:24 etc; Psalm 42; Hebrews 10:26 & chap. 11

#### Faith and Works

James 1 & 2; Philippians 3

#### Sin and Forgiveness

Romans 5; Ephesians 2:1; John 1 & 2

#### Eternal Life

1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4 & 5; 1 Thess. 4 & 5

#### Faithfulness

Hebrews 4 & 6; 1 Tim. 1 and 4

#### Sanctified living

Romans 6 & 7; Matthew 5, 6 & 7; Philippians 3 & 4

#### Spiritual Experience

2 Cor. 12; Psalm 116

### Contents

- A. Questions on faith and assurance;
- B. Questions on prayer;
- C. Questions on specific aspects of faith:
  - 1. Sin and forgiveness;
  - 2. The Holy Spirit;
  - 3. Free grace and election
- D. Questions on the Church and the means of grace;
- E. Questions on daily Christian life:
  - a. Family life
  - b. Life in the world but not of the world
- F. Questions more specifically for young people.

### A. Questions of Faith and Assurance

What does your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ mean to you?

Are you very sure of your own faith in Christ?

Do you live close to Christ?

Do you live close to the Bible?

Is your faith a stable faith, or does it differ a great deal one time or another; do you go from one extreme to another?

If so, do you have any idea why that is so?

Do you have any problems with doubt (intellectual or personal)?

Do you ever doubt the truth of the Bible?

Are you very familiar with the Bible?

What is your favourite Bible book?

Do you ever doubt that Jesus died for *you*?

Do you ever rebel against God's plan for your life?

Are you sure that what God has done in your life is good and graciously done?

Do you every think about death and are you sure that for you to die is gain? Or would you be afraid to die?

Do you ever think about eternal life? Do you look forward to it?

Are you a fully committed Christian?

## **B. Questions on Prayer**

Do you find it difficult to pray?

Do you find it hard to concentrate in prayer?

Do you find it possible to pray with the minister in the prayers of the Church service?

Do you make time for personal prayer, apart from your family prayer?

Do you have customs for personal prayers, times of regular prayers?

Are your prayers very self-centred?

Do you pray for your enemies? Or do you have no enemies?

Do you pray for people you know but who do not know Christ yet?

Is thanksgiving much of a subject in your prayers?

Do you expect your prayers to be answered and great things to happen in reply to your prayers?

Do you expect God to change in answer to your prayers?

## **C. Questions on Specific Aspects of Faith**

### **1. Sin and Forgiveness**

Some people believe that in our church we overdo our emphasis on sin: do you agree?

Do you believe that all your sins have been forgiven?

Do you experience that God still disciplines you for sins of the past?

Do you see instances of victory over sin in your own life?

Do you experience that God through the Holy Spirit helps you to fight sin?

Do you find it very hard to forgive others?

Do you fear the day of judgment?

### **2. The Holy Spirit**

Have you received the Holy Spirit? Have you been baptised with the Spirit? Could you say when that happened?

Do you see fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life?

What gifts of the Holy Spirit do you find you have? Are you using them as you should?

Do you like discussing spiritual matters with people?

### **3. Free Grace and Election**

The Reformed Church is supposed to believe in predestination; do you believe that God has elected you for salvation? Do you think that it is fair that God has elected you and has passed by others?

Are we overdoing this talk about election?

What is the use of it anyway? Does it not tend to make people doubt God's fairness and their own salvation?

Are you sure that you will persevere to the end?

How do you know?

## **D. Questions on the Church and the Means of Grace**

Do you love the church, our church here?

Do you pray for the church here and everywhere?

Do you enjoy going to church?

Do you love singing God's praise?

Do you benefit from the sermons?

We never see you in the second service; not even when you missed out on the morning service.

Why do you never come at night?

You missed a good sermon last Sunday evening; don't you think you should have been there?

Do you find the Communion celebration to be meaningful for your spiritual life?

Do you find it hard to concentrate when celebrating the Lord's Supper?

Is the week of preparation of any spiritual value to you at all?

Does it ever happen that you do not feel free to have communion with Christ at his table?

Why would that be?

What does your own Baptism mean to you?

Do you ever question the practice of the Christian Church to baptise infants?

In what way do you take part in the Church's work?

If you cannot find the time, would there be anything wrong with your priorities?

Or are you satisfied that doing the Lord's work in your daily profession is doing the King's work already and in your case sufficiently?

Are you a cheerful giver to the Lord's work in His Church?

And outside the church in other Christian work?

What do you think of tithing for the Lord's work?

In what way do you seek further education for yourself and training for Christian faith and work?

What do you read?

What is your contribution to spreading the gospel through personal witness?

In what other ways do you take part in Christian organisational work:

- Christian school movement;
- Christian school activities (e.g. counselling, meals on wheels, Christian witness in trade unionism and politics)?

Can you see that your participation in the church equips you for life in the world?

## E. Questions on Daily Christian Life

### 1. Family life

This is a Christian home.

Do you find it hard to maintain an atmosphere of love and happiness in the home?

Do you quarrel much (as husband and wife, or with the children)?

Do you honour each other as parents in front of the children?

Do you find it possible to make family Scripture reading and prayer meaningful?

Do you pray a free prayer?

Do both father and mother take part in the prayer; and the children?

Do you use a story Bible for the smaller children and, if so, when?

Do you communicate freely with the teenagers in your family?

Do you discuss their reading material with them?

Do you try to interest them in Christian authors (C.S. Lewis and others)?

Are there serious problems with the teenagers about church going?

Do they have an interest in the Church's youthwork?



Do you inquire concerning their morning and evening prayers?

What school do the children attend?

Don't you think that state education is simply not good enough for covenant children?

Do the young people attend catechism classes regularly? And the Sunday school?

How often do those under twelve attend church?

## **2. Life in the World but not of the World**

Is the environment in which you work antagonistic to the gospel of Christ?

Are you able to stand up to it?

As a Christian mother do you feel much need to be liberated or do you feel free and sufficiently involved as you are now?

Do you find many of your talents wasted by being bound to the home so much?

Working away from the home, does that not interfere with your family life?

Should married women work in a world of unemployment?

Can you see your daily work as service to Christ?

Being in business, do you find it possible to maintain Christian standards, e.g. in being truthful, in not being greedy, in observing the Lord's Day?

Do you succeed in making the Sunday a festive day for yourself and the family?

Travelling on Sundays seems to have become an accepted thing; should it?

Do you show hospitality to strangers and visitors, e.g. on Sundays after church?

Do you invite outsiders into your home to discuss the things of the Lord with them?

Do you take them to the men's or ladies' fellowship meetings and other activities of the Church?

Do you have trouble in controlling your language?

Why have you not given up smoking yet? Don't you think it is a rather outdated and unclean habit?

Is there a drinking problem in your family?

## **F. Questions More Specifically for Young People**

Why have you been reluctant to profess your faith in Christ?

Would you nonetheless say that you want to love and serve the Lord?

Have you ever regretted that you professed your faith in Christ?

Have you found it difficult to live up to your vows made in your profession of faith?

Do you find that the battle against sin is a rather hopeless one?

Which of the Ten Commandments do you find most difficult?

What are your prayer and Bible reading practices?

Do you find it hard to speak about Jesus where you work or study?

Do you have doubts regarding the truth of the Bible?

Do you have many unbelieving friends?

Do you discuss your faith in Christ?

Do you feel isolated as a Reformed Christian?

Are there any biblical doctrines that you find particularly hard to believe?

Are you sure about your salvation?

## Statement on Divorce and Remarriage (Acts of Synod 1992, Art. 50)

### Concerning Divorce

1. The marriage covenant, whether formalised by the civil authorities or the church, before or subsequent to a personal commitment to Christ, is binding in the eyes of God. Jesus speaks of all marriages when he says, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Mathew 19:6)
2. The severance of a marriage covenant becomes a possibility, though not always an automatic necessity, when it has been violated by
  - a. adultery/marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:31,32; 19:9)
  - b. wilful desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15)
3. Although God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), its legitimacy may be accepted by the church courts (i.e. sessions) when one or both partners, having violated the marriage covenant, steadfastly refuse to repent (in the sense of *metanoia* – a true ‘change of mind’ repentance) and seek genuine reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> Such refusal is an act of wilful disobedience that not only breaks the marriage covenant but also the covenant in Christ’s blood.
4. While the much broader concept of “irreconcilable breakdown” is now sufficient grounds for divorce in this country’s civil law, Scripture allows only for the two grounds mentions in 2 a. and b. It is therefore necessary for the courts of the church (i.e. sessions) to determine, on the basis of Scripture, whether or not a divorce granted by civil authorities is legitimate.
5. When a divorce has been accepted as legitimate by the courts of the church, the judgment should be accepted by all without conditions.
6. In the case of a legitimately divorced man seeking to become an office-bearer in the church, the teaching of 1 Timothy 3:1 (see also Timothy 3:12; Titus 1:6) needs to be taken into account.

### Concerning Remarriage

7. Those who have lost their spouses through death are free to remarry. (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Legitimately divorced persons have the same status.

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<sup>1</sup> The committee came to no conclusion on whether or not a person may divorce a spouse who has committed adultery, irrespective of that spouse’s repentance.

8. There will continue to be many instances of formerly married persons who intend to remarry and who have not ascertained the legitimacy or otherwise of their divorce.<sup>2</sup> The most common examples of this being:
  - a. Persons who were (improperly) divorced before their conversion;
  - b. Persons whose former spouse has remarried or entered into a new relationship.

It is both difficult and pastorally unwise to make or suggest regulations or laws to cover all possible instances. However, in considering a request for such a marriage, the following should be taken into account:

- c. The evidence of true repentance for past sin;
- d. The possibility and advisability of reconciliation with the former spouse;
- e. The faith commitment of the couple (1 Corinthians 7:39c; 2 Corinthians 6:14);
- f. The need for special pastoral counselling.

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<sup>2</sup> The committee considered this point as being at the centre of the matter. It is in accord with Report 9 to the RCA Synod, 1989. Here the matter is simply stated rather than re-arguing the case.

## **Guidelines for the Discipline of Those Who Resign** (Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 86, Report 18; Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 127.1)

In regard to those who unilaterally resign from the church, the session shall, depending on the persons, times, places and sins, do what is edifying according to the judgement of the session, with advice or concurrence of the presbytery as needed.

The following guidelines with regard to those who unilaterally resign from the church presume that the resignee is still accessible. If he is not, then discipline should not be pursued, since there is no direct evidence as to the resignee's state.

- a. The elders should evaluate their prior relationship with the would-be resignee, seeking:
  - To remove any stumbling blocks that might drive the member away,
  - Forgiveness for any lack of care on their part,
  - To build a more positive relationship, if possible, before it is too late.
- b. The elders should weigh the needs of the resignee, as to whether he may be helped by being under the care of a church to which he cannot be transferred.
- c. The elders should decide whether a disciplinary approach is necessary to serve the Lord's honour, the church's purity, and the member's welfare. In order to make this decision, the following should be investigated:
  - Will the profession of faith vows *necessarily* be broken by the resignee's choices, or does he simply place himself in danger?
  - Is the member resigning in order to escape discipline, or to pursue false worship in a false church, or to give up public worship altogether?
  - Is the member resigning due to apostasy?
- d. If discipline is not warranted, a statement may be made, stating the church's desire that the Lord may still bless the departing brother/sister, or sadness about the outcome, warnings to the congregation about the danger of joining churches that are not confessionally Reformed and so on, according to the situation.
- e. If discipline is warranted, the elders should decide whether to use the existing procedures (as per Church Order Article 78), or a procedure which cuts short the usual process, as per the following steps:
  - If dissuasion fails to move the resignee, the elders should admonish/rebuke him.
  - The resignee should be suspended from the Lord's Table.

- If there is no resolution of the problem, the session shall read a disciplinary statement to the congregation after receiving concurrence from presbytery.
  - Before the disciplinary statement is read, the resignee, and then the congregation, should be informed of the date and time of the church service in which the disciplinary statement will be read out.
- f. Disciplinary statements may include the following details:
- The resignee's name,
  - Summary of the resignee's sin(s),
  - A proclamation of repentance as the way of restoration,
  - An expression of grief in the outcome,
  - A warning to the congregation to avoid taking the same path,
  - If a session intends that the announcement be understood as an excommunication, then the form for excommunication must be read out as well as any other statement.

## **Guidelines for Sessions Having to Deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children**

**Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 102, 114**

### **Preamble**

The Christian church has always valued her children. Even infants receive the treasured sign and seal of God's covenant promises. Our children are to be nurtured by their parents in the Christian faith and a godly lifestyle. God has also appointed elders in the church to help parents to train up their children in the way they should go. One of the essential tasks of the elders is to defend the flock from wolves inside and outside the church.<sup>1</sup> If elders must defend the flock, then they must do what they can to protect children, who are among the lambs and the most vulnerable of the flock. Our desire is that our children be protected from sexual predators. Like the Good Shepherd, the one we follow, we are to be deeply concerned about the welfare of children. For Jesus, even the youngest children were important, and he blessed those brought to him.<sup>2</sup>

The seriousness of child sexual abuse cannot be exaggerated. We would do well to take to heart Jesus' words, speaking in part about children: "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."<sup>3</sup> On the same occasion, he also warned, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."<sup>4</sup>

As God's image bearers, all children are to be treated with dignity and respect. Sexual abuse represents a savage attack on a child's God-given identity, including their sexuality. They are victims of deceit, manipulation, violence and hate. To make matters even worse, children are often abused and betrayed by someone loved and trusted, whom God (and the victim and others) expected to be loving and trustworthy towards them.

It is our prayer and hope that this report will help those who must pastor victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse. We especially hope that elders would make it a priority to protect the lambs of the flock. We also pray that the Lord may use the wise discipline of elders to bring those who have sinned sexually against children to heartfelt repentance.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:28ff

<sup>2</sup> Mark 10:16

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18:6

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 18:10

## SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

### Section 1—Introduction, definitions and general observations

- Article 1 Introduction  
This article sets out a number of general principles relating to human sexuality.
- Article 2 Definitions  
The following terms are defined: child sexual abuse, child, session, and Oranga Tamariki.
- Article 3 General comments about child sexual abuse  
This article contains general comments about what to expect with respect to child sexual abuse, and how God expects us to respond.
- Article 4 Some useful resources for dealing with child sexual abuse  
Much has been written on child sexual abuse. In this article some resources are recommended.

### Section 2—Pastoral care in sexual abuse cases

- Article 5 Introductory comments  
Session must deal with sexual abuse within the congregation. In this article, session's role and response to sexual abuse is described in general terms.
- Article 6 Pastoral support for the victim and their families  
Sexual abuse can be extremely traumatic. This article focuses on caring for the victim and their families.
- Article 7 Pastoral support for the abuser  
Dealing with an abuser can be complex. This article describes the main things that a session needs to consider when dealing with an abuser.
- Article 8 Reconciliation between abuser and victim  
Reconciliation is possible, but difficult. This article highlights issues that need to be considered.
- Article 9 Prevention of abuse  
While churches are not immune from sexual abuse, steps can be taken to discourage would-be abusers and to detect abuse early.

### Section 3—Dealing with allegations of abuse

- Article 10 Allegations, suspicions and confessions  
This article deals, in general terms, with the manner that sexual abuse is dealt with.

- Article 11 Interviewing a child and placing children in care  
Interviewing children who have been abused can be challenging. This article explains some of the issues that arise. It also discusses the possibility of children at risk being placed in care.
- Article 12 Procedural matters  
This article discusses Matthew 18:15–17, and procedural issues that arise in dealing with sexual abuse cases within the church.
- Article 13 Involving the authorities  
The state has a legitimate, God-given role in dealing with and punishing criminal behaviour. This article explains the importance of churches involving and interacting with the authorities.
- Article 14 An inconclusive court case or investigation  
This article addresses the situation where the authorities have taken no action about someone accused of sexual abuse or where they have been found not guilty in a court of law.
- Article 15 False allegations  
This article briefly discusses what steps Session may need to consider when it believes allegations of sexual abuse are false.
- Article 16 Dealing with the media  
Sexual abuse is often deemed newsworthy by the media. This article gives some guidance as to how churches should deal with the media regarding sexual abuse allegations.



## GUIDELINES<sup>5</sup>

### Section 1—Introduction, definitions and general observations

#### 1. Introduction

- a) Genesis 1 tells us that in the beginning, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” and God saw that “it was very good.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise in 1 Timothy 4, we are reminded that “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”<sup>7</sup> So, human sexuality is both God-given and good.
- b) As God’s people, we are called to be sexually pure. In our relationships with one another within the church, we must treat one another “with absolute purity.”<sup>8</sup> God’s intention is that sexual intimacy take place within the lifelong bond of marriage between a man and a woman; outside of marriage it is contrary to God’s will and is destructive.<sup>9</sup>
- c) The Bible and the laws of New Zealand prohibit sexual relations between close relatives. The scriptural position is reflected in chapter 24 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.
- d) Clear biblical teaching on sexual purity is required both in the home and church. The Scripture teaches that “the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body....Therefore honour God with your body.”<sup>10</sup>
- e) It is critically important that we teach about God’s wise and loving design for human relationships. Many in our society, because of the lies they believe about romantic love, are destructively permissive. Conversely, out of fear, others curtail legitimate expressions of affection and care.

#### 2. Definitions

- a) “Child sexual abuse” means any act of a sexual nature against a child. By way of example, it includes sexual grooming, inappropriate touching, voyeurism, involvement in photography or filming for pornographic purposes, touching of genitals, forced masturbation, sexual intercourse, and inviting or inducing a child to do any sexual or indecent act. The Crimes Act 1961 lists more than 80 offences that involve child sexual abuse. It ordinarily refers to a sexual act performed by an adult on a child or where an adult caused a child to perform a sexual act. However, it can

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<sup>5</sup> Synod 2011 defined ‘guidelines’ as stated on page iv

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 1:27,31

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 5:4

<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 5:2

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:14,20

also include older children abusing younger children. Sexual abuse can be a single event or a series of incidents that occur over a number of years.

- b) “Child” means someone who is under the age of 16 years.
- c) “Session” refers to the elders of a congregation.
- d) “Oranga Tamariki” is a service of the Ministry for Children (formerly “Child, Youth and Family”, a service of the Ministry of Social Development).
- e) In this document, the abuser is described in the masculine. While some abusers are female, it is recognised that the majority of abusers are men.

### **3. General comments about child sexual abuse**

- a) It takes much wisdom to deal well with sexual abuse, more than any of us possess. Hence, we must pray for wisdom,<sup>11</sup> recognising that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”<sup>12</sup> and where needed, seek advice.
- b) Both the Scriptures and painful experience teach us that it would be foolish to believe sexual abuse could not happen in our churches.<sup>13</sup> However, shame, guilt, lust, fear and a wrong view of authority conspire to keep sexual abuse well hidden. Hence we must do what we can to expose sexual abuse and deal with it as a serious sin.
- c) The Bible encourages us to be honest about our sin, first and foremost with God, but also where appropriate with others.
- d) As God’s people we are to share God’s concern for the weak and vulnerable, and do what we can to protect them from those who would take advantage of them.
- e) The way that sessions respond to and deal with sexual abuse will have repercussions for all involved, and may have lifelong consequences for good or evil.
- f) The state has a legitimate, God-given role in this area. When it comes to investigations by the authorities and to judicial proceedings, sessions should strive to co-operate with the authorities and avoid jeopardising any part of the legal process. As followers of Christ, we must have a clear and strong commitment to justice being done and being seen to be done.
- g) Sexual abuse is far more than a physical act. It wounds the heart, often grievously. To spiritually care for the victim, the offender and their families, sessions will need to:

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<sup>11</sup> James 1:5

<sup>12</sup> Colossians 2:3

<sup>13</sup> For example, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Timothy 3:1–7, Jude 3–4, and Revelation 2:12–29

- i. strive to understand their situation and grieve with them; and,
  - ii. keep encouraging them to look to the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
- h) Allegations of child sexual abuse can generate intense emotions. Session must deal with the matter as calmly and objectively as possible, neither being quick to judge nor making light of any allegations of abuse.<sup>14</sup>
- i) Communities generally view abusers with contempt and suspicion. Sadly, the all-too-common result is that abusers become outcasts who find it very hard to find acceptance anywhere, even within the church. Though it may be said that this is an inevitable consequence of sexually abusing children, the church must joyfully accept repentant sinners who put their trust in Jesus Christ. To do otherwise would be to deny the gospel. The church, therefore, may have responsibility to care for and support both a victim and his or her abuser; this will often be the case when both are associated with the church and perhaps even related to each other. This can be particularly challenging when someone who was guilty of abuse is released after having served a prison sentence and wishes to return to the church.
- j) Session needs to be aware that anyone who exposes sexual abuse, even the victim, might be regarded by some in the church as troublemakers. To have this attitude to those who bring sexual abuse to light is also a denial of the gospel.<sup>15</sup> We are called, as God's children, to have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather to expose them.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. Some useful resources for dealing with child sexual abuse

- a) The following books may help sessions and others wishing to better understand the effects of child sexual abuse:
- i. Dan Allender, *The Wounded Heart*
  - ii. Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Rid of My Disgrace*
  - iii. Brad & Cheryl Tuggle, *A Healing Marriage*;
  - iv. Dorie van Stone and Ed Lutzer, *Dorie: The Girl Nobody Loved*
  - v. Dorie van Stone and Ed Lutzer, *No Place to Cry*
- b) Christian Counseling Education Foundation has many useful resources on child sexual abuse and related topics, including its Biblical Counseling journal, online articles, conferences (which are available for purchase online) and books.

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<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 14:19; James 1:19

<sup>15</sup> John 3:15-21

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:11

## Section 2—Pastoral care in sexual abuse cases

### 5. Introductory comments

- a) Sessions are called by God to deal with sin within the church. The Word of God is the divinely appointed means for doing this.
- b) The Word of God associates wisdom with the willingness to seek and receive godly advice.<sup>17</sup> Sessions are therefore encouraged to seek advice from trusted sources to assist them, especially when they are dealing with areas in which they may have insufficient knowledge or experience, or if they encounter serious problems, such as irresolvable differences within session or with anyone who is involved.
- c) Sessions may also need advice about the nature of the offending. Sometimes it is not clear whether it should be treated as serious or minor. For example, viewed in isolation, a particular incident may appear minor. But if it is, or might be, part of a pattern of abuse, it may need to be treated as serious.
- d) A session should consider all available resources which may aid them in dealing with sexual abuse. As believers, we can use what has been written or produced by unbelievers provided we are discerning. While we cannot accept their worldview, we can filter out what is useful and good in God's sight and then place that information within a biblical framework.<sup>18</sup> Doing this in no way undermines the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.
- e) Church leaders should model and pursue biblical reconciliation among all members of the church, always holding out the hope of the gospel, serving as peacemakers, and seeking Christ's glory and the good of his people.
- f) Allegations or discovery of child sexual abuse will be devastating for a church. Session may need to consider asking presbytery or neighbouring churches for pastoral advice or assistance.

### 6. Pastoral support for the victim and their families

- a) Allegations, disclosure, or discovery of abuse can prove extremely traumatic for victims and other family members. They will need biblical counsel, and active encouragement and support from the church during this time. The session should be prepared to provide ongoing and extensive pastoral care and support, and should consider who else in the

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<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 9:9, 12:15, 13:10, 15:22, 19:20 and 20:18; Ecclesiastes 4:13

<sup>18</sup> The Bible has many examples of this. For instance, the apostle Paul had obviously read the Greek philosophers, and even quotes them in Acts 17:16 and following. However, Paul uses these quotes in a different framework than the original writers intended.

congregation may be able to assist. The session may also wish to recommend counsellors and others who might be able to help the victim and other family members work through issues.

- b) Wisdom and pastoral sensitivity are needed in dealing with sexual abuse. Those helping victims and their families should seek to become familiar with the dynamics of sexual abuse, the emotional and spiritual turmoil it generates, and the issues that victims and their families may need to work through and the challenges they may face. A thorough knowledge of Scripture is essential for bringing hope and healing to those affected by sexual abuse.
- c) While the church, along with the parents, has a crucial role in counselling and caring for children who are victims, the manner and timing of such work must be considered. For example, speaking to a child before he or she has been interviewed by the authorities may unintentionally complicate and compromise the legal process. Due to the vulnerable state of a child in such a situation, careful questioning is necessary so as not to distort a child's memory or diminish his or her ability to accurately recount what happened.
- d) Where family or friends were aware that the abuse was happening, but failed to take appropriate protective action and report the abuse, they too should be challenged to repent of their sin and seek forgiveness of those they have wronged.

## **7. Pastoral support for the abuser**

- a) This subsection assumes that the one accused of abuse is guilty of abuse, and may have admitted his guilt, in whole or part. Where the one accused of abuse is or appears to be innocent, the church will need to deal with the situation differently.
- b) As is the case with all sin, it is usually difficult for an abuser to admit his guilt. He needs to be made aware how traumatic his denials and minimisation can be for the victim and others affected. Hence he should be encouraged to be completely honest with the victim, victim's family, elders and authorities about what he has done wrong.
- c) Someone who was guilty of abuse and has repented should be reassured of the ongoing love and acceptance of the church family, regardless of what he confesses and the consequences of his offending. He should also be reassured that the church will strive to support him and his family while the matter is dealt with by the criminal justice system. In doing this, session may make it easier for him to confess any sin.
- d) Contrary to what many in our society say, sexual abuse is not an unforgivable sin. The blood of Jesus Christ can cover even the most

heinous sexual sins. Nonetheless, as an act of Christian love, those guilty of abuse will be subject to the admonition and discipline of the church.

- e) The session should consider whether the offending should be made known to the congregation. Where there is a name suppression order in place, legal advice should be sought before making any public statement.
- f) The session may also impose conditions on the abuser who continues to be a member of the congregation to protect children, to give the congregation confidence that children will be safe, and to ensure that the abuser is not placed in a compromising situation. The safety of children and the need to discourage further offending are important considerations which need to be taken into account.
- g) The session may also consider whether an abuser should be requested to pursue further counselling or attend a specific treatment programme.
- h) Should the abuser be convicted and imprisoned, the church should continue to support him and his family. Upon his release from prison, it will be necessary for the elders and the abuser to agree upon the conditions that will apply to his ongoing membership, including his involvement with children. Such conditions should incorporate any parole conditions which have been imposed. The church should consider how it can help the abuser reintegrate successfully into his family, the church and community. Where appropriate, this should be done in consultation with the victim and the victim's family.
- i) Those helping an abuser will need to understand the issues, emotions and challenges that an abuser must work through. A thorough knowledge of Scripture is essential for dealing effectively with those who have been caught in sexual sin. A good understanding of the dynamics of sexual abuse would also be helpful.

## **8. Reconciliation between abuser and victim**

- a) Sexual abuse leaves deep emotional and spiritual wounds. Hence the path to reconciliation may be painful and protracted. Yet we must continue to hold out the possibility of genuine reconciliation between the abuser and his victim and others affected. Sexual abuse may kill—spiritually, emotionally and relationally—but in Christ there is new life.
- b) Victims who are Christians may struggle to forgive. While completely understandable, they:
  - i. are called by Christ to forgive even their abusers and to be reconciled with them, just as they have been forgiven by God and have been reconciled to him;<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 6:12, 12:1-7; Mark 11:25-26

- ii. may experience freedom and great joy as they learn to forgive; and,
  - iii. are enabled by Christ's Spirit to forgive.
- c) Abusers who are Christians are called by Christ to repent of their sin, and to seek the forgiveness of those they have wronged, and where possible, to put things right. This may even involve an abuser going to the Police of his own accord and making a full confession.
  - d) Both the one who committed the abuse, his victim and all involved should patiently trust God's timing for a full reconciliation. However, sometimes this does not happen, even where the abuser has repented, sought forgiveness and done all he can to put things right, and the victim has extended forgiveness. Trust, once broken, can be difficult to restore. By God's grace, the one who was guilty of abuse and his victim may sit at the Lord's Table together, even while they may struggle to relate in other situations.
  - e) Special care should be taken in situations where the abuser was in a position of authority or control over the victim (for example, a parent, teacher or church office-bearer). Session should be alert to the possibility of the abuser forcing the victim to forgive him and to be reconciled, especially where he demonstrates little or no genuine contrition.

## 9. Prevention of abuse

Churches are not immune from sexual abuse affecting its members. It can, however, discourage would be abusers and detect abuse early by considering the following possibilities:

- i. police checks and interviews for everyone working with children;
- ii. adopting protocols for church programmes and activities to ensure that children are not generally left alone in the care of one adult;
- iii. familiarising itself with some of the possible effects of sexual abuse;<sup>20</sup>
- iv. teaching those working with children about sexual abuse; and,
- v. speaking more openly about sexual abuse in order to encourage those who are being or have been abused, and those guilty of abuse, to seek help.

## Section 3—Dealing with allegations of abuse

### 10. Allegations, suspicions and confessions

- a) When someone in the congregation is accused of sexual abuse, it is important that the session deal with those allegations in a timely and God-honouring manner.

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to Dan Allender, *The Wounded Heart*. Part 2 describes the damage done by sexual abuse.

- b) Sessions should do what they can to engender the trust of God's people by the way that they deal with allegations of abuse.
- c) Someone who has been abused and someone who has been falsely accused of abuse need to have the confidence that they will be taken seriously. The Scriptures alert us to the possibility of God's people committing gross sexual sin, but also warn about the possibility of false, even slanderous accusations being made.<sup>21</sup>
- d) Sexual abuse is usually done in secret. This creates a difficulty. There are usually no eyewitnesses. So sessions will need to handle accusations with care.
- e) The Scriptures teach us that the manner in which we deal with sin is important.
- f) The Scriptures also teach us the need for corroborating evidence.<sup>22</sup> The session will need to use its discretion as to what constitutes valid testimony which meets the biblical standard.<sup>23</sup>
- g) Where a member has confessed to sexually abusing a child, session should:
  - i. consider what should be done to protect the victim and other children; and,
  - ii. suspend him from office if he is an office-bearer in the church in accordance with articles 82 to 84 of the Church Order.
- h) Where allegations have been made or there are suspicions that abuse is occurring, session should carefully:
  - i. consider what inquiries should or need to be made;
  - ii. determine what steps may need to be taken to protect the possible victim and other children in the meantime;
  - iii. seek counsel from others experienced in investigating or dealing with sexual abuse cases; and,
  - iv. decide whether to involve the authorities immediately.
- i) Any inquiries by session should be made discreetly and with respect for confidentiality. A complainant should be assured of confidentiality and insofar as it is possible and practicable, should be told explicitly who will be informed. In accord with the ninth commandment, all those involved should be sensitive to the need to safeguard the reputations and the good names of the complainant, the accused, and others involved.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> James 4:11

<sup>22</sup> 1 Timothy 5:19,20

<sup>23</sup> Eyewitness testimony is not the only kind of valid witness; refer to 1 John 5:7–8 as an example.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to the Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 112.



- j) The session should never promise the accused or anyone else involved that the matter will be kept secret; such a promise could conflict with or compromise the biblical principles of truthfulness and justice. However, session should only disclose information to those who have a legitimate interest in receiving it.

### **11. Interviewing a child and placing children in care**

- a) Interviewing children who may have been abused can be challenging. It is difficult enough for adults who were abused as children to make sense of what happened; it is usually far more difficult for children to explain what happened.
- b) At the outset, the session must consider whether it would be better to involve the authorities immediately. From an evidential point of view, it can be highly advantageous for the authorities to conduct or be involved in the initial inquiries; these are usually undertaken with sensitivity to the child's needs and vulnerability.
- c) Elders in the church are given responsibility by God to be shepherds of the flock of God under their care and, as such, should be prepared to minister to all those involved where sexual abuse has been alleged. However, that does not mean that the elders should not seek advice from or involve others. Proverbs, for example, reminds us "wisdom is found in those who take advice."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, we have been given different gifts by the Holy Spirit which are to be used "for the common good."<sup>26</sup> Every member, as part of Christ's body, has a part to play in the life of the church and beyond.<sup>27</sup> When it comes to interviewing or ministering to children who have or may have been abused, there may be some to whom God has given special ability in this area.
- d) In cases where there is a risk of ongoing abuse, Oranga Tamariki may place a child in care. Sometimes this is only temporary but at other times the removal proves permanent. The church may have a role in finding a suitable home and providing support for that child. Except in the gravest of circumstances, an elder should not uplift children at risk and put them into care; to do so could constitute kidnapping. Such intervention should be left to Oranga Tamariki or the Police.

### **12. Procedural matters**

- a) In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus prescribes three progressive steps for handling personal offenses within the local church: 1) a private confrontation, 2) a witnessed confrontation, and 3) a wider confrontation before the church. At each step, the goal is repentance by the offender.

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<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 13:10

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 12-13; Ephesians 4:7-16

But the crime of child sexual abuse is far more than a personal offence. It is a crime within the jurisdiction of the governing authorities. In considering the general principles of Matthew 18:15–17, it is important to keep in mind that in the case of the sexual abuse of children, a child cannot be expected to confront his or her abuser. Even an adult who was abused as a child would have great difficulty confronting his or her abuser. He or she would require a great deal of pastoral support, and in most cases could not be expected to confront his or her abuser alone.

- b) Ordinarily abuse comes to light in one of three ways: a victim speaking to someone he or she trusts; an abuser making a confession; or someone observing something unusual or suspicious. While love hopes for the best, love also protects<sup>28</sup> and therefore demands that we consider the possibility of abuse at times.
- c) Where a minister or elder becomes aware of a situation involving potential child abuse (whether current or historical), he should let other elders know as soon as practicable in order to get their advice. Whether this is some or all of the elders will depend on the situation.
- d) It should be borne in mind that someone who was abused as a child and has kept it secret for years, perhaps even decades, may choose to say nothing if he or she is unsure who else will find out. The feelings of shame can become so overwhelming that silence becomes preferable to getting help. So while complete confidentiality should never be promised (as outlined in article 9 above), information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis, and where appropriate with the full knowledge and consent of the abused.
- e) It often takes great courage for someone guilty of abuse to voluntarily confess his or her sin needs. When such a confession is made it needs to be handled with great sensitivity. However, when there is confession of the sin of sexual abuse, due to the broader legal, ecclesiastical and familial consequences all of the elders should be informed about the confession.
- f) Where a minister or elder is a close relative or close friend of the alleged abuser or the person abused, it is strongly recommended that wherever possible they not become involved in the situation in their official capacity. The existence of a close relationship is likely to raise understandable concerns about objectivity.

### **13. Involving the authorities**

- a) The state has a legitimate, God-given role in dealing with and punishing criminal behaviour. God has commanded that his people submit to the

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<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:7

state unless this would result in disobedience to him.<sup>29</sup> This is clearly established by passages such as Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–17. There are a number of other weighty reasons why the church should involve the state:

- i. God expects his people to be passionate about justice being done.
  - ii. Those guilty of sexual abuse tend to minimise the abuse and their denials can be difficult to unmask. The church does not have the resources that the state possesses.
  - iii. There is often a greater risk of reoffending where the state is not involved.
  - iv. Victims of abuse need to know that the church treats sexual abuse as a serious crime. Failure to do so may result in people becoming disillusioned and feeling that the church has failed them. Furthermore, trivialising or covering up sexual abuse causes Christ's name to be blasphemed; conversely, where churches deal with sexual abuse in an exemplary fashion, Christ's name is honoured.
- b) The State has no authority to “interfere in matters of faith.”<sup>30</sup> The church has a duty to counsel, comfort and encourage those who have been wronged; and to admonish the guilty. She must not abdicate her responsibility to the state.
  - c) Where a crime has been committed, the three steps in Matthew 18:15–17 need not be taken before Christians can seek the help of the state.
  - d) The principles in 1 Corinthians 6:1–8 should not be interpreted as excluding the role of the civil authorities in situations where criminal offending has occurred. That passage applies to minor or trivial matters.<sup>31</sup>
  - e) Where the session believes that sexual offending might not warrant prosecution it would be wise for it to seek advice or allow the state to make that determination. Even apparently minor offending needs to be taken seriously; it may be that there is more offending that has yet to come to light or which has already come to the attention of the authorities.
  - f) Restorative conferences can be highly beneficial where there has been a clear admission of guilt by the abuser and both the abuser and victim are willing to meet. Depending on the seriousness of the case and the input of Oranga Tamariki or the Police, the matter might be resolved at that level or the authorities may choose to take the matter further.

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<sup>29</sup> Acts 5:29

<sup>30</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, 23:3

<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:2 speaks of 'trivial cases.'

- g) Churches should not shield offenders from the consequences of criminal actions. Furthermore, failure to take appropriate action could result in legal action against the church or its officers.
- h) Ordinarily victims or their families, rather than the session, should report the offending to the Police or Oranga Tamariki. They may benefit from one of the elders being present in a supportive role. However when family dynamics or other considerations make that impossible or highly impractical, the session should inform the family that it will report the matter to the Police or Oranga Tamariki and then do so.
- i) Where appropriate, families and caregivers should be made aware of section 195A of the Crimes Act 1961 (refer to the appendix). Families and those responsible for the care of children have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect children from ongoing abuse. The church family should also do what it reasonably can to protect children from ongoing abuse. Hence the Police or Oranga Tamariki should also be notified where session becomes aware that a child is in danger of being subjected to sexual abuse.
- j) Oranga Tamariki and the Police have an inter-agency approach to dealing with child sexual abuse. They share information and work together when dealing with such cases.
- k) In recognising the role of the civil authorities to fulfil their responsibilities before God, sessions should seek to co-operate with the Police and Oranga Tamariki and where appropriate provide such information as will aid inquiries.
- l) In the case of a victim of child abuse who is now an adult:
  - i. ordinarily the choice as to whether to press charges should ultimately be left with the victim. Where the victim is intellectually impaired, others may have to make the decision whether to involve the authorities.
  - ii. the Police will sometimes ask a victim whether he or she wishes charges to be laid. While well-intended, this can place a heavy burden on a victim.

In both situations, session may need to offer the victim clear advice and strong support, especially if the abuser is a family member or someone close.

#### **14. An inconclusive court case or investigation**

- a) Where someone accused of a sexual crime has been found “not guilty” in a criminal court of law, this means that the charges were not proved beyond reasonable doubt. So a “not guilty” verdict is not necessarily a declaration of innocence. Similarly, occasions where the Police or

Oranga Tamariki decline to act does not amount to a declaration of innocence.

- b) Where there has been a “not guilty” verdict or the authorities have taken no action, the session will always need to make its own pastoral and judicial assessment of the situation.
- c) The session may need to actively monitor the situation for a time, perhaps even years, providing ongoing spiritual care, encouragement and accountability.

### **15. False allegations**

- a) Session must always be alert to the possibility that allegations might be false. Hence sessions should be slow to judge and must deal with allegations circumspectly. The person making the accusations might be genuinely mistaken, or even acting maliciously.
- b) There may be times when session may need to warn an accuser about the seriousness of making false allegations.
- c) Where session determines that someone has made false allegations, it should consider whether disciplinary action is warranted. It should also consider whether a public statement is necessary in order to protect and uphold the good name of the one who was accused of wrongdoing. It may be wise for the session to seek the advice of Presbytery before making any public statement.

### **16. Dealing with the media**

- a) Sexual abuse is often deemed newsworthy by the media and so the session should be prepared to receive inquiries from the public.
- b) If the media approach the church regarding a sexual abuse allegation, it can be helpful for one person to be appointed to speak on behalf of the church.
- c) Anyone speaking with the media must always bear in mind that:
  - i. the accused has a right to a fair trial and should be presumed innocent until found guilty;
  - iii. the privacy of all concerned is to be protected as much as possible; and,
  - iv. the authorities have a God-given role to deal with sexual abuse.

## Section VI – General

### Gravamen

Procedural Regulations  
Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 16.1

#### Definition

A **Gravamen** is called for only when an office-bearer, or any confessing member of the church, wishes actually to call the church, for good and adequate reasons to consider revision of the confessions.

A session is to endorse a gravamen, submitted by one of its members; the session as one of the church judicatories must call upon the whole church to consider a revision in the confessions.

#### Regulations re Procedure

Regulations concerning procedure to be followed in the submission of **“difficulties and different sentiments”** to the assemblies for examination.

1. The basic assumption of the church in requiring subscription to the Form of Subscription is that **all the articles and points of doctrine** contained in the confessions of the church **do fully agree with the Word of God**. The burden of proof therefore rests upon the subscriber who calls upon the church to justify or revise her confessions.
2. Ministers (including missionaries and all others not serving congregations as pastors), elders and deacons shall submit their “difficulties and different sentiments” to their sessions for examination and judgment.
3. Professors of theology may, if they desire, take their “difficulties and different sentiments” directly to synod. However, in the interest of doing justice to their relationship to their session, synod recommends that professors of theology first consult their sessions regarding their difficulties with the confessions of the church.
4. In all such cases (2 and 3 above), a matter shall be considered ‘revealed’ to an assembly (session, presbytery, or synod) only when the assembly has accepted it for action.
5. Since the subscriber has the right of appeal from the judgment of a session to presbytery and from presbytery to synod, the mere fact that a matter is being appealed shall not be a reason for suspending or otherwise disciplining an office-bearer, provided other provisions of the Form of Subscription and the Church Order are observed.

6. In cases involving a gravamen (a call for revision of the confessions) the above regulations shall apply. Moreover:
  - a. Should a session decide that it is not able to judge a gravamen submitted to it, it shall submit the matter to presbytery for examination and judgment. If the presbytery, after examination, judges that it is unable to decide the matter, it may submit it to synod, in accordance with the principles of the Church Order, Article 28.
  - b. A gravamen adopted by session and/or presbytery as its own becomes an overture to the broader assemblies and therefore is open for discussion by the whole church. In such cases the personal restrictions of the Form of Subscription no longer apply.
  - c. Should a presbytery or synod judge that a gravamen presented by an individual is worthy of consideration by the whole church, all who signed the Form of Subscription shall be free to discuss it together with the whole church, until definitely adjudicated by synod.
  - d. A revision of the confessions in response to either gravamen or overture shall not be adopted by synod until the whole church membership has had adequate opportunity to consider it.

## **Rules for Needy Churches**

**(Acts of Synod 1969, Arts. 49 & 56; Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 92;  
Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 53.6)**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of the Fund for Needy Churches is to grant assistance towards stipend and other working expenses (excluding capital payments) to needy churches.

### **2. The Fund**

The Needy Churches Fund may be replenished, if such a need arises, by raising quota from the churches (Acts 1980, Art. 65; Acts 2002, Art. 92.11).

### **3. Definition Needy Church**

A needy church is a church which, although meeting the requirements of Art. 6 of these rules, is not able to meet the minimum stipend and other working expenses. Payments for the purchase of buildings and other assets are not included in "working expenses" for the purpose of defining what constitutes a needy church. (For clarification: assistance for building purposes is available by way of a Building Loan from the Church Extension Committee.)

### **4. Administration**

The Fund for Needy Churches shall be administrated by the Church Extension Committee. This committee shall be responsible to synod. The committee, in processing a request for assistance, will take into consideration the congregational giving to the financial needs of the church, including synodically set quota and special conditions relevant to the request. The Church Extension Committee shall grant assistance only upon consent of two thirds of the number of the churches.

### **5. Minimum Size of Church Qualifying for Assistance**

For the purpose of the administration of the Fund, synod, acting upon the recommendation of the Church Extension Committee, will determine the minimum number of units which a church is required to have before it may extend a call and subsequently request assistance from the Fund.

### **6. Application**

A church desiring assistance from the Fund shall make application annually. The application, together with the church's latest annual financial report and



other relevant data such as the number of units, shall be forwarded to the presbytery. Following examination and endorsement by this presbytery, the application and statements are then to be sent to the secretary of the Church Extension Committee.

The assisted church, while receiving such support, shall forward a copy of their financial statement each year to the secretary.

## **7. Minimum Contribution**

At each synod the Church Extension Committee shall recommend a minimum contribution which, as an average, each unit belonging to the assisted church shall make towards the church funds. The final decision shall be left to synod.

## **8. Definition of Unit**

For the purpose of these rules a 'unit' is defined to be a family as well as a single confessing member.

## **9. First Application**

If a church is making application for assistance for the first time, this church shall, in consultation with the presbytery, provide the Church Extension Committee with details of its history, of its growth and the economic conditions and prospects of the area in which the church is established.

## **10. Aim**

In general, the policy of the Church Extension Committee, in consultation with the presbytery concerned, shall be consistent with the aim that recipient congregations become self-supporting as soon as possible.

## **11. Vacancy**

Normally no assistance from the Fund will be available during the vacancy of a church. The Church Extension Committee shall be informed of the date when the church becomes vacant.

## **12. Alteration of Rules**

These rules can be amended only by act of synod.

## **Rules for the Denominational Building Fund** (Acts of Synod 1962, Art. 116; Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 53.7)

1. Loans supplied to churches for the purpose of building a church building or manse are at a low interest rate which will maintain the real value of the money lent (Acts 1986, Art. 18).
2. Repayments of loans plus interest are due on 30 September each year; this being 10% of capital, spread over a period of ten years.
3. Every year, towards September, the secretary of the Home Mission and Church Extension Committee informs all the churches of the total amount of funds available for loan purposes.

The churches are invited to apply for new loans.

4. Applications for new loans must be in the hands of the secretary, together with financial statement, balance sheet and any other relevant papers.
5. The following rules for priority apply in providing new loans:

Order of priority:

- a. Loan for Church or Manse;
- b. Loan to replace an existing interest-bearing loan on a Church or Manse;
- c. Loans to ministers to assist them in the purchase of their own home under usual conditions of repayments (10% p.a.);
- d. Loan to other interests.

# **Principles for Changing Ecumenical Creeds, Reformed Confessions, Liturgical Forms, Psalms and Hymns**

(Acts of Synod 1986, Arts. 67 & 94)

## **B. Overtures to Synods**

### **Requirements**

Any overture to synod which asks for change to Ecumenical Creeds, Confessions, Liturgical Forms or Psalms and Hymns must:

- a. be motivated with reference to the respective principles below (under B), so that a prima facie case for the proposed change(s) is established by the overture before it may be sent to a committee for study,
- b. present an adequate alternative,
- c. show that the change proposed is feasible, in light of various factors such as cost, resources available, etc.

## **C. Principles Summarising Purpose and Function**

### **1. Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions**

#### **Purpose and Function**

- a. to witness in and to the world, of Christ and his gospel;
- b. to summarise Biblical truth, for teaching and tests of orthodoxy;
- c. to express unity as Christian and Reformed Churches, often in worship services.

### **2. Liturgical Forms**

#### **Purpose and Function**

To serve the worship of the church by providing:

- a. Uniformity of teaching content for certain special ceremonies, such as the sacraments;
- b. Beauty and simplicity of expression and form;
- c. Continuity with the tradition of the Church;
- d. Participation opportunities for the congregation.

### **3. Psalms and Hymns**

#### **Purpose and Function**

To serve the worship of the church, the music and song should be appropriate for worship.

- a. It should clearly be an individual/communal response to who God is by nature and to His acts of redemption, as revealed in the Bible.
- b. It should be suited to the revelation response dialogue form of Reformed worship:
  - 1) Lyrics should mainly be addressed to God;
  - 2) It should serve the ministry of the Word.
- c. It should be for mutual teaching and admonishing of the congregation.

## **Statement of Principle for Music in Worship** (Acts of Synod 1998, Art. 99, Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 41.3)

### **Statement of Principle**

*The music of the church should be appropriate for worship – that is, it should be liturgical and have aesthetic integrity. The music of worship should serve the dialogue between God and his people. It must be true to the full message of the Scriptures and reflective of biblical Christian experience. Hence, the music of worship should be biblical, catholic, confessional and pastoral. The music of worship should also satisfy the aesthetic laws that are conditions of good art, such as imaginative craftsmanship and seriousness of expression. It should reflect the church at worship today and throughout the ages in ways that are relevant, enduring, festive and dignified.*

### **Interpretation**

The four aspects of worship listed in the Statement of Principle – the biblical, the catholic, the confessional and the pastoral – are present in all worship and ought to complement one another. They may not be equally obvious in every service, but they should all be appropriately represented in the flow of worship services throughout the year.

#### **The music of the church should be biblical**

Text and tunes must serve worship in ways true to biblical patterns for liturgy and must be faithful to the full range of the revelation of God in Scripture. Psalms and Bible songs must be faithful to the original meaning and context of the Scripture passage. Hymn texts are to be true to the teachings of Scripture.

Furthermore, our music should be *“reflective of biblical Christian experience”*. It will manifest, therefore, a spirituality that centres upon God and His works. Our experience of Him is secondary to this, even as it is in the Psalms. This statement deals with a perceived weakness of our age, albeit by negation; our hymnody must avoid the fads and the spirit of our age. Nevertheless, our hymnody must reflect (in its turns of phrase at least) our particular time in history.

Our Church Order requires the singing of Psalms in worship. We have been blessed with a love for them and wish to foster that tradition. The book of Psalms is God's gift of song to the Church. Although most of today's poets would probably write fewer laments and more songs of praise than the Psalmist did, every psalm has meaning for Christians in some time or place. For the sake of those suffering persecution for Christ; and on behalf of those being led astray by false shepherds, even in the present day, we will continue to sing the imprecatory psalms: weeping with those who weep; praying even

as we sing them, not only that Christ's confirmed enemies be punished, strongholds be broken down, and God's Kingdom come, but also that we might be spared the conditions that provoke such anguished prayer.

The Bible-song section expands the singing of Scripture to include other Bible songs and other sections of Scripture that are appropriate for song.

In choosing the hymns, we have sought to maintain the same balance of the biblical Christian experience that we find in the Psalms, and the reflections and expressions of New Testament believers on the majesty and goodness of God and his grace in Christ.

### **The music of the church should be catholic**

Our music should express not only the unity of a single denomination or congregation but also the unity of the Church throughout the world and from all ages. We rejoice in the communion of the saints when we sing ancient prayers and songs from a variety of Christian communities, cultures and traditions that make up the body of Christ. To meet these many different needs, our hymnody should contain a variety of styles and contributions from various cultures and eras, bearing in mind, however, that singing with cultural integrity is also part of worshipping "in truth".

### **The music of the church should be confessional**

While we recognise that the Lord has His people in many places, nevertheless we humbly confess that the system of understanding Christianity known as the Reformed faith is simply the faith of the Bible. To worship in truth, therefore, our music must reflect our confessional and doctrinal understanding of Scripture, with its emphasis on the communal. Hence our songs deal with topics like the covenant and baptism, God's sovereignty and election and providence. That does not mean that every aspect of a given teaching must be present in every song on that subject. A song is a song, not a systematic theology. A text is not to be judged by what it fails to say, unless in its failure a false impression is conveyed.

### **The music of the church should be pastoral**

Each part of the body of Christ worships in a particular time and place and has a unique set of needs. Each church needs to identify with an already familiar body of songs and singing this collection of songs contributes to the unity of the churches. The words of these songs must be written in language that is understandable to the congregation and set to singable melodies. In addition, because we worship together as families, the music of the church ought to include some songs that our little ones can sing and understand. In this way we can fulfil the exhortation of the apostle Paul who wrote; "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Col. 3:16).

**The music of the Church should be beautiful**

In serving these various aspects of worship, the music of the Church should, therefore, be beautiful. Its poetry should have aesthetic integrity in itself, not relying on the music to carry it; its music likewise having aesthetic integrity in itself, not relying on the poetry to carry it. And the two should complement each other, the resultant whole satisfying the laws of balance, unity, variety, harmony, design, rhythm, restraint and fitness.

Thus, the music of the church serves the dialogue between God and His people, containing God's Word to us and our response to Him. The Church's music also provides a way for us to address others. Since God's people are His ambassadors to the whole world, the Church's songs must witness to God's wondrous acts of saving love and must call all people and nations to honour and obey the King of kings and Lord of lords.

So shall we all, in the Spirit, in Truth, in holiness and in beauty, join the eternal song:

To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb  
be praise and honour and glory and power  
for ever and ever! (Revelation 5:13).

---

**Use of Previously Approved Songs**

Under the conditions of this Statement of Principle, sessions have freedom to select songs for the worship services from other sources previously approved by synod, always having regard to the principal usage of the adopted *Psalter Hymnal* for the sake of the unity in our churches (Acts 1998, Art. 99.3).

# Reformed Theological College

(Acts of Synod 2017, Art. 21.1–4)

## RCNZ Relationship with the RTC

### Memorandum of Understanding

Dated this fourteenth day of September 2017

Between **THE REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**, a duly incorporated company having its registered office at Geelong, Australia (“the College”)

And **THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND** (The RCNZ).

#### *Interpretation*

In this document:

### Interpretation

In this document:

“the **Assembly**” (or “**Assemblies**”) means the Synod or General Assembly or Presbytery of the RCNZ which is the highest court/broadest assembly of the RCNZ;

“the **Board**” refers to the Board of the College;

“the **Churches**” means the churches that make up the RCNZ;

“the **Confessional Standards**” refers to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and the Westminster Confession of Faith;

“the **Constitution**” and “the **Policies**” refers to the constitution and policies of the College;

“the **Denominational representatives**” refers to the officers appointed by the RCNZ to act on its behalf in relation to the College;

“**RCNZ student**” means a student who is or was a member of the RCNZ who has been recognised as a potential candidate for the ministry in the RCNZ, and is studying at the College

“the **Faculty**” refers to the permanent Board appointed faculty members



of the College;

“the **Principal**” refers to the Principal of the College, or his nominated representative;

“the **Reformed Theological College**” (abbreviated as “the RTC” or “the College”) means the theological college currently operating from 125 Pigdons Road, Waurin Ponds, Geelong;

“the **Scriptures**” means the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in their original languages.

### **Preamble**

The connection between the RTC and the RCNZ is designed to provide oversight by the Churches of the training of candidates for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments according to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions. This ecclesiastical oversight shall be exercised through the Denominational representatives who shall embrace within their sphere of supervision:

- a) that the instruction provided by the RTC is suitable for candidates for the ministry of the Word in the RCNZ; and
- b) the doctrine, conduct and progress of RCNZ students being trained at the RTC for the ministry of the Word.

### **Agreement**

#### **Selection Criteria of Faculty Members**

1. The Board shall ensure that each member of the Faculty upholds the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and of binding authority, subscribes to the Confessional Standards as setting forth the system of doctrine contained in the Scriptures, is a member in good standing of a church of like doctrine, and supports the theological foundations and ethos of the College.

#### **Appointment of Faculty Members**

2. The appointment of Faculty members is the sole responsibility of the RTC Board. The Board will, however, involve the Denominational representatives in any appointment insofar as it is practical to do so and the Policies permit. Ordinarily this will mean that the Board will:
  - a. invite the Denominational representatives to nominate one or

- more candidates to fill a vacancy that has arisen;
  - b. provide the Denominational representatives with details of those candidates shortlisted for interview, and will take any feedback by the Denominational representatives into consideration; and
  - c. invite the Denominational representatives to a meeting with the candidate/s prior to the Board interview.
3. The Denominational representatives will keep any information given to them pursuant to the preceding clause confidential until it becomes public knowledge.

### **Oversight of Faculty Members**

4. If any member of the Faculty becomes subject to any disciplinary action (either ecclesiastical or of the Board), the Board shall immediately advise the Denominational representatives.
5. If the Denominational representatives come to have concerns with any member of the Faculty where they have grounds to believe that:
- a. the member has departed from the Scriptures or Confessional Standards;
  - b. the instruction given by the member is substandard or could be improved; or,
  - c. the training for the ministry is being compromised;
- they will first raise their concerns privately with the Principal, without making their concerns public. The Principal will determine whether it is appropriate to arrange a joint meeting with the Faculty member concerned.
6. If the Denominational representatives are dissatisfied with the outcome of their discussions with the Principal, they have the right to bring their concerns to the attention of the Board.

### **Role of Denominational Representatives**

7. After each Assembly, the RCNZ shall advise the Principal and the Board of the names of the Denominational representatives, and of any decisions taken by the Assembly in relation to the RTC or the training of its ministry candidates.
8. The Denominational representatives are welcome to attend lectures, tutorials, and other student activities at the RTC, but should at all times consult with the Principal before doing so.
9. If requested, the Principal will give the Denominational representatives reasonable access to information to enable them to

assess the content and quality of the Faculty's teaching. The Denominational representatives shall give adequate notice of such a request.

10. The Denominational representatives may consult with the Principal from time to time regarding:
  - a) the supervision of the life and doctrine of RCNZ students;
  - b) the curriculum of the RTC; and,
  - c) any other matter pertaining to the training of candidates for the ministry.
11. The Denominational representatives will provide the College with copies of all reports relating to the College prepared by them for consideration by the RCNZ at an Assembly or otherwise.

### **Standard of Education**

12. The College is committed to providing theological training to a high standard. It is, however, recognised that improvement is always possible. To that end, the Denominational representatives may identify any areas in which they believe that the standard of training provided by the RTC could be improved.
13. The Denominational representatives will advise the Principal of their expectations of RCNZ students, including the areas of study they expect them to undertake, particular skills they wish to see developed, and the level of understanding to be achieved. The College shall take reasonable steps to accommodate those expectations, however, it is recognised and understood by the Denominational representatives that it may not be possible for the College to meet all of those expectations.
14. Where any Assembly of the RCNZ, or the Denominational representatives, determine that the standard of education provided by the RTC is, in their opinion, deficient in some way, the Denominational representatives shall, after informing the Principal, advise the Board accordingly. In consultation with the Principal, the Board will give due consideration to those concerns and advise the Denominational representatives on what action, if any, it intends to take.

### **Supervision of Students**

15. The Denominational representatives shall advise the Principal of the names of all prospective RCNZ students.
16. The Principal shall keep the Denominational representatives fully

apprised of the progress of all RCNZ students and, in particular, shall promptly advise the Denominational representatives of any concerns about the life or doctrine of any student or their suitability for the ministry.

17. The Faculty and Denominational representatives shall be jointly responsible to supervise the life and doctrine of RCNZ students. However, this shall not limit in any way the right or responsibility of the Faculty or Board to take appropriate disciplinary action against any RCNZ student. The Principal or Board shall fully inform the Denominational representatives of the progress and outcome of any such disciplinary action.

### **Funding and Support**

18. The RCNZ shall support the College financially either directly and/or by prescribing or recommending contributions by the Churches, as decided by each Assembly. The RCNZ Assembly shall also urge their Churches to consider supporting the College by encouraging potential students to attend the RTC.
19. The RCNZ will usually invite two members of the Faculty to attend its Assemblies. While they will have no right to vote, they shall have the same rights to speak as fraternal delegates. Every effort will be made by Faculty to attend the Assembly, if practically possible.

### **Congregations**

20. Subject to the terms of the Constitution, each of the congregations within the RCNZ may become or remain a congregational member of the College.
21. The College may communicate directly with any or all of the congregations within the RCNZ, but should inform the Denominational representatives before doing so.

### **Provision of Information**

22. Where this memorandum requires the provision of information or documentation by any party, all such information or documentation shall be provided in a timely fashion.

### **Constitution and Policies**

23. The Board will advise the Denominational representatives of any proposed changes to the College's Constitution, policies or direction that the Board believes may have a material impact on the nature and basis of this memorandum.

**Operation of Agreement**

24. This memorandum, which is made pursuant to clause 10 of the RTC Constitution, completely supersedes any previous agreement or memorandum of understanding between the Parties and shall immediately take effect on its execution by both parties.

**Variation of Agreement**

25. Any variation of this agreement must be recorded in writing and approved by the Board and the Assembly of the RCNZ.

**Termination of Agreement**

26. The parties shall seek with utmost good faith to resolve any dispute or disagreement that may arise.
27. This agreement may be terminated:
  - a) immediately where the other party is in material breach of this agreement which is irremediable or has not been remedied within a reasonable time of it having been requested in writing to do so; or,
  - b) by one party giving written notice to the other party of no less than one year.

**Execution & Attestation**

The Common Seal of the **REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**  
being affixed this day in accordance with the Constitution in the presence of:

\_\_\_\_\_

Director

Name: .....

\_\_\_\_\_

Director

Name: .....

Signed on behalf of the **REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....

Position: .....

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....

Position: .....

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