

NORTH GREENVILLE CHURCH

A Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship

Northern Greenville County, South Carolina

CONGREGATIONAL BY-LAWS

Preamble:

In January of 2016, a group of people (many of which had been a part of the former Travelers Mission of Second Presbytery) met together to discuss the possibility of establishing a Church in the North Greenville area. By unanimous decision, it was decided to move forward with this dream. A second meeting was scheduled to be held at the Pebble Creek Grill. At this meeting a steering committee was elected comprised of Stan Grist, Randy Jeffeaux, Tommy Morgan, Lucky Thomas, and Don Woodard. Two elders from the Greenville A.R.P. Church: Welch Bostick and David Junker along with the Rev. Bill Barron agreed to be advisors for the committee. The committee was tasked with the responsibility to take whatever steps were necessary to move the group forward in organizing the “North Greenville Church.” They were to act in a leadership role until such time as elders would be elected and installed. Following that election, they would continue serving in a diaconal capacity meeting with and working with the elders. They would also act a board of trustees to charter the church and to draw up a constitution for the body.

Worship was held at the Travelers Rest YMCA through Easter, March 27, 2016. The church then shifted its worship to the Woodlands at Furman. Each Sunday meeting at 9:30 am for Sunday School and morning worship at 10:30 am. A Wednesday Bible Study was begun also meeting at the Woodlands at 7:00 pm.

North Greenville Church was duly organized on May 5, 2016 as a non-profit corporation by the State of South Carolina. The Articles of Incorporation are equivalent to the constitution of the corporation.

Article I - Name

The name of the church is “North Greenville Church” with the descriptor “A Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship.”

Article II - Purpose & Goals

Purpose: To Glorify God

Goal: North Greenville Church is committed to helping the world find new life through Jesus Christ. To this end, we dedicate ourselves:

- 1) to live for God, worshiping Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength;
- 2) to live for each other, building up one another in love;
- 3) to live for the salvation of people, used by God to bring others to faith in Jesus;
- 4) to live in the world for Christ’s sake, representing Him in service and joyful giving

Strategy: The desire of North Greenville Church is to establish a reformed church in North Greenville County that is God centered. To this end, we hold to two main principles. First, we embrace a worship style that is historically based in the Protestant Reformation, warm and inviting to others. It will focus on God - not man or entertainment. Both traditional music and good contemporary hymns will be incorporated into the worship. This will be done in a manner that allows for the expression of the full richness and harmony that God has given to music. Second, we are developing a community of love in which everyone is welcome and important. Loving one another means caring for, praying with, and assisting each other. No one is unimportant or will be treated with disrespect.

Article III - Statement of Faith

The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God the Father, Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary:
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, died, and was buried:
He descended into Hades:
the third day he rose again from the dead:
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:
from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead:*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit:
in the holy catholic church:
the communion of saints:
the forgiveness of sins:
the resurrection of the body:
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Article IV - Doctrine

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Shorter and Larger Catechisms, was set forth between 1643 and 1649 by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, England. It serves as our guiding general interpretation of God's Holy Bible.

The Five Sola's of the Reformation (The great rallying cries of the Protestant Reformation)

Sola Fide: by faith alone

Sola Scriptura: by Scripture alone

Solus Christus: through Christ alone

Sola Gratia: by grace alone

Soli Deo Gloria: glory to God alone

Reformed as is illustrated with the acrostic T.U.L.I.P.

T - **total depravity**: radical corruption; total inability; original sin

U - **unconditional election**: according to God's kind intention

L - **limited atonement**: selective or particular atonement

I - **irresistible grace**: the internal call of the Holy Spirit

P - **perseverance of the saints**: once saved always saved

Governance

In order that the Church shall fulfill its calling as given by God, it is necessary that its ministry be directed in an orderly manner. Government rooted in and defined by Scriptural example and instruction is the means of accomplishing such necessary direction and order.

Presbyterian

While Scriptures do not teach a detailed form of Church government, the Presbyterian form is agreeable to and founded upon the Old and New Testaments. The Presbyterian form of Church government is government by presbyters (elders).

Other Key Documents which help to explain our doctrinal stand

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

The Thirty-nine Articles (1571)

The Council of Dort (1618)

The Belgic Confession (1561)

The Marrow of Modern Divinity, Edward Fisher (1645)

Article V - Membership

The conditions required for full membership in this Church are:

1. the applicant has made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
2. the applicant has been or agrees to receive baptism into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
3. the applicant pledges obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and His teachings in the Scriptures;
4. the applicant submits to the authority of the Session of the Church;
5. the applicant promises to support the Church with their gifts, abilities, and resources;
6. the applicant promises to live a life style consistent with his/her testimony.

The Session shall maintain a separate roll of the children of the congregation (noting whether baptized or not). These shall have access to the pastoral care, preaching, and Christian education of the Church.

Membership shall be terminated by death, voluntary transfer, or by dismissal by the Session. The Session, by two-thirds vote, may dismiss, suspend, and publicly or privately admonish any member. Such disciplined members may appeal the discipline to the Court of Appeals which consist of the Session and the Diaconate. The decision of this Court of Appeals shall be final by a two-thirds vote of those in attendance. The accused member has the right of counsel before the Session and/or the Court of Appeals. No one shall be permitted to act as counsel who is not a communicant member in good standing in an Evangelical Church. Any member who shall be absent for two years without satisfactory reason, may be dismissed by the Session as set forth above.

Membership Questions:

When wishing to unite with the Church, each person will be asked to affirm the following questions:

- (1) *Do you confess that you are a sinner in the sight of God; that you deserve His punishment; that you are unable to save yourself; and that you are without hope of salvation except for God's love and mercy?*
- (2) *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners; and do you receive and trust in Him alone for your salvation?*
- (3) *Do you accept the Bible, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God; and that it is the only perfect rule of faith and how to live?*
- (4) *Do you promise to trust in the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit so that you can live all of life as a Christian, following the example set by Jesus Christ?*
- (5) *Do you promise to exercise faithful stewardship of God's resources entrusted to you for the furtherance of God's Kingdom and purposes?*
- (6) *Do you accept that the doctrines and principles of the North Greenville Church are founded upon the Scriptures?*
- (7) *In loving obedience, do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of this church, promising to seek the peace, purity, and prosperity of this congregation as long as you are a member of it?*

Article VI - The Congregation

A congregation is a company of Christians, with their children, associated together according to the Scriptures for worship and ministry in the name of Christ, subscribing to a form of church government, and choosing and ordaining some to perform selected ministries.

The purpose of a congregation is to glorify God by conducting public corporate worship, bringing the lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, building them up in the Christian faith, and preparing them for Christian service.

Structure of a Congregation

The congregational structure consists of pastor(s), sufficient numbers of elders and deacons, and members. Filling the pastoral office is not essential to the formal structure of a congregation.

For legal matters, the members of the Session of the congregation shall be the trustees. The trustees, and their successors in office shall: hold title to all property belonging to the congregation and upon authority from and on behalf of the congregation buy, sell, lease, or mortgage property for the congregation. The powers and duties of the officers of the corporation and of the individual trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the Session and the Diaconate.

The membership of a congregation shall consist of communicant, non-communicant, and associate members.

An Associate Church Member is one who is residing in our area for a period of time or expects to make periodic visits to our area, but chooses not to transfer his/her church membership from his/her home congregation. As an Associate Church Member, the individual and family have the right to the care and privileges of the Church. In congregational meetings they have voice. They also can take on responsibilities within the congregation other than being an officer of the Church with the approval of the Session.

A congregation shall have such organizations as are necessary and desirable for the edification of the Church. Each organization shall be responsible to the Session of the congregation.

Congregations shall elect a chairperson and treasurer(s) from among the communicant membership. Their terms of office shall be for one year, and the officer shall be eligible to succeed him/herself. The chairperson shall lead congregational meetings (unless someone else is designated by the Session to do so for that meeting), is an advisory member of any congregational committees, and will be the general spokesperson for the congregation. The treasurer shall be an advisory member of the Diaconate when not a regular member thereof. The treasurer shall keep an accurate accounting of all receipts and expenditures and furnish such records to the Diaconate and/or Session on a regular basis.

If the congregation becomes so reduced in its membership and strength as to be unable to maintain the ordinances of regular public worship, or when for other reasons the interests of the members in particular and of the Church in general would be, in the judgment of Session, best served by dissolving the congregation, the Session shall formally declare it dissolved. The Session shall direct its stated clerk to issue certificates of transfer for the remaining members upon request by a receiving church. Such requests shall be sent directly to the receiving church and shall not be given to the individual member. The Session shall determine the dissolution of all properties and the manner for handling any liabilities.

Meetings of the Congregation

The purpose of the congregational meeting is to give spiritual and temporal direction in all matters not within the realm of duties assigned to the Pastor, the Session, or the Diaconate. The governing rules and procedures those in this document. In matters not prescribed, Robert's Rules of Order shall be the basic guide. The meeting will be announced in writing to all members' households no less that one week in advance of the meeting. All business for the meeting shall be stated in the notice. No meeting shall be regular and in order unless such notice is given.

Matters to be considered at a congregational meeting includes but are not limited to the:

- Election and calling of a pastor or associate pastor
- Election of elders, deacons (the number determined by the congregation)
- Election of the congregational officers
- Determination of otherwise unspecified procedures of the congregation.
- Adoption of the congregational budget as prepared by the Diaconate and approved and recommended by the Session
- Authorization of expenditures for the erection or alteration of any building
- Determining of salaries as proposed by the Diaconate and Session
- Purchase or selling of property
- Amending (or presenting proposals to amend) these By-Laws
- All changes are to be approved both by the Session and the congregation

At all congregational meetings, the congregational chairperson or someone appointed by the Session shall preside, and the clerk of the Session or someone appointed by the Session shall serve as secretary.

No business at a called congregational meeting shall be voted on in the absence of a quorum (considered without a quorum). One-fourth of the communicant membership entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum. Only communicant members who are in good standing (not under discipline) are entitled to vote. Normally, a member must be physically present to vote, however in extenuating circumstances, the Session may determine to allow for absentee voting. This arrangement must be made prior to the meeting where the vote will be taken. (The presiding officer of the meeting shall determine the meaning of "present" in light of electronic media.) In the case of members who are not regularly attending but who are not under church discipline at the moment, the Session will determine their standing as it pertains to the quorum.

The purpose and motion(s) at the core of the called congregational meeting shall be communicated in writing to the communicant members at least one week in advance of the meeting. Absentee ballots, if allowed for the meeting, must be received by the clerk of session by the date of the congregational meeting and validated by the clerk of session to be counted. Members submitting valid ballots by the deadline shall be deemed by the moderator of the meeting to be "present" for the communicated motion. Absentee ballots will only be valid for the motion(s) as communicated in advance and not for any amendments or substitute motions that may pass and be voted on during the meeting. Only communicant members physically present will be deemed "present" for any amendments or substitute motions voted on in the congregational meeting.

Voting shall be by voice, show of hands, standing, or secret ballot as determined by the Session. The method of voting shall be determined by the Session, but may be modified at the meeting by the presiding officer when deemed advisable. Secret ballots are required when voting for a pastor and recommended where controversy or intimidation become a factor.

Article VII - Ministers

A minister is a man who is called by God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, to a special ministry of the word. Only those who give evidence of being called and qualified by the Lord Jesus Christ shall be set apart to this ministry.

The call to ministry begins with the individual seeking to determine whether or not he has been called as a minister. Yet, as Christ fits His servants for this ministry, they must also evidence the necessary qualifications for this work.

The qualifications of a minister consist of such gifts as fit him for service as a teacher and leader in this ministry, and of such character and reputation as will continue honor to this office.

Spiritual Maturity. A minister must be mature in his faith, with absolute certainty of his own saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Belief. A minister must accept the doctrines, government and worship as described in this document as agreeable to and founded upon the Word of God.

Knowledge. A minister must give evidence of his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines, government, and worship of this Church, and the duties of a minister.

Compassion. A minister must serve as Jesus Christ, who came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

Personality. A minister must be one who will attract persons to Christ and His Church.

Intelligence. A minister must be capable of meeting the education requirements essential for ordination.

Education. A minister must present evidence of having obtained a baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent, from an accredited four-year college or university, as well as a master of divinity degree from an accredited seminary. The educational requirements shall be waived only in extraordinary cases.

The Scriptures acknowledge no degrees of rank or dignity among ministers, they being equal in office and authority. The names of pastor, teacher, bishop and presbyter are used simply to set forth different duties and responsibilities.

The office of minister includes the office and authority of elder. For this reason the minister is also referred to as a presbyter.

The Responsibilities of a Pastor

The pastor(s) of the Church is the minister of the congregation. In fulfilling his duties, he is to exercise both public and private responsibilities.

Public Responsibilities

A minister shall pray for and with his people; read the Scriptures; preach the Word; teach, reprove, exhort and comfort; administer the sacraments; pronounce the blessings of God upon the people; officiate at weddings and funerals; and serve with elders in all matters pertaining to the government, discipline, worship, and education of the congregation. He is an advisory member of all committees.

Private Responsibilities

A minister shall visit with and be available to his people as their pastor, counsels with and instruct them in spiritual things, and pray for and with them; visit especially the sick, the afflicted, and the aged; advise, comfort, and pray with those who have need; admonish those who are guilty of conduct unbecoming their Christian profession or who are indifferent to their religious duties; and, in general, assume the spiritual oversight of his people.

A Call of a Pastor

The relationship between a minister and the congregation may be that of pastor or associate pastor. No person shall be chosen to be the pastor of the congregation who has not been regularly ordained or examined and approved for ordination.

The pastor shall be selected by the congregation. The congregation shall first elect a pastoral search committee which will review candidates and when ready, present to the Session the candidate they believe the Lord would have serve as the congregation's pastor along with a call stating the terms of the call. The Session would either approve or reject the candidate and the call. If approved, a congregational meeting shall be called for the purpose of approving the candidate and the terms of the call. The selection should be unanimous or nearly so. After the election, the call shall be signed by the voting members of the congregation. The procedure for a call to a pastor or associate pastor shall be the same.

The terms of the call shall:

1. Clearly state the amount of salary and other allowances
2. Include information as to housing, vacation, moving expenses, insurance, and any other matters deemed beneficial to the pastor or congregation
3. Provide for an annual review of the terms of the call by the Session
4. Be presented to the candidate for his acceptance

If the pastor-elect accepts the call, a date shall be set for a special service of ordination and installation (or just installation if the pastor is already ordained).

Candidates for the ministry

When a member of the congregation senses the call of the Lord to go into full-time Gospel ministry, he may request that the Session receive him as a candidate for the ministry under the care of North Greenville Church.

One seeking to be received under the care of North Greenville Church shall be examined through a committee of the Session as to his Christian character, his conviction of being called of God to the ministry, his qualifications, and his saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Session shall enroll and counsel with each candidate under its care and shall direct his theological studies, inquiring into his diligence and progress.

A candidate may be received under the care of the Session in an appropriate service of recognition in which he shall be asked to stand before the Session and answer the following questions:

(1) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a character consistent with your Christian profession and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for God's ministry of reconciliation?

(2) Do you promise to submit yourself to the supervision of North Greenville Church in matters concerning your preparation for the ministry of the Word?

When these questions have been answered in the affirmative, the moderator shall briefly address the candidate and shall close this portion of the service with prayer.

He shall be given opportunities to preach trial sermons before North Greenville Church.

The Session, with or without his request, may remove his name from the roll of students for reason.

Procedure for Ordination for Candidates

When a candidate has completed his academic training as required by the Session, the Session may take steps for his ordination.

Requirements for ordination, in addition to academic standards, shall consist of the following:

1. A review of the candidate's personal Christian religious experience
2. An examination of his knowledge of the English Bible
3. An examination of his knowledge of theology and his doctrinal positions and a brief written statement of his Christian beliefs
4. An examination of his knowledge of the history and government of the Church and the determination of his approval of the form of government, discipline and worship of North Greenville Church
5. A sermon which he shall preach before the Session or congregation and which shall be subject to constructive criticism by the Session. The session may assign or approve the text for this sermon
6. A call either to a congregation or to another approved ministerial labor

Each candidate will be reviewed by the Session (or committee of the Session) for approval to the ministry. If a minority of one-fourth of the Session or the committee disapproves a candidate's examination, the Session may require a further examination in writing on questions proposed by the Session. These questions and answers shall become a part of the official Sessional record.

When the Session has approved a candidate's examination and is furnished evidence of a candidate's call, the Session shall appoint a time and place for the ordination of the candidate. Usually the ordination shall be held before a called meeting of the Session in the Church of which the candidate is to be Pastor.

On the day appointed, the Session shall be convened and a minister shall preach an appropriate sermon. The presiding officer shall review all that the Session and candidate have done in preparation for this ordination and shall impress upon the congregation the solemnity of the occasion.

The presiding officer shall then propose to the candidate the following vows:

(1) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the Session of this Church and to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?

(2) Do you sincerely resolve to fulfill all your responsibilities in your home life and in all your relations with your fellow man, fulfilling all righteousness, faith, and love?

(3) Do you accept and enter upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through you with a desire to glorify God and to be instrumental in strengthening His Church?

(4) Do you promise to preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity, declaring the whole counsel of God, and to perform all your official duties with zeal and faithfulness, seeking the salvation and edification of sinners?

The candidate, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Session.

If the ordination is not in connection with his installation as Pastor, the presiding officer shall declare the candidate set apart to the ministry, emphasizing the importance, the difficulties and the excellence of the ministry that he now enters.

The newly ordained minister shall be given a Certificate of Ordination signed by the Pastor/Moderator and clerk of Session. A full report of the ordination service shall be recorded in the minutes of the Session and a copy forwarded to the congregation of which he was formerly a member so that his name may be removed from the membership roll.

Procedure for the Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

The dissolution of the pastoral relationship shall be by action of Session. The Pastor, the congregation, or the Session may initiate such action.

When a pastor wishes to be released from his pastoral charge, he shall first inform the Session in writing of his wishes. The Session shall then call a congregational meeting to inform the members of his request.

When the Session concurs in this request, the Session may dissolve the pastoral relationship.

If the Session desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it shall, by calling a congregational meeting, first notify the congregation of its desires. If the majority of the congregation concurs with the Session, the Session shall proceed with the action.

If the congregation desires the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, it shall first notify the pastor by written request and then make the same written request to the Session. The Session shall then take whatever action is in the best interests of the Church and its Pastor.

The Session has authority, acting on good information, to dissolve a pastoral relationship without formal application from either party, if in its judgment the welfare of the congregation so requires.

Article VIII - Elders & the Session

The office of elder as set forth in the Scriptures is ordinary and perpetual in the Church.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God ordained elders to govern and discipline His people.

To this office of elder shall be chosen men of wisdom, discretion, sound faith and godly life, and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture.

An elder shall be a member in good standing of the congregation, actively sharing in the worship and service of the Church and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office.

It is the responsibility of elders, both individually and jointly, to guard and promote the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Although ruling elders do represent congregations by election, they are to seek the will of God in all church court decisions.

When the elders meet together, they form the Session.

The Organization of the Session

The Session, initially, shall consist of the pastor(s) and three elders. The elders shall serve for three years having staggered terms and may succeed themselves (the original rotation will to be set up by the Session).

The officers of the Session shall be a moderator, a vice moderator, and a clerk who shall be elected annually by the Session. The pastor, by virtue of his office, is the moderator of the Session. An associate pastor, if there is one, is also a member of the Session. In cases where the pastor is, for any cause, disqualified from presiding the vice moderator presides. When a congregation is without a pastor, the moderator shall be a minister of like theological beliefs appointed by the Session. The Session shall normally hold one regular meeting each month with at least six meetings per year.

The Session will serve as the Trustees for the Church.

The moderator shall call a meeting of the Session at any time he deems necessary or upon the request of two ruling elders, or upon request of the Presbytery. Adequate notice of called meetings shall be given. No meeting of the Session shall be held without the knowledge of the pastor. The quorum for the Session shall be two members of the Session. Only members who are personally present at the meeting are entitled to vote. Each meeting of the Session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

Authorities and Responsibilities of the Session

The Session shall have as its primary responsibility the spiritual oversight of the congregation

The Session shall:

1. Plan, organize and administer programs designed to enable the congregation to carry on the mission of God in Christ's Church by word and deed in the community and the whole world.
2. In order to institute and supervise the general work of the congregation, the Session has the power to appoint boards, commissions, or committees of the congregation.
3. Shepherd the members by visiting with them, especially the sick; praying with them; comforting the sorrowing, encouraging the weak, guiding the wayward and the careless, and, in general, discharging all other duties in Christian love.
4. Counsel with the members of the congregation and inquire into their Christian knowledge and conduct.
5. Admonish, rebuke, suspend, or exclude from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper any member of the congregation found delinquent, according to standards of this document.
6. Encourage parents who are communicant members to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism.
7. Receive applicants into communicant church membership upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon transfer of membership.
8. Grant the appropriate certificate of transfer for any member in good standing upon proper request.
9. Instruct, examine, ordain, and install elders and deacons upon their election by the congregation.
10. Encourage the officers of the congregation to devote themselves to their respective responsibilities

- a. Supervise the work of the diaconate and examine the records of its proceedings.
 - b. Develop and supervise religious and educational programs of the congregation.
 - c. Employ and supervise any non-ordained church staff.
11. Exercise authority over the time and place of the preaching and teaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, and over all other religious services.
 - a. Assemble the people for worship in the absence of the pastor.
 - b. To direct the securing, receiving, and distributing of special offerings.
 12. Devise and encourage suitable measures for the spiritual advancement of the congregation and of the Church.
 13. Establish, review, control, and dissolve any special groups within the congregation and in its discretion to require stated reports.
 - a. Call a congregational meeting.
 - b. Exercise authority over the use of the church buildings and associated properties.
 - c. Keep an accurate record of its proceedings.
 14. Keep an accurate record of the rolls of the members of the congregation, the names of persons receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, and a list of deaths and marriages of members of the congregation.

Article IX - Deacons

Deacons

The Church does not have to have a board of Deacons. When the Session determines that the ministry of the Church will be enhanced by having such a board, and the congregation is strong enough to support the Diaconate along with the Session, this board shall be organized.

The office of Deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, mercy and service after the example of Christ. Deacons will serve as assistants to the Session in these areas. In the discharge of its duties, the Diaconate is under the supervision and authority of the Session. The Session may void or amend any action of the Diaconate or return it for further consideration.

To this office should be chosen men of good character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly love, sympathetic nature and sound judgment; and who are qualified under the standards recorded in Scripture, particularly I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

A Deacon shall be a member in good standing of the congregation, actively sharing in the worship and service of the Church, and giving particular emphasis to the duties of his office.

The Diaconate

The Deacons shall be organized as a board, the Diaconate. The pastor(s) shall be an advisory member, and the congregational treasurer shall be an advisory member when not otherwise a member of the board. The Diaconate shall elect a chairman and a secretary from among its own number. The secretary shall keep a record of the Diaconate's proceedings and shall submit its minutes to the Session.

The Diaconate shall be responsible for the congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress and all such things as can be covered by the term "mercy ministry." The needs of those who are within the congregation shall be given first priority, and then those needs outside the congregation.

It shall also encourage the practice of total stewardship among the member of the congregation, encouraging tithing in particular, a general spirit of liberality and hospitality towards their fellow saints as well as the world, and helping them to see that their possessions are a trust to keep before the Lord.

It shall plan, in collaboration with the Session, the causes toward which the offerings of the congregation shall be directed; devise effective methods for securing and receiving these offerings; and see that all offerings are properly recorded and distributed.

It shall have the care of the general property of the congregation, both real and personal. In matters requiring extraordinary expenditure for acquisition, construction, or alteration of Church property, consent of the congregation is required.

The Diaconate should hold at least four regular meetings each year. Notice of all meetings shall be given to all members of the Diaconate and the pastor.

The Diaconate shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum.

Only members who are personally present are entitled to vote.

Each meeting of the Diaconate shall be opened and closed with prayer.

The Dorcas Ministry:

The Dorcas Ministry is not an ordained office, but a special ministry.

It is based upon the ministry of Jesus and the early church (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:40-41).

John Calvin had “a deaconess ministry” in the Church at Geneva.

This is a diaconal style ministry of care and nurture with special attention towards women and children.

I Timothy 3:11 lists four qualifications for those in this ministry

- (1) Dignified
- (2) Not a gossip
- (3) Temperate
- (4) Faithful in all things

The key in the success of this ministry is not to list activities or duties, but for those involved to look and see the needs and work to meet those needs.

Article X - the Election, Ordination and Installation of Elders and Deacons

Ordination

Ordination is that act in which the person is consecrated to specific Church offices to which they have been called by God and elected or appointed by the congregation. The act of ordination is not valid apart from the prior calling of God.

In the Presbyterian system, the act of ordination is usually accompanied by the laying on of hands, though this is not necessary to effect the act. Such action is intended to give visible and tangible expression to the prior work of the Holy Spirit, and is not to be construed as conveying powers by one man to another. Further, the act of ordination shall be accompanied by intercessory prayer in which the participants seek divine blessing for those receiving ordination. The act of ordination is perpetual and as such it remains in effect unless the appropriate court suspends or removes it due to disciplinary matters or the individual dies. The act of ordination does not convey or imply to the recipient a rank or position superior in status to any other church member, but a difference in calling and function. The congregation shall have the authority to dedicate or consecrate members who are being called into a particular service which does not require ordination (such as missionary service). In such cases, a commissioning service shall be held within a congregation. The laying on of hands in prayer may be a part of such a service, but shall not be construed as conveying or implying ordination. The Pastor shall normally preside over the ordination and installation service.

Eligibility

Persons elected to the office of Elder or Deacon shall be:

1. Members in full and active communion in the congregation
2. Not be under any current or pending discipline

The minimum age for holding these offices shall be determined by the Session; consideration shall be given so that recent converts are not called to an office prematurely.

Nominations shall not be made to an office unless there is clear evidence that God is calling the individual to such an office.

The church should prefer having fewer officers than to electing unqualified officers simply to fill a specified slot on the Session or Diaconate. The Session shall be responsible for providing adequate training for all church offices.

Terms of Office

Elders or deacons are elected and ordained for life unless deposed in the process of discipline. However, they will serve three-year staggered terms. The Session will set up and maintain the rotation. Elders and Deacons may succeed themselves.

Election Procedure

The nomination procedure should have three parts: recommendations, certification, and election. Ample time is to be given to certify the eligibility of those nominated based upon standards set by the Session. Also, the congregation should take time for prayer to be offered for those nominated and for the election process.

A nominating committee shall be appointed by the Session. Representation on the nominating committee shall include at least one active elder. Suggestions from the congregation for nominees shall be solicited by the committee. The committee shall give due consideration to all suggested nominees but is responsible to present to the Session its slate of nominees. The committee shall provide a list of nominees to be certified by the Session to determine if they meet the Biblical requirements for elders or deacons.

The election of Elders and Deacons shall take place by action in a duly called congregational meeting. If there is more than one nomination for an office, voting shall be by secret ballot. A plurality of the vote cast is necessary to constitute election to an office.

When voting is by ballot, the Session shall provide suitable ballots and shall appoint a committee to count the ballots and announce in alphabetical order the names of those elected without reporting the number of votes.

The Session shall appoint a day for ordination, when required, and installation or re- installation.

Ordination and Installation

The pastor of the congregation shall preside over the service of ordination and installation of Elders and Deacons. At the time of the ordination and installation service, the officers-elect shall present themselves before the congregation, and shall solemnly promise, according to the annexed formula, to maintain the doctrine, government, discipline, and worship of the Church.

Formula for Ordination and Installation

(1) Do you believe in one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things for the Church, which is His Body?

(2) Do you reaffirm your belief in the Bible, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of the living God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant in the original manuscripts, and to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken at any time or upon any pretext?

(3) Do you accept the doctrines of this Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith and do you resolve to adhere thereto?

(4) Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of this Church?

(5) Do you accept the office of elder (deacon) in this congregation; and do you promise to perform faithfully all the duties of the office; and do you promise to endeavor by the grace of God to live your life in Christian witness before the church and in the world?

(6) Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the Session?

(7) Do you promise in all things to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church?

These questions having been answered in the affirmative, the presiding officer shall address the following question to the congregation:

“Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive these fellow members as Elders (Deacons), and do you promise to give them all the honor, obedience, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office, according to the Word of God and the Standards of this Church, entitles them?”

After the members of the congregation have signified their affirmative answer to this question by standing, the officers-elect shall kneel and be set apart to their office with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Session.

Following the ordination prayer, the minister shall say:

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, I now declare you duly ordained and installed in the sacred office of Elder (Deacon).”

The members of the Session shall take the new officers by the hand, saying:

“We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us.”

The minister shall then charge both the officers and the congregation regarding their Christian responsibilities to each other and to the Church.

A record of the service of ordination and installation shall be entered in the minutes of the Session.

Article XI - Committees, Boards, and Commissions

A committee is a body empowered to study matters committed to it, to recommend appropriate action, and to carry into effect specific directions of decisions made by Session or Diaconate.

A board is a body empowered to take management of certain specified duties in order to advance the mission of the Church.

The Session is a standing board of the Church with the responsibility for all spiritual matters and other activities related to the Church.

A commission is a body empowered to examine, consider, and conclude certain designated business.

The Session may appoint committees, other boards, and commissions as it finds to be good for the Church to carry out its charge from God. All actions of a committee, a commission, or another board are reported to the appointing court and subject to review or change.

Article XII - Worship

The Nature of Worship

The Christian life is a response to God, expressing itself in worship and service.

After a person’s reconciliation to God through the blood of Christ, there is a desire by the moving of the Holy Spirit to seek a knowledge of Him, to aspire after Him, and to respond to Him in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and obedient love.

The purpose of worship is affirmed by the words of the psalmist:

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness;

come before Him with joyful singing.

*Know that the Lord Himself is God;
it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him; bless His name.
For the Lord is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations*

(Psalm 100)

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

(John 4:24).

Forms of Worship

Corporate Worship

It is necessary, unless providentially hindered, for spiritual growth that Christians gather for corporate worship. Christians normally worship on the Lord's Day, in a building set aside as a house of worship. However, in addition, they may worship at any time or place agreeable to those who gather.

The use of an orderly form for the service of worship on the Lord's Day is most desirable. Such a form should reflect our Protestant heritage in the Reformed tradition.

All worship services shall be conducted in full accordance with Scripture and the doctrines and government of North Greenville Church as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and these By-Laws.

Worship is not confined to a place or external exercises, but involves a reality in the heart, soul, and mind and may be public, family or private. Worship may be planned or spontaneous, but should be such as to invoke in the worshiper praise, honor, homage, obedience, dedication, and gratitude to God. We are to show adoration and exaltation to Him with reverence. It should be accompanied by confession of sin and a plea for forgiveness by virtue of atonement by Jesus Christ, with an attentive mind to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of God's pardoning grace.

Public worship is a unique event in human experience where together response is made to God's mighty acts of redemption in Jesus Christ. In public worship, the subject matter is the revelation of God set forth in Holy Scripture and centering in the Person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Public worship is corporate in all its parts with active participation or silent attention, or both. It should be orderly, interesting, and inspiring toward spiritual ideals and Christian service. It should be directed to the total person involving intellect, emotion, and will. It should include any or all of the following acts of worship: prayer and thanksgiving; singing or praise; the reading, hearing, and preaching of the Word; the administering and receiving of the sacraments; the giving of tithes and sacrificial offerings; an appropriate response to the Gospel; an affirmation of faith; and the dismissing of the people with a Biblical benediction. Anthems and other special music shall be in keeping with the doctrines and government of North Greenville Church.

Individual and Family Worship

Equally necessary for spiritual growth is daily worship, privately as an individual and as a family in the home. Christian families should set aside some time each day to worship God. The head of the home should see that this is done. There should be the reading of Scripture and prayer. Other materials and activities may enhance the worship experience.

Family worship should be Biblical and instructive with participation by all encouraged.

Marriage

The Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God, normally conducted in the house of God. As in all other services of worship, reverence shall be expected on the part of all present. The service shall be under the sole direction of the minister.

Marriage was instituted by God when He saw that it was not good that man should be alone. Jesus Christ blessed this relationship by His presence at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. It was given a crown of glory by the Apostle Paul, who compares it with that holy union which exists between Christ and His Church in which Christ is called the Bridegroom and His Church the Bride. Therefore, a man and woman may enter together into the estate of marriage, pledging their love and promising fidelity to each other, as long as they both live.

It is to be expected that both of the partners are professing Christians, and that they will share a common Christian faith. Pastors may, at their discretion, officiate the wedding of two non-believers. Marriage must be only between one man and one woman.

Before any man and woman are joined in marriage they shall fulfill all the lawful requirements of the state. The couple shall provide satisfactory evidence of being prepared to enter upon marriage with maturity and wisdom.

If, after counseling, the minister is not convinced in his conscience of the propriety of the marriage under the laws of the state and of Holy Scripture, as interpreted in the standards of this Church, he shall not perform the ceremony.

The minister shall comply with all requirements of the state for the proper performance and registration of the marriage. He shall also see that the Church maintains an adequate record of all marriages within the congregation.

Funerals

Christians are aware of the inevitability of death. In the presence of death, Christians witness to their faith that God, in Jesus Christ, has conquered death and raises His people from death to life eternal.

The funeral service should be conducted with dignity and simplicity. It should witness to the resurrection and to the sure and certain hope that Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place for God's children. Funeral sermons, remarks and prayers in the nature of a eulogy of the deceased are discouraged with the awareness that God is to receive all the glory not the deceased.

The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper

The Table is none other than Christ's Table. He invites those who put their trust in Him to share in the feast that He has prepared. Having given His children eternal life based upon the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, God offers continual spiritual nourishment to them and sustains them in the fellowship of the body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The participation of the entire congregation in the service.

The Words of Institution set forth the Sacrament as originating in Christ's command, and make plain that those worshipping do so in obedience to His will. Hereby they participate in the continuing history of the people of God until Christ comes again.

The prayers and responses witnessing to the communion of saints testify that this fellowship includes all the faithful everywhere, in heaven, on earth, and not just those assembled.

The invoking of the Holy Spirit signifies that what takes place in the Sacrament is not of man's doing, but is done by the grace of God.

The distinct acts of the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the cup show forth that Christ gave His own body to be broken and His life's blood to be poured out on man's behalf in His offering of Himself on the cross. The distribution and partaking of the elements show forth the reality of the believers' union with Christ through faith and their willingness that His presence should abide in them.

The promise of Christ's presence in the midst of those receiving this Sacrament witnesses to the reality of His resurrection from the dead and is a foretaste of eternal fellowship with Him.

The prayers of thanksgiving, the singing of Psalms and hymns and the believers' offering of themselves show forth the response in praise and self-giving which is required of those who receive such gifts as are here set forth.

Since the Sacrament is an action in which the whole Church participates and is part of the public witness of the Church to the power of the Word, it is normally to be celebrated as the culmination of the public worship of God, and shall not be isolated from the acts of worship which precede and follow it.

Since no one can come to the Lord's Table as a worthy recipient of God's gifts, but must trust utterly that God in His graciousness will welcome those who acknowledge and repent of their unworthiness, participation in the Sacrament is to be understood as a privilege given to the repentant undeserving rather than a right conferred upon the worthy. Since this Sacrament is offered out of the fullness of God's love, it is to be received in joyful gratitude that the power of the Gospel extends to God's undeserving children, and thereby unites them all in a common dependence upon Him.

The Session shall determine how often the opportunity to partake of this Sacrament may be provided. It is fitting that it be observed frequently and regularly enough that it is seen as a proper part of, and not an addition to, the worship of God by His people.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism is the Word made visible as ordained by Jesus Christ. Primarily, it represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the lives of God's people. It may also be understood as a sign of God's power and

mercy in cleansing people of their sin, and as a means whereby we are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, entering with Him into His death and rising with Him to newness of life (Romans 6:4ff.). It is to be regarded as the sign of their engrafting into Christ, and of their entrance into the Church, inasmuch as that which unites them with Christ unites them also with His Church.

As a Sacrament, Baptism is an act of the whole Church and normally should be administered in the presence of the worshiping community. Since the Sacrament is a means by which the Gospel is proclaimed to all who receive it or witness it, and yet cannot be separated from the Word, it should be administered ordinarily at a service at which the written Word is expounded, inasmuch as the Word sets forth the promises which the Sacrament seals to man.

The Sacrament is both a means of testifying to the reality of God's grace, and also a means by which all faithful members of the Church show forth publicly their own faith and trust in Him.

Since no person is worthy by their own merit to receive the gift of God's grace shown forth in Baptism, all those present when the Sacrament is administered are to recall their dependence on God's grace, trusting that in the Sacrament He will certify to them His promise, and draw people closer to one another through their common acknowledgment of the need in which they stand.

The Sacrament of Baptism not only shows God's grace but is a means by which His grace is communicated to people. Thus the visible Word of the Gospel in Baptism points toward, and is fulfilled by, Christ Himself.

The Baptism of Children

The baptism sets forth the grace of God in Jesus Christ and affirms that all who are children of believers are heirs of this covenant of grace, as many as the Lord our God shall call Himself. In the Sacrament of Baptism they are acknowledged to be members of the household and family of God. It is, therefore, appropriate that at an early age the children of believers are baptized.

The baptism of a covenant child has particular significance for the Church as that Sacrament of God's grace, His unmerited love, which shows forth that, long before the child is conscious of God or confesses Him, God has set the child apart, loving the child with a love which is eternal. The Sacrament, as administered, is to be understood as a declaration of Word of God in its grace and power to all He calls to Himself and makes believers. Believers present are called upon to see themselves likewise as helpless children, whom God in His mercy has called to eternal life in the Spirit.

The parents of the child promise to bring the child up to love God and serve Him, and the members of the congregation likewise promise to surround the child with their concern and love in Christ, that he may continue in the fellowship of the Church, confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and live in His eternal Kingdom.

It is desirable that a minister, before baptizing a child, engage in instructions and discussion with the parents, to acquaint them with the significance of what God is doing in this act and with the responsibilities which it lays upon them.

The parents having presented their child for baptism at a service of public worship, the minister shall make declaration of the meaning of the Sacrament and the gifts of God that it exhibits and offers to all assembled. The minister shall make it clear that the child is not saved by the administration of this sacrament. Baptism as an ordinance does not save but seals the sacrament. At least one parent, or one rightly exercising parental authority,

shall be asked to make affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He shall also promise publicly, in dependence on the grace of God, to raise the child to love God and to serve Him, to the end that the child may come to commit his or her life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. North Greenville Church does not recognize sponsors customarily called Godparents.

The congregation shall then, in the name of the whole Church of Christ, be asked to undertake responsibility for the growth of the child in Christian nurture; and members of the congregation shall indicate their intention to do so in an appropriate manner.

After prayer, the minister shall baptize the child with water alone, declaring, “ _____, I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The minister shall then charge the parents and the members of the congregation to be faithful in their response to God, in bringing up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The Sacrament shall conclude with prayer for the child, the parents and all those of the household of faith.

At the time of baptism the child shall be recorded as a baptized “non-communicant” member of the Church, and shall be numbered among those whom the Session has responsibility.

The parent or parents shall give affirmative answers to the following questions:

(1) *Do you renew the vows that you made when you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and entered into the full Communion of this Church?*

(2) *Do you acknowledge that your child is a sinner in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit?*

(3) *Do you claim God’s Covenant promises on this child’s behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for this child’s salvation, as you do for your own?*

(4) *Do you now covenant and promise in humble reliance on the Grace of God to bring up your child to love God and to serve Him, to the end that your child may come to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?*

** The congregation shall give affirmative answer to the following or equivalent question: *Do you the members of this congregation in the name of the Church of Christ, undertake with these parents the Covenant responsibility for the Christian nurture of this child?*

The Baptism of Adults

When individuals who have not been baptized as children desire to commit their lives to Christ and become incorporated into the membership of His Church, they shall, upon their public profession of faith, receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

Before the Sacrament is administered, such individuals shall receive instruction concerning the meaning of the Sacrament, the nature of the Church and the Christian faith, and privileges and obligations attendant upon membership in the Church.

After they have satisfied the Session to their Christian purpose and given assent to the formula of questions required for membership in North Greenville Church, they shall ordinarily be presented before the congregation for baptism in a service of public worship which includes the reading, hearing and preaching of the Word.

The minister shall declare the meaning of the Sacrament and of the gifts of God that it exhibits and offers to all assembled. Such persons as are to be baptized shall, in response to the prescribed questions, publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and in the power and readiness of God in Christ to forgive their sins, and shall promise in dependence on the grace of God to live as faithful members of His Church, and to place their lives under the authority of Scripture.

Article XIII - Discipline

Theology of Church Discipline

The basis of all Church discipline is the free love of God in Christ expressed in both mercy and judgment. The purpose of discipline is to bring about the reconciliation of a person to God and person to another person, to engage the people of God in the ministry of reconciliation and to promote the peace, purity and edification of the Church. Christian discipline is discipleship; it is the response of loving commitment to God in Christ as Lord that learns from Him as it obediently seeks to carry on His mission in the world. Under the rule of Christ expressed through the Church, discipline is that submission that frees the Christian for more effective service. Such service by the Church in the world demands a disciplined individual and corporate life. Each Christian is incorporated into the disciplined community and is responsible under its government for the total ministry of the body as the body is responsible for each individual and group in the Church. In this mutual responsibility, all are held accountable for the sake of the task of the whole body of Christ, remembering that each individual and group is finally responsible not to a Church, but to God.

Discipline is never to be perverted into the effort to gain the gift of salvation, into a source of pride, or into the nourishing of the life of the Church as an end in itself. Whereas a certain structure is essential for the disciplined life, the mission of the Church is primary, and the rule of discipline is not rigid but open to change that will better accomplish this mission according to the Scriptures.

In this context of discipline, the Church, under the authority of the Lord, disciplines or guides, instructs and controls its members to enable them to serve God more effectively. The exercise of discipline is made necessary by the need more fully to reconcile Christian individuals or groups to God and one another, to prevent mercy from becoming a soft and finally cruel indulgence, and to control those whose words and actions may seriously hinder the witness of the whole body of Christ. Whereas each Christian has a responsibility for discipline, corporate discipline exercised in the name of the Church is to be undertaken only by the Session.

The constant responsibility of every Church to a situation calling for discipline is contrition by the Session and the Church. They will search for any way in which what has been done or failed to be done has contributed to the problem requiring discipline. True contrition leads to that repentance from all parts. The Session will submit itself constantly to the will of the Lord in searching the Scriptures and in prayer.

The Session is to restrain the words and actions of those under its jurisdiction according to the particular circumstances. The criterion for corrective discipline is the teaching of the Scriptures and the standards of the Church. This is summed up in the good news that in response to God's love, the Christian loves God and his neighbor as himself and is engaged in the mission of the Church. Every effort will be made to accomplish any needed restraint by constructive and verbal persuasion. If these means fail, then necessary censures will be employed in proportion to the offense and in consideration of all the circumstances.

In all things, the Church shall seek the repentance and restoration of the individual or group involved, consistent with the higher responsibility to carry on Christ's work in the most effective way.

Offenses and Censures

An offense is anything in the principles or practice of the Church member or organization that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, the By-Laws of North Greenville Church, and/or the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

Offenses are either personal or general, private or public, but all offenses, being sins against God, are grounds for discipline. A personal offense is a violation of the law of God in the way of wrong done to some particular person or persons, including one's own self. A general offense is a violation of the law of God not directed against any particular person. Private offenses are those known only to an individual or, at most, to a few persons. Public offenses are those which are generally known.

Censures fall into five ascending degrees: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition and expulsion.

(1) Admonition is kindly reproving an offender, warning of one's guilt and danger and exhorting the person to refrain from such conduct in the future.

(2) Rebuke is reprimand, a strong, authoritative expression of disapproval.

(3) Suspension is temporary exclusion from receiving the sacraments or from a Church office or from both.

This censure becomes necessary when more serious offenses have been committed or when, notwithstanding admonition or rebuke, an offense is persistently repeated.

(4) Deposition is depriving an officer of the Church of his office.

(5) Expulsion is the judicial dismissal of an offender from membership in the Church. This fearful censure is to be passed only for such errors or violations of the law of God as are grossly inconsistent with the Christian faith, or for obstinate persistence in grave offenses in the face of milder censures. Its purpose, like all censures, is to reclaim the member for Christ's service.

When a lesser censure fails to reclaim the offender, the Session shall consider the infliction of a higher degree of censure.

The censures of the Church are in no case to be employed for any selfish or vindictive purpose.

Jurisdiction and Appeal

Original jurisdiction over Church members, including non-communing members, and over Elders and Deacons as officers, is vested in the Session.

Jurisdiction over a member ceases upon his expulsion. Original jurisdiction by the Session over ministers ceases upon their deposition.

The right of appeal is a specific request to have any matter or decision reconsidered. The appeal must be made in a timely manner and is to be made to the clerk of the Session. A special board composed of the Session, Diaconate, and church officers shall be the board of appeal. Anyone making an appeal, along with any other involved parties, will be allowed to present before the board. The decision of the board in the matter will be final.

Private Procedure

When a personal offense has been committed, whether the offense is public or private in nature, the injured party shall use the means prescribed by our Lord for bringing the offender to the recognition of his wrong and shall exhaust every effort to effect a reconciliation. Matthew 18:15-17 shall be the basic guide for private offenses.

Personal offenses satisfactorily settled between the parties concerned are not, as a rule, to be inquired into by the Church. Judicial process by the Church, however, is not to be precluded in such cases where the personal offense is so generally known or of such a nature as to require judicial investigation.

In all cases of private offense, anyone to whom the offense is known shall endeavor to effect reconciliation without disturbing the peace of the Church. An informer who has not taken these previous steps to effect reconciliation is to be considered worthy of censure.

In certain cases, the person to whom the offense is known, before making any effort to remove it, may desire to obtain the counsel and assistance of the pastor or some officer in the Church. To seek such counsel and assistance in order to remove the offense privately is not only not censurable, but in some cases highly proper.

It is the duty of pastors and other Session members to endeavor earnestly, according to the spirit of the Lord's command, to handle all private offenses that may come to their knowledge and maintain the peace that is often disturbed by public process. The peace and purity of the Church is best maintained when private offenses are resolved by the parties immediately involved and kept confidential.

The Session shall use divine guidance through the Scriptures in dealing with all matters of church discipline. Whereas we are not laying out basic guidelines for the process of church discipline, the Book of Discipline of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church will be our standard.

Restoration

Restoration is the culmination of the element of mercy in the discipline of the Church; therefore, it is to be regarded as the goal of judgment. There is no degree of guilt which automatically precludes the restoration of an offender to full Church privileges, following satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation.

The act of restoration may be publicly announced or privately conveyed. The court shall determine the option based on the good of the offender and/or the Church. An offender desiring restoration shall make application to the Session, acknowledging the offense and expressing desire to be restored to the privileges of the Church. The necessity of initiative on the part of the offender is in no manner to be seen as releasing the Church from its responsibility in pursuing the repentance and restoration of the offender.

The Session is to consider carefully the request of the offender with the evidence of repentance and if satisfied of the person's sincerity and the earnestness of the person's purpose to live a Christian life, the Session is to remove the sentence and restore the person to the privileges of the Church.

An officer who has been suspended or deposed from office and has had the privileges of the Church suspended is to be restored to the Church privileges on satisfactory evidence of repentance. He is not to be restored to the exercise of his office until such time that the witness of the Church will not be impaired by such restoration.

When an offender has been restored he or she is, as one forgiven through Christ who claims God's covenant promises, to be received by the Church as a brother.

Article XIV - Amendments

The By-Laws may be amended by following process:

1. Any proposed amendment will be submitted to the clerk of the Session
2. The Session will evaluate the merits of the proposal.
3. If a proposal is determined to be unwise or frivolous by the Session, the Session shall consult with the presenter as to the reasons for their determination.
4. If the Session deems the proposed amendment to be worth consideration, it will call a congregational meeting for the purpose of discussing the proposed amendment as to obtain the sense of the congregation regarding the proposal.
5. A final draft of the amendment will be made and sent out to the Session with notice of the next Session meeting.
6. The Session will then vote on the approval of the final draft of the proposed amendment (a 2/3 vote required for approval) and announce the result to the congregation.

Article XV - Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was established by those interested in seeing the Church go forward after being discontinued as a mission by Second Presbytery. The Steering Committee was charged with the task of taking whatever steps were necessary to get the Church chartered with the State of South Carolina, the establishment of By-Laws, the establishment of a congregational membership roll, and the election of elders.

To this end, the elder consultants will serve as a Provisional Session for ecclesiastical purposes until such a time as the Session has been duly installed for the Church. After the Session has been installed, the members of the Steering Committee who are not a part of the Session will continue to work with the Session in a diaconal manner until such time as a diaconal board is established.

Article XVI - Matters Unprovided For

Any matters or details of process not provided for are left to the judgment of the Session. There are others sources to which we look for help. However, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments remain our primary source for all wisdom and guidance.