

**Church Order**  
of the  
**Heritage Reformed**  
**Congregations**

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## Introduction

This booklet is published in accordance with a decision made by the Classis of the Heritage Reformed Congregations, convened on October 19, 2007 (Motion #8).

All the minutes of the Classis meetings since the inception of the Heritage Reformed Congregations have been carefully reviewed, and the following decisions have been recorded under the appropriate articles of the Church Order:

- Decisions that are a further interpretation of a given article;
- Decisions that relate to the specific implementation of a given article in our churches.

Once a year this booklet will be updated to reflect any such decisions made by Classis during that year.

Any corrections and/or additions should be brought to the attention of the Stated Clerk of the HRC Classis.

The following documents are also included in this booklet:

- A comparison of the 1914 Redaction and the 1618–1619 Edition of the Church Order of Dort
- Formula of Subscription for Office-bearers
- Rules for Church Visitation
- Classis Credentials
- Policy for Admission of Non-HRC Ministers into the HRC Ministry

With the addition of these documents, this booklet should be a handy reference manual for office-bearers.





## Rationale for the Adoption of the 1914 Redaction of the Church Order of Dort

After careful consideration by all the churches, Classis adopted the 1914 Redaction of the Church Order of Dort as the official and functional church order of the Heritage Reformed Churches, bearing in mind that Article 86 allows for a consistory to bring suggestions to Classis for possible changes (October 13, 2006—Motion #6).

This decision was made in light of the fact that during recent years some of our churches have brought to the attention of Classis that there are numerous phrases and a few articles in the original version of the Church Order, adopted by the 1618/1619 Synod of Dort, which are no longer applicable in our day. Since several churches made overtures to Classis that the Church Order be edited to address these issues, Classis appointed an Ad Hoc committee to make a comparison between the original 1618/1619 version, and the Redaction of 1914.

The year 1905 marked the first time that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands adopted a revised version of the 1618/1619 Church Order. The Christian Reformed Churches in North-America followed suit in 1914 by adopting the translation of this 1905 revision, which included some editorial changes to reflect the North-American setting. This became known as the 1914 Redaction of the Church Order of Dort. It should be noted that the 1914 Redaction is the genuine Church Order of Dort—with the exception that obsolete phrases and/or articles were removed, and that the language of some articles was slightly changed to more accurately reflect the current practice of the churches.

It should also be noted that the 1914 Redaction has been the functional church order for many conservative Reformed denominations in North-America since its adoption—including the NRC (which until the mid-70's used the CRC edition of the Psalter which contains the 1914 Redaction). The best available English commentary on the Church Order of Dort, by VanDellen and Monsma, (Grand

Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964) is therefore based entirely on the 1914 Redaction.

We believe that a careful comparison of the 1618/1619 and 1914 redactions of the Church Order will yield the same conclusion Classis arrived at: The 1914 Redaction is the more suitable edition of the Church Order for our churches today. (For a comparison of the 1914 and 1618/1619 redactions of the Church Order, please turn to page 33.)

(This is an extract from the Minutes of the October 13, 2006 Classis of the Heritage Reformed Congregations.)

# Church Order of the Heritage Reformed Congregations

(The 1914 Redaction of the Church Order of Dort)

## Article 1

For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.

## FIRST HEAD – THE OFFICES

### Article 2

The offices are of four kinds: of the Ministers of the Word, of the Professors of Theology, of the Elders, and of the Deacons.

### Article 3

No one, though he be a Professor of Theology, Elder, or Deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when any one acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the Classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.

### Article 4

The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists:

First, in the *election* by the Consistory and the Deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance, that only those can for the first time be called to the Ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches, according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of Classis or of the counselor appointed for this purpose by the Classis;

Secondly, in the *examination* both of doctrine and life which shall be conducted by the Classis, to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three Delegates of Synod from the nearest Classis;

Thirdly, in the *approbation* by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the minister having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objection arises; which approbation, however, is not required in case the election takes place with the cooperation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made;

Finally, in the public *ordination* in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers and imposition of hands by the officiating minister (and by other ministers who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose.

#### Article 5

Ministers already in the Ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the aforesaid manner by the Consistory and the Deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the Consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Reformed Churches and for the repeated calling of the same Minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the Classis or of the counselor, appointed by the Classis, and with the approval of the Classis or of the Delegates appointed by the Classis, to whom the ministers called show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeably to the Form for this purpose.

#### Article 6

No Minister shall be at liberty to serve in institutions of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the

preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.

#### Article 7

No one shall be called to the Ministry of the Word, without his being stationed in a particular place, except he be sent to do church extension work.

#### Article 8

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in preparation for the Ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible according to Article 4, shall not be admitted to the Ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense, and discretion, as also gifts of public address. When such persons present themselves for the Ministry, the Classis (if the [particular] Synod approve) shall first examine them, and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches.

#### Article 9

Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the Ministry in the Church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination, by the Classis, with the approval of Synod.

*9.1 A policy has been adopted governing the admission of non-HRC ministers into the HRC ministry. The complete text of this policy has been included as an appendix. (October 22, 2004—Motion #29)*

*9.2 With the exception of Emeritus status, the credentials of an HRC minister shall be removed if that minister remains without a charge for a period of two years. (March 27, 2009—Motion #34)*

#### Article 10

A Minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the Consistory, together with the Deacons, and knowledge on the

part of the Classis; likewise no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the church and the Classis where he served.

*10.1 A minister may be declared eligible for a call after having served a congregation for two years. If the call is extended after two, but before three years, the minister's current congregation could request the calling church to reimburse part of the original moving expenses (including immigration costs) incurred in relocating him to his present congregation. (April 18, 2002—Motion #15)*

### Article 11

On the other hand, the Consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers, and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the Classis and of the Delegates of the (particular) Synod.

*11.1 In light of the invocation of Article 11 of the Church Order on (date), Classis wishes to affirm that, though there is no longer a functional, ministerial relationship between Pastor X and congregation Y, there continues to be a formal, ecclesiastical relationship between these two parties. This means that the oversight regarding Pastor X's life and doctrine (including his preaching schedule) remains with the consistory of Y. Furthermore, Pastor X and his family continue to be members of congregation Y until the lawful termination of such membership (i.e., excommunication, withdrawal of membership, or transfer to another congregation). (October 19, 2007—Motion #5)*

### Article 12

Inasmuch as a Minister of the Word, once lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the Classis.

### Article 13

Ministers, who by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise, are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their Office, shall nevertheless

retain the honor and title of a Minister, and the Church which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need (likewise for the orphans and widows of Ministers) out of the common fund of the Churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter.

#### Article 14

If any Minister, for the aforesaid or any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time, which shall not take place without the advice of the Consistory, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

#### Article 15

No one shall be permitted, neglecting the Ministry of his Church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of Synod or Classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the Sacraments in another Church without the consent of the Consistory of that Church.

##### *15.1 Policy for Admitting Visiting Ministers into HRC Pulpits*

- 1. If a local HRC congregation wishes to invite a non-HRC or non-FRC minister into its pulpit, and if the invitation pertains to occasional pulpit supply, the consistory can proceed to do so, provided that it informs the next HRC Synod of this.*
- 2. If a local HRC congregation wishes to invite a non-HRC or non-FRC minister into its pulpit for an extended period of time (beyond a month of consecutive Lord's Days), then the consistory must inform the CCC of this and request that a Colloquium Doctem be conducted. The following should be noted regarding this interview:*
  - Its purpose will be to ascertain the doctrinal and ecclesiastical views of such a minister.*
  - The appended questions will be used as an objective guideline for this interview.*
  - Due to geographical constraints, this interview may be conducted by phone—though a face-to-face interview will always be preferable and desirable.*
  - Only when the CCC rules the outcome of this interview to be*

*favorable, and informs the consistory of such, may it proceed to invite this minister into its pulpit.*

- *CCC will report these decisions to Synod in its annual report.*

3. *All of the above applies to ministerial students as well. (April 16, 2010—Motion #15)*

#### **Article 16**

The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the Ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

#### **Article 17**

Among the Ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the Consistory, and if necessary, of the Classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the Elders and the Deacons.

#### **Article 18**

The office of the Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

#### **Article 19**

The Churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the Ministry of the Word.

*19.1 Classis adopted the following order of application for young men seeking admission to the seminary:*

- I. *A young man who believes he is called by the Lord to the ministry should contact the pastor or an elder of his local consistory.*
- II. *The applicant should be requested to supply the consistory with a written testimony of how the Lord converted him and called him to the ministry.*



- III. *Specifically, the Consistory should ask him to answer the following questions in writing:*
1. *Do you believe the Bible to be God's infallible, inerrant Word, all of which was inspired by God Himself?*
  2. *Have you carefully and thoroughly read our three doctrinal standards (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort), and are you in complete agreement with them?*
  3. *Please describe for us how the Lord converted you and has continued to lead you to be experientially acquainted with:*
    - a. *Misery: an awakening to God, self, sin, and the world; an ongoing sense of sin, a growing hatred of it, a continuing struggle against it, and evidences of breaking with it.*
    - b. *Deliverance: a scriptural longing for and an eventual believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus by God-given faith through the Word.*
    - c. *Gratitude: a longing after and a pursuing after holiness (sanctification).*
  4. *Describe for us how you believe God is calling you to the ministry in conformity to His Word and by His providence.*
  5. *Have you read prayerfully and carefully Scripture's qualifications for the ministry as recorded in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1? Though this list of qualifications is both formidable and humbling, can you honestly state that by the grace of God you are pursuing these qualities?*
- IV. *The local consistory should set a time and date when they (together with their moderator, if their congregation is vacant), may interview the applicant.*
- V. *A set of standard questions should be answered by all consistories before the interview. (These questions may be found in appendix 2 of the HNRC Theological Training report).*
- VI. *At the interview with the applicant, the consistory should feel free to ask him questions relating to his written testimony or any other questions deemed necessary and/or fitting. The consistory's primary focus, however, should not be a determination of the validity of an internal calling to the ministry, so much as whether or not the person's doctrine and life harmonize with this profession and calling. The local consistory is by far in the best position to consider the applicant's doctrine and life, since one of its main*

*duties is the oversight of the flock. We urge that the ruling elders have the primary voice in this interview since this area is more the responsibility of the office of elder.*

*VII. After the interview, the consistory should answer the questions found in appendix 3 of the HNRC Theological Training Report.*

*If the majority of the consistory votes in favor of forwarding the applicant to the Admissions Committee, a brief written report of the interview should then be forwarded to the clerk of the Admissions Committee together with: (1) the brother's written testimony of his conversion and calling; (2) the consistory's answers to appendix 2; and (3) the consistory's answers to appendix 3 (of the HNRC Theological Training Report). The consistory clerk should read the final draft of the report and the two sets of questions answered in the presence of the consistory so as to be sure that it reflects the mind of the consistory. (January 11, 1995—Motion #04)*

*19.2 Classis ruled that it would be better to accept students that are HRC members both in spring and fall to begin their studies in the fall, unless there would be compelling reasons to begin at any other time which then would be determined by the TSC committee. (October 5, 2000—Motion #22)*

*19.3 Classis ruled that no applicant will be considered by the TSC or accepted as an HRC-approved student unless he is forwarded through an HRC consistory. However, he would not be accepted as an HRC student until he has been a member in good standing of an HRC congregation for one year, or until the same local consistory which has forwarded him to the TSC has in good faith received him into full membership. Any applicant may apply as a guest student at his own expense, but HRC status can only be conferred after the membership provision is satisfactorily met. Upon satisfactory completion of this requirement, application can be made to the TSC for HRC status and support following the normal procedure. (October 24, 2003—Motion #33)*

## Article 20

Students who have received permission according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the Ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the Con-

gregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship.

### Article 21

The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian Schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the Covenant.

*21.1 Consistories are exhorted to encourage the use of good Christian schools, and if home schooling is practiced, to encourage that the curriculum used be biblical and doctrinally sound. (September 30, 1998—Motion #31)*

### Article 22

The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the Consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the Consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed, that they may, after they are approved by it, unless any obstacle arise, be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one-half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeably to the Form for this purpose.

### Article 23

The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Minister of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow-Elders and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches to visit the families of the Congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian Religion.

#### **Article 24**

The Deacons shall be chosen, approved, and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the Elders.

#### **Article 25**

The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may see fit.

#### **Article 26**

In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the Board of Directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the Diaconates assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions.

#### **Article 27**

The Elders and Deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Articles 22 and 24, render a re-election advisable.

#### **Article 28**

The Consistory shall take care, that the churches for the possession of their property, and the peace and order of their meetings, can claim the protection of the Authorities; it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may

never suffer the royal government of Christ over His Church to be in the least infringed upon.

## SECOND HEAD – THE ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

### Article 29

Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classis, (the Particular Synod), and the General Synod.

*29.1 Classis (the only major assembly of the HRC) will convene only once annually during the Spring of each year. (October 24, 2008—Motion #5)*

*29.2 Classis moved that the annual Classis meeting of our denomination be redesignated as “Synod” and be convened each Spring at a date determined by Synod. These meetings will be preceded by an office-bearers’ conference, prayer service, and the TSC meeting at which time students will be heard and/or accepted to commence fall studies at PRTS. (March 27, 2009—Motion #05)*

### Article 30

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the Churches of the major assembly in common.

*30.1 The following stipulations were adopted for “Customary Questions”:*

- a) Oral customary questions can no longer be submitted by consistories. Written questions stemming from current issues can be submitted until the evening before Classis convenes. If there is anything that needs to be addressed from out of the meeting, then it can be done with a show of hands.*
- b) Submitted customary questions will be considered at the present meeting, unless the delegates, by a hand vote, determine it to be a matter that should be postponed. (October 5, 2000—Motions #17–19)*

*30.2 The following policy was adapted regarding the calling church—the church that officially convenes Classis:*

- 1. The calling church shall have the following responsibilities:*
  - a) Officially convene the regular and stated meetings of Classis. This means that the pastor of the calling church shall be responsible for opening the session of Classis—and in the event a congregation is vacant, the Moderator shall do so.*
  - b) Convene an emergency session of Classis should the majority of the churches request such a session.*
  - c) Make the necessary arrangements for a change of venue should the majority of the churches request this.*
- 2. The churches shall assume the responsibility of being the calling church in alphabetical order.*

*It is understood that the location of Classis is not determined by who might be the calling church but per most recent classis decision or point 1(b) and (c). (March 18, 2005—Motion #48)*

### **Article 31**

If any one complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by the General Synod.

*31.1 As the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Denomination, we wish to clearly state that we believe a proper interpretation of Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort includes the following: If and when a Classis and/or Synod should make a decision which a local church consistory believes is contrary to Scripture and/or church order (and consequently cannot abide by it in good conscience), Classis and/or Synod shall not have the authority to bind the conscience of the local consistory to obey the decision in question during the process of appeal of that local church consistory. To compel obedience against the conscience of the consistory during the appeal process is to compel that consistory to adhere to what they believe is wrong and/or sinful. If Classis and/or Synod maintain the decision upon appeal, and the appealing church consistory cannot in good conscience abide by it, then Classis and/or Synod, after hearing the reasons why*

*the consistory cannot abide by it and after working with the consistory patiently and in love, shall determine whether or not the decision at hand involves such an essential point of doctrine that full affiliation with the denomination is no longer possible. If no major essential doctrine clearly stated in Scripture is involved, Classis and/or Synod shall allow the local consistory to exercise its conscientious autonomy in the matter that was appealed. (August 6, 1994—Motion #02)*

### Article 32

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.

### Article 33

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their persons or churches.

*33.1 Classis moved that congregations that presently do not have a functioning consistory but still have (a) serving elder(s), be permitted to delegate one ruling elder to the meetings of Classis in an advisory capacity. (October 19, 2007—Motion #36)*

### Article 34

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

*34.1 The Classis treasurer is to be appointed from the congregation hosting the Classis. Expenses will be paid at Classis. (March 6, 1998—Motion #29)*

*34.2 Classis approved the appointment of a standing or “stated” clerk, who will provide continuity between Classis meetings, and will assist the elected clerk of a particular Classis in taking notes, preparing Classis minutes, etc. (September 30, 1998—Motion #26)*

*34.3 Classis approved a change in voting procedure. In the event a majority is not attained, candidates should be selected based on the outcome of the second free ballot. (September 30, 1998—Motion #27)*

*34.4 Classis will have a preparation secretary, a minutes secretary, and a voted Classis secretary. The preparation secretary is responsible for collecting material for Classis and his responsibility expires when Classis begins. The minutes secretary is responsible for recording the official minutes for Classis and submitting it to the moderamen and help the moderamen produce the final draft. The voted Classis secretary is responsible for condensing minutes and carrying out the classical outgoing correspondence. (March 28, 2008—Motion #24)*

*34.5 Those elected to Standing or Assistant clerk need not be an office bearer at present. Whoever is elected to this position, does not have to absent himself for any part of the meeting, but will simply be asked to affirm that he will maintain strict confidentiality regarding all Synodical proceedings. (April 16, 2010—Motion #33)*

### Article 35

The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observes due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in speaking; and properly to discipline them if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises.

*35.1 The chairman (president) of Synod shall be chosen at the prior meeting of Synod. (March 21, 2003—Motion #38)*

*35.2 When electing a chairman for Synod, an alternate shall be elected as well. (April 16, 2010—Motion #37)*

### Article 36

The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.

### Article 37

In all Churches there shall be a Consistory composed of the Ministers of the Word and the Elders, who at least in larger congregations, shall, as a rule, meet once a week. The Minister of the Word (or the Ministers, if there be more than one, in turn) shall preside and regu-



late the proceedings. Whenever the number of the Elders is small, the Deacons may be added to the consistory by local regulation; this shall invariably be the rule where the number is less than three.

### Article 38

In places where the Consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall not take place except with the advice of the Classis.

*38.1 Synod adopted the following procedure for an HRC Preaching Station (Outreach) to become an HRC Congregation:*

1. *Group requesting organization as an autonomous HRC congregation,*
  - a) *must have been formally recognized by the HRC Synod as an HRC Preaching Station (Outreach) for a period of at least one (1) year;*
  - b) *must have been served effectively by an ordained HRC minister and by one or more office-bearers (elected from the local male membership) for at least one (1) year.*
2. *The Leadership Committee of this HRC Preaching Station (Outreach), when requesting formal organization of the Preaching Station (Outreach), must express to the mother church, in writing, their agreement with:*
  - a. *The use of the denominationally approved Bible version in all formal ecclesiastical activities;*
  - b. *The three forms of unity (and the possible addition of the Westminster Standards) as the doctrinal framework for all preaching and teaching;*
  - c. *The regular use of the Psalms, as the basis of singing, in all public worship services;*
  - d. *The Church Order of Dort being the basis for all ecclesiastical fellowship.*
3. *It must be demonstrated by the mother church that there are men in the Preaching Station (Outreach) capable of serving as office-bearers, so that a consistory of at least two elders and one deacon can be constituted. The supporting documentation for this must be submitted by the ruling elders of the mother church, doing so in close consultation with the minister serving the HRC Preaching Station (Outreach).*

4. *To facilitate a measure of acquaintance with the delegates of the HRC Synod, at least two men from the Leadership Committee of this HRC Preaching Station (Outreach) must have attended (with travel remuneration) one or more HRC Synod meetings as visitors.*
5. *After the above objectives have been satisfactorily met, the mother church will submit a formal request to the HRC Synod that the HRC Preaching Station (Outreach) under her care be organized as an autonomous HRC congregation.*
6. *A 2/3 majority vote will be required for the HRC Synod to grant such a request.*
7. *Upon giving the mother church permission to proceed with organization, a meeting of all the male members of the HRC Preaching Station (Outreach) will be convened. During this meeting, chaired by the mother church, a free election will be held to elect the required number of elders and deacons.*
8. *The consistory that is to be constituted must consist of at least two elders and one deacon, with the understanding that the minister serving the Outreach will be considered as one of these elders.*
9. *Upon having announced the names of the elected office-bearers for two consecutive Lord's days (in both the mother church and the Preaching Station [Outreach]), there will be a designated worship service, conducted by the mother church, during which*
  - a. *These office-bearers will be formally installed in their respective offices;*
  - b. *The minister serving the Preaching Station [Outreach] will formally affirm his readiness to serve the new HRC congregation as her pastor.*
10. *After the installation of office-bearers, the organization of the new HRC congregation will have been formally ratified, and this congregation will now have all the rights and privileges of an autonomous HRC congregation.*

*(April 15, 2011—Motion #11)*

**38.2** *Classis ruled that the "Procedure for Mission Posts to become HRC Congregations" be modified so that the section reading, "A majority vote*

*by Classis is necessary for a mission post to be admitted as a congregation of the HRC,” be replaced with, “A two-thirds majority (taken by paper ballot) shall be required to admit a mission post as a congregation of the HRC. (October 24, 2003—Motion #27)*

*38.3 The congregations are strongly advised to consult with Classis prior to any action towards disbanding. (March 18, 2005—Motion #47)*

### Article 39

Places where as yet no Consistory can be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighboring Consistory.

*39.1 Classis adopted the following list of responsibilities for the mother church of church plants. (March 21, 2003—Motion #35)*

- 1. Extend calls on behalf of Classis for the mission post, utilizing the post’s input as to whom to call.*
- 2. Organize with the local leadership committee the installation of the pastor, including logistics surrounding the installation services.*
- 3. Oversee the life and doctrine of the pastor of the outreach. The pastor of the church plant with his family will be members of the mother church.*
- 4. Review preached sermons and provide feedback to the pastor.*
- 5. Maintain regular contact with the local leadership committee. Ensure that the leadership committee feels the freedom to ask the consistory for advice.*
- 6. Conduct periodic family visitations for attendees who have become members of the mother church.*
- 7. Visit the church plant periodically to meet with the people and address any concerns or needs, and offer advice, encouragement, and exhortation.*
- 8. The mother church should be the conduit to Classis of any issues requiring Classis attention.*
- 9. At least one elder from the mother church should be present for the administration of the sacraments until such time as a local congregation is established.*
- 10. Monitor CCRA/IRS tax requirements pertaining to the*

*organization of the congregation and the pastor's salary and housing.*

11. *Collect pastor's support from the church plant and other sources and pay the pastor on a periodic basis according to his agreed remuneration until such time as Classis appoints a committee for this purpose.*
12. *Provide a report to Classis on the status of the church plant.*
13. *Accept the membership papers of the members from the congregations that they accept transfers from, i.e.: the NRC and FRC.*
14. *Facilitate the way for young people to do Confession of Faith.*

#### **Article 40**

The Deacons shall meet, wherever necessary, every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the Ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present.

#### **Article 41**

The classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder to meet at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting. Such meetings shall be held at least once in three months, unless great distances render this inadvisable. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession. Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church:

- Are the consistory meetings held in your church?
- Is church discipline exercised?
- Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?
- Do you need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of your church?

And finally, at one but the last meeting and, if necessary, at the last

meeting before the (Particular) Synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend said Synod.

*41.1 Classis ruled that, at its discretion, former elders (namely those who have held office during the two years previous to that particular Classis meeting) may be present during closed sessions of Classis in order to benefit from their intimate knowledge concerning specific issues that are being discussed by Classis. (March 18, 2005—Motion #06)*

*41.2 Classis adopted the following guidelines for guests of Classis. (October 21, 2005—Motion #11)*

- 1. Welcome the guests at the beginning of the meeting if they are present and mention those who hope to be present. (Information to be received from the CCC secretary or Classis clerk.)*
- 2. Introduce the invited representatives and give them opportunity to address the Classis, preferably in the morning session and all in one block.*
- 3. Appoint someone from Classis to give a short response to each of the speakers after they have addressed Classis.*
- 4. Finally, appoint someone to bring the denominations represented before the Lord in prayer.*

*41.3 Classis ruled that, commencing in the fall of 2007, every fourth Classis be held in an HRC congregation other than Burgessville, Grand Rapids, or Jordan—a congregation that would be capable of accommodating a Classis meeting (e.g. Chilliwack, Franklin Lakes, or Hull). Each consistory decides how many elders, in addition to the Classis delegates, they would like to send to the TSC meeting. The expenses of the additional elders attending the TSC meeting are to be covered by the sending consistory. (October 13, 2006—Motion #47)*

*41.4 Classis (the only major assembly of the HRC) will convene only once annually during the Spring of each year. (October 24, 2008 — Motion #5)*

*41.5 Classis moved that the annual Classis meeting of our denomination be redesignated as “Synod” and be convened each Spring at a date determined by Synod. These meetings will be preceded by an office-bearers’ conference, prayer service, and the TSC meeting at which time students*

*will be heard and/or accepted to commence fall studies at PRTS. (March 27, 2009—Motion #05)*

#### **Article 42**

Where in a church there are more Ministers than one, also those not delegated according to the foregoing article shall have the right to attend Classis with advisory vote.

#### **Article 43**

At the close of the Classical and other major assemblies, Censure shall be exercised over those, who in the meeting have done something worthy of punishment, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

#### **Article 44**

The Classis shall authorize at least two of her oldest, most experienced, and most competent Ministers to visit all the Churches once a year and to take heed whether the Minister and the Consistory faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation, in particular of the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the churches. And each Classis may continue these visitors in service as long as it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the Classis shall judge.

*44.1 Classis ruled that church visitation can be carried out via conference call for every second visitation, unless special attention is required and only if it is confirmed that there is no church member requesting a hearing. (March 18, 2005—Motion #51)*

#### **Article 45**

It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis and likewise the (Particular) or General Synod meets to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.

*45.1 Classis ruled that the entire moderamen of Classis be responsible for reviewing and publishing the complete Classis minutes, as well as the BSGT synopsis. (March 26, 1999—Motion #20)*

*45.2 The standing clerk is to formulate a copy of classis material which is purged of sensitive materials and make this available for members of the HRC as well as invited guests upon approval of the document's content. (March 18, 2005—Motion #04)*

#### **Article 46**

Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous Synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary.

#### **Article 47**

(Every year [or if need be oftener] four or five or more neighboring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Classis shall delegate two Ministers and two Elders. At the close of both the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with advice of Classis the time and place of the next Synod.)

#### **Article 48**

(Each Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.)

#### **Article 49**

(Each Synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by Synod both as to what pertains to the Government and to the respective Classes, resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future Ministers. And, moreover, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the Classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. Also they shall keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to Synod, and if it be demanded, give

reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until Synod itself discharges them.)

*49.1 Classis ruled that committees of Classis shall be allowed to appoint at their discretion their own sub-committees; and that membership of such committees be subject to approval at the next regular Classis meeting. (April 28, 2000—Motion #01)*

*49.2 The Article 49 Committee was assigned the task of overseeing the transition of ministers from one congregation to another upon the acceptance of a call, and that this transition committee consists of the moderators of the churches involved. (March 18, 2005—Motion #44)*

*49.3 The four members which compose the Article 49 Committee shall always be selected from four different HRC congregations. (October 24, 2008—Motion #30)*

## Article 50

The General Synod shall ordinarily meet once every two years unless there be urgent need to shorten the time. To this Synod three Ministers and three Elders out of every Classis shall be delegated. If it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least three Classes to call a meeting of Synod within two years, the local church designated for this purpose shall determine time and place.

*50.1 The annual Classis meeting of our denomination has been redesignated as “Synod” and will be convened each Spring at a date determined by Synod. These meetings will be preceded by an office-bearers’ conference, prayer service, and the TSC meeting at which time students will be heard and/or accepted to commence fall studies at PRTS. (March 27, 2009—Motion 5)*

## Article 51

The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order.

*51.1 Consideration for financial support for individual missionary efforts of (a) member(s) of one of our HRC congregations will be governed by the following stipulations. (October 24, 2008—Motion #18)*



1. *Classis will maintain a list of approved missionary endeavors. Each missionary endeavor on the list would first need to be nominated for Classis's acceptance by an HRC Consistory that is willing to provide suitable oversight of the missionary endeavor's activities. This oversight would need to include the activities being performed, as well as its financial accountability. Each year Classis would review the approved list and receive assurances from the nominating consistory that it is still providing the required oversight.*
2. *Classis will mandate the Mission Committee to attempt to provide each approved missionary endeavor with their assistance*
3. *The Mission Committee may include articles about these endeavors in its Glad Tidings publication. It will also serve as a vehicle to forward financial gifts to these endeavors. And, to the degree the Mission Committee would deem itself able, it would also include limited funding for these endeavors in its annual budget.*

#### Article 52

Inasmuch as different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies, and in the publication of recommendations, instructions, and decisions.

### THIRD HEAD – THE DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, AND OTHER CEREMONIES

#### Article 53

The Ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors of Theology (which also behooves the other professors and School Teachers) shall subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618–'19, and the Ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.

*53.1 Classis adopted the following statement, to be used in conjunction with the Formula of Subscription: The Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregations are founded upon the infallible truth revealed in the Bible (Authorized Version) as the Word of God. The congregations also adhere to the biblical doctrines as expressed in the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Moreover, the congregations desire to live in accord with the Church Order of Dort, which together with the doctrinal standards listed above, were adopted at the National Synod of the Reformed Church, held at Dordrecht, The Netherlands in the years 1618-1619. (August 6, 1994—Motion #03)*

*53.2 In addition to the Three Forms of Unity, the Westminster Standards have also been adopted as doctrinal standards of the HRC, including the caveats provided by the CCC. With regard to the issue of spiritual desertion as a ground for Christian divorce, Classis recommends that it be left to the conscience of the individual office-bearer, adding it to the list of caveats. Each congregation is free to choose whether to adopt these standards in addition to the Three Forms of Unity, and existing members are not required to accept the new standards. (March 27, 2009—Motion #21)*

#### **Article 54**

Likewise the Elders and Deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid Formulas of Unity.

#### **Article 55**

To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the Ministers and Elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, as well in the Ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

#### **Article 56**

The Covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by Baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.

**Article 57**

The Ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for Baptism.

**Article 58**

In the ceremony of Baptism, both of children and of adults, the Minister shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this Sacrament.

**Article 59**

Adults are through Baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, and are accepted as members of the Church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their Baptism.

**Article 60**

The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded.

**Article 61**

None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.

**Article 62**

Every Church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.

**Article 63**

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

#### Article 64

The administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of Elders, according to the ecclesiastical order, and in a public gathering of the Congregation.

#### Article 65

Funeral sermons or funeral services shall not be introduced.

#### Article 66

In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the Churches, it is fitting that the Classes proclaim a Day of Prayer.

#### Article 67

The Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.

#### Article 68

The Ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the catechism itself, for that purpose.

*68.1 It will be left to the local consistory's discretion whether to allow the exposition of one of the other doctrinal standards in lieu of the Heidelberg Catechism, as long as the Catechism is expounded the time following. (March 27, 2009—Motion #29)*

#### Article 69

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung.

#### Article 70

Since it is proper that the matrimonial state be confirmed in the pres-

ence of Christ's Church, according to the Form for that purpose, the Consistories shall attend to it.

#### FOURTH HEAD—CENSURE AND ECCLESIASTICAL ADMONITION

##### Article 71

As Christian Discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from Civil trial or punishment by the Authorities, so also besides Civil punishment there is need of Ecclesiastical Censures, to reconcile the sinner with the Church and his neighbor and to remove the offense out of the Church of Christ.

##### Article 72

In case any one errs in doctrine or offends in conduct, as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.

##### Article 73

Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be laid before the Consistory.

##### Article 74

If any one, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the Consistory.

##### Article 75

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the Church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each Church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public, shall, when there is a difference of opin-

ion about it in the Consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring Churches or of the Classis.

#### Article 76

Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of the Classis.

#### Article 77

After the suspension from the Lord's Table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the Church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.

#### Article 78

Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the Church in the way of repentance, it shall be announced to the Congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he

may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the form for that purpose.

#### **Article 79**

When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders, or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the Authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the Ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis, with the advice of the Delegates of the (Particular) Synod mentioned in Article 11.

#### **Article 80**

Furthermore, among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the Church would be considered worthy of excommunication.

#### **Article 81**

The Ministers of the Word, Elders, and Deacons, shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

#### **Article 82**

To those who remove from the Congregation, a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the Consistory, signed by two; or in the case of letters, which are given under the seal of the Church, signed by one.

### Article 83

Furthermore, to the poor, removing for sufficient reasons, so much money for traveling shall be given by the Deacons, as they deem adequate. The Consistory and the Deacons shall, however, see to it that they be not too much inclined to relieve their Churches of the poor, with whom they would without necessity burden other Churches.

### Article 84

No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.

*84.1 Classis adopted the following statement: The Heritage Netherlands Reformed Denomination is organized on a congregational and non-presbyterial basis with regards to all local church real and personal properties. As such, local congregations shall retain full rights to all of their local church real and personal properties. In the event a local congregation, by majority vote, disaffiliates with the denomination for any reason, all of the local congregation's real and personal property shall remain with the congregation and shall not be distributed to any faction solely because of such faction's allegiance to the denomination. (August 6, 1994—Motion #01)*

*84.2 Classis ruled that local consistories are autonomous in the decision to read announcements sent to them. Committees should send details to the consistories (if necessary) but controversial pulpit announcements should be kept as brief as possible. (April 20, 2001—Motion #17)*

### Article 85

Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.

*85.1 Classis rules that a committee be appointed to receive correspondence and communicate with groups or churches that request affiliation with the HNRC. This committee should be made up of one minister, and one Elder from each church. (January 11, 1995—Motion #02)*

*85.2 Classis ruled that the Church Affiliation Committee and Inter-denominational Correspondence Committee be amalgamated to form a combined committee called the Church Correspondence Commit-*



*tee. The mandate given to the Church Affiliation Committee will be incorporated into the mandate of this new committee. (April 18, 2002—Motion #25)*

*85.3 Classis ruled that a better approach to the issue of feast days, and how our fathers viewed them in the past, is to treat any such churches along the already established lines of three levels of communication. (October 21, 2005—Motion #32)*

*85.4 Classis moved to adopt the next two levels of correspondence to complete the spectrum of five possibilities. The complete text of all five levels of correspondence has been included as Appendix #3. (March 27, 2009—Motion #20)*

*85.5 Synod adopted a modified form of level five of correspondence, in which the full ramifications of Full Union are spelled out (April 15, 2011—Motion #10). For the complete text of all five levels see Appendix #3.*

## Article 86

These Articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the Churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished. However, no particular Congregation, Classis, (or Synod) shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod.

*86.1 Classis adopted the 1914 redaction of the Church Order of Dort to become the official and functional church order of the Heritage Reformed Churches, bearing in mind that Article 86 allows for a consistory to bring suggestions to Classis for possible changes. (October 13, 2006—Motion #08)*

*86.2 Classis ruled that 1) all Classis decisions relating to any Church Order Article be annotated (with the date of the decision), 2) these annotations be published with the Redaction of 1914, and 3) a copy be provided to each consistory. (October 13, 2007—Motion #09)*

# Church Order of Dort

## Comparison of the 1914 Redaction & the Original 1618/1619 Edition

Redaction of 1914	1618-1619 Edition
<p><b>Article 1</b></p> <p>For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.</p>	<p><b>Article 1</b></p> <p>For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices; assemblies; supervision of doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies; and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.</p>
<p><b>FIRST HEAD—THE OFFICES</b></p>	<p><b>FIRST HEAD—THE OFFICES</b></p>
<p><b>Article 2</b></p> <p>The offices are of four kinds: of the Ministers of the Word, of the Professors of Theology, of the Elders, and of the Deacons.</p>	<p><b>Article 2</b></p> <p>The offices are of four kinds: of the Ministers of the Word, of the Professors of Theology, of the Elders, and of the Deacons.</p>
<p><b>Article 3</b></p> <p>No one, though he be a Professor of Theology, Elder or Deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when any one acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the Classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.</p>	<p><b>Article 3</b></p> <p>No one, though he be a Professor of Theology, Elder, or Deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when any one acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the Classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.</p>

## Redaction of 1914

### Article 4

The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists:

First, in the *election* by the Consistory and the Deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance, that only those can for the first time be called to the Ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches, according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of Classis or of the counselor appointed for this purpose by the Classis;

Secondly, in the *examination* both of doctrine and life which shall be conducted by the Classis, to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three Delegates of Synod from the nearest Classis;

Thirdly, in the *approbation* by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the minister having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objection arises; which approbation, however, is not required in case the election takes place with the cooperation of the

## 1618-1619 Edition

### Article 4

The lawful calling of those who have not previously been in office, in cities as well as rural districts, consists:

First, in the election, after previous fasting and prayer, by the Consistory and Deacons, not without (proper correspondence with the Christian magistrates of the respective districts, and) the knowledge or advice of the Classis where this had been customary up to now.

Secondly, in the examination both of doctrine and life by the Classis, in the presence of all or some of the delegates of Synod.

Thirdly, in the approbation and endorsement (by the magistrates and then also) by the members of the Reformed Congregation of that city, if, the name of the Minister having been announced in the churches over a period of fourteen days, no objection arises.

## Redaction of 1914

congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made;

Finally, in the public *ordination* in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers and imposition of hands by the officiating minister (and by other ministers who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose.

### Article 5

Ministers already in the Ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the aforesaid manner by the Consistory and the Deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the Consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Reformed Churches and for the repeated calling of the same Minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the Classis or of the counselor, appointed by the Classis, and with the approval of the Classis or of the Delegates appointed by the Classis, to

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Finally, in the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, prayer and the laying on of the hands by the ordaining Minister and by other Ministers, if more are present, in accordance with the Form for this purpose. It is understood that the imposition of hands may take place in the Classical assembly to the newly graduated Ministers being sent to the Churches under the Cross.

### Article 5

Ministers already in the ministry of the Word who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in this manner (including aforesaid correspondence), in cities as well as rural districts, by the Consistory and the Deacons, with the advice or approval of the Classis, to whom the aforesaid Ministers called, shall show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life; (after approval by the magistrate of the respective district and) after being presented to the congregation over a period of fourteen days, as before stated, they shall be installed after previous stipulations and prayers. All due regard

## Redaction of 1914

whom the ministers called show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeably to the Form for this purpose.

### Article 6

No Minister shall be at liberty to serve in institutions of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.

### Article 7

No one shall be called to the Ministry of the Word, without his being stationed in a particular place, except he be sent to do church extension work.

### Article 8

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in

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must also be given here to the things previously mentioned with respect to proper right of presentation or any other right, insofar as it can be employed to edification without detriment to the Church of God and good Church Order; to which (the Civil Authorities and) the Synods of the respective districts are to give their careful attention, and make proper regulations, to the welfare of the Churches.

### Article 6

No Minister shall be at liberty to serve in any private manors, institutions of mercy, or otherwise, unless he previously be admitted in accordance with the preceding Articles; and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.

### Article 7

No one shall be called to the ministry of the Word without stationing himself in a particular place, unless he be sent either to preach in one place or another for the Churches under the Cross, or to do Church extension work.

### Article 8

No school teachers, artizans, or others who have not studied, shall

## Redaction of 1914

preparation for the Ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible according to Article 4, shall not be admitted to the Ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion, as also gifts of public address. When such persons present themselves for the Ministry, the Classis (if the [particular] Synod approve) shall first examine them, and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches.

### Article 9

Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the Ministry in the Church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination, by the Classis, with the approval of Synod.

### Article 10

A Minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the Consistory, together with the Deacons, and knowledge on the part of the Classis; likewise no other church may receive him until he has

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be admitted to the ministry, unless there is definite assurance of their being exceptionally gifted, godly, humble, modest, and possessed of good sense and discretion, as well as gifts of public address. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the Classis shall (if the Synod approve) first examine them, and, the examination being satisfactory, permit them to preach in private for a certain length of time, and then further deal with them as it shall deem edifying.

### Article 9

Novices, priests, monks, and others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the ministry in the Church, except with extreme caution and circumspection, and after a definite period of probation.

### Article 10

A Minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation which unconditionally received him to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the consistory and the deacons (and those who previously held the office of elder and deacon, together with the magistrate), nor without the

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presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the church and the Classis where he served.

### Article 11

On the other hand, the Consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers, and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the Classis and of the Delegates of the (particular) Synod.

### Article 12

Inasmuch as a Minister of the Word, once lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the Classis.

### Article 13

Ministers, who by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise, are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their Office, shall

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knowledge of the Classis; likewise no other church shall be permitted to receive him until he has presented a legal certificate of dismissal from the church and the Classis where he served.

### Article 11

On the other hand, the Consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers, and shall not dismiss them without the knowledge and judgment of the Classis who, in the event of lack of support, shall judge whether or not to remove aforesaid Ministers.

### Article 12

Inasmuch as a Minister of the Word, once lawfully called in conformity to the above, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for important and weighty reasons which shall be subject to the cognizance and judgment of the Classis.

### Article 13

In the event that Ministers are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office due to age, sickness, or otherwise, they

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nevertheless retain the honor and title of a Minister, and the Church which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their need (likewise for the orphans and widows of Ministers) out of the common fund of the Churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter.

### Article 14

If any Minister, for the aforesaid or any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time, which shall not take place without the advice of the Consistory, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

### Article 15

No one shall be permitted, neglecting the Ministry of his Church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of Synod or Classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the Sacraments in another Church without the consent of the Consistory of that Church.

### Article 16

The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the

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shall nevertheless retain the honor and title of a Minister, and the church which they have served shall honorably provide for them in their needs, also for the widows and orphans of Ministers.

### Article 14

If any Minister, for the aforesaid or any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time, which shall not take place without the advice of the Consistory, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

### Article 15

No one shall be permitted, neglecting the ministry of his Church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of Synod or Classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the Sacraments in another Church without the consent of the Consistory.

### Article 16

The office of the Ministers is to continue in prayer and in the



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Ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

### Article 17

Among the Ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the Consistory, and if necessary, of the Classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the Elders and the Deacons.

### Article 18

The office of the Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

### Article 19

The Churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the Ministry of the Word.

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Ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over their brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as the Congregation, and finally with the Elders to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

### Article 17

Among Ministers of the Word, equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the Consistory, and, if necessary, of the Classis; which equality shall be maintained in the case of the Elders and Deacons.

### Article 18

The office of the Doctors or Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to uphold sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

### Article 19

The Churches shall make efforts to obtain students of theology which are to be supported by them (*ex bonis publicis*).

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### Article 20

Students who have received permission according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the Ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the Congregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship.

### Article 21

The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian Schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the Covenant.

### Article 22

The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the Consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the Consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as

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### Article 20

In the churches having more capable Ministers the practice of preparing some for the ministry of the Word by allowing them to speak a word of edification shall be instituted, in conformity to the rule in this matter, as specially prescribed by this Synod.

### Article 21

The consistories everywhere shall see to it that there are good school teachers, not only to teach the children reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts, but also to instruct them in godliness and in the Catechism.

### Article 22

The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons, so that every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to present to the Congregation as many Elders as are needed, that they may be installed with public prayers and stipulations after being approved by and with the assent of the congregation, unless any obstacle arise — or twice the number of Elders needed may

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many elders as are needed, that they may, after they are approved by it, unless any obstacle arise, be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one-half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeably to the Form for this purpose.

### Article 23

The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Minister of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow-Elders and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches to visit the families of the Congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian Religion.

### Article 24

The Deacons shall be chosen, approved, and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the Elders.

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be presented, half of them to be chosen by the congregation, and installed in office in the same manner, according to the Form for this purpose.

### Article 23

The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Ministers of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their other fellow helpers and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office; and, insofar as circumstances of time and place permit, to do house visitation both before and after the Lord's Supper for the edification of the congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members of the congregation, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian religion.

### Article 24

The Deacons shall be chosen, approved, and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the Elders.

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### Article 25

The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may see fit.

### Article 26

In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the Board of Directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the Diaconates assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions.

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### Article 25

The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, to distribute the same faithfully and diligently to the poor, both to residents and to strangers, as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort those in distress, and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may see fit.

### Article 26

In places where there are Visitants to shut-ins or other Almoners, the Deacons shall request them to maintain proper correspondence with them to the end that the alms may the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need.

**Article 27**

The Elders and Deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Articles 22 and 24, render a re-election advisable.

**Article 28**

The Consistory shall take care, that the churches for the possession of their property, and the peace and order of their meetings, can claim the protection of the Authorities; it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may never suffer the royal government of Christ over His Church to be in the least infringed upon.

**Article 27**

The Elders and Deacons shall serve two years, and every year half their number shall retire and others shall be substituted, unless the circumstances and the profit of any church require otherwise.

**Article 28**

As it is the office of Christian Magistrates to promote holy Divine Services in every way, to recommend them by their example to their subjects, and to assist whenever necessary the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons and to protect them by proper regulations, so it is the duty of all Ministers, Elders, and Deacons diligently and sincerely to impress upon the entire Congregation the obedience, love, and respect which they owe the Magistrates; further, all Church Officers shall set a good example to the Congregation, and seek to gain and retain the good will of the Magistrates toward the Churches by means of proper respect and correspondence, to the end that, each acting for the

**SECOND HEAD—THE  
ECCLESIASTICAL  
ASSEMBLIES**

**Article 29**

Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classis (the Particular Synod), and the General Synod.

**Article 30**

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the Churches of the major assembly in common.

**Article 31**

If any one complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered

mutual welfare in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and true concord be maintained to the welfare of the Churches.

**SECOND HEAD—THE  
ECCLESIASTICAL  
ASSEMBLIES**

**Article 29**

Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classical Meetings, the Particular Synod, and the General or National Synod.

**Article 30**

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.

**Article 31**

If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered

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settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by the General Synod.

### Article 32

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.

### Article 33

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their persons or churches.

### Article 34

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

### Article 35

The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in

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settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles formulated in this General Synod, as long as they are not changed by another General Synod.

### Article 32

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.

### Article 33

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they only shall have a vote.

### Article 34

In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of that which deserves to be recorded.

### Article 35

The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in

## Redaction of 1914

speaking; and properly to discipline them if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises.

### Article 36

The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.

### Article 37

In all Churches there shall be a Consistory composed of the Ministers of the Word and the Elders, who at least in larger congregations, shall, as a rule, meet once a week. The Minister of the Word (or the Ministers, if there be more than one, in turn) shall preside and regulate the proceedings. Whenever the number of the Elders is small, the Deacons may be added to the consistory by local regulation; this shall invariably be the rule where the number is less than three.

### Article 38

In places where the Consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall not take place except with the advice of the Classis.

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speaking; and properly to discipline them if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises.

### Article 36

The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.

### Article 37

In all churches there shall be a Consistory composed of the Ministers of the Word and the Elders, who shall meet at least once a week. The Minister of the Word, or the Ministers, if there be more than one, in turn shall preside and regulate the proceedings. (And also the Magistrates of the place respectively shall, if they desire to do so, delegate one or two of their number, being members of the Congregation, to the Consistory to listen to the matters under discussion and to participate in the deliberation.)

### Article 38

In places where the Consistory is to be constituted for the first time this shall not take place except with the advice of the Classis. And whenever the number of



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### Article 39

Places where as yet no Consistory can be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighboring Consistory.

### Article 40

The Deacons shall meet, wherever necessary, every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the Ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present.

### Article 41

The classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder to meet at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting. Such meetings shall be held at least once in three months, unless great distances render this inadvisable. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; how-

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Elders is very small, the Deacons may be added to the Consistory.

### Article 39

In places where as yet there is no Consistory, the Classis shall in the meantime take care of the work which would otherwise be performed by the Consistory in accordance with this Church Order.

### Article 40

Likewise the Deacons shall meet every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the name of God; whereunto the Ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present.

### Article 41

The Classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a Minister and an Elder, to meet at such a time and place as was determined by the previous Classical meeting, with the understanding that this be within the next three months. In these meetings the Ministers shall preside in rotation or the assembly shall choose one to preside; however, the same Minister shall not be chosen twice in succes-

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ever, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church:

Are the consistory meetings held in your church?

Is church discipline exercised?

Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?

Do you need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of your church?

And finally, at one but the last meeting and, if necessary, at the last meeting before the (Particular) Synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend said Synod.

### Article 42

Where in a church there are more Ministers than one, also those not delegated according to the foregoing article shall have the right to attend Classis with advisory vote.

### Article 43

At the close of the Classical and other major assemblies, Censure shall be exercised over those, who in the meeting have done something worthy of punishment, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

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sion. Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, ask each of them if Consistory meetings are held in their churches; if church discipline is exercised; if the poor and the schools are cared for; lastly, if they need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of their Church. The Minister designated by the previous Classis shall preach a brief sermon from the Word of God, of which the others shall judge and point out if anything be lacking in it. Finally, at the last meeting before the Particular Synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend said Synod.

### Article 42

When there are more Ministers than one in a church, all of them may attend the Classis and have a vote, except in matters which particularly concern their persons or churches.

### Article 43

At the close of the Classical and other major Assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who have done something worthy of punishment in the meeting or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

## Redaction of 1914

### Article 44

The Classis shall authorize at least two of her oldest, most experienced and most competent Ministers to visit all the Churches once a year and to take heed whether the Minister and the Consistory faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation, in particular of the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the churches. And each Classis may continue these visitors in service as long as it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the Classis shall judge.

### Article 45

It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis and likewise the (Particular) or General Synod

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### Article 44

The Classis shall authorize a number of its Ministers, at least two of the oldest, most experienced and competent ones, to visit all the Churches once a year, in cities as well as in rural districts and to take heed whether the Ministers, Consistories, and Schoolteachers faithfully perform the duties of their offices, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the Congregation, including the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the Churches and Schools. And each Classis may continue these Visitors in service as long as it sees fit, except where the Visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the Classis shall judge.

### Article 45

It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis, and likewise the Particular or General Synod

## Redaction of 1914

meets to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.

### Article 46

Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous Synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary.

### Article 47

(Every year [or if need be oftener] four or five or more neighboring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Classis shall delegate two Ministers and two Elders. At the close of both the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with advice of Classis the time and place of the next Synod.)

### Article 48

(Each Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.)

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meet, to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.

### Article 46

Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of the previous Synod have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed unless a revision be deemed necessary.

### Article 47

Every year, or if need be oftener, four or five or more neighboring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Classis shall delegate two Ministers and two Elders. At the close of both, the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with the advice of the Classis the time and place of the next Synod.

### Article 48

Each Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods, in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.

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### Article 49

(Each Synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by Synod both as to what pertains to the Government and to the respective Classes, resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future Ministers. And, moreover, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the Classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. Also they shall keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to Synod, and if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until Synod itself discharges them.)

### Article 50

The General Synod shall ordinarily meet once every two years unless there be urgent need to shorten the time.

To this Synod three Ministers and three Elders out of every Classis shall be delegated. If it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least three Classes to call a meeting of Synod within two years, the local church designated

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### Article 49

Each Synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by Synod both as to what pertains to the High Authorities and to the respective Classes resorting under it; and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future Ministers. And furthermore, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the Classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. They shall also keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to Synod, and if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until Synod itself discharges them.

### Article 50

The National Synod shall ordinarily be held every three years, unless an urgent need arises to make it a shorter period. Two Ministers and two Elders shall be sent from each Particular Synod (from both the German and the Welsh speaking churches). Further, the church charged with appointing the time and place of the General Synod shall convene its Particular Synod if the

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for this purpose shall determine time and place.

### Article 51

The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order.

### Article 52

Inasmuch as different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies, and in the publication of recommendations, instructions, and decisions.

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General Synod is to be called within the three years (and inform the nearest church speaking the other language, which is to send four persons there) to determine jointly the time and place. (When the church which has been appointed to convene the General Synod is consulting with the Classis regarding the time and place, it is to inform the High Authorities in due time, that with their knowledge, if it be their pleasure also to send some to the Classis, the matter be decided in the presence and with the advice of their Deputies.)

### Article 51

(Whereas two languages are spoken in the Netherlands, it is deemed proper that the churches of the German and the Welsh languages each have their own Consistories, Classical Meetings, and Particular Synods.)

### Article 52

(Notwithstanding, it is resolved that in the cities where before-mentioned Welsh churches are found, some Ministers and Elders from both sides meet every month to maintain proper unity and correspondence with each other and, as much as possible,

**THIRD HEAD—THE  
DOCTRINE,  
SACRAMENTS, AND  
OTHER CEREMONIES**

**Article 53**

The Ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors of Theology (which also behooves the other professors and School Teachers) shall subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and the Ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall de facto be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.

**Article 54**

Likewise the Elders and Deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid Formulas of Unity.

**Article 55**

To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly

assist one another with advice as the need arises.)

**THIRD HEAD—THE  
DOCTRINE,  
SACRAMENTS, AND  
OTHER CEREMONIES**

**Article 53**

The Ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors in Theology shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands Churches (which is proper for the other Professors as well), and the Ministers who refuse to do so shall de facto be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have declared themselves fully in this matter, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.

**Article 54**

Likewise the Schoolteachers shall subscribe to the aforesaid Articles or instead thereof to the Christian Catechism.

**Article 55**

No one of the Reformed religion shall presume to have printed

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through heretical writings, the Ministers and Elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, as well in the Ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

### Article 56

The Covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by Baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.

### Article 57

The Ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for Baptism.

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or published in any other way any book or writing, treating of religion, prepared or translated by himself or by someone else, unless it is previously looked over and approved by the Ministers of the Word of his Classis, or by the Particular Synod, or by the Professors of Theology of these provinces, but with the knowledge of his Classis.

### Article 56

The Covenant of God shall be sealed to the children of Christians by Baptism as soon as the administration thereof is feasible in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached. But in those places where sermons are preached less frequently, a certain day of the week shall be set aside for the administration of Baptism in a special service, not however, without the preaching of a sermon.

### Article 57

The Ministers shall do their best and put forth every effort to have the father present his child for baptism. And in the Congregations where Sponsors or Witnesses are taken at Baptism beside the father (which custom, not being objectionable in itself,



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### Article 58

In the ceremony of Baptism, both of children and of adults, the Minister shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this Sacrament.

### Article 59

Adults are through Baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, and are accepted as members of the Church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their Baptism.

### Article 60

The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded.

### Article 61

None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves have made a confes-

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is not easily changed) it is proper that such be taken who agree with the pure doctrine and are pious in their conversation.

### Article 58

In baptizing both children and adults the Ministers shall employ the Forms pertaining to the institution and administration of Baptism which have been drawn up respectively for this purpose.

### Article 59

Adults are incorporated through Baptism into the Christian Church and are received as members of the Church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their Baptism.

### Article 60

The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents and witnesses and likewise the date of Baptism, shall be recorded.

### Article 61

None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who, according to the usage of the Church to which they unite themselves, have made confession

## Redaction of 1914

sion of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.

### Article 62

Every Church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.

### Article 63

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

### Article 64

The administration of the Lord's

## 1618-1619 Edition

of religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly conversation, without which also those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.

### Article 62

Every Church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers on the pulpit, the Form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read at the Table.

### Article 63

The Lord's Supper shall be administered once every two months, wherever possible, and it will be edifying that it take place at Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas where the circumstances of the Church permit. However, in those places where the Church has not yet been instituted, first of all Elders and Deacons shall be provided.

### Article 64

Whereas the Evening Prayer

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Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of Elders, according to the ecclesiastical order, and in a public gathering of the Congregation.

### Article 65

Funeral sermons or funeral services shall not be introduced.

### Article 66

In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the Churches, it is fitting that the Classes proclaim a Day of Prayer.

### Article 67

The Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National

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Meetings are found profitable in many places, every Church shall govern their use in a manner they judge to conduce most to their edification. However, in case they would desire to discontinue them, this is not to be done without the judgment of the Classis (and of the Authorities who favor the Reformed Religion).

### Article 65

If funeral sermons are not in use, they are not to be introduced, and if they already have come to be accepted, diligence shall be exercised to dispose of them by the most suitable means.

### Article 66

In times of war, pestilence, calamities, heavy persecution of the Churches, and other general distresses, the Ministers of the Churches shall request the Government to employ their authority and command that public days of Fasting and Prayer be appointed and set aside.

### Article 67

The Churches shall observe, in addition to Sunday, also Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, with the following day, and whereas in most of the cities and provinces

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Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.

### Article 68

The Ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose.

### Article 69

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung.

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of the Netherlands the day of Circumcision and of Ascension of Christ are also observed, Ministers in every place where this is not yet done shall take steps with the Government to have them conform with the others.

### Article 68

The Ministers everywhere shall briefly explain on Sunday, ordinarily in the afternoon sermon, the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Catechism which at present is accepted in the Netherland Churches, so that it may be completed every year in accordance with the division of the Catechism itself made for that purpose.

### Article 69

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Song of Mary, that of Zacharias, and that of Simeon shall be sung. It is left to the individual Churches whether or not to use the hymn, "Oh God! who art our Father." All other hymns are to be excluded from the Churches, and in those places where some have already been introduced, they are

**Article 70**

Since it is proper that the matrimonial state be confirmed in the presence of Christ's Church, according to the Form for that purpose, the Consistories shall attend to it.

**FOURTH HEAD – CENSURE  
AND ECCLESIASTICAL  
ADMONITION**

**Article 71**

As Christian Discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from Civil trial or punishment by the Authorities, so also besides Civil punishment there is need of Ecclesiastical Censures, to reconcile the sinner with the Church and his neighbor and to remove the offense out of the Church of Christ.

to be removed by the most suitable means.

**Article 70**

Whereas up to now various usages in regard to marriages are maintained everywhere, and it nevertheless is proper that uniformity be exercised in this matter, therefore the Churches shall adhere to the method which they, in conformity to the Word of God and previous ecclesiastical regulations have maintained up to now, until the High Authorities (which are to be asked to do so at the earliest opportunity) shall prepare a general Regulation with the advice of the Ministers of the Churches, to which this Church Order refers itself in this matter.

**FOURTH HEAD – CENSURE  
AND ECCLESIASTICAL  
ADMONITION**

**Article 71**

As Christian discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from civil trial or punishment by the authorities, so also besides civil punishment there is need for ecclesiastical censure, to reconcile the sinner with the Church and with his neighbor, and to remove the offense out of the Church of Christ.

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### Article 72

In case any one errs in doctrine or offends in conduct, as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.

### Article 73

Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be laid before the Consistory.

### Article 74

If any one, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the Consistory.

### Article 75

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the Church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of

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### Article 72

In case anyone transgresses against the purity of doctrine or godliness of conversation, as long as it is of a private character and has not given public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.

### Article 73

Secret sins of which the sinner repents after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be laid before the Consistory.

### Article 74

If anyone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the Consistory.

### Article 75

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the Church was despised, shall take place, when definite signs of repentance are evident, publicly, by the judgment of the Consistory; and in rural districts or

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each Church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public, shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it in the Consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring Churches or of the Classis.

### Article 76

Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of the Classis.

### Article 77

After the suspension from the Lord's Table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care

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smaller towns having only one Minister, with the advice of two neighboring Churches, in such a form and manner as shall be judged to be conducive to the edification of each Church.

### Article 76

Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeable to the Form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with previous advice of Classis.

### Article 77

Before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the Congregation, explaining the offense, together with the diligence bestowed upon him in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and manifold

## Redaction of 1914

bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the Church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.

### Article 78

Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the Church in the way of repentance, it shall be announced to the Congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he may with profession of his conversion be publicly

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admonitions; and the Congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned, that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the Congregation shall be informed that, unless he repent, he will be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the Church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.

### Article 78

Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the Church in the way of penitence, it shall be announced to the Congregation, either before the administration of the Lord's Supper or at some opportune time, in order that, insofar as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary, at the next Lord's Supper he may, with profession of



## Redaction of 1914

reinstated, according to the form for that purpose.

### Article 79

When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders, or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the Authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the Ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis, with the advice of the Delegates of the (Particular) Synod mentioned in Article 11.

### Article 80

Furthermore, among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness,

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his repentance, be publicly reinstated, according to the Form for that purpose.

### Article 79

When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders, or Deacons have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the Authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately, by preceding sentence of the Consistory of that Church and the nearest adjoining Church, be deposed from their office, but the Ministers shall be suspended. But whether or not they are to be entirely deposed from their office shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis.

### Article 80

Furthermore, among the gross sins which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness,

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brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the Church would be considered worthy of excommunication.

### Article 81

The Ministers of the Word, Elders, and Deacons, shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

### Article 82

To those who remove from the Congregation, a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the Consistory, signed by two; or in the case of letters, which are given under the seal of the Church, signed by one.

### Article 83

Furthermore, to the poor, removing for sufficient reasons, so much money for traveling shall be given by the Deacons, as they deem adequate. The Consistory and the Deacons shall, however, see to it that they be not too much inclined to relieve their Churches

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brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the Church would cause him to be considered worthy of excommunication.

### Article 81

The Ministers of the Word, Elders, and Deacons shall exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

### Article 82

To those who remove from the Congregation, a certificate of dismissal or testimony regarding their conversation shall be given them at the discretion of the Consistory, under the seal of the Church, or where there is no seal, signed by two.

### Article 83

Furthermore, the poor shall, when removing for sufficient reasons, receive assistance from the Deacons at their discretion provided it be noted on the reverse side of their certificate of dismissal to places to which they

## Redaction of 1914

of the poor, with whom they would without necessity burden other Churches.

### Article 84

No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.

### Article 85

Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.

### Article 86

These Articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the Churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished. However, no particular Congregation, Classis, (or Synod) shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod.

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wish to go, and the assistance they have received.

### Article 84

No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.

### Article 85

Foreign Churches whose usages regarding nonessentials differ from ours shall not be rejected.

### Article 86

These Articles, relating to the lawful Order of the Churches, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they, if the profit of the Churches demand otherwise, may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished. However, no particular Congregation, Classis, or Synod shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General or National Synod.

# Heritage Reformed Churches

## Formula of Subscription

We, the undersigned (that is, Professors of the Heritage Reformed Congregations—or Ministers of the Gospel, Elders, and Deacons of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of \_\_\_\_\_), do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619), do fully agree with the Word of God. We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above-mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory and Classis, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory and Classis, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the consistory or Classis, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod,

we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory or the Classis, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

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Signature

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Office

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Date

# Heritage Reformed Congregations

## RULES FOR CHURCH VISITATION

### GENERAL RULES

#### Article 1

The appointees for church visitation shall give the consistory to be visited at least fourteen days notice of the time when consistory visitation will occur.

#### Article 2

Before or on the Sunday prior to church visitation, the consistory shall inform the congregation of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

#### Article 3

All consistory members and deacons are obligated to be at the meeting. In the event of lawful hindrances, the reason(s) must be brought to the attention of the president of the visited church prior to the meeting. If the majority of the consistory is not present, church visitation will be held at another stipulated time.

#### Article 4

The visitors shall ask whether the membership records, the minutes of the consistory and congregational meetings, and the financial records of the funds collected for the church and deaconry, are in good order, and that the financial records are audited annually. If needed, these documents should be available for review.

#### Article 5

The chairmanship of the meeting shall reside in the president of the consistory who shall give the appointees the opportunity to perform their labors which are to be divided between them. No appointee may belong to the consistory which he visits.

## Article 6

If desired, a short summary of the visit may be made by the appointees, which is to be signed by the consistory.

## Article 7

After church visitations, the appointees shall report to the next classis meeting the state of affairs in the churches they have visited.

### THE EXAMINATION

#### (Questions Addressed to the Whole Consistory)

1. Was the time, place, and purpose of this church visitation made known to the congregation on or before the previous Sunday?
2. Are all the consistory members present? If not, why?
3. Are all the books mentioned in Article 4 of the Rules available for review?
4. Are the archives kept in order and satisfactorily preserved? Do they contain the minutes of Classis, the previous minutes of the consistory, the records of church and deaconry, and all that is to be preserved by the consistory to properly serve the church in the future? Is there also a ledger of these records kept in the archives?
5. Are the monies for the church and the needy funds managed prudently and with sufficient control?
6. Are the monies and title deeds of the church and deaconry preserved in a safe place?
7. Are there brothers and/or sisters who desire a hearing at this meeting?

#### *A. Ministration of the Word*

1. Is the Word administered twice on the Lord's Day with the Heidelberg Catechism explained according to Article 68 of the Church Order?
2. Are only persons permitted to preach who have been examined and admitted by a classis or by a committee appointed by the Synod of the Heritage Reformed Congregations in North America?
3. Does the congregation faithfully attend the ministration of the Word? Is spiritual fruit perceived upon the preaching of the Word?

4. Is the amount collected for the church and deaconry satisfactory?

***B. Ministration of the Word in Vacant Churches***

1. Are serious attempts made to call a minister of the Word?
2. Does the consistory avail itself of the opportunities to be served by a minister?
3. Is the selection of sermons to be read made by the consistory or is it left to the one who is to read? Is there a rule regulating which elder is to read in the reading services? Is there supervision concerning additions or deletions that are made in the sermons that are being read?
4. In meetings of the congregation, does an elder always offer prayer?
5. During vacancy, does the consistory make regular provision for the explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism?
6. Are the services of the moderator used, especially when calling ministers?
7. Is the service rendered by the moderator satisfactory?

***C. Administration of the Sacraments***

1. Are the forms for the administration of the sacraments fully used?
2. Is Holy Baptism administered upon request? Is it promptly performed or is it arbitrarily delayed?
3. When baptism is requested, is information given concerning the significance of Holy Baptism and the responsibilities of the parents?
4. Are the records of administered baptisms kept in good order?
5. Is the Lord's Supper administered regularly, at least four times a year, and after a preparatory sermon has been delivered?
6. Has a friendly Christian censure (appraisal) been exercised among the members of the consistory before each administration of the Lord's Supper (according to Article 81 of the Church Order)?
7. Does the consistory watch for profanation of the Lord's Supper?

***D. Public Confession***

1. Are the questions used in public confession of faith selected by the consistory?



2. How does the consistory treat those who have come to the years of discretion and have not made confession of faith?

**E. *House Visitation***

1. Is regular house visitation made so that the entire congregation is visited at least once a year? Is each member in the household addressed in house visitation? Besides speaking about matters concerning the Lord's Supper and the spiritual conditions of the family, is the Word of God as it concerns the home, church, and society emphasized? Is the reading of our church publications and other sound religious books recommended?
2. Are the sick, poor, widows, widowers, and elderly visited regularly?
3. Are those who have transferred to this church with a certificate of membership promptly visited and assisted with advice and help?
4. Is house visitation provided for those in nursing establishments?

**F. *Catechetical Instruction***

1. Are catechism classes held regularly?
2. What books are used? In the event that material is used instead of the Heidelberg Catechism, does it contain instruction of the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches?
3. Do the elders visit the classes for the purpose of supervision?
4. Is faithful use made of catechetical instruction? In what manner is absenteeism corrected?
5. Are results of catechetical instruction discernible?

**G. *Education***

1. Is there a Christian school in this area?
2. Do all children of the congregation receive a Christian education — either in a Christian school or by way of parental home-schooling?
3. How does the consistory deal with parents who send their children to the public school?
4. Is there a tie between the church and the Christian school? Does the consistory supervise the educational process?

**H. *Consistory***

1. Are the Forms of Unity subscribed to by all members of the consistory and by the deacons?

2. Does the consistory meet at a specified time? Is the congregation informed? Are accurate notes taken at the meetings of important matters?
3. Is the number of elders and deacons sufficient?
4. Are all matters handled according to the Word of God, the Forms of Unity, and the Church Order?
5. What is done to increase the knowledge of the office bearers so as to properly discharge their office?
6. Does the consistory meet with the members of the congregation for discussion of congregational matters?
7. Does the consistory exercise church discipline with seriousness, unbiasedness and according to the command of God's Word and the Church Order?
8. Are unlawful gatherings held?
9. When a member transfers to another location, is a membership paper or baptismal certificate given to him so he can present it to the consistory in his new location? Does the consistory notify the consistory of the church in the new location of this?
10. Does the consistory have supervision over existing societies and how is this supervision exercised?

*I. Mission*

1. What does the church do for the mission?
2. How is zeal and love for missions aroused?
3. Does the consistory work to win those who do not belong to our congregation?

*J. Denominational Unity*

1. Is the consistory faithful in upholding the decisions of major assemblies?
2. Are the decisions of Classis reported by the deputies to the consistory?
3. Are collections held for causes recommended by Classis?

**Questions to the Consistory in Absence  
of the Minister of the Word**

1. Are Word and sacraments faithfully administered according to God's Word, the Forms of Unity, and the Church Order?
2. Is the instruction edifying, sound, and profitable?
3. Does the minister regularly hold catechism classes? Does he demonstrate a proper concern for catechetical instruction?

4. Does it appear from his sermons that he is zealous in his studies?
5. Does he visit the sick?
6. Does he also take part in visiting families?
7. Does he reveal himself in his private and public life as a faithful God-fearing servant of the Lord?
8. Does he receive a sufficient income to adequately and honorably live from the gospel?

### **Questions to the Minister of the Word and the Deacons in Absence of the Elders**

1. Do the elders regularly attend congregational and consistory meetings?
2. Do they stand in a good, brotherly relationship to the minister of the Word and faithfully assist him?
3. Do the elders visit the congregation and observe whether they are abiding by the sound doctrines of the Word of God as stated in our doctrinal standards? Do the elders labor to remove offences from the church of the Lord? Do they seek to strengthen the weak, admonish to repentance those who fall, correct the unruly, and subdue all discord and lack of unity?
4. Do they search the Scriptures in respect to the mysteries of faith?
5. Do they conduct themselves in family and public life as examples for the congregation?

### **Questions Addressed to the Minister of the Word and the Elders in Absence of the Deacons**

1. Do the deacons regularly attend congregational, consistory, and special meetings in accordance with Article 40 of the Church Order?
2. Do they faithfully discharge their office regarding the poor, widows, and widowers? Do they faithfully visit them? Do they comfort their hearts with words of consolation as well as with special gifts appropriate to the specific needs?
3. What means are employed to help the poor? Are relatives admonished by the deacons concerning their responsibility to help?
4. Do they keep records of receipts and expenses and do they

- give an account of them to the consistory and congregation at a specified time?
5. Do the deacons offer support to institutions of mercy?
  6. Do they reveal themselves in their family and public life as examples for the congregation?
  7. Do they participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper?

### CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

1. Does the consistory labor in neighboring locations where the church has not been organized to the Reformed confession?
2. Does the consistory want any advice or instructions from the appointees?

## RECORDS OF CHURCH VISITATIONS

Congregation of \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Full Members \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized Members \_\_\_\_\_

=====

Baptized \_\_\_\_\_

Marriages \_\_\_\_\_

### RELIEF FUND:

Balance	_____	
	DATE	_____

Receipts		_____
----------	--	-------

Total		_____
-------	--	-------

Payments		_____
----------	--	-------

Balance	_____	
	DATE	=====

### CHURCH FUND:

Balance	_____	
	DATE	_____

Receipts		_____
----------	--	-------

Total		_____
-------	--	-------

Payments		_____
----------	--	-------

Balance	_____	
	DATE	=====

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

Church-visitors: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# The Heritage Reformed Congregations

## Credentials for Classis

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Consistory of the:

### HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATION of

\_\_\_\_\_

at their meeting held on \_\_\_\_\_ has appointed the following brothers as delegates to the \_\_\_\_\_ Classis Meeting:

Pastor/Elder		Primus
Pastor		Advisory/Secundus Pastor
Pastor		Advisor
Elder		Primus
Elder		Secundus
Elder		Advisor

These brothers have charge and authority as representatives of our congregation as if she were entirely present, to act and decide in conformity with the Word of God in all matters which shall be brought up for consideration at this classical meeting.

Our Consistory expects that the 1914 Redaction of the Church Order of Dort and approved clarifications subscribed to by the *Heritage Reformed Congregations* shall be referenced at all proceedings.

The Consistory of the *Heritage Reformed Congregation* of

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\_\_\_\_\_, President

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



## APPENDIX #1

### **Policy for Admission of Non-HRC Ministers into the HRC Pulpit Ministry**

*(April 16, 2010—Motion #14)*

#### *Possible Situations*

The two most common situations in which non-HRC ministers may be interested in applying for ministry in HRC churches are:

1. The minister himself may feel called to apply for pulpit ministry in the HRC
  - For the first time,
  - Or, having served the HRC in the past, he may feel called to reapply for ministerial credentials in the HRC.
2. A particular HRC congregation may desire to call a non-HRC minister to some form of ministry that serves the local body and/or one or more of her outreaches. This situation could take place either with a view to having
  - A minister's credentials moved to the HRC;
  - A minister-on-loan from the denomination that holds his credentials.

#### *Prerequisites for Applications Initiated by a Non-HRC Minister of the Gospel*

1. Any minister may apply for admission to the HRC who
  - a) is willing to be committed to using the King James Version of the Bible.
  - b) can wholeheartedly subscribe to the doctrinal standards of the HRC which are the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards with the exception of the HRC-approved caveats to the latter.
  - c) whose personal convictions concur with the Reformed, Puritan, experiential emphases.
2. Application for admission to the HRC will be considered if,
  - a) The applicant has contacted the consistory of this HRC congre-

- gation to explain his desires and convictions. HRC consistories should be prepared for such a meeting.
- b) The applicant, after this meeting, has provided this consistory with a written document about his conversion and call to the ministry. This document should answer the five questions asked in Appendix 2 of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary catalog, as well as this additional question: Why do you believe God may be calling you to minister in the Heritage Reformed Congregations?
  - c) The applicant must supply:
    - A statement of health from a physician,
    - Ministerial credentials from the denomination to which he presently belongs,
    - Three written testimonials as to his satisfactory exercise of the gifts needed for the gospel ministry. The testimonials shall include answers to Appendix 3 of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary catalog.
    - Several of his most recently recorded sermons.
3. After having received the applicant's answers, and having listened to some of his sermons, the consistory shall meet with the applicant and the Deputies of the synodical Article 49 Committee. The consistory and the Deputies of Article 49 shall interview the applicant and listen to a live sermon preached by him. They will then together seek to ascertain the applicant's
- a) Soundness of doctrine,
  - b) Sanctity of life,
  - c) Preaching gifts,
  - d) Knowledge and appreciation of the HRC and its distinctives,
  - e) Sufficiency of education.
  - f) A testimony of doctrine and life from the consistory or session of the last congregation in which the nominee served or previous congregations if circumstances warrant.
4. If the majority of the consistory is in favor of letting the process move forward, the consistory shall present the necessary paperwork to the HRC Synod, which shall include
- a) The applicant's answers to the six questions mentioned above;
  - b) A record of how the consistory has proceeded in this matter;

- c) A minimum of three of his most recently recorded sermons;
  - d) An independent report from the Deputies of Article 49.
5. Synod, upon having ascertained that all the proper paperwork has been received, will then examine the applicant. This examination will include:
- a) An oral interview,
    - Requesting further clarification of all that has been submitted in writing;
    - To obtain answers to all the questions listed in the appendix.
  - b) Listening to a live sermon;
  - c) The consideration whether the applicant is requesting that
    - His credential papers be formally received by the HRC;
    - He be accepted as a minister-on-loan from his present denomination.
6. It is feasible that Synod could vote in favor of letting the application move forward if certain conditions are met, such as
- Some additional coursework;
  - Or an internship.
- Synod has the right to tailor these conditions to each individual situation.
7. Upon Synod having approved of the application by a 2/3 majority, the following needs to occur before the applicant can be received into HRC pulpit ministry:
- a) For a period of at least one half year, he must preach regularly in all HRC churches;
  - b) After each preaching engagement, the churches must submit an evaluation to the Deputies of Article 49;
  - c) All stipulations of #6 must have been met satisfactorily;
  - d) The Deputies of Article 49 must convene to
    - review these evaluations;
    - ascertain that all requirements have been met satisfactorily;
    - meet with the applicant (if this is deemed necessary);
  - e) Should this assessment not be favorable, the Deputies of Article

49 must then forward the application to the next session of the HRC Synod, at which time a final decision regarding this application will be made. The deputies may ask the applicant to continue preaching in HRC churches until Synod convenes (7b would then continue to be applicable);

- f) If, however, the assessment of these deputies is favorable, they will then inform all HRC churches that the applicant is now eligible to receive a call;
  - g) Upon the acceptance of a call, the applicant will be installed as an HRC minister of the gospel, at which time he will
    - Be asked to sign the formula of subscription;
    - Receive a formal certificate of his HRC credentials.
8. If, after two years of being eligible for call, there is no confirmation by receipt of a call to serve a local church, Synod shall consider whether to sustain or to divest the applicant of the privileges of being callable in the HRC.

#### *Prerequisites for Admissions Initiated by a Local Consistory*

1. Ministers from other denominations may be called by HRC congregations only in exceptional cases. Before a consistory can proceed to call a minister from another denomination, the consistory must:
  - a. Establish in writing that there is a pressing local need, which can best be met by the proposed nominee.
  - b. Secure the Moderator's endorsement if the congregation is vacant. If the Moderator objects to the proposed nomination, he must report his objections to Synod in writing.
  - c. Obtain the approval of the Article 49 Committee to ascertain whether the proposed nominee would consider such a call if he were to receive it. This approval will only be granted if the Article 49 Committee is convinced that either
    1. No ministers in the HRC are eligible for call;
    2. No HRC ministerial students will be available in the immediate future;
    3. Or that local circumstances are such that the needs of this HRC congregation can best be met by the proposed nominee.
  - d. If a-c have been met satisfactorily, and the proposed nominee is

willing to consider such a call, the following must occur before a call can be extended:

- 1) The consistory of the HRC congregation desiring to call the proposed nominee should ask him to submit a written document regarding his conversion and call to the ministry. This document should answer the five questions asked in Appendix 2 of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary catalog, as well as this additional question: Why do you believe God may be calling you to minister in the Heritage Reformed Congregations?
- 2) The proposed nominee must also supply
  - A statement of health from a physician;
  - Official ministerial credentials;
  - Three written testimonials as to his satisfactory exercise of the gifts needed for the gospel ministry. (The testimonials shall include answers to Appendix 3 of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary catalog.);
  - Several of his most recently recorded sermons.
- 3) The proposed nominee, if he is without a charge, must agree to serve the congregation on a trial basis for a period of at least three months. During this period,
  - He will engage in all the duties of the pastoral ministry;
  - He will be financially supported by the congregation.If the proposed nominee is presently serving a congregation, he will be exempted from serving the required three month trial period.
- 4) Recordings of sermons preached during this trial period will be submitted to the Deputies of Article 49 for evaluation.
- 5) Upon the completion of this trial period, the consistory shall meet with the nominee and the Deputies of Article 49. During this interview they shall together seek to ascertain the nominee's soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, preaching gifts, knowledge and appreciation of the HRC and its distinctives, and sufficiency of education.
- 6) If, as a result of this meeting, the Deputies of Article 49

should object to the extension of a call to the proposed nominee, the consistory requesting the extension of this call will have the following options:

- Submit to the decision of the Deputies of Article 49;
  - Appeal this decision to the next session of the HRC Synod;
  - Withdraw from the federation of the HRC.
2. If, with the approbation of the Deputies of Article 49, the consistory then decides to proceed, it must convene a congregational meeting to explain the situation, and to seek to know the mind of the flock. At this point, the congregation may
    - a) Approve of the nomination with a majority vote (the extent of the majority to be determined by the local consistory) and proceed to extend a call;
    - b) Request an extension of the trial period, at the end of which another congregational meeting would be convened to determine whether a call will be extended.
  3. If the congregation votes to extend a call to the nominee, and if the nominee subsequently accepts the call, the consistory shall then present the necessary paperwork to Synod, requesting that this brother be accepted and installed as an HRC minister of the gospel. This formal request to Synod will include:
    - a) The nominee's answers to the six questions mentioned above;
    - b) A record of how the consistory has proceeded in this matter;
    - c) An evaluation of this brother's ministry in the congregation during the aforementioned trial period;
    - d) An independent report from the Deputies of Article 49.
  4. Synod, upon having ascertained that all the proper paperwork has been received, will then examine the applicant. This examination will include:
    - a) An oral interview,
      - Requesting further clarification of all that has been submitted in writing;
      - To obtain answers to all the questions listed in the appendix.
    - b) Listening to a live sermon;

- c) The consideration whether the applicant is requesting that
    - his credential papers be formally received by the HRC;
    - he be accepted as a minister-on-loan from his present denomination.
5. It is feasible that Synod could vote in favor of letting the application move forward if certain conditions are met, such as
- some additional coursework
  - or an additional period of internship.
- Synod reserves the right to tailor these conditions to each individual situation.
6. Upon Synod having approved of the application by a 2/3 majority, the following needs to occur before the applicant can be installed in the HRC congregation that has called him:
- a) He must have preached at least once in all HRC churches;
  - b) All stipulations of #5 must have been met satisfactorily;
  - c) All evaluations of such preaching engagements must be assessed by the Deputies of Article 49;
  - d) Should this assessment not be favorable, the Deputies of Article 49 must then forward the application to the next session of the HRC Synod, at which time a final decision regarding this application will be made. The deputies may ask the applicant to continue preaching in HRC churches until Synod convenes (6b would then continue to be applicable);
  - e) If, however, the assessment of these deputies is favorable, they will then inform the congregation whose call the applicant has accepted, as well as all HRC churches, that the applicant can now be installed as an HRC pastor of this congregation;
  - f) At the time of his installation, this brother will
    - Be asked to sign the formula of subscription;
    - Receive a formal certificate of his HRC credentials.

## APPENDIX #2

### Guideline Questions for Interviews

The following questions, in addition to those already referred to above, may serve as helpful guidelines to consistories as they interview ministers either for possible admission into the HRC or for possible admission into their local pulpit.

#### REFORMED DOGMATICS

*What is your view on:*

1. Holy Scripture and the current historical-critical methods in interpreting Scripture? Genesis 1-3?
2. God's sovereignty and election?
3. The covenants and covenant theology?
4. The relationship of law and gospel?
5. The order of salvation?
6. The relationship of repentance and faith to justification? The relationship of justification to sanctification?
7. Assurance of faith?
8. The distinction between the visible and invisible church?
9. Covenant children?
10. Church government?
11. Women in the office?
12. The relationship between confession of faith and the Lord's Supper?
13. The relationship of Word and Spirit?
14. Infant Baptism?
15. Paedo-communion?
16. Gifts of the Spirit (as speaking in tongues, modern prophecy, faith healing, "second blessing," etc.)?
17. Millennialism?
18. Dispensationalism and Theonomy?

#### ETHICS

*What is your view on:*

1. The role of the Ten Commandments for the Christian life?
2. Lord's Day observance?



3. Issues related to worldliness?
4. Abortion and euthanasia?
5. The role of government?
6. Christian witnessing?
7. The media?

## **PREACHING**

1. How do you select your texts for preaching?
2. What sort of literature (commentaries) do you consult in preparing your sermons?
3. What is in your view balanced preaching?
4. What elements should be found in preaching?
5. What is your view on applicatory and discriminatory preaching?
6. What would you understand by pastoral preaching?
7. What is your view on the offer of grace?
8. What place should covenant and election have in preaching?
9. What is your view of church feast days?

## **LITURGY**

*What is your view on:*

1. Use of Bible Version?
2. Place of preaching in the worship service?
3. The regulative principle of worship?
4. Use of language in prayer?
5. Psalms-singing?
6. The liturgy in use by the HRC (see back of the Psalter)?
7. Signing the Formula of Subscription?

## APPENDIX #3

### **Levels of Ecclesiastical Fellowship**

*(Adopted by the HRC Synod on April 15, 2011—Motion #10)*

#### *Level 1: Informal Contact*

1. This informal level allows relationships to develop with like-minded churches or denominations without requiring a formal tie. This level includes only informal communication with various churches and denominations around us, both in our local community as well as beyond.
2. There is no obligation or commitment except for us to witness the Reformed biblical truth to them.
3. Meetings with their representatives are to be held by the Church Correspondence Committee in order to determine if there is sufficient ground to bring a request before Synod that this denomination/congregation ought to be considered eligible to move to the second level of correspondence. Synod must approve of this request before any other level of correspondence can be carried out. These meetings would seek to determine the doctrinal position of the denomination/congregation and whether or not they uphold the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Standards.

#### *Level 2: Formal Correspondence*

1. A church and/or denomination would need to direct its committee representatives to sign the Formula for Public Declaration of Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity and/or Westminster Standards on behalf of their broadest assembly.
2. Copies of the official minutes, without confidential material, of the broadest assemblies are to be sent to each other. A copy of each issue of the official denominational publication is to be sent to one another's consistory members.
3. Representatives of both denominations would continue to meet to determine whether the next level of communication is attainable and desirable and if so, the Church Correspondence Committee would forward this request on to Synod for approval.
4. This is done with the understanding that this level of "Formal

Correspondence” must be in place for a minimum of two years before the next level of communication would be considered.

***Level 3: Limited Fellowship***

1. At this level there is a formal acknowledgment that the gifts found in each other’s churches can be employed in the churches/denominations for the spiritual building up of the kingdom of God. This level would include everything under “Formal Correspondence” and the following:
  - Each individual consistory of the HRC would be free to invite any minister from those denomination(s)/ congregation(s) [which have been given classis approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to preach in their pulpits.
  - Each individual consistory of the HRC would be free to allow any member from these denomination(s)/congregation(s) [which have been given synodical approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to attend the Lord’s Supper.
  - Mutual agreement is made with the corresponding denomination/congregation, that delegates would be sent to one another’s broadest assemblies as advisory members only. This Level of Fellowship may be revoked at any time by Synod.

***Level 4: Full Fellowship***

1. At this level the realization of Christ’s prayer is more fully evidenced.
2. This level includes everything under “Limited Fellowship” as well as:
  - Ministers would be considered having full ministerial rights in either federation;
  - Ministers would be callable from any congregation in either federation without further examination.
3. This full fellowship could include various considerations or stipulations made by both federations in order to arrive at this level. These would mutually be agreed upon by both federations and must not hinder the professed unity expressed.
4. At this point, such fellowship is permanent. This would mean

that if either a congregation or the federation departs from the Word of God, the recourse is to appeal to the broadest assembly. If no reconciliation is made, sadly, separation must then take place on the basis of the Word of God.

*Level 5: Full Union*

Full union means that a complete amalgamation of two federations of churches has taken place. Such amalgamation will

1. Only be proposed after these federations have functioned harmoniously and efficiently at level 4 for a minimum of two years;
2. Be the result of the Synods of both federations having approved of this by a 2/3 majority;
3. Constitute a new federation with a previously agreed upon
  - Set of doctrinal standards
  - Church order
  - Ecclesiastical structure (e.g. Classes, Regional Synods, Synods);
4. Be the fullest realization of Christ's prayer that His people be one as He and His Father are one.