

# NEW WINESKINS

## **Constitution**

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

May God grant us wisdom as we continue to envision together  
a New Wineskin for Presbyterians . . .

**The New Wineskins Initiative  
and  
The New Wineskins Association of Churches**

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NEW WINESKINS ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES INC.

8800 Peebles Road  
Allison Park, PA 15101  
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Printed in the United States of America

# A New Wineskin for Presbyterians Constitution

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## Prologue

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. . .  
a time to be born and a time to die . . . a time to plant and a time to uproot . . .  
a time to keep and a time to throw away.”* Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The people of God are called upon to discern the times — to read and to respond to the seasons of God’s creative and redemptive work in this world. As God moves among us and the world changes around us, there will be in our shared ministry seasons of initiation and seasons of completion, times of development and times of refinement, days of strengthening the old and days of building the new.

*“See, I am doing a new thing in your midst.  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”* Isaiah 43:19

In each new day, God moves afresh, spreading the Gospel and advancing the Kingdom. The Spirit of God continues to hover over creation and over the Church. Today, all across the globe, we discern a fresh move of God’s Spirit. The kingdom of God is forcefully advancing, as the new wine of the Gospel, the fresh wind of the Spirit, is being poured out upon the earth.

*“No one puts new wine into old wineskins.  
The old skins would burst from the pressure,  
spilling the wine and ruining the skins.  
New wine must be stored in new wineskins.  
That way both the wine and the wineskins are preserved.”*  
Matthew 9:17

God sends the Church of Jesus Christ as His kingdom instrument to the world. Faithful ministry and mission in a changing cultural context require that we regularly revisit the structures that organize the various portions of the Church, ensuring that they are faithful and subject to God’s redemptive purposes in each new season. A fresh outpouring of God’s Spirit will sometimes require fresh approaches to, and structures for, collaborative ministry.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”*  
Psalm 127:1

We believe that God is calling presbyterians together to a new wineskin, to a new manner of structuring for ministry and mission for this new season, even as we uphold together the unchanging truths of the Gospel of grace and its holy demands. As the people of God, we place ourselves in a posture of responsiveness and expectancy, as together we wait upon the Lord, worship His name, seek His face, discern His lead, and follow in His footsteps towards the new.

It is God's to bring order and substance to our shared life, and it is to God that we continually subject it.

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory,  
because of your love and faithfulness. Psalm 115:1*



## Chapter One

# The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith

*“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!”*

Revelation 19:1

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

I Peter 1:3

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

1. God is majestic, compassionate, and lovingly desires to be known. Therefore we worship Him. God is revealed generally through creation, specifically through the Holy Scriptures, and finally in the living Word who became flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.
2. The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The Holy Spirit spoke through its authors and witnesses to us today that it is indeed and in truth the very Word of God, God’s gift to the world and guide for His people.
3. In the beginning, the sovereign God created all things good. Humanity, bearing God’s likeness, crowns creation. Through the disobedience of those made in the image of God, the whole of creation fell into the darkness of sin and rebellion. In love, God initiated the plan of redemption, which stands upon the historic events of the crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus the Messiah. God’s gracious redemptive work results in the Church and culminates in the new creation.
4. The LORD our God, the LORD is one. The one true God exists in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that each Person of the Trinity is engaged in all that God has done, does now, and will yet do. The LORD our God is the One who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.
5. We believe in God the Father, who created all things in, through, and for His Son. The Father adopts as children all who are drawn by the Holy Spirit to believe in His Son, giving to them all the riches of God’s glorious Kingdom. The loving heart of our Father is poured out in eternal redemption through Jesus Christ and in the ongoing discipline that shapes God’s children into the image of Christ.

6. Jesus Christ is the living Word, the promised Messiah, and the eternal Son of the Father, sent in mission to the earth. Incarnated in the womb of the virgin Mary, He is fully God and fully human, come to reconcile God and humanity. During His earthly ministry Jesus lived a sinless life, healed the sick, raised the dead, drove out demons, befriended sinners, preached the gospel to the poor, and died as our substitute on the cross. He rose bodily from the dead, ascended to the Father, and remains our faithful Mediator and High Priest. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by faith in Him. He is the only Head of the Church, our Lord and Savior.

7. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Jesus Christ and to apply His saving work to our lives. By the Spirit, the redeemed cry “Abba” as God’s adopted children. The Spirit awakens from spiritual death those whom God has chosen, convicting them of sin, comforting their hearts with the hope of the Gospel, uniting them to Christ, making Christ real to them, gathering them into a people of His own possession, and sealing their salvation. Indwelling their hearts, the Spirit sanctifies them for lives of holiness, and empowers them for ministry in the Church and mission to the world.

8. From the beginning God has sovereignly elected and called a people who are the true Church, the Body of Christ. The Church is the fruit of God’s redemptive work; a covenanted community of worship, prayer, and service, called to love God and neighbor and to live out the ethical and moral imperatives revealed in Holy Scripture. All believers are baptized in one Spirit into this Body, which finds expression in local congregations. In these believing communities the loving presence of God is embodied, the Gospel is preached in truth, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are rightly administered, compassionate and godly discipline is exercised, and Kingdom mission is faithfully carried out. The Church is a connectional and confessional community in which theological, ethical, and moral accountability is demonstrated.

9. The Church is called to make disciples of all nations, proclaiming the Gospel to the spiritually lost and equipping believers so that they may be presented mature in Christ. The Lord calls all believers to be ministers and witnesses to God’s amazing grace and readily to participate in the task of making disciples, for which God gives the Church powers, gifts, and talents. It is the responsibility of the Church and its leaders to develop, equip, and release people into their God-given ministries in the Church and the world.

10. Finally, in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ will leave the Father’s side to return to earth in glory to fulfill God’s promised purposes. All believers look forward to this Day when our lowly bodies will be transformed to be like Christ’s glorious body and the Church, the bride, will be presented to her bridegroom. For Christ will liberate creation from its bondage to corruption, judge the living and the dead, usher in a new heaven and earth, and establish God’s everlasting Kingdom. “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”

“Amen, Hallelujah!”



## Chapter Two

# A Declaration of Ethical Imperatives

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

John 14:23

1. Genuine Christian faith is more than mere assent to propositions of truth. Saving faith issues forth in an ethical life: a life of love, obedience, and holiness.
2. Christian ethics are grounded in the character of God the Father. Neither an abstract formulation nor an arbitrary rule of conduct, our ethical standard is nothing less than likeness to the holy God whom we love and serve.
3. As Jesus is the Divine Exemplar, “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3), His life of love and self-sacrifice becomes the pattern for our own. The follower of Christ is called to conform to the character of Christ.
4. As the Holy Spirit is the Divine Counselor, sent by the Son from the Father to convict of sin (John 16:8-11) and to guide into truth (John 16:13-15), His presence empowers us for transformed living. It is the work of the Spirit to transform us into the character of Christ.
5. We confess that we are incapable of meriting the love of God through any effort of our own. Right standing before God is His gift apart from any holiness, love, or obedience which may be present in our lives. The ethical life is the fruit of, not the basis of, our reconciliation with God through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
6. We likewise confess that we are incapable of producing holiness in ourselves. Holy living is possible only as we cooperate with the transforming work of God’s Spirit within us. The ethical life is God living His life through us by His Spirit.
7. Ethical living involves more than mere avoidance of wrongdoing. We are called not only to shun what is hurtful and wrong but also to seek what is good and right. The moral life is one that vigorously pursues the good.
8. The parameters within which God desires us to live as His children have been lovingly revealed for us in the Scriptures.
9. The Scriptures define the good we are called to pursue. Prescriptive ethical standards for Christian conduct, grounded in the covenant with Moses (Exodus 20:1-17), were summarized positively by Jesus in the Great Commandments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. While we believe these ethical principles are universally binding, we also recognize that some may hold reservations concerning some particular application or implication of these ethical imperatives that is not directly addressed in the Scriptures. It is expected that such reservations will be dealt with within the bounds of freedom and structures of accountability established by the covenant community.



## Chapter Three

# Vision and Governing Principles

### **I. Vision**

The New Wineskins for Presbyterians is a constitutional association of individual presbyterian congregations and their leaders, joined together in mutual submission and accountability, on the basis of shared biblical theology, ethics, and calling for the sake of mutual benefit and collaborative Kingdom mission and ministry, to the greater glory of God.

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

The following biblical principles will govern our life together:

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

to equip the members of the local church and to release them into the works of service to which they are called and for which they are gifted.

I Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4:11-12

- F) **The Leadership of the Church:** Spiritual leadership is exercised by men and women of recognized spiritual maturity who are called and gifted to direct the local church in its ministry and mission. Pastors, elders, deacons are called to serve humbly and wisely, leading the body as they are led by its Head, Jesus Christ, and exercising faithful leadership by representing not their congregations but their consciences as held captive by the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:11-16, I Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17

- G) **The Structure of the Church:** The Church worldwide finds local expression in particular congregations. As the Scriptures teach the value of the counsel and correction of others, of resources shared for common ministry, of banding together for mutual strength and encouragement, and of ministry structures that make optimal use of the gifting of the body, we are led to recognize the benefit and importance of connectional support structures (denominations) by which particular congregations within the broader Church may join together for the sake of more faithful ministry and mission.

Exodus 18:13-26, Proverbs 15:22, 32; 27:17, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

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

In the light of these convictions about the Church, the constitution of the New Wineskins of Presbyterians is characterized by the following foundational design elements:

- A) **Unity:** We are bound together in our shared commitment to Jesus Christ and to his truth, as historically understood in orthodox biblical theology, and as informed by the Reformed confessions. Participating churches and their leaders will make a mutual confessional commitment to biblically-derived statements of faith and ethics, which we call the Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith and the Declaration of Ethical Imperatives.
- B) **Encouragement and Accountability:** We build our shared life upon covenant relationships of mutual encouragement and support. Particular congregations and their leaders are joined together with others for shared worship, prayer, and Scripture study, as well as equipping, planning, and sharing resources for collaborative ministry. Within these covenant relationships will be exercised loving accountability and just discipline that upholds the Essential Tenets, the Ethical Imperatives and all certification/ordination standards.
- C) **Structure and Flexibility:** We are committed to a missional ecclesiology that combines constitutional order with permission-giving freedom for the sake of effective ministry and mission. To ensure ministry faithfulness, congregations within the connectional structure agree to nonnegotiable commitments to this New Wineskins Constitution.. At the same time, to ensure ministry and mission effectiveness, they are provided with flexibility in areas which are not specifically defined in this constitution.

- D) **The Primacy of Local Ministry and Mission:** We share a common understanding of the purpose of the Church that centers on the primacy of the local congregation and its ministry of equipping and sending its members in mission to all the world. Local congregations are called to join with other Christian disciples to build up the body of Christ to spiritual maturity and to reach the world for Christ.
- E) **Networks of support:** We seek a connectional structure each component of which supports and serves the local congregations of which it consists:
- 1) The Congregation is the primary agent and focal point of kingdom mission and ministry. Together its members are called to worship God, to love one another, to make disciples, to serve the world, to reach the lost, and to equip and send out its members into mission and ministry. Towards these ends, the congregation calls leaders, holds and maintains property, and hires staff.
  - 2) The Ministry Network gathers leaders of particular congregations ordinarily from a shared geographical proximity into covenant relationships for mutual edification and support, for shared worship and study, for collaborative ministry and mission, and for loving accountability and discipline. Congregations are encouraged to form other relationships for collaborative ministry and mission.
  - 3) The Support Network exists to support and guide the Ministry Networks of which it consists, including planning for regional ministry, meeting for mutual growth and encouragement, providing counsel in the event of congregational difficulties, and upholding the essential tenets, the ethical imperatives, and the standards for ordination.
  - 4) The National Network exists to support the various congregations and networks of which it consists through shared worship, prayer, study, mission, resource sharing, and strategic planning for ministry, as well as seeing to the provision of pension and health care services for pastors and other employees of the connectional structure.

#### **IV) Definitions**

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

- C) Kingdom of God: the spiritual domain in which Jesus Christ rules as King over the hearts of men, women, and children, willing and faithful subjects, who enter the kingdom by faith in Him and His saving work. The reign of God is an expanding realm marked by God's love, joy, peace, humility, reconciliation, righteousness, and justice.
- D) Church: consistent with the New Testament usage, this refers to either: the worldwide fellowship of Christian believers (the Church universal), or a community of believers gathered in a particular locality (the local church). The Church is both agent and embodiment of the Kingdom.
- E) Denomination: a connectional structure that houses and organizes a portion of the Church, joining together a number of individual congregations for mutual benefit and effectiveness. It is an organization united by a common theology, committed to mutual accountability, and organized missionally for the sake of shared ministry and mission. It is not to be mistaken for the Church.
- F) Member: an individual follower of Christ, and an integral and indispensable part of the body of Christ. As such, a member is understood to be a committed and growing disciple of Jesus Christ who participates fully in the life and ministry of a particular congregation.
- G) Presbyterian: a form of church government distinguished by:
- 1) spiritual leadership and authority vested in followers of Christ who are recognized for their wisdom and spiritual maturity (*presbuteros*: elder);
  - 2) congregations and their leaders allying themselves with others in voluntary constitutional association and mutual submission for the sake of faithful Kingdom ministry and mission, mutual edification and encouragement, and accountability in the areas of theology, ethics, and calling; and
  - 3) a constitutional framework of governance providing for a series of widening representative bodies whose responsibility it is to support and to serve the smaller bodies from whom its members are derived.
- H) Reformed: a set of theological emphases enumerated by John Calvin and other Church reformers, captured in the historic creeds and confessions and distinguished primarily by:
- 1) the sovereign reign of God over human history and the lives of individuals;
  - 2) the inability of persons, because of the taint of sin upon every aspect of the mind, heart, and will, to please God or to seek Him of their own accord;
  - 3) the Trinitarian nature of redemption, including the gracious election of some to salvation by a loving Heavenly Father, the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son to

purchase their redemption, and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit to bring them from spiritual death to new life in Christ; and

- 4) the Church's missional call to be "in" but not "of" the world, there to embody the loving reign of God and to engage the world with God's redemptive purposes.



## Chapter Four The Local Congregation

### **I. The Member as a Disciple of Jesus Christ**

Jesus came to make disciples. Disciples demonstrate that they are followers of Jesus Christ in faith, word and deed. As disciples within a New Wineskin for Presbyterians, they embrace The Essential Tenets of our Reformed Faith.

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

### **II. The Congregation**

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

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

### **III. The Ministry of the Whole People**

The ministry of all Christians grows out of God's intended mission for the Church. The missional purpose of the entire Church and each of its members is found in our Lord's commandment to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mathew 28:18-20).

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

#### **IV. The Nature of Servant Leadership**

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

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

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

#### **V. Particular Ministries in the Church**

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

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

- A) Pastors, together with other ministry leaders, lead in worship, teaching, visioning, discipling, caring, praying, and equipping God's people for the missional work of ministry. All congregations shall have at least one pastor or commissioned lay pastor or designated elder(s) serving in a similar capacity of spiritual leadership.
- B) Elders lead in governance and discipline, based on the knowledge of, and submission to, God's Word (1 Timothy 3: 2 – 7). Their role is to strengthen and nurture the faith and life

of the local congregation. All congregations shall have a minimum of three elders elected to rotating terms. An elder shall serve for three years, unless the congregation deems otherwise in its by-laws.

- C) Deacons ordinarily lead in service and charity, ministering to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress, both within and beyond the community of faith. Each particular congregation will ensure that these ministry tasks are carried out, whether by the pastors, elders, deacons, or the congregation as a whole. Congregations who establish Deacon Ministries will consider the Scriptural purpose for the ministry and characteristics of Deacons as outlined in Scripture (Acts 6:1-6, I Timothy 3:8-13).

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

## **VI. The Session of the Congregation**

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

The Session of the local congregation has the responsibility to:

- A) Shepherd the congregation into a discipleship that demonstrates Jesus Christ in faith, word and deed, overseeing every aspect of church life including: evangelism, worship, administration of the sacraments, healing ministries, equipping ministries, mission, physical plant, administration, discipline, and staffing.
- B) Prayerfully design ministry within the local congregation so that The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith becomes the focus of mission and ministry of the local church.
- C) Design a process that identifies, prepares, and presents individuals to the congregation who wish to become part of the particular congregation as members. Persons will be designated as joining either by Transfer of Membership, Profession of Faith, or Reaffirmation of Faith. In the case of Transfer of Membership, the receiving congregation will notify the sending congregation in writing of the transfer.
- D) Keep a record of those participating in the life and ministry of the church so that, at regular times during the year, pastoral contact may be made with those who are no longer present or active. Their concerns should be expressed and responded to, and they may be

encouraged to recommit themselves to the life and ministry of the congregation or, in some cases, to become part of another church family.

- E) Provide for the regular review of the church records to determine whether some individuals may be removed as a member after repeated contact.
- F) Maintain records of baptisms, membership categories, leadership rolls, marriages, and deaths.
- G) Establish, according to state laws and in conjunction with the New Wineskins for Presbyterians "Guide to Local Church Ministry," the structure and policies of a particular congregation's life including, but not limited to: congregational meetings; incorporation; standards for hiring, evaluating, and discharging employees; quorum for Session meetings; child protection and abuse prevention policies.
- H) Establish regular elections of persons by the congregation to serve as Elders on the Session.
- I) Convene Session meetings at least four times per year, with the pastor or pastor-designate serving as the Moderator. The number and tenure of elders serving on Session may be set by church by-laws. The meetings may be ordered according to "Roberts' Rules of Order" or another mutually agreed upon method. The Moderator will call a special meeting when requested in writing by any two members of Session, or the Moderator may initiate the call for a meeting. A quorum for regular business will be the Moderator and one-half of the elders but not fewer than two elders; the congregation may establish a higher quorum in its by-laws. For the examination and acceptance of new members, the congregation may set a lower quorum in its by-laws.
- J) Establish the annual budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences, providing the congregation with full information of its decisions in such matters.
- K) Maintain accurate, up-to-date records, minutes, by-laws, and policies. Minutes of Session and congregational meetings will be preserved and made available to the Support Network for regular review and when requested in an administrative or disciplinary matter.
- L) Elect annually a treasurer, if permitted by state law, and see that accurate financial records are kept, reported, and reviewed regularly.
- M) Maintain accountability and discipline within the congregation.
- N) Oversee the faithful participation of the congregation in the life and ministry of the Ministry Network, Support Network, and National Network.

- O) Together with the pastor(s), renew endorsement of the Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith and the Declaration of Ethical Imperatives annually.

## **VII. The Congregation and its Meetings**

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

- A) The local congregation consists of all members on the roll of the local church. A member is understood to be a committed and growing disciple of Jesus Christ who participates fully in the life and ministry of a particular congregation.
- B) The congregation will have regular meetings to serve the body and to address business as needed. All members present at a congregational meeting have the right to vote.
- C) In its meetings the local congregation has responsibility to:
  - 1) Call and elect congregational and pastoral leadership;
  - 2) Adopt by-laws;
  - 3) Receive the annual budget;
  - 4) Review the compensation of the pastor and other pastoral staff, upon previous review by the session;
  - 5) Address other matters concerning the pastoral relationship, such as changing the call or requesting the consent or decline to consent to dissolution;
  - 6) Acquire, encumber, and dispose of real property;
  - 7) Address matters related to dissolution, merger, transfer, or withdrawal of the congregation from New Wineskins for Presbyterians; and
  - 8) Receive reports and highlight ministries.
- D) Meetings of the congregation are called by the Session, and will be held at least annually. Special meetings of the congregation may be called, as needed or deemed beneficial, at the request of:
  - 1) the Session;
  - 2) the Support Network; or
  - 3) the congregation, when requested of the Session in writing by one-tenth of the members of the congregation, provided that the members requesting the meeting have brought the matter in writing to the session at least thirty days before the meeting.

- E) Public notice of all congregational meetings, including the business to be conducted, will be announced at all worship services for at least two consecutive weeks. Written notice will be mailed to members at least fourteen days before the meeting.
- F) The quorum at congregational meetings will be not less than one-tenth of the members. A congregation may establish a higher quorum in its by-laws. No meeting of fewer than ten members will be valid as a congregational meeting.
- G) For passage of any proposal concerning the pastoral relationship, such as changing the terms of call or dissolving the relationship, or related to dissolution, merger, transfer, or withdrawal of the congregation from New Wineskins for Presbyterians, a three-quarters vote of those present is necessary. For all other proposals, a majority vote of those present is required, unless the congregation provides in its by-laws for a higher number. If there is a tie vote, the moderator will put the question a second time; if it is tied again, the motion is lost. The moderator will not vote at a meeting.
- H) The pastor or pastor-designate will moderate all meetings of the congregation. The clerk of session will serve as secretary for congregational meetings and keep minutes.

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

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

- A) Formation: Congregations may form wherever believers gather together for the mission and ministry of the local church. To become part of New Wineskins for Presbyterians a Session will petition a Ministry Network for membership by endorsing as a congregation The Essential Tenets of our Reformed Faith, A Declaration of Ethical Imperatives, and the Constitution of the New Wineskins for Presbyterians. Upon receipt of the petition, the Ministry Network will review and act upon the petition. If the Ministry Network concurs, it will forward the petition to the Support Network for final evaluation. Upon approval the congregational leaders will join a Ministry Network by signing the Ministry Network Covenant. The Ministry Network will then support and guide the formation process.
- B) Multiplication: Recognizing the kingdom benefit of new church planting, congregations will consider new church development as part of their strategic plans, and Ministry Networks and Support Networks will intentionally band together to enable new church development as a common effort.
- C) Dissolution and/or Merger: The Ministry and Support Networks will provide counsel and support for congregations that need to either dissolve or merge. In the case of dissolution, the congregation, at a properly called and constituted congregational meeting, will by a majority vote dispose of real property and other assets by sale, gift, to other charitable causes or to the New Wineskins for Presbyterians. In the case of merger, the new entity will follow the steps for forming a new congregation.

- D) **Transfer from a Ministry Network:** A congregation may transfer from one Ministry Network to another if there are no pending disciplinary matters against the session or pastor. The Session of the congregation seeking transfer will make application to the Ministry Network which it desires to join and send notice to its network of current membership, review, and act upon the application. If the Ministry Network receiving the application concurs, it will forward the application to the Support Network for final evaluation and decision.
- E) **Withdrawal from the New Wineskins:** A congregation may withdrawal from the New Wineskins for Presbyterians by a three-quarters vote at a properly called and constituted congregational meeting. The vote of the congregation is determinative of the matter and may not be challenged. Its real property and other assets belong to the local congregation.



## Chapter Five

# The Ministry Network

### **I. The Purpose of the Ministry Network**

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

### **II. Formation of Ministry Networks**

- A) All congregations, pastors of congregations, and pastoral candidates within congregations will be members of a Ministry Network, which it may start or join.
- B) A Ministry Network is a cluster of congregations, formed by mutual agreement and for mutual benefit. A Ministry Network is formed when at least three congregations, ordinarily sharing geographic proximity, agree and sign a Ministry Network Covenant (see sample Ministry Network Covenant in Appendix A). The original Covenant, as well as each subsequent revision, is delivered to the Support Network for its review and approval.
- C) A Ministry Network is a cluster of several congregations formed by mutual agreement and will be composed of not fewer than three and ordinarily not more than eight congregations.
- D) While meetings of the Ministry Network will generally be informal and of a consensual nature, when matters are put before the Ministry Network for formal vote, pastors, parish associates, visitation pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and pastoral candidates actively serving in a congregation, and elders serving on a Leadership Team have voice and vote. Clergy serving outside the congregation, including retired pastors, may be members of the Ministry Network with voice but without vote.
- E) Each Ministry Network will establish Equipping and Fellowship Groups for its members, which are covenanted fellowship groups that develop and review annually a group covenant (see Appendix B). The Equipping and Fellowship Group exists for the purposes

of worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible study and theological reflection, training and equipping, resource sharing, planning for cooperative ministry, and mutual submission and accountability. These groups will include:

- 1) A Pastors' Covenant Group will consist of all pastors, pastoral candidates, parish associates, visitation pastors, commissioned lay pastors and commissioned lay pastor candidates in active ministry in a congregation, and retired pastors. The Pastor's Covenant Group will meet regularly for worship, prayer, study, mutual support, accountability, and ministry planning. These meetings may be less frequent and of longer duration, or more frequent and of shorter duration, but must take place at least once per quarter. Exceptions will be considered for reasons of travel/logistical difficulties alone and must be submitted to the Support Network for its review and approval.
  - 2) If desired, Equipping and Fellowship Group(s) for elders, deacons, educators, trustees, worship and music leaders, parachurch workers, and other ministry leaders may be formed.
- F) Each Ministry Network will provide a shared ministry event for its member congregations no less than two times per year. These events may include, but are not limited to, training events, evangelistic events, service outreach events, shared mission partnerships, special projects, concerts of prayer, and worship gatherings.
- G) If a congregation wishes to join an existing Ministry Network, the Session will ask the Ministry Network for consideration of the request. If the Ministry Network approves, the congregation will join after the Session signs the Ministry Network Covenant.
- H) Ministry Networks may form, evolve and re-form in a fluid, ministry-focused manner. A congregation may transfer from one Ministry Network to another. The Session will make application to the Ministry Network that it desires to join, and send notice to its network of current membership. Upon receipt of the application the network will consult with the network of current membership, review, and act upon the application. If approved the transfer is effective.

### **III. Ministry Network Components**

- A) A Facilitator/Moderator, elected by the Ministry Network for a one year term open to re-election, who leads the Leadership Team.
- B) A Leadership Team, consisting of one pastor or one elder elected by each Session for a one year term open to re-election, that gives direction and conducts business as needed.
- C) Pastors' Covenant Groups for pastoral leaders.
- D) Other Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Groups, as developed by the Ministry Network.

#### **IV. The Leadership Team of a Ministry Network:**

- A) Will oversee the holding of shared congregational events and may appoint ad hoc planning teams for these events.
- B) Will form an Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Group for those in pastoral leadership called the Pastors' Covenant Group.
- C) Will encourage the formation of Equipping and Fellowship Covenant Groups for other ministry leaders.
- D) As needed, the Leadership Team in consultation with their respective Sessions, will make decisions regarding the addition or withdrawal of member congregations of the Ministry Network and will propose changes to the Ministry Network Covenant.
- E) The Facilitator/Moderator will be elected annually by the Leadership Team. The Facilitator/Moderator will be responsible for convening the Leadership Team meetings as needed. While meetings of the Ministry Network will generally be informal and of a consensual nature, when matters are put before the Ministry Network for formal vote, meetings will be directed according to "Roberts Rules of Order" or some other agreed upon method.

#### **V. Equipping and Fellowship Groups**

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

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

- A) offer times of sharing and prayer;
- B) provide for worship and instruction;
- C) spend time in theological reflection; and
- D) hold each other accountable to the Ministry Covenant.

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



## Chapter Six

# The Support Network

### I. The Purpose of the Ministry Support Network

A Support Network is a broader body connecting and consisting of the members of several Ministry Networks allied for the sake of shared ministry and mission. More relational than structural, the gathering of a Support Network will be characterized by prayer, worship, theological reflection, networking, resource sharing, equipping, and planning for shared ministry. In addition, the Support Network will provide minimal necessary formal support for the Ministry Networks, such as upholding certification/ordination standards and carrying out just discipline. A Support Network exists for the local church, not for itself. Staffing and structure will be minimal, set in place only to support the ministry and mission of the local church, its leaders and disciples, and their collaborative ministry with others.

### II. Formation of Support Networks

- A) Every Ministry Network will be the member of a Support Network, which it may begin or join.
- B) A Support Network is a cluster of Ministry Networks formed by mutual agreement between Ministry Networks and with the approval of the National Network. A Support Network is formed when at least three Ministry Networks, ordinarily sharing geographic proximity, agree and sign a Support Network Covenant (see sample Support Network Covenant in Appendix, to be developed). The original Covenant, as well as each subsequent revision, is delivered to the National Network for its review and approval. Support Networks may form, evolve, and re-form in a fluid, ministry-focused manner.
- C) A Support Network will ordinarily be composed of not fewer than three nor greater than eight Ministry Networks, and will ordinarily have not fewer than nine nor more than thirty congregations in total.
- D) In order to preserve the integrity of accountability and discipline, a Support Network may not be formed or re-formed while one or more of the Ministry Networks, congregations, or pastors within the Network is the subject of an ongoing judicial action.

### III. Function of Support Networks

- A) The Support Network, in conjunction with its Ministry Networks, guides, trains, examines, and certifies/ordains pastors and lay pastors for congregations.

- B) A Support Network encourages and provides opportunity for theological reflection and for pastoral and lay education and training, so that leaders and congregations may be strong, healthy, and effective in the Kingdom ministry and mission to which they are called.
- C) A Support Network fosters mutual submission and accountability and provides the means for formal discipline of Ministry Networks, sessions, officers and members.
- D) A Support Network will update credentials for all pastors, pastoral candidates, and lay pastors for congregations and Ministry Networks of which they consist.
- E) A Support Network will propose to the National Network such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church.
- F) A Support Network may employ staff to further the ministry and mission of its congregations as needed and deemed necessary.

#### **IV. Mandated Committees**

- A) Ministry Committee: to oversee pastors and their credentials and all candidates being prepared for various forms of ministry.
  - 1) The Ministry Committee will work with Ministry Networks, who have the primary oversight of all pastors and candidates.
  - 2) The Ministry Committee will receive and review a Congregational Ministry Covenant from each pastor, congregation, and candidate within its jurisdiction each year.
  - 3) If it appears that a pastor or congregation seems to be failing to uphold the covenant partnership, the Ministry Committee will engage in conversation with that pastor or congregation for the purpose of restoring the covenant relationship.
  - 4) If a pastor or congregation persists in denying or failing to uphold any portion of the covenant partnership, the Ministry Committee will initiate a disciplinary process.
  - 5) The Ministry Committee will be responsible for all ministry candidates under care, and will, after appropriate examination, experience, and education that satisfies the guidelines and requirements determined by the National Network, present the candidate for examination to the Support Network. All candidates will demonstrate proven ability to make disciples. All candidates will affirm the Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith without scruples and affirm The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives and The Constitution.

- 6) The Ministry Committee will keep a roll of all active pastors and lay pastors within its bounds and shall, when appropriate, remove individuals from that roll through retirement or transfer and add individuals who either transfer in or are recognized through certification/ordination.
  - 7) The Ministry Committee will keep a roll of clergy serving outside that congregation and of retired pastors and will encourage their participation in the Pastor's Covenant Group, Ministry Network relationships, and local congregations.
- B) Equipping Committee: to work with Support Network staff and/or Ministry Networks to provide specific nurture and training events to Mission Networks, pastors, and individual congregations.
  - C) Mission Committee: to work with Support Network and Ministry Networks to provide shared opportunities for local, regional, and global outreach.
  - D) Judicial Committee: to work with local congregations, Ministry Networks, Support Networks, and National Networks to ensure that fair and biblical discipline is carried out and to serve as the deciding body in cases that come before the Support Network.
  - E) Other Committees: the Support Network may form permanent or ad hoc teams and committees as it determines.
  - F) Coordinating Team: consisting of the Support Network Moderator, Clerk, and representatives from the Judicial, Mission, Equipping, and other committees and teams, whose number of meetings, size, terms and governance will be determined by the Support Network. The Coordinating Team will either create a Nominating Committee, or act as Nominating Committee, on behalf of the Support Network.

## **V. Meetings of the Support Network**

- A) The purpose of Support Network meetings is to support the Ministry Networks and the individual congregations within its bounds. Its meetings should be designed to promote this purpose. The Support Network will meet at least twice a year and is encouraged to meet more often if possible for worship, equipping, prayer, and, when necessary, an efficient business meeting.
- B) Delegates to the Support Network Meetings
  - 1) Any members from within the New Wineskins for Presbyterians may attend and participate in meetings of the Support Network except for its business meetings. At meetings involving business and discipline, only elected delegates will have voice and vote.

- 2) Pastors, parish associates, visitation pastors, and commissioned lay pastors actively serving in a congregation have voice and vote at any meeting of the Support Network to which the congregation belongs. In addition, each Session of a member congregation will elect two elders to correspond with each delegate who is a pastor, parish associate, visitation pastor, and commissioned lay pastor actively serving the congregation as delegates with voice and vote at Support Network meetings. If the congregation is currently without a pastor or commissioned lay pastor actively serving the congregation, the Session will elect one additional elder to serve as a delegate for such time until the congregation has pastoral staff. An elder does not have to serve on the Session to serve as a delegate.
- 3) Clergy serving outside the congregation, including retired pastors, may be members of the Support Network with voice but without vote.



## Chapter Seven The National Network

### I. The Purpose of the National Network

The national network is a body that is both relational and missional. It exists to serve and support the shared ministry and mission of the local churches in local, regional, contextual, national, and global partnerships. A national organization will operate with an intentionally limited number of staff who will serve in a convene-and-deploy model to foster effective church partnerships for effective ministry and mission between churches in similar contexts (urban, rural, suburban, multi-staff, generational, etc.) The connecting body will serve the local church in its ministry and mission by drawing upon proven programs, curricula, and other resources available from across the broader body of Christ. Polity is supportive, not regulatory; it fosters, not hinders, ministry and mission; it serves, not constrains.

### II. Guiding Principles

- A) The National Network is the representative body composed of all individual members, congregations, Ministry Networks, and Support Networks and is responsible for encouraging and supporting the work of the various parts of the New Wineskins for Presbyterians.
- B) The National Network will meet at least one time per year for worship, fellowship, Bible study and theological reflection, equipping members and sharing resources, strategic planning for shared ministry and mission, business, and discipline.
- C) The National Network Gathering will generally include:
  - 1) a Convocation: for worship, study, and equipping, open to the full participation of all members of the National Network; and
  - 2) a Delegate Meeting: as needed for business and discipline, consisting of delegates from member congregations.
- D) The National Network will elect a Moderator and a Stated Clerk for three-year terms at a business meeting.
  - 1.) Candidates for either office shall be pastors actively serving a congregation or elders.
  - 2.) No person may be elected as Moderator or Stated Clerk for successive terms.

- 3.) No person serving in either office may be elected to serve in the other office immediately upon the end of his or her term.
- E) The National Network will establish procedures that govern the conduct of business and other meetings and the hiring, evaluating, and discharging of any employees (should there be any).

### **III. The Work of the National Network**

The National Network has the following responsibilities:

- A) Overseeing the integrity and health of Support Networks;
- B) Acting, through its Judicial Committee, as the court of final appeal for cases originating from Sessions, Ministry Networks, and Support Networks;
- C) Adopting a manual of procedures for disciplinary matters for all networks;
- D) Recognizing, by vote in a Business Meeting, the formation, merger, and dissolution of Support Networks;
- E) Promoting resources to strengthen the ministry and mission of individual members, Congregations, Ministry Networks, Support Networks, and the Global Mission Network. The National Network will seek to locate the best available resources, creating new resources only when it is unable to find materials in the broader Church that are effective and theologically consonant with the Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith and the Declaration of Ethical Imperatives.
- F) Developing relationships with like-minded denominations and ministry entities;
- G) Overseeing the mission partnership efforts of the Global Mission Network;
- H) Providing guidance on seminary standards and theological preparation for Support Networks;
- I) Conducting the Delegate Meeting according to “Robert’s Rules of Order” or other agreed method;
- J) Keeping detailed records of Business Meetings, including all receipts and expenditures of income, and making these records available online and through Support Networks; and
- K) When necessary, providing for the final resolution of conflicts arising within the New Wineskins for Presbyterians.

### **IV. Committees or Teams**

- A) The National Network may organize ad hoc committees, task forces, or ministry groups as it sees fit in order to do the business before it. Should it decide to establish any committee to serve for more than two years, the national network will propose such committee by amendment to this constitution; otherwise the ad-hoc committee, task force, or ministry group will be dissolved.
- B) The Judicial Committee will work with local congregations, Ministry Networks, Support Networks, and the National Network to ensure that fair and biblical discipline is carried out in compliance with the Declaration of Ethical Imperatives and judicial process. The committee will serve as a final court of appeal in judicial cases that originate from Sessions and Networks.
- C) Members of any permanent or ad hoc committee, task force, or ministry group will be nominated by the moderator at a business meeting. Nominations will be allowed from the floor. Election will be by a majority vote.
- D) Members of a permanent committee will be elected for terms of three years; no person may be elected for more than two terms successively.

## **V. Meetings**

- A) The National Network will call at least one regular meeting per year to conduct its business. The docket will be set by the Moderator and Stated Clerk and will include any proposal which a Support Network sends as a common concern to the whole body.
- B) Delegates are pastors, parish associates, visitation pastors, and commissioned lay pastors actively serving in a congregation. Each Session of a member congregation will elect two elders to correspond with each delegate who is a pastor, parish associate, visitation pastor, and commissioned lay pastor actively serving the congregation as delegates with voice and vote at national Network Meetings. If the congregation is currently without a pastor or commissioned lay pastor, actively serving the congregation, the Session will elect one additional elder to serve as a delegate for such time until the congregation has pastoral staff. An elder does not have to serve on the Session to serve as a delegate. Clergy serving outside the congregation, including retired pastors, may be members of the national Network with voice but without vote. Delegates so elected will serve until the convening of the next regular business meeting. Delegates alone will have voice and vote in the Delegate Meeting. All Delegate Meetings for business and discipline will be open to observers.
- C) A quorum of the National Network will be at least one pastor delegate from twenty-five percent of the Support Networks and one elder delegate from at least twenty-five percent of the Support Networks.
- D) The Moderator may call a special business meeting of the National Network upon his or her initiative with notice of at least sixty days.

- E) The Moderator will call a special business meeting of the National Network upon receipt of a request for such meeting from ten per cent of the Support Networks whose members approved such request by a majority vote. At least sixty days notice will be given.
- F) The Moderator may, at his or her discretion, call a meeting of the National Network for worship, Bible study and theological reflection, equipping of members, and/or sharing of resources.



## Chapter Eight

# The Global Mission Network

### **I. The Vision for Global Mission Partnerships**

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

### **II. The Biblical Basis for World Mission**

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

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

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

### **III. Global Mission Network**

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

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

- D) Develop partnerships in true mutuality with God's people in the world Church;
- E) Facilitate church planting among ethnic groups in the United States;
- F) Be responsive to the local congregation, to Ministry Networks, and to Support Networks, and accountable to the National Network; and
- G) Be guided by principles, values and goals, which are clearly articulated and accounting practices consistent with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.



## **Chapter Nine Leadership Development**

### **I. Calling to Spiritual Leadership**

The New Wineskins for Presbyterians affirms the historic Reformed understanding of the four-fold call, where call is affirmed by the community, by an individual, by appropriate preparation, and by undertaking a specific form of servant ministry. It is primarily the responsibility of the local congregation to identify those with gifts and skills in disciple-making whom God may be calling into leadership ministry.

### **II. Elder and Deacon Commissioning/Ordination**

- A) Leader-candidates who have been identified by a local Session or designee as having the spiritual maturity, gifts, and ability to serve will be taken under care of a mentor assigned by the Session. The mentor will provide accountability and spiritual support throughout a training process prescribed by Session.
- B) At the conclusion of training, the leader-candidates will again meet with the Session or a body appointed by it to review sense of call, to review completed training, to assess proficiency in the specified ministry, to confess The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith without scruple, and to affirm The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives and The Constitution of New Wineskins for Presbyterians. If the Session finds the person prepared for the ministry, the leader-candidate may be nominated for congregational election to serve in a capacity of spiritual leadership within the body. The local congregation will arrange for a service of commissioning/ordaining that celebrates, with prayer and the laying on of hands, God's gifts at work in the church.

### **III. Pastoral Certification/Ordination**

- A) A man or woman who senses a call to pastoral leadership will begin by discussing this with the Session of the local church. The Session will discuss and evaluate the individual's sense of call and demonstrated gifts and skills in disciple-making and other pastoral areas.
- B) Every pastoral candidate will receive commendation by a particular local congregation that affirms both his/her gifts for ministry, and his/her confessional commitment to The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith, The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives, and The Constitution.
- C) If the Session concurs with the individual, the Session will affirm the person as a pastoral candidate. Pastoral candidates will be taken under care of a mentor who will provide

accountability and support throughout a process of training. The pastoral candidate will become a participant in a particular Ministry Network and the Pastoral Covenant Group.

- D) Pastoral candidates will receive education consistent with their particular ministry calling as stipulated in the “Preparing for Certification/Ordination” handbook.
- E) When the candidate has completed their preparation, the Pastor’s Covenant Group of the Ministry Network will examine the pastoral candidate and make recommendation concerning certification/ordination. After consultation with the Pastors’ Covenant Group of the Ministry Network, the Support Network will examine the candidate for evidence of a strong sense of call, completed course work, proficiency in ministry, adherence to certification/ordination standards, and ability to articulate and subscribe without scruple to The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith and to affirm The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives and The Constitution. Thereafter the Support Network shall act upon the candidate’s application. If denied the Support Network shall report in writing to the pastor’s Covenant Group of the Ministry Network the detailed basis for not sustaining certification/ordination.
- F) Pastoral candidates will receive a call to a particular congregation before certification/ordination will be granted by the Support Network. A pastoral candidate may be called to his/her home church.



## Chapter Ten

# The Exercise of Godly Discipline

### **I. The Basis for Godly Discipline**

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

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

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

### **II. The Discipline of an Individual**

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

#### A) Informal Accountability

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

#### B) Formal Discipline

- 1) If the Session or Ministry Network decides to initiate a formal disciplinary process, the person who is accused of an offense shall receive a written statement of the alleged offense, with specific information of what, where, when, and how the offense occurred, the names of witnesses, and any other evidence, which will be presented to the Judicial Committee of the Support Network.
- 2) Any person against whom an allegation of an offense has been made has the right to confront his or her accusers.
- 3) Any accused person will have the opportunity to have the presence of counsel of one or more persons. The accused person has the right to present and examine witnesses and to see, hear, and examine all evidence.
- 4) The decision by the network court will by a majority vote and will be set out in a written statement of findings and reasoning.
- 5) No person shall be removed from active membership or office in the church without these procedures having been observed.
- 6) If an accused person has been found not to have committed the alleged offense, the network may not appeal the decision.
- 7) If the accused person is found to have committed the alleged offense, the Judicial Committee of the Support Network will recommend action to the Support Network, including terms of discipline, and the process of reconciliation and the possibility of full restoration upon repentance.

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

We recognize as a principle of faith that all human councils err. Therefore, an allegation of an offense by the body may be brought against a body by any member of that body. The offense may be an erroneous decision or action, an omission, or a failure to act.

### **IV. Appeals**

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

- A) the decision was manifestly unjust;
- B) irregular process was permitted;
- C) there was a misinterpretation of Scripture or the Constitution;
- D) there was manifestation of prejudice; or
- E) proper evidence was refused admission or improper evidence was received.

## **V. Manual of Disciplinary Procedures**

In adjudicating allegations under this chapter, each network will be guided by a manual of procedures adopted by the National Network according to the principles of this chapter. Those procedures may include provisions of support to persons involved in the disciplinary process and to their families, and it may include a process for restoration for persons committing or injured by the offense.



## Chapter Eleven Amendments to Constitution

### I. Amendments to Constitution prior to December 31, 2006

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

An amendment to modify the Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith or The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives or to adopt additional confessional or ethical standards shall be made only in the following manner:

1. The approval of the proposed amendment by  $\frac{3}{4}$  (three- quarters) super-majority vote of the NWI Board of Directors, which shall vote upon any proposed amendment within 60 days of submission by any endorsing Session; and
2. The approval in writing by  $\frac{3}{4}$  (three- quarters) super- majority vote of all endorsing Sessions. Any Session failing to report its vote to the NWI Board of Directors within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the NWI Board shall be excluded from calculating the  $\frac{3}{4}$  super- majority vote.
3. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the NWI Board of Directors.

- B. Amendments to Other Portions of the Constitution

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

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by majority vote of the NWI Board of Directors, which shall act upon any proposed amendment within 60 days of submission by any endorsing Session; and
2. The approval in writing by majority vote of endorsing Sessions. Any Session failing to report its vote to the NWI Board of Directors within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the NWI Board shall be excluded from calculating the majority vote.
3. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the NWI Board of Directors.

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

- D. Each congregation will have the number of votes as follows: One vote for every pastor in active pastoral leadership in a congregation and an equal number of votes for elders corresponding to each pastor.

## **II. Amendments to Constitution after December 31, 2006**

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

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

1. The approval of the amendment by  $\frac{3}{4}$  (three- quarters) super-majority vote by the National Network, which shall vote upon any proposed amendment within 60 days of submission by any endorsing Session; and
2. The approval in writing by  $\frac{3}{4}$  (three- quarters) super- majority vote of all endorsing Sessions. Any Session failing to report its vote to the National Network within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the National Network shall be excluded from calculating the  $\frac{3}{4}$  super- majority vote.
3. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the National Network and transmission to all endorsing congregations.

- B. Amendments to Other Portions of the Constitution

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

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by majority vote of the National Network, which shall act upon any proposed amendment within 60 days of submission by any endorsing Session; and
2. The approval in writing by majority vote of endorsing Sessions. Any Session failing to report its vote to the National Network within 60 days after receipt of the proposed amendment from the National Network shall be excluded from calculating the majority vote.
3. The amendment shall be considered effective upon certification of the vote by the National Network and transmission to all endorsing congregations.

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

- D. Each congregation will have the number of votes as follows: One vote for every pastor in active pastoral leadership in a congregation and an equal number of votes for elders corresponding to each pastor.





## Appendix A Sample Ministry Network Covenant

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

We endorse The Essential Tenets of Our Reformed Faith and The Declaration of Ethical Imperatives of the New Wineskins for Presbyterians.

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
(signed by clerk of session)

of \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

2. \_\_\_\_\_

of \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

3. \_\_\_\_\_

of \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



## Appendix B

# Sample Covenant for Equipping and Fellowship Groups

Covenant for \_\_\_\_\_ (dates)

- A. We agree to engage each other in the disciplines of the Christian life through:
1. Regular study, prayer, and worship time;
  2. Discussion at each meeting on issues of theological significance;
  3. Developing relationships as brothers and sisters in the family of God and holding each other in prayer; and
  4. Faithful attendance at our meetings. If I am unable to come, I will contact the others.

- B. We agree to engage in positive, Christ-like communication:
1. Speaking the truth in love;
  2. Affirming each other;
  3. Holding each other accountable in areas of belief and practice;
  4. Not talking about a group member in his/her absence;
  5. Keeping confidential what is heard in the group unless agreed otherwise by mutual consent;
  6. Making decisions by group consensus.

C. We will meet at least \_\_\_\_ times per year on the following dates, times, and locations for a meeting length of \_\_\_\_:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

D. We will study the following during this year: \_\_\_\_\_

We will complete the following homework (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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(Signatures of participants)

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(Date)



## Appendix C

# The Lausanne Covenant

### INTRODUCTION

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

### 1. THE PURPOSE OF GOD

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

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

### 2. THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE BIBLE

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

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

### 3. THE UNIQUENESS AND UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that everyone has some knowledge of God through his

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

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

#### **4. THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM**

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

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

#### **5. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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

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

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

## **6. THE CHURCH AND EVANGELISM**

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

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

## **7. COOPERATION IN EVANGELISM**

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

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

## **8. CHURCHES IN EVANGELISTIC PARTNERSHIP**

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

education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the Church's mission.

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

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

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

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

## **10. EVANGELISM AND CULTURE**

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

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

## **11. EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP**

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but

of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training program for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programs should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards.

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

## **12. SPIRITUAL CONFLICT**

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

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

## **13. FREEDOM AND PERSECUTION**

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

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

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

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is

contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love and power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice.

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

## **15. THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

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

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

## **CONCLUSION**

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