

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales –
BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER – FORM OF GOVERNMENT

FORM of GOVERNMENT

THE
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER – FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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1.0 THE CHURCH

1.1 THE CHURCH - CATHOLIC AND PARTICULAR

1.1.1 The Church of Christ signifies:

1.1.1.1 the whole number of the elect, who, before the foundation of the world, were given by the Father unto the Son that by the Son they might be redeemed; and who, in due time, are called, justified and glorified. This is commonly called the invisible Catholic or Universal Church.

1.1.1.2 all those throughout the world who profess true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are subject to His laws and give obedience to Him, together with their children. In this sense we speak of it as the visible Catholic or Universal Church.

1.1.2 A particular Church

1.1.2.1 A particular Church is a branch of the Catholic visible Church and all its members are members of the visible church. Such of its members as are, or are ordained of God to be, savingly united to Christ belong to the invisible Church.

1.1.2.2 A particular Church is a body or community professing and maintaining the saving truths of the gospel. It is formed under Christ's authority and exists for the keeping of Christian ordinances and for the gathering, edifying and perfecting of God's people. It may consist of one congregation or a number of congregations under a common government.

1.1.3 The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales was first constituted as a particular Church in 1996.

1.2 THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

1.2.1 The Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church and He has revealed in His Word that He has appointed offices, ordained orderly government, instituted ordinances of worship and enacted principles and laws of fellowship in His Church.

2.0 THE STANDARDS OF THE CHURCH

2.1 OUR CREED

- 2.1.1 The Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the supreme standard of the Church.
- 2.1.2 The subordinate standards of our Church are the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; we believe these subordinate standards, as amended in this sub-section, accurately summarize, interpret and apply the teaching of the Scriptures on important points of doctrine and worship.
 - 2.1.2.1 Chapter 23 – Of the Civil Magistrate.
We do not receive this Chapter in any sense as to mean that the Civil Magistrate has a controlling power over Synods or Councils with respect to the exercise of their Ministerial authority, or power to persecute any for their religion.
We allow individual elders and sessions to accept or reject the principle of establishment as their consciences dictate.
 - 2.1.2.2 Chapter 24 – Of Marriage and Divorce
We accept all the statements of this Chapter except the last sentence of Paragraph 4.
Individual elders and sessions are allowed to accept, or not accept, the words, ‘The man may not marry any of his wife’s kindred, nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband’s kindred, nearer in blood than of her own.’
 - 2.1.2.3 Chapter 25 - Of the Church.
Individual elders and sessions are allowed to accept, or not accept, the words ‘but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God’ from Paragraph 6.

2.2 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

- 2.2.1 The Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, together with the *Book of Church Order*, comprising *Decently and In Order*, *Form of Government*, *Rules of Discipline*, *Directory of Worship*, and *Book of Discipline*.
- 2.2.2 Amendments to the *Book of Church Order* not within this section 2.2 *The Constitution of the Church* may only be made in the following manner:
 - 2.2.2.1 Approval of the proposed amendment by majority of those present and voting in the General Assembly and its recommendation to the Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.2.2 The advice and consent of two thirds of the Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.2.3 The approval and enactment by a subsequent General Assembly by a majority of those present and voting.
- 2.2.3 Amendments to the *Book of Church Order* within this section 2.2 *The Constitution of the Church* may only be made in the following manner:

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- 2.2.3.1 The approval of the proposed amendment by 75% of those present and voting in the General Assembly and its recommendation to Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.3.2 The advice and consent of 75% of the Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.3.3 The approval by a subsequent General Assembly by 75% of those present and voting.
- 2.2.4 If any Presbytery fails to act, or to report action, on any proposed amendment to the *Book of Church Order*, and the response of the Presbytery is not satisfactory to the General Assembly, the General Assembly shall require the delinquent Presbytery to report its judgment at the next Assembly, which shall take action on the proposed amendment.
- 2.2.5 Full organic union of the EPCEW with any other ecclesiastical body can be effected only in the following manner:
- 2.2.5.1 The approval of the proposed union by 75% of those present and voting in the General Assembly and its recommendation to Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.5.2 The advice and consent of 75% of the Presbyteries; **and**
 - 2.2.5.3 The approval by a subsequent General Assembly by 75% of those present and voting.

3.0 THE CONGREGATION

3.1 MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1.1 Acceptance to membership is determined by the Session. It is open to all such persons as have made a credible profession of faith in Christ as God the Son, their Saviour and Lord, have been baptised and exhibit a teachable spirit.
- 3.1.2 Members transferring from one congregation to another must obtain a certificate from the Session, confirming that they are members in good standing. Applications for membership from outside this Church should be supported by a disjunction certificate where possible, or a valid reason given for failure to produce such a certificate. Applicants must satisfy the Session that their profession of faith is credible.
- 3.1.3 Children of such members (though not admitted to full communion) are, because of God's Covenantal promise, received as infant members of the congregation in the Sacrament of Baptism. Such children shall be admitted to full communion upon their profession of faith.
- 3.1.4 Members have a responsibility faithfully to attend the means of grace, submit to the authority of the Session, respect and encourage their Elders, promote the peace and prosperity of the congregation, give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them, pray for the work of the gospel at home and abroad and exhibit a Christian spirit at all times.

3.2 OVERSIGHT

- 3.2.1 Each congregation, so far as its membership may justify, should have men elected to the position of Elder (Bishop/ Presbyter/ Overseer or Minister/ Pastor).
- 3.2.2 The Scriptures teach that in each congregation there are a plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Phil. 1:1). In New Testament times all Elders ruled and some of them also laboured in the Word and doctrine (Tim. 5:17); hence the titles Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder. Teaching Elders are referred to as Ministers in this book.
- 3.2.3 The Elders, including the Minister, comprise the Session, which has to do with the whole spiritual oversight of the congregation, including the admission to, or exclusion from, the Sacraments of the Church, and Church discipline (in necessary cases in conjunction with the Presbytery).
- 3.2.4 We endorse the right of every congregation to call its own Minister(s) and Ruling Elders, subject to the approval of Presbytery.

3.3 BUSINESS MEETINGS

- 3.3.1 Calling of Business Meetings
 - 3.3.1.1 Every business meeting shall be called from the pulpit by the authority of the Session.
 - 3.3.1.2 At the written request of 25% of the members a special meeting must be called by the Session.
 - 3.3.1.3 The congregation must also meet when directed to do so by Presbytery.
 - 3.3.1.4 An Annual business meeting must be held at which there shall be presented reports

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(including, inter alia, Session, Pastoral and Financial reports) assessing the preceding year and any plans and objectives for the ensuing year; such information and explanation of the reports as may be asked for shall be given.

- 3.3.2 Announcement shall be made of the meeting on the two preceding Sabbaths. Such announcement shall specify the business to be transacted and no business other than that specified may be brought before the meeting.
- 3.3.3 The quorum for a business meeting shall be 25% of the membership.
- 3.3.4 At every business meeting the Minister (or an Interim-Moderator) shall ordinarily preside. The Session may appoint another Elder to preside where the need arises.
- 3.3.5 Only members in full communion have the right to vote or engage in debate.
- 3.3.6 Sessions have the right to restrict attendance at a business meeting to members only.
- 3.3.7 The proceedings and decisions of business meetings shall be recorded in the Session minute books.

4.0 THE SESSION

4.1 COMPOSITION

- 4.1.1 The Session consists of the Teaching and Ruling Elders of a congregation.

4.2 MEETINGS

- 4.2.1 The Minister shall ordinarily preside at meetings of the Session. In his absence another elder may preside; or an Interim-Moderator appointed by Presbytery.
- 4.2.2 The Session shall meet at least bi-monthly for the transaction of ordinary business, public intimation having been given on a previous Sabbath.
- 4.2.3 Any member of Session may request, in case of urgency, a special meeting of Session.
- 4.2.4 A quorum consists of a majority of Session members, with a minimum of two.
- 4.2.5 All Session meetings must be opened and closed with prayer.
- 4.2.6 The Session must appoint a Clerk who shall make a record of the proceedings of each meeting. Any member of the Session may enter his dissent from any part of the proceedings and may require his dissent to be recorded; or he may dissent and complain to the Presbytery as per *Rules of Discipline* 1.3.

4.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.3.1 The Session must maintain registers of members and of their baptised children.
- 4.3.2 The Session has the responsibility for the administration of the Sacraments and maintain a record of attendance at the Lord's Supper.
- 4.3.3 The Session shall make arrangements for the pulpit supply and essential ministerial services of the congregation during the absence of the minister
- 4.3.4 The Session shall encourage the graces of liberality and concern for the needy among the people
- 4.3.5 The Session shall ensure that all congregational Title and Trust Deeds are in order and preserved in a safe place, together with all official congregational documents.
- 4.3.6 The Session shall present annually a report to the congregation and to the March meeting of Presbytery.
They shall report as follows:
- number of baptised members 1st January / 31st December
 - number of communicant members 1st January / 31st December
 - number of deaths and disjunctions
 - average number of communicant members at Communion services
 - average attendance Morning services
 - average attendance Evening Services
 - average attendance Mid-week Services
 - number on Sabbath School and Bible Class Rolls at the end of the calendar year

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- number of Baptisms
- number of marriages.

4.3.7 In any congregation lacking a Board of Deacons the duties of Deacons shall fall upon the Elders.

4.4 AUTHORITY

- 4.4.1 All Elders, Deacons, members of and workers in the congregation must submit to the authority and decisions of the Session, but any member who disapproves of or feels aggrieved by a decision of Session has the right of petition to Session and appeal to Presbytery.
- 4.4.2 The Session shall conduct all elections to the offices of Minister, Ruling Elder or Deacon. It must decline any person put forward for election whom it regards as unsuited for the office.
- 4.4.3 The Session, in exercising its power of discipline, may call before it members of the congregation and, if necessary, admonish, rebuke, suspend or exclude from the Sacraments those who are found to deserve censure.
- 4.4.4 Members of Session, including the Minister, are subject to the jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

5.0 THE DIACONATE

5.1 COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT

- 5.1.1 The Deacons' Board consists of the Deacons and (ex-officio) members of Session of a congregation.
- 5.1.2 Deacons must be members in full communion with the congregation in which they are appointed. They must be men qualified in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must be approved by the Session and be chosen by popular vote.
- 5.1.3 At his ordination and/or installation a deacon must answer affirmatively the following questions:
- Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as accepted by this Church, and that they are founded on and agreeable to the Word of God?
 - Do you believe the Form of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the Courts of this Church?
 - Do you accept the office of Deacon in this congregation and do you undertake through divine grace to discharge its duties, so far as in you lies, with diligence and faithfulness?
- 5.1.4 In exceptional circumstances, in small congregations, when candidates for the office of Deacon are not able to endorse the WCF because of different views on baptism, otherwise suitable men may be eligible for election, at the sole discretion of presbytery.
- 5.1.5 Elections for Deacons shall be held any time after 3 years, but in no case beyond 5 years following the previous election.
- 5.1.6 Deacons shall relinquish their office if:
- they are not re-elected
 - they cease to be members of the congregation
 - their resignation is received and accepted.

5.2 MEETINGS

- 5.2.1 A member of session shall ordinarily preside at all meetings.
- 5.2.2 The Deacons' Board should meet at least four times annually for transacting ordinary business.
- 5.2.3 A special meeting of the Board may be called by the Minister or the session or at the request of two Deacons.
- 5.2.4 Meetings shall be intimated publicly from the pulpit or by notice given to every member.
- 5.2.5 A majority of Board members, which should preferably include one member of the Session other than the Chairman, constitutes a quorum.

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5.2.6 All meetings of the Board shall be opened and closed with prayer.

5.2.7 The Deacons' Board must appoint a Clerk who shall make a record of the proceedings of each meeting. Any member of the Board may enter his dissent from any part of the proceedings. He may require his dissent with/without reasons to be recorded.

5.3 DUTIES

5.3.1 The duty of the Deacons' Board is to assist the Session in administering the social and material affairs of the congregation, e.g.

- ministration to the poor, the needy, the sick, the lonely and any who may be in distress
- the collection and administration of the finances
- the preparation of audited annual accounts
- the maintenance, improvement, insurance and uses of the property
- devising effective methods of collecting and distributing the gifts of the fellowship as guided by the session
- giving assistance in organising projects in, or by, the congregation and any other task which the session may assign them.

5.4 AUTHORITY

5.4.1 The Deacons' Board shall act under the authority of the session and has no power of discipline.

6.0 THE PRESBYTERY

6.1 COMPOSITIONS AND APPOINTMENT

- 6.1.1 The Presbytery shall consist of
- all Ministers, including retired Ministers of the EPCEW, within its bounds that have been accepted by Presbytery;
 - all ruling (including Assessor/Borrowed) Elders from each Session within its bounds.
- 6.1.2 Each congregation may have up to three voting Elder Commissioners to Presbytery.
- 6.1.3 Each Session shall inform the Clerk as to who their voting representatives are prior to the beginning of business at each meeting.
- 6.1.4 A Minister shall be required to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he resides unless there are reasons satisfactory to his Presbytery why he should not do so. Where a minister labours outside the geographical bounds of his Presbytery it shall only be with full concurrence of his Presbytery and the Presbytery within whose bounds he labours.
- 6.1.5 A Minister shall only be received as a member of Presbytery who receives a call to an ecclesiastical work within the bounds of that Presbytery, except in cases where the minister is retired, or where deemed necessary by Presbytery subject to review by the General Assembly.

6.2 OFFICIALS

- 6.2.1 The officials of the Presbytery are the Moderator, Clerk or Clerks and the Treasurer, and shall be appointed by the Court from among its members.
- 6.2.2 The Presbytery shall elect a Moderator annually at the March meeting in accordance with the following rules:
- 6.2.2.1 The Presbytery Arrangements Committee shall, and each congregational Session may, submit in writing the name of the member of Presbytery they wish to nominate to the Clerk at the November meeting for inclusion on the March agenda.
- 6.2.2.2 Where there is more than one nomination there shall be an election by ballot.
- 6.2.2.3 To be elected, a nominee must secure a majority of the total votes cast. Until this is achieved, the nominee with the smallest number of votes is eliminated and another vote taken.
- 6.2.3 The new Moderator shall enter upon his office at the meeting following his election.
- 6.2.4 In the absence of the Moderator the immediate past Moderator shall preside, but if he, too, is absent, the Presbytery shall elect a Moderator for that meeting.
- 6.2.5 The Clerk and Treasurer shall be elected every three years at the March meeting in accord with the same rules as for the Moderator.

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6.3 MEETINGS

- 6.3.1 There shall be a minimum of four ordinary meetings during each calendar year.
- 6.3.2 Presbytery shall determine the date, time and place of each meeting, but shall ordinarily meet the first Saturday of March, and the last Saturday of June, September and November.
- 6.3.3 The dates of all Presbytery meetings shall be known for the next twelve months and appended to the minutes of all Presbytery meetings. The date of the meeting twelve months hence shall be decided at every Presbytery.
- 6.3.4 Commissioner elders should normally be present at all meetings of Presbytery. The quorum for a meeting is one half of the voting members of presbytery.
- 6.3.5 The Moderator and Clerk(s) may call a special meeting.
- 6.3.6 The Clerk shall summon a special meeting on the written request of four members of Presbytery, provided they represent at least two congregations.
- 6.3.7 Any member may express his dissent from any part of the proceedings; he may require his dissent, including reasons, to be recorded.

6.4 COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

- 6.4.1 Presbytery may appoint a Commission or Committee for such purposes as it may determine.
- 6.4.2 In every case the Commission or Committee shall report to the Presbytery through its appointed Convenor. [At the request of Presbytery and following due notice the Convenor of a standing Committee shall produce the Committee Minute Book for inspection].
- 6.4.3 A Commission of Presbytery consists of a minimum of three of its members [one of whom is a Minister and one of whom is its Convenor] appointed to consider matters referred to it by the Presbytery and invested with the powers of Presbytery itself so far as these matters are concerned.
- 6.4.4 Presbytery may authorise temporary co-option of persons from within the Church membership, and note its reasons for doing so in the minutes.
- 6.4.5 The Standing Committees of Presbytery are:
- Committee for Presbytery Arrangements — [CPA]
 - Committee for Ministerial and Eldership Training — [CMET]
 - Committee for Missions — [CM]
 - Committee for Church Planting — [CCP]
- 6.4.6 Special Committees are appointed for special business and are dissolved when that business is completed.
- 6.4.7 All Committees shall consist of not more than five and not less than three members, at least one of whom shall be a Minister, and at least one of whom shall be a Ruling Elder.
- 6.4.8 Appointments to Standing Committees, other than the Presbytery Arrangements Committee, shall be made annually at the June meeting; members shall ordinarily be appointed to serve for

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three years.

6.4.9 Unless otherwise directed, each Committee shall convene at least once annually, and submit a written report to Presbytery at least once per year.

6.4.10 PRESBYTERY ARRANGEMENTS*

6.4.10.1 The Presbytery Arrangements Committee shall consist of the Moderator, who shall act as Convenor, immediate past Moderator, Moderator-elect, and the Clerk.

6.4.10.2 The Presbytery Arrangements Committee shall:

- provide members of Presbytery at the March meeting with a list of the members of the Standing Committees, indicated thereon which members are due to retire, and request nominations to be presented at the June meeting
- submit its nomination for the Moderator-elect at the November meeting
- provide guidance for the Moderator in situations requiring immediate attention
- check the representation of congregations at Presbytery.

6.5 RESPONSIBILITIES

6.5.1 The Presbytery shall:

- 6.5.1.1 Assist its congregations in spiritual and temporal affairs by giving advice in cases of difficulty and by receiving and determining petitions, complaints or appeals.
- 6.5.1.2 Check every two years that the session's minute books and register are properly kept.
- 6.5.1.3 See that the ordinances are duly administered and discipline upheld in the congregations, and in any that may become vacant; appoint a Minister as Interim-Moderator, unless declined by the Session, and assist the Church as to filling the vacancy.
- 6.5.1.4 Approve students for the Ministry, receive them under its care, direct their theological training and after trial, license them to preach the gospel.
- 6.5.1.5 Examine, approve, ordain and/or install Ruling Elders.
- 6.5.1.6 Approve the appointment and demission where necessary of any office bearer or paid official of the Church.
- 6.5.1.7 Ordain to the gospel Ministry and watch over all that pertains to the call, ordination, and/or installation of Ministers and to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship within its bounds.
- 6.5.1.8 Try charges against Ministers, Ruling Elders, Deacons, Licentiates and Missionaries and, if necessary, administer censure.
- 6.5.1.9 Control the Funds of the Presbytery.
- 6.5.1.10 Receive the views of Sessions regarding altering or abrogating any part of the Book of

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* This page amended June 2005

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Church Order.

- 6.5.1.11 Require the Clerk to collate annually the congregational Statistical Reports for circulation to its members at the March meeting, and send them to the General Assembly for review.
- 6.5.1.12 Keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and send them to the General Assembly annually for review. It shall report to the Assembly not less than thirty days before the meeting of each Assembly a detailed report of all important changes that have taken place within its bounds, including *inter alia* licensures, ordinations, unions, divisions, dissolutions and separations of congregations, and the formation of new ones.
- 6.5.1.13 Send to the clerk of the General Assembly not less than thirty days before the meeting of each stated Assembly a duly attested list of all presbyters on the roll of the Presbytery, a list of its commissioners to the Assembly, and the nominations of its representatives to the standing committees of the Assembly.
- 6.5.1.14 Convene for the transaction of designated business when directed to do so by the General Assembly.

6.6 AUTHORITY

- 6.6.1 Until such time as a General Assembly is formed the Presbytery is the supreme Court of the Church in legislative, administrative and judicial matters.
(The presbytery remains the radical (*i.e.* most representative) court in the wider affairs of the church even when a General Assembly has been formed).
- 6.6.2 The presbytery is bound to take order that the instructions of the General Assembly of the EPCEW are faithfully observed by ministers, elders, sessions, committees of management and congregations within its bounds.

7.0 THE CONDUCT OF PRESBYTERY BUSINESS

7.1 AGENDA

- 7.1.1 An agenda will be issued to members at least seven days before the date of the meeting.
- 7.1.2 The agenda is to contain sufficient detail to enable knowledgeable preparation. Documentation should be appended where appropriate.
- 7.1.3 Items of business for inclusion on the agenda must be communicated to the Clerk not later than fourteen days before the date of the meeting.
 - 7.1.3.1 Wherever possible the agenda for Presbytery meetings should state what has to be decided under each item of business.
 - 7.1.3.2 Wherever possible specific questions or resolutions should be sent out to church sessions under each item on the Presbytery agenda.
- 7.1.4 Urgent business arising too late for the published agenda may be included at the discretion of the Moderator after discussion with the Clerk.
- 7.1.5 Minor and incidental business only may be raised under ‘any other business’.
- 7.1.6 All business involving the Book of Order of the Church shall require written notice of motion submitted to the Presbytery.
- 7.1.7 Items of business on the agenda may take the form of a proposal, motion (seconded proposal), report, petition, appeal, complaint or referral.
- 7.1.8 The petitions, appeals and complaints procedures give circumstances where those other than Presbytery members can place business on the agenda.
- 7.1.9 In order to deepen fellowship, to encourage elders in the work of the local congregation and to produce guidelines and policy statements where these are necessary, the Presbytery agenda may contain a major item of devotional, pastoral or theological interest. Sessions or committees of presbytery may request such items to be inserted in the agenda by the CPA.
- 7.1.10 The agenda shall ordinarily include a report from one or more of the congregations to encourage prayer among the churches.

7.2 LAWS OF DEBATE

- 7.2.1 All participants in Presbytery business must address Presbytery through the Moderator in whom is vested control of the proceedings.
- 7.2.2 Decisions shall be made by formal motions and amendments, so that, after discussion, responses to questions or motions should normally be ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, or an amendment or counter-motion.
- 7.2.3 A member may put forward a proposal either at the beginning or end of his comments. The item of business can proceed only if the proposal is seconded, making it a motion.

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7.2.4 Discussion on the motion may follow for which the Moderator should allow reasonable time and opportunity for those wishing to contribute.

7.2.5 Discussion of a motion may be facilitated by any of the following procedural motions, other than amendment, for which notice of motion is not required:

- that the question be now put
- that Presbytery pass from the question
- that the business be postponed
- that the meeting, or debate be adjourned
- that the recommendation be referred back to Committee
- that the question be referred to a Committee
- that a counter-motion be considered.

The Moderator has discretion to accept or reject a procedural motion.

7.2.6 DEFINITIONS OF PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

7.2.6.1 ‘That the question be now put’ is to conclude discussion. If successful, a vote is taken at once. If defeated, discussion continues.

7.2.6.2 ‘That Presbytery pass from the question’. If successful, the motion and discussion is discontinued immediately.

7.2.6.3 ‘That the business be postponed’ is to defer discussion because of lack of information or because of untimeliness at that point.

7.2.6.4 ‘That the meeting, or debate be adjourned’.

- In the case of a meeting - because of unfinished business or tension or lack of quorum.
- In the case of a debate - in order to give time for consideration or to deal with a more important item on the agenda.
- The Moderator himself may ask the meeting for permission to adjourn.

7.2.6.5 ‘That the recommendation be referred back’ is for further consideration by a Committee.

7.2.6.6 ‘That the recommendation be referred to a Committee’ applies where it is felt that the nature of the business is such that a concentrated treatment by Committee is the efficient procedure.

7.2.6.7 ‘That a counter-motion be considered’ is to interrupt a debate by laying the original motion on the table to give opportunity for an alternative motion to be considered. If the counter-motion is adopted the original motion automatically falls; but if it is not adopted discussion is resumed on the original motion.

7.2.7 A motion may be subjected to amendment and notice of motion is not required. It must not be negative or substantial; it may include a ‘rider’.

7.2.8 Only one amendment can be allowed at any one time. Parties to the original motion or previous amendment cannot propose or second. Any number of amendments may succeed.

7.2.9 Amendments to amendments are allowed.

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- 7.2.10 All amendments and amendments to amendments should be individually put to the vote in the order in which they affect the motion.
- 7.2.11 All adopted amendments are embodied in the motion and put to the vote as a ‘substantive motion’.
- 7.2.12 If all amendments are lost the motion is put to the vote.
- 7.2.13 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by agreement between the proposer and seconder and with the consent of the meeting. Such should be minuted.
- 7.2.14 When carried, a motion becomes a ‘resolution’.
- 7.2.15 Presbytery may resolve itself into Committee on any occasion it deems fit in which case no minutes shall be recorded of the debate and/or discussion. The following provisions apply:
- a simply majority vote shall normally be sufficient for such resolution; however where changes to the Book of Church Order are under consideration a 2/3rds majority of the membership present shall be required
 - when the business dealt with in Committee has been completed and the Court sits again, the report and/or proposals as completed in Committee may be adopted or rejected but cannot be amended
- 7.2.16 For Presbytery decisions to be reversed a rescinding motion should be put at one meeting but not voted upon until the next.
- 7.2.17 Points of order may be raised to deal with a departure from normal procedure in the following areas:
- behaviour
 - lack of quorum
 - *ultra vires*
 - no question before the meeting
- 7.2.18 Behaviour will be a ground of censure by Presbytery on any of its members after the member has been given opportunity of withdrawal, explanation and apology.

7.3 VOTING PROCEDURES

- 7.3.1 A formal vote is necessary only when the mind of the meeting cannot otherwise be ascertained, i.e. ‘without objection’.
- 7.3.2 Voting shall be by a show of hands or, on occasions when Presbytery specifically decides, by ballot. The Clerk shall act as teller and may receive assistance for this purpose.
- 7.3.3 The Moderator has a ‘casting vote’ only.
- 7.3.4 For a motion involving an amendment recommended for adoption by the General Assembly to the *Book of Church Order* to be carried, a vote in its favour of two thirds of the members of Presbytery present and voting at the meeting, at two consecutive Presbytery meetings, shall be required. In voting upon the amendment, Presbytery may

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not divide the parts of the amendment, except as directed by the General Assembly recommending its adoption.

7.3.5 Proxy voting shall not be permitted.

7.3.6 Voting on a motion to divide a Presbytery into two or more Presbyteries requires a majority vote from each of the proposed new presbyteries, as represented by the members present and voting who would fall under the boundaries of these proposed new Presbyteries. Votes will be taken in turn from each of the proposed new Presbyteries.

For a motion to divide a Presbytery to be carried, a vote in its favour of two thirds of the members of Presbytery present and voting at the meeting, at two consecutive Presbytery meetings, shall be required.

7.3.7 All resolutions involving a division of a Presbytery or an alteration in the bounds of presbyteries shall be referred to the General Assembly by petition.

7.4 MINUTES

7.4.1 All motions and amendments, with the names of proposers and seconders and the results of all votes, should be recorded in the minutes, together with key arguments in the debate helpful for future reference and not noted in documents appended to the minutes.

7.4.2 Minutes should highlight decisions made and action to be taken (indicating by whom and, usually, by when such action should be taken).

7.4.3 Minutes should be sent out within seven days after each meeting.

8.0 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

8.1 COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT

- 8.1.1 The General Assembly is a permanent court and shall meet at least once annually. Its members comprise the commissioners sent from its presbyteries, consisting of all Teaching Elders in good standing with their presbyteries and Ruling Elders from each formally constituted congregation in the ratio of one Ruling Elder for each fifty baptized members, or fraction thereof.

8.2 OFFICIALS

- 8.2.1 The officials of the General Assembly are the Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the Treasurer, who shall be members of the Court.
- 8.2.2 The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Treasurer are elected by and hold office at the will of the Court, ordinarily for terms of three years each.
- 8.2.3 The General Assembly shall appoint a Moderator's Nominating Committee, which shall comprise the Moderator, the Clerk of the Assembly, and three ministers and three ruling elders appointed by and from each presbytery. The Clerk is the Convener of the Committee. The Convener shall circulate to Presbyteries no later than 180 days prior to the stated Assembly a request for a nomination from each for the office of Moderator. The Convener then circulates to members of the Committee the nominations of presbyteries no later than ninety days preceding the Assembly for members to vote thereupon.
- 8.2.4 The person receiving the majority of votes shall be declared to be the nominee of the Committee. Should this procedure fail to provide a single nominee, the Convener shall call a meeting of the members of the Committee to decide the matter no later than sixty days preceding the Assembly.
- 8.2.5 The Convener shall immediately intimate to the nominee advice of his nomination as Moderator.

8.3 EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS

- 8.3.1 When an emergency shall require a meeting of the General Assembly earlier than the time to which it stands adjourned, the Moderator (or if he is indisposed, the Clerk) shall issue a call for an extraordinary meeting with agreement of the majority of presbytery moderators, or upon the written request of at least two presbytery moderators at the behest of their respective presbyteries.
- 8.3.2 The members of the special meeting shall be the commissioners who sat in the preceding meeting of the General Assembly. A Session shall have the right to appoint an alternate commissioner in the stead of one who has ceased to be a member of the EPCEW since the preceding meeting, or who has notified the Moderator of his Session of his inability to serve.
- 8.3.3 Notice of the extraordinary meeting stating its purpose shall be sent to each commissioner and to the moderator of each Presbytery. The timing of the meeting should be determined by the moderator and the clerk based on the urgency of the matter. Consideration should be given to providing 30 days' notice if the matter allows. No other business is to be transacted.

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8.4 GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

- 8.4.1 The General Assembly's committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the General Assembly and may not direct any Church judicatories.
- 8.4.2 The General Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of all Presbyteries, each committee being established on the basis of an equal number of Teaching and Ruling Elders.
- 8.4.3 Any member of the Assembly has a right to attend any of its committees.
- 8.4.4 The Standing Committees of the General Assembly are:
- Committee for Business — [CB]
 - Committee for Training of Presbyters — [CTP]
 - Committee for Missions — [CM]
 - Committee for Publications — [CP]
 - Committee for Inter-church Relations — [CIR]
- 8.4.5 Special Committees are appointed for special business and are dissolved when that business is completed.
- 8.4.6 Three members of a Committee shall constitute a quorum.
- 8.4.7 A member may speak more than once to the same question.
- 8.4.8 Motions from Committees do not require a second.
- 8.4.9 The Convenor may speak to a question, and may move motions and amendments, and shall have both a deliberative and casting vote.
- 8.4.10 The General Assembly may appoint a Commission with full powers to deal with all matters submitted to it. The Assembly appoints the chairman.

9.0 THE CONDUCT OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS

9.1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 9.1.1 No business shall be transacted in the General Assembly except in the presence of at least sixteen members representing at least two Presbyteries.
- 9.1.2 No inferior court shall sit during the sittings of the General Assembly.
- 9.1.3 The General Assembly shall be presided over by a Moderator, duly elected, who shall have a casting vote but no deliberative vote.
- 9.1.4 In the absence of the Moderator for the current term, the chair shall be taken by the immediately previous Moderator, or if he is also absent by any previous Moderator, or a member appointed by the court.
- 9.1.5 When the minutes are submitted for confirmation, no question shall be raised regarding them except such as concerns their accuracy as a record of the proceedings.
- 9.1.6 The items of business arranged by the Business Committee and approved by the Assembly shall constitute the Orders of the Day.
- 9.1.7 The Assembly may vary the Orders of the Day by a motion, without notice and without debate, between items of business.
- 9.1.8 No business shall be introduced to the Assembly by any member until called for by the Moderator.
- 9.1.9 Every committee of the General Assembly shall submit to the Assembly a written report, with recommendations for action (if any) appended; such reports and recommendations shall be circulated among members of the Assembly at least seven days before they are considered.
- 9.1.10 Circulated reports and recommendations shall be held as read unless the Assembly determines otherwise.
- 9.1.11 No recommendation in any report shall be held as adopted unless it shall have been definitively set forth and approved by the Assembly.
- 9.1.12 Questions may be put by any member through the Moderator to the convenor of a committee (or his alternate) when the report is before the Assembly and after the deliverance as a whole has been moved and seconded.
- 9.1.13 No resolution of a court or committee can be rescinded unless notice of motion to that effect has been given at a previous meeting.

9.2 MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 9.2.1 A substantive motion refers to business that does not arise from the report of any committee. It shall ordinarily be communicated to the Business Convenor at least seven days before it is considered by the Assembly.
- 9.2.2 Motions shall be amended by inserting, adding or removing certain words, including removing certain words to insert and add other words. A direct negative to a motion shall not be a competent amendment.
- 9.2.3 An amendment may be moved to an amendment that has been moved and seconded as if the first amendment were an original motion.

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- 9.2.4 When an amendment is before the Assembly, debate shall be strictly confined to such amendment.
- 9.2.5 Notices of motion shall ordinarily be written and communicated to the Business Convenor at least seven days before the matter to which they are related is before the Assembly. A motion of amendment may be moved without notice, if in the opinion of the Moderator it arises in the course of the debate and does not alter the substance of the motion. Should the Moderator rule that the proposed amendment affects the substance of the motion, it shall require the leave of the Assembly.
- 9.2.6 No change shall be made in the terms of a notice of motion unless made at least seven days before the matter comes before the Assembly.
- 9.2.7 If the member who gave notice of the motion is absent when called for by the Moderator, another member may move the motion, failing which the motion lapses.
- 9.2.8 A motion or amendment shall be seconded before it can be debated or put to the vote, except in Committee of the Whole. When the mover of the motion or amendment has finished his speech, his motion or amendment shall forthwith be seconded, failing which it lapses and shall not be recorded in the minutes.
- 9.2.9 A motion or amendment, duly made and seconded, shall not be withdrawn except by leave of the Assembly and at the request of the mover with the consent of the seconder.

9.3 LAWS OF DEBATE

- 9.3.1 A member speaking in the Assembly shall address the Chair only, and shall not speak until called on by the Chair.
- 9.3.2 Except in Committee of the Whole, no member shall speak more than once to the same question other than in explanation, or raising a point of order, or in reply at the close of the debate if he is the mover of the original motion.
- 9.3.3 A member who has spoken to the main question shall not afterwards move an amendment to it, but he may second or speak to an amendment moved by another member.
- 9.3.4 A mover of an amendment shall not afterwards speak to the main question.
- 9.3.5 Before the speech in reply, the Moderator shall declare that it is to be a reply on the debate, and that thereafter the debate shall be closed. Any member entitled to speak may then speak to the main question before the speech in reply has begun. After the speech in reply, which shall introduce no new matter, there shall be no further debate.
- 9.3.6 When it shall appear to the Moderator or Chairman that the motion, or any amendment to it, has been adequately debated he may so inform the Assembly, distinctly stating whether it is to the debate on the amendment only or to the debate on the amendment and motion that closure is to be applied. The Moderator or Chairman shall forthwith put the motion that the question be now put, and if the same be carried by at least two thirds, he shall forthwith put to the vote the motion, or the amendment, or the amendment and the motion, as the case may be, without further debate.
- 9.3.7 The Moderator or Chairman shall endeavour to put the question at every convenient opportunity. He shall state the motion or amendment or shall cause it to be stated by the Clerk. Any member not distinctly hearing the motion or amendment so stated may require it to be stated again. The Moderator or Chairman shall give way to any member who still wishes to speak to the question and is entitled to do so, except when the debate has been closed by a speech in reply or by the application of the closure.

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- 9.3.8 The Moderator or Chairman of the Committee of the Whole shall not take part in any debate. He shall leave the chair if any case arises of which he is a party, or if he wishes to speak to any question, or give in a report of a committee.
- 9.3.9 No member shall interrupt a speaker except for one of the following purposes:
- To raise a point of order and ask for a ruling from the Chair on it.
 - To make a personal explanation.
 - To object to language deemed objectionable or reflecting on character.
 - To move that the Assembly sit in closed session.
 - To move that the question be now put.
 - To move the adjournment of the debate.
- 9.3.10 Motions lost relating to the above do not preclude their being moved again during the same debate.
- 9.3.11 Points of order must refer strictly to the order of proceedings of the Assembly and may be raised to deal with a departure from normal procedure in the following areas:
- Behaviour
 - Lack of quorum
 - *Ultra vires*
 - No question before the meeting
- 9.3.12 A member raising a point of order shall simply state it and no other member shall speak.
- 9.3.13 The Moderator shall then rule on the point; or ask certain members whom he selects to state their views on it and thereafter rule on the point; or refer it to the Assembly for decision by debate and vote.
- 9.3.14 A member who challenges the ruling of the Chair shall be heard for not more than five minutes and, the Moderator or Chairman having been heard in reply, a vote shall be taken without further discussion.
- 9.3.15 The General Assembly may at any time close its doors and sit in closed session in consequence of a ruling by the Chair, or of a motion made, seconded and put to the vote without debate.
- 9.3.16 In dealing with cases or questions which have been discussed in closed session in a lower court, or which have been declared by the Chair to affect character or partake of the nature of personal disputes or misunderstanding, the Assembly shall deliberate in closed session unless a motion to the contrary duly made, seconded and put to the vote is carried.
- 9.3.17 If a member makes an explanation in debate, it shall refer exclusively to some statement or statements made by himself that, in his opinion, one or more speakers in the debate have misapprehended.
- 9.3.18 When language used in debate seems to any member to be objectionable, he may forthwith, but not later, ask for a ruling concerning it from the Chair. Language ruled objectionable shall be withdrawn and apologized for forthwith by the speaker in a manner satisfactory to the Assembly. The member raising the point of order may also demand that the words be taken down, whereupon the Moderator or Chairman shall, without debate, put the question that the words objected to be taken down, and if this is resolved in the affirmative he shall

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direct that the Clerk take them down as grounds for such further action as the Assembly may think fit to take.

- 9.3.19 No member may reflect on any decision of the Assembly except for the purpose of moving that it be altered or rescinded.

9.4 VOTING

- 9.4.1 The Moderator or Chairman shall first take the vote by voices, calling for 'Ayes' and 'Noes' to the question, and advise the Assembly whether in his opinion the Ayes or the Noes have it. If his opinion is acquiesced in by the silence of the Assembly, the motion shall be passed or lost accordingly. If no 'Noes' were heard he may direct the Clerk to record a unanimous vote. If his opinion is challenged by one or more members, the vote shall be taken by a show of hands 'for' or 'against' and the numbers recorded in the minutes.
- 9.4.2 In the case of equality of votes the Moderator or Chairman shall have a casting, but not a deliberative, vote, and shall vote wherever possible so as to leave the matter voted on open for further consideration.

9.5 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

- 9.5.1 By a motion put to the vote the General Assembly may resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole with a Chairman appointed by the Assembly.
- 9.5.2 In a Committee of the Whole
- All members of the Assembly shall be members of the Committee of the Whole.
 - Separate minutes shall be kept of proceedings.
 - A motion need not be seconded, and a member may speak more than once to the same question.
 - No member may dissent from any resolution of the Committee.
- 9.5.3 Proceedings shall be closed by the carrying of a resolution to report to the Assembly on the matter committed, or to report progress and ask leave to sit again; whereupon the Assembly shall forthwith resume, and the report of the Committee shall be given in.
- 9.5.4 The report may be adopted with or without amendment, rejected, postponed, recommitted, or otherwise dealt with as the Assembly thinks fit. At this stage any member may exercise his privilege of dissent.

9.6 OVERTURES

- 9.6.1 An overture is a written proposal submitted by a committee or presbytery to the General Assembly for the enactment of any alteration to the Constitution or rules of the Church; for a declaration of the interpretation of the law of the Church; for a declaration of the practice of the Church; or to have an action done for the general benefit of the Church.
- 9.6.2 That the Assembly has procedures to receive an overture does not prejudice the right of the Assembly to declare what it understands the law of the Church to be on any point within its jurisdiction.
- 9.6.3 When considering an overture, the Assembly is not exercising a judicial function, and no members are excluded from participating and voting in the proceedings.
- 9.6.4 An overture shall include in the recitals the authority pursuant to which the Assembly may give effect to the overture, and must specify what is desired in the very words it would stand if granted.
- 9.6.5 An overture shall not be moved unless notice of it has been given at a previous meeting of the Assembly, or in the papers submitted to members of an Assembly prior to sitting.

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- 9.6.6 Only members of the Assembly may state an overture. If no member appears to state the overture it falls without motion.
- 9.6.7 After the overture has been stated, members of the Assembly may put questions through the Moderator to the person(s) stating the overture. After questions have been answered the person(s) stating the overture may move that the overture be sustained.
- 9.6.8 An overture is either (i) sustained by the Assembly in its original or an amended form and sent down to presbyteries for consideration and report, or (ii) dismissed.

9.7 PETITIONS

- 9.7.1 A petition is a written request made to the General Assembly praying for something that is within the jurisdiction of the Assembly to grant which cannot be otherwise obtained constitutionally. A petition to review the judgment of a lower court that could be effected with due process constitutionally is thus irregular as a petition and cannot be received.
- 9.7.2 Any person within the jurisdiction of the courts of the Church, and any congregation, committee, or organization of the Church, and any lower court of the Church is competent to approach the Assembly by petition.
- 9.7.3 Sessions and Presbyteries should provide assistance to petitioners in preparing petitions to prevent their being rejected on the ground of informality or another defect.
- 9.7.4 A petition shall be read by the petitioner. A member cannot present the petition of others.
- 9.7.5 Relevant questions may be put by any member through the Moderator to the petitioner after the petition has been read.
- 9.7.6 The Assembly shall determine whether the petition can competently and with propriety be received.
- 9.7.7 If the petition is received the Assembly proceeds to consider its answer to the prayer of the petition.

9.8 REFERRALS

- 9.8.1 A referral is a written request for opinion or advice by the Assembly on matters of difficulty or importance, referred by a lower court in the form of a properly attested extract minute of the resolution of that court, and accompanied by all relevant documents.
- 9.8.2 The referral shall be stated by a member of the court from which it has come, and the statement shall outline the subject matter, why it has been referred, and how it is within the jurisdiction of the Assembly.
- 9.8.3 If a referral is informal the Assembly may dismiss the reference without entering upon the consideration of the substance of the reference.
- 9.8.4 The Assembly may sustain the referral such that the matter is properly before the Assembly, or it may decline to entertain the referral if it appears that the lower court has not exhausted its resources in the matter, and advise the lower court to adjudicate the matter in accordance with the laws of the Church.
- 9.8.5 Members of the lower court who are members of the Assembly retain their right to deliberate and vote.

9.9 APPEALS AND 'DISSENT AND COMPLAINTS' COMING BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- 9.9.1 An appeal is a signed document given in by a person who is or was a party at the bar in a case before the court.

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- 9.9.2 A ‘dissent and complaint’ is a signed document given in by a member of a court who neither is nor was at its bar in a case before the court. It contains his reasons for complaining against a decision of the court on which the complainant has voted in the minority and is designed to bring that decision under review by a higher court.
- 9.9.3 Reasons of appeal or ‘dissent and complaint’ must charge a lower court either with delinquency (having failed to do what it was responsible to do) or with error (for having acted contrary to its responsibilities).²³
- 9.9.4 In hearing appeals or ‘dissent and complaint’ the General Assembly shall proceed as follows:
- Read the decision appealed/complained against.
 - Read the reasons of appeal/complaint.
 - Read the record of the proceedings of the lower court in the case including any of that court’s answers to the reasons adduced.
 - Hear and question the appellant/complainant.
 - Hear and question the lower court concerned through its appointed representatives.
- 9.9.5 The General Assembly shall then direct the parties to the appeal/complaint, including each member of the lower court concerned, to withdraw, and shall proceed to consider the case and come to a decision on the matter as it seems right.
- 9.9.6 Parties are called in and the judgment of the Assembly intimated to them.
- 9.9.7 An appeal or ‘dissent and complaint’ is sustained where the decision of the lower court is
- i. disapproved, in which case the judgment of the lower court may be modified as the Assembly thinks fit; or
 - ii. defective in process, in which case the Assembly without entering on the merit of the decision of the lower court or pronouncing any judgment on it may send back the case to the lower court with instructions to have it taken up again and disposed of in accordance with the laws of the Church.
- 9.9.8 Dismissal of an appeal or ‘dissent and complaint’ implies approval by the higher court of both the decision and the procedure of the lower court. Thereupon the decision of the lower court becomes final.

9.10 PRESBYTERY BOUNDS

- 9.10.1 The General Assembly shall take no action relative to a proposed alteration to the bounds of presbyteries until all the presbyteries affected by the proposed change have been consulted and afforded opportunity to set forth their views.
- 9.10.2 New presbyteries (whether by division of an existing presbytery or otherwise) are formed and named and their boundaries defined by the General Assembly, and a resolution of the Assembly constituting a new presbytery shall specify the time and place of first meeting of each presbytery formed, and appoint one of its ministers to convene, constitute and preside over the first meeting of Presbytery until the commissions of elders have been sustained, the roll of members has been fixed, and a moderator has been elected. The extract minute of the General Assembly constituting the new presbytery is inserted in the first minute.

²³ Such would include irregularity in the proceedings of the court; reception of irrelevant evidence, or refusal to receive relevant evidence; judgment against evidence or the weight of evidence; mistake or injustice in judgment; undue haste in proceeding to judgment; denial of natural justice.

10.0 THE RULING ELDER

10.1 GENERAL

- 10.1.1 Ruling Elders must be members in full communion with the congregation in which they are appointed. They must be men qualified in accordance with 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. They must be chosen by popular vote and submitted to Presbytery in accordance with FOG 13.3.
- 10.1.2 In a congregation not having two Ruling Elders, the Presbytery shall, at the request of the congregation, appoint one or more of the Elders under its jurisdiction to that congregation as Assessor or Borrowed Elders for an interim period.
- 10.1.3 At his ordination and/or installation a Ruling Elder must answer the following questions:
- Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as accepted by this Church, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such, do you subscribe them as the confession of your faith?
 - Do you believe the Form of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the Courts of this Church?
 - Are you resolved through divine grace firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as accepted by this Church, and to teach the same and defend it to the utmost of your power against all error so long as you remain an Elder of this Church?
 - So far as you know your own heart, have you been induced to undertake the work of the Eldership in this place from love to God and from a sincere desire to promote His glory and to win souls to Christ?
 - Do you promise through divine grace to make full demonstration of your ministry among this congregation by: visiting the people, instructing the young, visiting the sick, aiding in the government of the Church and discharging all other duties incumbent upon you as an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ?
- 10.1.4 Ruling Elders are elected for life in the congregation appointing them. An Elder may not of himself demit the duties of his office; but he may ask Session to relieve him of them and his request, if sustained by satisfactory reasons and approved by Presbytery, shall be granted. The granting of such relief shall automatically extend to the duties of Assessor or Borrowed Elder and other Presbytery appointments.

10.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 10.2.1 The Ruling Elders shall join with the Minister(s) in the government, nurture and discipline of the congregation. Upon them, equally with the Minister(s), devolves the responsibility of caring for the spiritual welfare of the people and the superintendence of all meetings and organisations within the congregation. It is the responsibility of Ruling Elders to pray with, and for the congregation and to seek fruit among them. They are to visit the people,

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paying special attention to the sick, and to irregular attendees, and also to instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, warn the careless and nourish and guard the children of the Church.

11.0 THE MINISTER

11.1 GENERAL

11.1.1 Ministers are Elders who rule and also labour in the Word and Doctrine. They shall be members of the congregation and, together with other Ruling Elders, have the responsibility for its Spiritual oversight.

11.1.2 At his ordination and at every installation, the Minister must answer affirmatively the following questions:

- Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as accepted by this Church, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such, do you subscribe them as the confession of your faith?
- Do you believe the Form of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the Courts of this Church?
- Are you resolved through divine grace firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as accepted by this Church, and to teach the same and defend it to the utmost of your power against all error so long as you remain a Minister of this Church?
- So far as you know your own heart have you been induced to undertake the work of the ministry in this place from love to God and from a sincere desire to promote His glory and to win souls to Christ?
- Do you promise through divine grace to make full proof of your ministry among this people, preaching the Gospel of the grace of God, administering the Sacraments, visiting the people, instructing the young, visiting the sick, aiding in the government of the Church and discharging all other duties incumbent upon you as a Minister of Jesus Christ?

Substitute Questions to be put to Missionaries:

- Are you resolved through divine grace firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as accepted by this Church, and to teach the same and defend it to the utmost of your power against all error?
- So far as you know your own heart, have you been induced to undertake this work for the Lord from love to God and from a sincere desire to promote His glory and to extend His Kingdom on earth?

11.1.3 Ministers are subject to the jurisdiction of their Presbytery.

11.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

11.2.1 The Minister has particular responsibility to:

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- faithfully minister the Word both publicly and privately
- conduct public worship and administer the Sacraments
- care, as a Pastor, for his people
- visit the people, especially the sick
- instruct the young
- conduct marriages and funerals
- aid in the government of the Church
- provide a Christian example at all times

11.3 DISSOLUTION OF THE MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIP

- 11.3.1 When any minister shall submit a resignation of his ministerial charge to his Session:
- 11.3.1.1 The Session shall notify Presbytery and call for a meeting of the congregation in accordance with FOG 3.3. If possible, the meeting should be moderated by a member of presbytery, invited by the session, from another congregation.
- 11.3.1.2 The Presbytery shall require the church to appear by its commissioners, to show why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation.
- 11.3.1.3 If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its minister be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the ministerial relation dissolved.
- 11.3.2 If any church desires to be relieved of its minister:
- 11.3.2.1 The Session (having exhausted all reasonable means to resolve any disputes, including mediation by the presbytery) shall notify Presbytery and call for a meeting of the congregation in accordance with FOG 3.3. The meeting shall be moderated by a member of presbytery, invited by the session, from another congregation.
- 11.3.2.2 The Presbytery shall require the church to appear by its commissioners, to show why the Presbytery should or should not dissolve the ministerial relationship.
- 11.3.2.3 If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for dissolving the relationship with its minister be deemed insufficient, his ministerial relationship to the church shall be retained.
- 11.3.3 In either case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

11.4 DEMISSION OF OFFICE

- 11.4.1 Ministers who, resign their charges in order to engage in other recognised Christian ministry, that is, for work other than designated work for presbytery, may be moved to a list of those under the care of presbytery, but without voting rights.
- 11.4.2 The Minister may offer his resignation when he reaches the age of 65; if it is accepted he shall have a seat on the Session should he continue to worship with the congregation.

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- 11.4.3 Where it appears that the Minister has become - through illness, infirmity or other reason - permanently unfit for his work Presbytery may, after consultation with the Session, require him to retire and declare the office vacant.

11.5 DEPOSITION OF OFFICE

- 11.5.1 A Minister shall be deposed by Presbytery if convicted of heresy or immorality.

12.0 THE MINISTRY: TRAINING AND ADMISSION

12.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 12.1.1 Final authority in regard to ministerial training, the examination of candidates for ministry and admission to the ministry of the EPCEW is vested in the General Assembly.
- 12.1.2 The Presbytery may use any theological training schools approved by the General Assembly, but the completion of such courses shall not be deemed equivalent to approval by Presbytery.
- 12.1.3 The stages of progress toward the ministry, as recognised by the EPCEW are:
- **Under Care:** This stage usually applies to students who are preparing at a theological college under the direction of the Presbytery, but may also be applied to men whose training has been completed outside of the direction of the EPCEW, and then apply to the Presbytery to be examined for licensure.
 - **Licensure:** This is a stage at which the candidate has satisfied the Presbytery as to his character and suitability for the ministry, as well as his knowledge of the required academic subjects.
 - **Ordination:** This is the stage at which the Licentiate has received a call from a congregation to serve as its minister, or a call to serve as a teacher in a theological hall or college or as a missionary at home or abroad, which the presbytery deems consistent with a calling to the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

12.2 COMMITTEE FOR MINISTERIAL AND ELDERSHIP TRAINING (CMET)

- 12.2.1 The Committee shall consist of not more than five and not less than three members, at least one of whom shall be a Minister, and at least one of whom shall be a Ruling Elder.
- 12.2.2 Presbytery shall decide all appointments for training and admission to the Ministry after considering reports and recommendations from the Committee. It shall delegate to the Committee the implementation of its decisions and the administration of procedures.
- 12.2.3 The Committee shall convene twice annually and additionally as occasion may demand, submitting a report to Presbytery of each meeting.
- 12.2.4 Business at regular Committee meetings shall include:
- student progress
 - applications
 - an evaluation of the need for students for the Ministry

12.3 CONDITIONS RELATING TO COMING UNDER CARE

- 12.3.1 A candidate wishing to be taken under care of Presbytery should have been a member of a

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congregation of the EPCEW within that Presbytery for at least six months, and have the written recommendation of his session. (See also 12.3.4).

- 12.3.2 Normally applicants for training or for admission to the Ministry shall be University graduates but those of more mature years or whose circumstances are exceptional may apply to Presbytery. In these cases great stress will be placed on the examinations required in sections 12.4.2, 12.4.3, and 12.4.6. (See note under 12.4.9).
- 12.3.3 Admission to training or to the Ministry shall be subject to the satisfaction of the Presbytery as to the applicant's foreseeable commitment to the Ministry of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales.
- 12.3.4 Applications shall be submitted to the CMET and shall include: a full C.V., a written reference and completed questionnaire from the applicant's Session.
- 12.3.5 The Committee shall:
- interview the applicant, first providing him with a copy of the Book of Church Order to assist his preparation for the interview.
 - submit a written recommendation to Presbytery for its consideration.
- 12.3.6 The applicant must appear before Presbytery in person and give a testimony of his personal experience of grace and call to the ministry.
- 12.3.6.1 The Presbytery may examine him regarding these testimonies.
- 12.3.6.2 A decision to accept shall require a 60% majority of those present and voting.
- 12.3.6.3 If approved, the moderator shall ask the candidate the following questions:
- Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a becoming Christian character, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for the sacred ministry?
 - Do you promise to submit yourself to the proper supervision of the Presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for the ministry?
- 12.3.6.4 If these questions are answered in the affirmative, the moderator, or someone appointed by him shall lead in prayer for the candidate. The applicant shall then be entered on the roll of candidates for the ministry.
- 12.3.6.5 The Presbytery shall require every candidate for the ministry on its roll to make a report to it at least once per year; and it shall secure from CMET an annual report upon his deportment, diligence and progress in study.
- 12.3.6.6 The Presbytery may issue a certificate of dismissal to another Presbytery, upon application of the candidate. The approval of both Presbyteries will be required if the candidate is not also to transfer his church membership to a congregation in the other Presbytery.
- 12.3.6.7 A candidate shall, at his request be allowed to withdraw from the care of Presbytery. The Presbytery may, for sufficient reasons given to the candidate and the Session of his church, remove the candidate from its roll of candidates.

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12.4 LICENSING

- 12.4.1 The Committee shall maintain sufficient contact with the students in training, to ensure effective communication and the monitoring of training progress in particular.
- 12.4.2 Each candidate for licensure shall sit three Presbytery examinations. Ordinarily they shall be one in each year of Theological training. The areas of examination shall be as follows, or as otherwise directed by the General Assembly:

Year 1

- Scripture Genesis - Song of Solomon
- Shorter Catechism Questions 1-31
- Larger Catechism Questions 1-68
- Confession of Faith Chapters 1-12

Year 2

- Scripture Isaiah - Malachi
- Shorter Catechism Questions 32-62
- Larger Catechism Questions 69-121
- Confession of Faith Chapters 11-22

Year 3

- Scripture Matthew - Revelation
- Shorter Catechism Questions 63-127
- Larger Catechism Questions 122-196
- Confession of Faith Chapters 23-33
- History of Presbyterianism in the U.K. including the history of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales.

- 12.4.3 Each candidate for licensure shall submit during the last two years of theological training a critical study of a prescribed passage of Scripture from each of the Old and New Testaments; the passages may be those prescribed by his Theological College.
- 12.4.4 Each student shall complete his Theological College's Syllabus and sit the final examinations in those subjects required by the Committee.

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- 12.4.5 Each student shall gain a minimum of six months' practical experience either as a summer assistant under a serving Minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales or in secular employment (depending on the recommendation of the CMET) before becoming eligible for licensure.
- 12.4.6 Presbytery shall require a candidate for licensure, on completion of his theological training, to preach a trial sermon on an occasion when a Commission of Presbytery is present or at a meeting of Presbytery.
- 12.4.7 When the student has completed his training and the Committee has considered in interview with him his:
- College and Presbytery results
 - College Principal's Report
 - Critical Studies and Trial Sermon
 - Practical experience Report
 - Appreciation of the questions to Licentiates

the Committee shall submit a final training report in writing to Presbytery with recommendation as to licensing, after which the presbytery may ask the candidate questions from the floor.

- 12.4.8 A 60% majority of those present and voting shall be required to approve the candidate for licensure, whereupon the Moderator shall ask the candidate the following questions:
- Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as accepted by this Church, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such, do you subscribe them as the confession of your faith?
 - Do you believe the Form of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the Courts of this Church?
 - Are you resolved through divine grace firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as accepted by this Church, and to teach the same and defend it to the utmost of your power against all error?
 - So far as you know your own heart, have you been induced to seek the office of Teaching Elder from love to God and from a sincere desire to promote His glory and to win souls to Christ?

Then he, or someone appointed for the purpose, shall give the candidate a brief charge and conclude in prayer.

- 12.4.9 Presbytery shall not omit any part of these requirements and trials except in extraordinary*

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cases. Whenever Presbytery does make an exception, a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of those present and voting is required and the reasons shall be recorded in the minutes.

**Extraordinary cases should be limited to extraordinary circumstances of the church and a man of proven gifts, or the extraordinary circumstances of a man of proven gifts. Presbyteries should exercise care in the use of these provisions so as not to ordain or accept from other denominations anyone who is inadequately prepared for the ministry.*

- 12.4.10 No candidate shall be eligible to be ordained until he becomes a Licentiate.
- 12.4.11 Licensure shall remain valid for one year after which it shall be reviewed by Presbytery to determine whether it should lapse or be renewed for a further specified period not exceeding twelve months.
- 12.4.12 Licensure may be withdrawn at any time if Presbytery deems such a course to be prudent, necessary, and/or in the best interests of the Church. Licentiates shall be given a copy of the notice of motion proposing such withdrawal and shall have the right of attending the relevant meeting to put their case to the members.
- 12.4.13 A 60% majority of those present and voting at Presbytery shall be required to withdraw or renew licensure.
- 12.4.14 Should a licentiate desire to remove from the bounds of his Presbytery into those of another, the latter Presbytery shall procure proper testimonials from the former and may repeat any part of the previous Presbytery's examination it desires.

12.5 TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY FUND

- 12.5.1 The Fund shall be administered by the Treasurer of the General Assembly.
- 12.5.2 All grants and disbursements shall be made by the Assembly considering the recommendations of the Committee for Training of Presbyters (CTP) and the Treasurer.
- 12.5.3 Presbyteries shall be requested to make an annual collection for the Fund, the Committee ensuring that each Presbytery is aware of current need.
- 12.5.4 Applicants for training who will be considered for financial support must be members in full communion of at least two years' standing with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales, and the applicant must be willing to study at one of the Theological Colleges approved by the General Assembly at its last evaluation.
- 12.5.5 Each applicant for financial assistance is required to make application for a grant to his Local Education Authority before commencing training. When evidence of the grant or grants awarded is received, the General Assembly will consider the need to further supplement income up to the level determined by the Assembly from time to time.

12.6 ADMISSIONS FROM OUTSIDE THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

- 12.6.1 It is permissible for a vacant congregation to call a Minister or Licentiate from outside the

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- 12.6.2 Whenever a candidate comes under consideration, he should first be provided with the relevant Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales literature by the session.
- 12.6.3 The Session (or a committee of the congregation appointed for the task of seeking out a minister) shall ask the candidate for a full C.V. and that he complete the standard EPCEW questionnaire. The Session shall then interview the candidate and take up references.
- 12.6.4 When the session (or committee) is satisfied that the candidate should be presented as a candidate to the congregation, it shall present the candidate together with the assembled documentation, *i.e.* C.V. questionnaire and references, to the Presbytery's Committee for Ministerial and Eldership Training (CMET), together with a written request for the candidate to be approved for presentation to the congregation.
- 12.6.5 The CMET shall review the documentation, interview the candidate and make a recommendation to the presbytery. Presbytery may also examine the candidate on the floor of Presbytery.
- 12.6.6 If the Candidate is not ordained, the above procedure shall be deemed as the basis of licensure in the EPCEW providing all licensing requirements have been fulfilled. The Presbytery may accept the licensure of another denomination, provided it believes it is equivalent.
- 12.6.7 A decision to approve the candidate shall require a 60% majority of those present and voting.
- 12.6.8 Confidentiality where other denominations are involved is to be recognised and permission obtained from the applicant before any approach is made to his present employers.
- 12.6.9 Should the parties intend to create a contract of employment, Sessions shall acquaint themselves with current employment legislation and Codes of Practice and conform to them throughout the procedure.
- 12.6.10 Where an approach is made to Presbytery regarding appointment to our Ministry which is not in response to the interest of a particular vacant congregation, Presbytery shall consider it. Acceptance of such a candidate shall be pending a call.
- 12.6.11 Where appointment is made from another denomination that denomination should be formally advised.

13.0 THE REGULATIONS FOR ELECTIONS AND CALLS

13.1 GENERAL

- 13.1.1 All members of a congregation in full communion, and only such, shall be eligible as qualified voters for the purpose of electing Ministers, Ruling Elders and Deacons.
- 13.1.2 Two months before a call or election the roll of communicant members shall be checked by the Session, lodged in the hands of the Minister/Interim-Moderator, and a copy made available for the members of the congregation.
- 13.1.3 Any member of the congregation claiming to be a qualified voter may make an objection regarding any name on the roll, or omitted from the roll; he shall lodge the objection, with reasons, in writing with the Moderator/Interim-Moderator of Session within two weeks of the publication of the roll, and the Session shall give its decision thereon or refer the matter for decision by Presbytery.

13.2 ELECTION AND CALLS OF MINISTERS

- 13.2.1 When a vacancy occurs in the Pastorate of a congregation, the Session shall seek to bring suitable candidates to the attention of the congregation.
 - 13.2.1.1 The Session may form a committee from members of the congregation to aid in the search for a suitable candidate.
 - 13.2.1.2 Any member in full communion may propose a candidate to the Session or its committee.
- 13.2.2 When the Session believes that the congregation may be prepared to elect a Minister, they shall call a meeting for the purpose in accordance with FOG 3.3; the day specified for the meeting should normally not be a Sabbath.
- 13.2.3 At the Meeting the following steps shall be taken:
 - 13.2.3.1 Should more than one candidate be proposed and seconded, a vote shall be taken of the qualified voters and repeated until only one candidate remains.
 - 13.2.3.2 A vote shall be taken on this candidate, for and against. If he be approved by not less than 2/3 of those present and voting, the call shall be drawn up and signed by the communicant members of the congregation concurring (persons not qualified to vote, but closely associated with the congregation may sign on a separate list). The Moderator of the meeting and the Clerk of Session shall certify the signatures.
 - 13.2.3.3 The call may be left in the charge of the Session until the succeeding Sabbath to receive further signatures in the presence of and attested by one Elder.
- 13.2.4 The Session shall notify the Clerk of Presbytery of its intention to lay the call before Presbytery at its next meeting.
- 13.2.5 Where the call is to a Minister presently in charge of a congregation of the EPCEW, the Clerk of Presbytery shall notify his Session so that representatives may be given the opportunity of attending and speaking to the issue.
- 13.2.6 Presbytery shall consider any dissents and representations under 13.2.5 above, determine

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whether the call is regular and valid and whether, in all the circumstances, it should be sustained.

- 13.2.7 If the call be sustained Presbytery shall take steps to present the call to the Licentiate or Minister concerned.
- 13.2.8 A call may be accepted, declined or retained for consideration; if retained an answer must be given at a time specified by Presbytery.
- 13.2.9 Following acceptance of a call, Presbytery shall take steps to ordain and/or install the Minister-elect normally on a day other than the Sabbath.

13.3 ELECTION OF RULING ELDERS

- 13.3.1 The Session shall normally determine when an election is to take place and the number of Ruling Elders to be chosen.
- 13.3.2 The Minister shall explain to the congregation the duties and qualifications of Ruling Elders.
- 13.3.3 In the election of Ruling Elders two principles must be secured:
- The men elected must be adjudged by the session to be fit for the office of the eldership
 - They must have the support of a clear majority of the communicant membership in a free election.

There is no single mandated method of electing ruling elders. The Session exercise their discretion in determining which method will be most generally acceptable locally and occasion least tension and difficulty. The following are some of the methods which honour both the principles stated above. The order of listing is not significant.

- 13.3.3.1 The session may call a meeting of communicant membership of the congregation for the purpose of electing a specified number of new elders. At this meeting names will be proposed and upon subsequent voting those securing the required majority identified. From these the session selects the required number and ascertains their willingness to accept office.
- 13.3.3.2 The session may, at a duly called meeting of the communicant membership, propose certain names to them and upon securing a clear majority agreement proceed to invite those named to accept office.
- 13.3.3.3 The session may submit to the communicant membership a list of names of all male communicants over the age of 21 and ask for the election of a specified number. From the number securing the support of a clear majority of the communicants the session then elects the names of those they deem most suitable.
- 13.3.3.4 The session may submit to the communicants a list of those whom they deem suitable for office and ask for the election of all or a specified number.
- 13.3.3.5 The session may issue to qualified voters, voting papers, identifying male communicant members. The names of those they wish to choose, up to the number required, shall be marked and the papers returned to the Session by or before the day appointed. Those receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected.

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13.3.4 No person can be admitted as a Ruling Elder if:

- he does not receive 2/3 of the votes cast or receives less than 51% of the total communicant membership.
- the Session are dissatisfied with his qualifications notwithstanding the votes received.

13.3.5 The names of every Ruling Elder-elect willing to accept office shall be read to the congregation on the Sabbath following the election making it clear that their formal appointment is subject to Presbytery approval; one week shall be allowed to give opportunity for the lodgement (in writing, with reasons) of any objections with the Moderator of Session.

13.3.6 Should the objection be not sustained or should there be no objection, the Ruling Elders-elect shall appear before Presbytery or a Presbytery Commission which shall satisfy itself of their suitability.

13.3.7 Presbytery shall make arrangements to join with the Session to ordain and install Ruling Elders-elect approved by them. The day appointed may be a Sabbath.

13.4 ELECTION OF DEACONS

13.4.1 The election of Deacons shall take place in the same manner as in the case of Ruling Elders excepting that:

- Deacons-elect are not required to appear before Presbytery for examination and approval
- They may be ordained and/or installed by the Session
- The Clerk of Session shall report in writing of any election, ordination and /or installation of Deacons to the Presbytery Clerk before the next regular meeting of Presbytery.

14.0 ACCESSION AND SEPARATION OF CONGREGATIONS

14.1 Accession of Established Congregations

14.1.1 The Purpose of this procedure is:

- that the confessional nature of the EPCEW is maintained
- that a welcoming spirit is displayed.

14.1.2 Initial Enquiry

14.1.2.1 An existing congregation which develops an interest in the EPCEW shall first apply through the Clerk of the presbytery of the bounds.

14.1.2.2 The clerk shall refer the matter to the Committee for Church Planting

14.1.2.3 The Committee for Church Planting shall prepare a report for the presbytery based upon its meeting(s) with the church's leadership. The report shall include:

- The commitment of the leadership to Scripture and the Westminster Standards.
- The likely acceptability of the minister as a Teaching Elder in the EPCEW.
- The relationship of the congregation to any other bodies.
- The level of congregational support for the leaders.
- Any historical factors or traditions which could affect the relationship with the EPCEW.
- Any practices the congregation wishes to retain which are not part of EPCEW regular practices.
- Whether the church should be considered for fully organised status or mission status.
- Whether elder training and/or elections need to be held.

14.1.2.4 Upon receipt of the report, the presbytery may:

- extend an invitation to the church to attend presbytery as observers.
- refer the minister and/or elders to the Committee for Ministerial and Eldership Training for further study.
- encourage the church to make formal application for reception into the presbytery.
- indicate to the church that it is unlikely that they would be received into the EPCEW on specified theological grounds.

14.1.3 Formal Application

14.1.3.1 Should the church wish to proceed in joining the presbytery, the congregation should petition the presbytery for acceptance. The petition should include the details of the congregational meeting at which the decision was made and include:

- The number of members present (and percentage this is of the total membership).

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- The numbers of the vote - For, Against, and Abstentions.
- The wording of the motion that was passed.
- The signatures of those who voted in favour.

14.1.3.2 Upon receipt of the petition, presbytery shall appoint a commission to deal with the examination of the elders, if necessary to assist with elections, answer the questions of the congregation concerning the EPCEW and receive the church into the presbytery.

14.1.4 Unorganised groups of believers may apply through the clerk to the Committee for Church Planting for assistance in starting a mission church.

14.2 Separation of Congregations

14.2.1 Where the elders of a congregation consider that the presbytery as a whole has departed from a biblical position or to the extent that they can no longer remain in the presbytery; or where the presbytery considers that a congregation and its elders have departed from a biblical position to such an extent that such elders may no longer remain in meaningful fellowship; and where attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted; then separation may be effected by the procedures listed in 14.2.3.

14.2.2 This procedure is intended to be an assurance that the lessons learned in leaving mixed denominations are not forgotten and that once a congregation has agreed to enter the EPCEW that it could leave again if the gospel was in jeopardy. It is not intended to be used as a negative veto to ensure a minority can get its own way, nor is it intended that different presbyteries should be set up to maintain a particular party's view on a point of variation within Presbyterian principles.

14.2.3 CONGREGATIONAL PROTEST

14.2.3.1 The session shall first express their concerns to the presbytery in writing.

14.2.3.2 If, after debate, the concerns are rejected the session may lodge a further protest.

14.2.3.3 Should this, after debate, also be rejected there shall follow a suitable period of silence on the matter, not to exceed one year.

14.2.3.4 The session should pursue their concerns within presbytery for as long as conscience allows.

14.2.3.5 If the issue is of such gravity that the session believes it to be wrong to remain in the presbytery, they must call a meeting of the congregation to inform them of the matter and invite the presbytery to send representatives to the meeting, giving those representatives the privilege of the floor. If the proposal to separate from the presbytery has the support of 70% of the membership, the session shall give written notice to presbytery of the church's intention to leave the presbytery.

14.2.3.6 Upon receipt of the notice of the church's intention to leave, the presbytery shall appoint a commission to meet with the congregation to argue the case of the presbytery.

14.2.3.7 The session shall call a second meeting of the congregation, which shall not be less than six months after the first meeting, to vote on the matter of separation. A 70% majority of the membership is required to carry a motion to leave.

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14.2.3.8 If the required majority is reached an orderly separation shall be arranged. This should include:

- Repayment of any outstanding loans from the presbytery.
- Provision for any minority which wishes to remain linked to the presbytery, provided that minority is more than 10% of the membership. This shall include a proportional division of all assets above liabilities.

14.2.4 PRESBYTERY PROTEST

14.2.4.1 A concern as to doctrine, practice or moral position prevailing in a particular church may be raised by any member of the presbytery, in writing, through the clerk.

14.2.4.2 If presbytery chooses to consider the protest, it must make an initial inquiry to determine whether the matter is one of advice or ruling then debate the issue, and if it is not an issue which can be referred back to the session, draft a statement of its concerns.

14.2.4.3 Presbytery may ask the session to respond to its concerns in writing.

14.2.4.4 If the presbytery considers the response to be unsatisfactory it shall appoint a commission to visit the congregation. The commission shall, in conjunction with the session, arrange a congregational meeting at which both the presbytery's concerns, and the session's position, will be explained.

14.2.4.5 The commission will report to the presbytery so that the matter may be further debated in the light of the facts and with the informed representation of the session.

14.2.4.6 A further meeting of the congregation is to be arranged. If the congregation votes at this meeting, by a 70% majority of the communicant membership, to continue its position; and is unable to persuade the presbytery of the rightness of its position, the presbytery may then proceed to separate the congregation from the presbytery.

14.2.4.7 The same safeguards for a minority position shall be applied as in the case of a Congregational protest, (14.2.3.8).

15.0 CHURCH PLANTING

15.1 Exploratory Works

- 15.1.1 Exploratory works are church planting Bible studies and/or occasional worship services.
- 15.1.2 The aims of exploratory works are:
 - 15.1.2.1 to assess a church planting opportunity in a specific area, and
 - 15.1.2.2 to establish a mission church.
- 15.1.3 A Session or Presbytery may initiate an exploratory work. When undertaken by a Session, Presbytery is to be made aware of the work.
- 15.1.4 Oversight.
 - 15.1.4.1 An exploratory work is under the immediate oversight of the court which initiated it.
 - 15.1.4.2 When undertaken by Presbytery, it may task nearby elders with responsibility to support the church planter during the exploratory work period.

15.2 Mission Churches

- 15.2.1 Mission churches are churches which are governed by a temporary, provisional Session.
- 15.2.2 The aim of a mission church is to provide worship, fellowship, and pastoral care of members of the mission church with the goal of becoming an organised congregation.
- 15.2.3 Establishment.
 - 15.2.3.1 Presbytery appoints a provisional Session and provides for a commission to declare a group of professing Christians and their children to be a mission church within the bounds of Presbytery. This may be the same commission appointed to commission the church planter. (cf. 15.4.4.1).
 - 15.2.3.2 Presbytery's action can be of its own initiative, in response to a proposal from a Session, or in response to an overture of a group of believers outside the EPCEW.
 - 15.2.3.3 This declaration is one of recognition of the work of God, and is according to the Word of God and the standards of the EPCEW.
- 15.2.4 Membership.
 - 15.2.4.1 Members of mission churches are communicant or non-communicant members of the EPCEW with the same privileges and responsibilities as members of organised churches.
 - 15.2.4.2 The provisional Session keeps a roll of membership of the mission church.
 - 15.2.4.3 Records are to be kept concerning births, baptisms, deaths, etc.
 - 15.2.4.4 Members are received, transferred, and removed as in organised churches.

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15.2.4.5 If the mission church is overseen by a sending Session rather than Presbytery, the mission church membership roll and records are distinct from the roll and records of the sending congregation.

15.2.5 Congregational meetings.

15.2.5.1 The mission church will hold at least one annual congregational meeting adhering to the provisions in *FOG* 3.3 (“Business Meetings”).

15.3 Provisional Session

15.3.1 Presbytery appoints officers, including any church planting minister(s) and assessor elders, to serve on a provisional Session to govern a mission church.

15.3.2 The provisional Session is directly accountable to Presbytery.

15.3.3 The provisional Session has the same duties towards the mission church as a Session of an organised church.

15.3.4 Composition.

15.3.4.1 Presbytery may appoint assessor elders to the provisional Session from within the presbytery, from other EPCEW presbyteries, or from elders of fraternally related churches who meet the Standards of the EPCEW.

15.3.4.2 The church planter is a member of the provisional sessional and serves as its moderator.

15.3.4.3 If a mission church is without a church planting minister, Presbytery shall appoint an interim moderator.

15.3.5 In the case of a sending session.

15.3.5.1 When Presbytery approves a mission church proposed by a Session, this act also appoints the members of the sending Session as members of the provisional Session.

15.3.5.2 The provisional session is a distinct court from the sending Session. Its meetings and records are distinct from the sending Session.

15.3.5.3 The church planting minister serves as the moderator of the provisional Session by virtue of his office in relation to the mission church.

15.3.5.4 The Presbytery, with the advice of the sending Session, may appoint a church planting minister to the provisional Session who is not a member of the sending Session. In such a scenario, the church planting minister will have pastoral responsibility only for the mission church and not the sending church.

15.3.6 Representation in Presbytery.

15.3.6.1 A provisional Session is represented to Presbytery by commissioning its church planting minister(s).

15.3.6.2 The provisional Session is dissolved when the church is organised or the mission is closed.

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15.4 Church Planter

- 15.4.1 A church planter is a minister appointed by Presbytery to labour in the gospel with the aim of developing a mission church into an organised church.
- 15.4.2 Appointment.
 - 15.4.2.1 Presbytery may appoint a church planter to initiate or continue an exploratory work or to develop a mission church.
 - 15.4.2.2 In the case of a Session seeking to plant a mission church, the Presbytery shall give careful consideration to church planter candidates recommended by the Session.
- 15.4.3 Employment and legal matters.
 - 15.4.3.1 The church planter may be employed by Presbytery, a sending session, or an approved partner (such as a denominational mission agency).
 - 15.4.3.2 The Presbytery or the sending Session shall be responsible for legal matters pertaining to the employment of the church planter, including visa sponsorship.
- 15.4.4 Commissioning.
 - 15.4.4.1 When Presbytery appoints a church planter to undertake an exploratory work or to plant a mission church, it shall appoint a commission of Presbytery to (ordain and) commission him.
 - 15.4.4.2 If a provisional session has already been appointed, this commission also declares the recognition of a mission church in the same service (cf. 15.2.3.1).

15.5 Organization

- 15.5.1 A mission church may become an organised church when Presbytery is satisfied that the church is suitably stable. This includes the ability to meet its financial needs on a predictable basis and the ability to elect elders.
- 15.5.2 A church is organised by a declaration of Presbytery in association with the (ordination and) installation of congregationally elected ruling elders. This declaration is one of recognition of the work of God, and is according to the Word of God and the standards of the EPCEW.
- 15.5.3 Election of Ruling Elders and Petition of the Mission Church.
 - 15.5.3.1 Under the supervision of the provisional Session, the mission church shall elect ruling elders.
 - 15.5.3.2 The mission church shall send a petition to Presbytery for formal constitution as an organised church, appending the signatures of communicant members and the provisional session. The mission church will include with the petition a list of names of the elders-elect.

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- 15.5.3.3 The above will be accomplished at a congregational meeting following the procedures in the EPCEW Standards.

15.5.4 Presbytery Commission to Examine, Install, and Organize.

- 15.5.4.1 Presbytery may respond to the petition by appointing a commission to interview those elected as elders per *FOG* 11.3.6. The same commission may proceed to arrange for an organizing service where the (ordination and) installation of ruling elders will be carried out in conjunction with the organization of the church.

- 15.5.4.2 The commission shall administer the following congregational vow:

Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise that you will walk together as an organised church of the Lord Jesus Christ, adhering to the faith and order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the purity and peace of the whole body?

- 15.5.4.3 A member of the organizing commission shall then say:

In recognition of the work of God, I now declare that you are constituted an organised church according to the Word of God and according to the faith and order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- 15.5.5 The church planting minister will continue his pastoral relationship with the organised congregation. The formation of this pastoral relationship to church members, and their acceptance of it, is implied in their having taken membership vows upon joining the mission church.

15.6 Church Revitalization

- 15.6.1 The Presbytery may act to recognize an organised congregation as a mission church during a period of revitalization.

15.7 Committee for Church Planting

- 15.7.1 Members of the Committee are appointed by Presbytery, but the committee also includes church planters who participate as committee members.
- 15.7.2 All church planters have a responsibility to provide reports to the Committee.
- 15.7.3 All members of Presbytery may visit the Committee as a guest with voice.
- 15.7.4 The Committee advises Presbytery through communication of information and recommendations.