

DIRECTORY
FOR
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
AND CHRISTIAN LIVING

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

H. Directory for Church Membership and Christian Living

SECTION 1: The Nature of the Church and the Qualifications for Membership

H 1:1 The Church of Jesus Christ is the ordained institution according to Holy Scripture whereby those who profess true faith, along with their children, are to join in fellowship, submitting themselves to this ecclesiastical government for the preaching, teaching and discipline thereof.

H 1:2 The nature of the true Church is:

- A. That the church is bound to the Holy Scripture and Christ as its head. (See BCO B1:1-B2:2)
- B. That it is governed by the Presbyterian system of church government. (see BCO B8:1-B11:7)
- C. That all particular congregations meet in one location weekly for Lord's Day services. (See BCO C:2:1)
- D. That it has properly trained men for the ministry, Elders and Deacons, who have been ordained for the work of those offices. (See BCO B3:1-B7:8)
- E. That it preaches and teaches the Word of God, rightfully administers the sacraments, and maintains church discipline. (See BCO C2:2-C2:7)
- F. That its mission is the preaching of the Gospel around the world as the means of calling individuals to Christ. (See BCO A6:5)

H 1:3 The Purpose of Church Membership is as follows:

- A. The fellowship of believers is the social structure in Christianity wherein those who profess true faith are bound to join themselves. As that ordained institution that is founded upon Christ Jesus our Lord, those who have the true Biblical faith cannot deny its appointment, importance or purpose as set forth in the Holy Scripture, deny its existence, condemn any part thereof, apart from the authority of a properly constituted denomination, nor be set apart from its membership and participation while professing Christianity. (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23; Ephesians 4:8-11; Psalm 68:18)
- B. Church Membership is an outward sign of an individual's having made a true profession of faith. Anyone, under normal circumstances, having been taught, found outside the membership is acting in contradiction to the command of Holy Scripture, which maintains that to be Christian is to belong to the visible church, as one under authority of Christ's ordained administration. (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Matthew 16:19)

- C. Church membership is the visible bond of union that all believers have in common with Christ Jesus our Lord. It is the visible manifestation of His covenant in history. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Psalm 2:8)
- D. Church Membership is also the visible bond of union with Christ and with His Church throughout the world, which represents the universal church (visible and invisible) made up of all believers. It is the visible manifestation of His covenant in history and supra-history. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18)

H 1:4 The requirements for communicant membership are:

- A. A credible profession of faith in Christ, commensurate with their age and mental abilities, given before the Session of a particular congregation. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)
- B. The prospective communicate member is required to read, or be instructed from, the Westminster Standards (confession and catechisms), as well as, the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly and agree to submission unto their teachings and practices.
- C. An interview prior to membership with the Session of a particular congregation covering any and all questions pertaining to, along with the instruction of rights, privileges, and duties of church members and due process with in this denomination.
- D. The prospective church member must sign the membership covenant and vows that affirms their understanding of all duties and requirements of church membership, as well as, the teaching, practice and administrative processes held by this denomination.
- E. The church member must take the vows of Church Membership (each and every person of age) before the congregation at a regular Sunday morning worship service.

SECTION 2 The Privileges of Church Membership (Officers and Members)

H 2:1 The right of voting is the privilege of church membership. This right is completed by head-of-house-hold voting and is carried out under the direction of the Session's guidance in the particular congregation that the individual has chosen to join. In the case of individual church membership, those who are 18 years of age or older, will be considered as head-of-house-hold.

H 2:2 The right of the Lord's Supper for those who come before the Session of the particular congregation of which they are a member and have received proper instruction concerning the nature and meaning of the table, and having given a credible profession as to faith and understanding of the Table, and thereby receiving the approval of the Session.

- A. All church members ought to study carefully the teaching of this denomination on issues of communion as set forth in questions 168 -177 of the Larger Catechism.

H 2:3 The voting church member has the privilege of choosing pastor(s), church governors and deacons to govern and serve the particular congregation, according to the Book of Church Order of this denomination. The approval of all officers is dependent upon the approval of the Presbytery.

H 2:4 All church members have the privilege of pastoral oversight, both of the pastor(s) and church governors of the church in spiritual matters.

H 2:5 All church members have the privilege of diaconate oversight in matters pertaining to their physical needs (as God has supplied the church with such abilities).

H 2:6 All church members have the privilege of being under the watch care of the members, along with their fellowship, prayers and assistance in matters pertaining to their relationship.

H 2:7 All church members have has the privilege of church discipline for the better caring of their soul, developing proper Christian behavior and conduct in their lives.

H 2:8 All church members have the privilege of due process in matters pertaining to discipline, administration or doctrine by following the duly constituted procedures of this denomination as set forth in the Book of Church Order. (See BCO D1:1-D10:4)

SECTION 3 The Duties for Christian Living (Officers and Members)

H 3:1 The Scriptures do hold forth that Christians are required to profess and practice their Christian faith among their officers and fellow members.

H 3:2 All Christians are required to strive to perform the following to the best of their ability as members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

- A. The daily study of God’s Holy Word under the godly oversight of the Session of the Church.
- B. The daily advancement of Christ’s Kingdom through living the Christian life before the church and the world, as a testimony of both their faith and as representatives of Jesus Christ.
- C. The proper Christian attitude concerning their disposition of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit in behaviors that are required of those who profess faith in Christ.
- D. To honor Christ in our attitude and actions that involve inter-exchange with the world, whether it is of a spiritual or social nature, including, but not limited to, economics, culture, taxation, politics and such other practices.

- E. In honoring Christ through proper (biblical) obedience to the civil magistrate according to the dictates of Holy Scripture. The right of private judgment is always required of a believer.
- F. Submission to proper spiritual authority as defined in the Holy Scripture, as it relates to the pastors, church governors, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly.
- G. Submission unto and agreement to follow the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly in all issues and matters of faith and practice.
- H. Not turning to the world or civil courts to settle matters of ecclesiastical dispute between fellow Christians or church officers.
- I. To show respect to the pastors, church governors and deacons with the honor due to their offices in all matters coming before them. Always giving them the privileges of meeting with anyone who has taken offense with the carrying out of their duties.
- J. Before breaking the vows of membership, prior to any departure from the church, the church member agrees to seek to reconcile with those who have offended and/or whom are presumed to be at fault in doctrine or practice.
- K. The church member shall regularly attend Sunday worship service(s). It would be proper for the members to notify the pastor and/or session concerning an absence in order that prayer or other needs may be addressed.
- L. The church member has the duty to the keep peace in the body of Christ, seeking to hold forth love, kindness, gentleness, having the mind of Christ and thereby having one mind and one spirit.
- M. The church member should maintain the honor of other church members as they would their own.
- N. It is the duty of church members to properly examine themselves prior to coming to the Lord's Table each time it is offered. (See WCF-LC Questions 168-177).
- O. Church members should pray daily for those in authority over them, both in ecclesiastical and civil positions.
- P. Church members should maintain personal and family worship times in their homes according to the Directory of Family Worship.

- Q. Church members are to train up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, according to the Holy Scripture, seeing that their children receive a Christian education consisting of doing what lies within me to enlighten their understanding, correct their temper, form their manners and habits, and fit them for their future stations in life, according to the counsels and commands of Holy Scripture, and are properly catechized according to the standards of this denomination.
- R. The Church member should notify the Pastor or Session of anything that is of an important nature or issue that can disturb the peace and well being of the church.
- S. Church members shall seek to participate in all church activities, as God permits, and the Session approves, to further the unity and work of the ministry in the particular congregation.
- T. The church member shall defend the reputation of the pastors, church governors and deacons in the Lord, while attending the church as a member, or after leaving the church having properly been removed according to the Book of Church Order and going elsewhere to church.
- U. The church member must support the church with tithes and offerings as God has provided on a regular basis. According to the Holy Scripture, tithing is 10% of an individual's income and offerings are freely given beyond the tithe. The church member's interests concerning church finances are fulfilled with the giving of the tithe and offering. It is the duty of the elders to administer the funds according to the needs of the church and its functions. The Session is accountable to presbytery in such matters and their determination will be the final authority on such issues.
- V. The church member should bear one another's burdens as it relates to fellow Christians, both within and outside of the particular congregation.
- W. The church member should visit sick (ill) congregants, taking into account their spiritual and physical needs, as the Lord allows, with respect to their physical circumstances, requests, and considering your gifts under the direction of the Church Session.
- X. Church members are to pray for fellow church members.
- Y. Church Members shall refrain from idle talk or gossip which is destructive to Christian humility, and fails in giving proper submission to the Session or to fellow church members.
- Z. The church member agrees that no accusation will be made against any one with out first consulting with the pastor and/or Session, and only then after meeting the requirements of Matthew 18.

- AA. In all offenses, Matthew 18 is to be followed prior to formal charges being made and should be under the direction of the pastor and/or Session.
- BB. The church member shall avoid divisive issues which are matters of opinion (or conscience) as set forth in Romans 14.
- CC. The church member is to avoid criticism and/or condemnation of any officer of the church to any other church member without first coming to the Pastor and/or the Session.
- DD. Any other issues that might arise not covered in this Directory shall be first brought to the attention of the Pastor and/or Session prior to any actions being taken by a church member.