

# STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



Life Together in the Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:  
Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Integrated Version—References and Examples



# **Professional Code of Ethics**

Approved by the  
210th General Assembly (1998)  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed by  
The Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics

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September 1, 1998

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you may be aware, the 210th General Assembly (1998) approved a report submitted by the Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics. The report, as approved, is titled "Life Together in the Community of Faith:

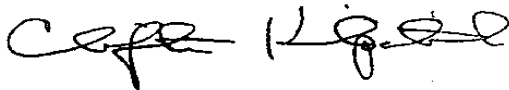
- A. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- B. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- C. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);"

The General Assembly took several actions to implement the use of "Life Together in the Community of Faith." Though it was not the first action taken, the action that is perhaps of the most interest to you is that the General Assembly commended the Standards, as a model, to presbyteries and synods for study, approval, and inclusion in manuals of operations, and to congregations, as a model, for study, approval, and use with sessions, new member classes, adult education classes, personnel committees, and in contracts. In addition, the General Assembly commended the Standards to seminaries for inclusion in curricula. The General Assembly approved A and B as Standards of Ethical Conduct for those serving in General Assembly entities and instructed those entities to include the Standards in personnel policies.

To make the report available to governing bodies and the seminaries, I have been instructed to publish and distribute the full report, including references and examples. I am pleased to put this important report in your hands. Some may ask why we need "Life Together in the Community of Faith." After all, we have the Bible, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. However, the 207th General Assembly (1995) recognized there were a number of different perspectives from which the issue of misconduct might be viewed. The committee was given the task of providing a resource that can help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prevent harm to individuals and the community of faith and provide an example of ethical conduct to the world.

I hope that in your session, presbytery, synod, or seminary faculty, the study of this report and implementation of the standards it upholds will be an enriching experience and will help produce a life together that reflects the shalom that God intends for us.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clifton Kirkpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly



**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore I will:**

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

**II**

**I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore I will:**

1. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due and observe copyrights;
9. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and
10. Accept the discipline of the church.

**III**

**I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:**

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for sisters and brothers in Christ;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore I will:**

1. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
2. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
3. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
4. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
5. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

**II**

**I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
2. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
4. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
5. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
6. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
7. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
8. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
9. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position, speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable;
12. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
13. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
14. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.



**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

**As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

**I**

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

**II**

**I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:**

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;

11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- \*\*15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
- \*\*16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- \*\*17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

### III

**I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:**

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

\*\* These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

## IV. INTEGRATED VERSION—REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES\*

### LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH: STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

**As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our *Confessions*, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God’s grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.**

#### References

*Ordination vows—G-14.0405b* [ministers]; *G-14.0207* [elders and deacons]:

- “(1) Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?”
- “(2) Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?”
- “(3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?”
- “(4) Will you be a minister of the Word and Sacrament [elders and deacons: Will you fulfill your office] in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions?”
- “(5) Will you be governed by our church’s polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God’s Word and Spirit?”
- “(6) Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?”
- “(7) Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?”
- “(8) Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?”

*Ordination vows—G-14.0405b(9)* [ministers]

- “(9) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith, and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

*Ordination vows—G-14.0207* [elders and deacons]:

- “i. (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”
- “j. (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people’s help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

*Jesus Christ as pattern for my life and ministry*

*Matthew 20:26–28*: “. . . whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” See also [G-6.0101](#).

*Philippians 2: 1–5*: “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus . . .” See also *1 Peter 1:15–16*.

*C-9:24 (The Confession of 1967):* “The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death.”

*G-14.0103:* “The purpose and pattern of leadership in the church in all its forms of ministry shall be understood not in terms of power but of service, after the manner of the servant ministry of Jesus Christ.”

### *Relying on God’s grace*

*C-9.22–23 (The Confession of 1967):* “The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand, except God’s grace.

“The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.”

### *Commit myself to the following ethical standards*

*1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1:* “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

*Philippians 1:27:* “. . . live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . .”

*James 1:22:* “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

*James 3:1:* “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

*C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession):*

“SYNODS. Nevertheless, there ought to be proper discipline among ministers. In synods the doctrine and life of ministers is to be carefully examined. Offenders who can be cured are to be rebuked by the elders and restored to the right way, and if they are incurable, they are to be deposed, and like wolves driven away from the flock of the Lord by the true shepherds.”

*G-2.0200:* “These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nonetheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed. The church is prepared to counsel with or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions. . . .”

## I

**I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry.**

### References

*Titus 2:7–8:* “Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.”

*Hebrew 13:7:* “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

*C-4.032 (Heidelberg Catechism):*

**“Q. 32. But why are you called a Christian?”**

“A. Because through faith I share in Christ and thus in his anointing, so that I may confess his name, offer myself a living sacrifice of gratitude to him, and fight against sin and the devil with a free and good conscience.”

*G-6.0106a:* “To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.”

*G-6.0202a:* “. . . When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice. . . .”

G-6.0303: “Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world. (G-6.0106)”

G-6.0401: “The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office.”

**Therefore I will:**

**I.1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;**

### References

*Exodus 20:8*: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.”

*Acts 2:42*: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

*Romans 12:11–13*: “Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

*Ephesians 6:18*: “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

*C-5.164 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: “But in order that the minister may perform all these things better and more easily, it is especially required of him that he fear God, be constant in prayer, attend to spiritual reading, and in all things and at all times be watchful, and by a purity of life to let his light to shine before all men.”

*W-2.2004*: “.... Those responsible for teaching and preaching the Word have a special responsibility to ensure that in their personal worship they observe a discipline of reading from the fullness of Scripture.”

*W-2.2007*: “.... Preaching requires diligence and discernment in the study of Scripture, the discipline of daily prayer, cultivated sensitivity to events and issues affecting the lives of the people, and a consistent and personal obedience to Jesus Christ.”

*W-5.1004*: “The life of a Christian is empowered by grace, is expressed in obedience, and is shaped by discipline. God has given as means of grace the elements of worship to be used by households and by individuals as well as by congregations.”

*W-5.2001*: “Daily personal worship is a discipline for attending to God and accepting God’s grace. The daily challenge of discipleship requires the daily nurture of worship. Daily personal worship may occur in a gathered community of faith (W-1.1006; W-1.3012; W-3.4000), in households and families (W-5.7000), or in private. Scripture, prayer, self-offering, and commitments to service are elements of daily personal worship. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are by their nature communal, but preparing for and remembering these Sacraments are important in daily personal worship. An aspect of the discipline of daily personal worship is finding the times and places where one can focus on God’s presence, hear God’s Word, and respond to God’s grace in prayer, self-offering, and commitment to service.”

*W-5.5004–.5005*: “Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God’s gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ’s call to minister to and share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship. (W-1.3030; W-2.500)

“Those who follow the discipline of Christian stewardship will find themselves called to lives of simplicity, generosity, honesty, hospitality, compassion, receptivity, and concern for the earth and God’s creatures. (W-7.500)”

*W-6.2006*: “The primary standard and resource for the nurture of the church is the Word of God in Scripture. The central occasion for nurture in the church is the Service for the Lord’s Day, when the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. All members of the community, from oldest to youngest, are encouraged to be present and to participate. . . .”

### Examples

- *An elder always takes his ten-year-old daughter to Sunday School and returns home to read the Sunday paper and drink a cup of coffee*

- *A minister becomes so wrapped up in church responsibilities that she drops her daily personal time for prayer and study.*
- + *A deacon who teaches the high school Sunday School class leads the class in establishing a recycling program.*
- + *When an elder's son asks why they say prayers every night before they go to sleep, she explains why Christians pray and the variety of prayers she says each day.*

## **I.2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;**

### **References**

*Exodus 20:16:* "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

*Ephesians 4:15:* "...speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . . ."

*Ephesians 4:25:* "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another."

*Colossians 3:9-10:* "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."

*G-1.0304:* "That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior's rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it."

### *Examples*

- *When a conflict arises in a church, the minister tells only partial truths and withholds some of the relevant facts to avoid taking appropriate responsibility for his actions.*
- *An elder with access to the church's tax exempt identification number uses it for his personal benefit.*
- + *A minister puts the wrong date in publicity for a church-wide dinner. Instead of blaming the error on the church secretary, she accepts responsibility for her mistake.*
- + *A deacon discovers an error in his favor on his bill at the hardware store and returns to the store to correct the mistake.*

## **I.3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;**

### **References**

*Genesis 21:22-34:* Story of the covenant of Abraham with Abimelech.

*Exodus 20:14:* "You shall not commit adultery."

*Exodus 20:17:* "... you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. . . ."

*Matthew 19:4-6:* "He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'"

*Hebrews 13:4:* "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."

*C-6.123 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* [Re: keeping covenants]

"An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt: nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels."

*C-6.131 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* “Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man and one woman enter, cherishing a mutual esteem and love, bearing with each other’s infirmities and weaknesses, comforting each other in trouble, providing in honesty and industry for each other and for their household, praying for each other, and living together the length of their days as heirs of the grace of life.” See also *G-6.0106b*.

*C-9.47 (Confession of 1967):* “. . . Man’s perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means for birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the household of God, is called to lead men out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, each person has joy in and respect for his own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by man when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.”

*G-6.0106b:* “Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

[An amendment is before the presbyteries that would revise the language of this section. This reference will reflect the current constitutional language.]

#### *Examples*

- *A minister regularly promises to do more than is humanly possible, undercutting the credibility of the office and leading people to see her interest in them as shallow and short-lived.*
- + *An elder who finds himself attracted to a member of a committee begins marriage counseling with his wife in order to strengthen his marriage.*
- + *A single minister discusses with her session the need for an office door with a window so that counseling sessions can be confidential yet observed.*
- + *A Stephen Ministries Committee decides to make home visits in teams after one of their Stephen Ministers is met by parishioner wearing a swimming suit.*

#### **I.4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 23:9:* “You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”

*Leviticus 19:15:* “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.”

*Matthew 25:37–40:* “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ”

*Mark 12:28–31:* “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ ” See also *Matthew 19:19 and 22:39, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8–9*.

*Acts 10:34–35*: “Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’”

*1 Corinthians 11:19–22*: “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?”

*C-7.232 (Larger Catechism)*:

**“Q.122. What is the sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man?”**

“A. The sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them to do to us.”

*C-8.19–20 (Barmen Declaration)*: “‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.’ (Matt. 20:25, 26)

“The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.”

*C-9.44 (Confession of 1967)*: “God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however, subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith they profess.”

*C-9.46 (Confession of 1967)*: “. . . A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

*G-6.0304*: “It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. Together with the pastor, they should encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equip and renew them for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world, visit and comfort and care for the people, with special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister spends so much time with members whom he particularly enjoys that he neglects pastoral care for the part of the congregation towards whom he feels less affinity.*
- *A session makes decisions favored by more wealthy/active/powerful members of the church at the expense of less noticeable members.*
- + *A minister makes an effort to talk with other members of presbytery with whom she disagrees.*
- + *An elder on the personnel committee meets weekly for coffee with the congregation’s obnoxious custodian to provide moral support during the custodian’s divorce.*

**I.5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:8–10*: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work . . .”

*Exodus 20:12*: “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”



*Romans 12:2*: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

*C-9.47* (Confession of 1967): See I.3. above.

### Examples

- *A minister becomes so absorbed in local school politics that he stops giving adequate pastoral care and leadership in developing church programs.*
- + *A deacon negotiates with her family to schedule one dinner hour a week organized around Scripture, prayer, and reflection on family life before anyone flees to the Internet.*
- + *A session discusses the balance of responsibilities the minister carries, so that the session understands her work and the demands on her time and attention. The elders covenant to share in the ministry more fully, expanding their understanding of ordination and providing the minister adequate time to have meals with family, engage in regular exercise, participate in a hobby or sport, and maintain a Sabbath.*
- + *A church secretary asks the session for permission to take a church administration course offered by the continuing education department at a local seminary in order to update her skills and get some new ideas.*

## I.6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;

### References

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 20:1*: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray is not wise.”

*Proverbs 23:29–35*: “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last, it bits like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ‘They struck me,’ you will say, ‘but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.’ ”

*1 Corinthians 3:16–17*: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

*Galatians 5:13–15*: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”

*C-7.251–.252* (*Larger Catechism*):

#### **“Q.141. What are the duties required in the Eighth Commandment?”**

“A. The duties required in the Eighth Commandment are: truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose of those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and a diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor by all just and lawful means to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

#### **“Q.142. What are the sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment?”**

“A. The sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment besides the neglect of duties required, are: theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen; fraudulent dealing; . . . injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; . . . all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise . . . we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.”

G-6.0106a: “Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church.”

cf: *Freedom and Substance Abuse. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993), 2f, (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 762):*

“Three principles guide this exploration of substance abuse.

“(1) God wills wholeness for each person, and wills the healthy interdependence of family and friends, congregation and community; rather than the loneliness and alienation of dependency.

“(2) The use of mind-altering substances is to be judged by their effect on health, creativity, reason, conscience, and respect for self and others.

“(3) Reformed theology calls on believers as individuals, households, congregations, denomination, and participant in society to accept social responsibility for substance dependency and its public consequences.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister continually yells at his inexperienced secretary when she doesn't “read his mind” and do exactly what he thought she should do.*
- *An elder logs onto a sexually explicit web site each night, gradually increasing his time online.*
- + *A minister takes education opportunities to develop supervision skills to foster growth and professionalism in the staff.*
- + *A personnel committee of a session organizes an intervention for an alcoholic minister of music in which members of the committee, family, and choir participate.*

#### **I.7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:16:* “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

*Leviticus 19:16:* “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people . . .”

*Proverbs 20:19:* “A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babbler.”

*2 Timothy 2:16–17:* “Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene . . .”

*James 4:11–12:* “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?”

*1 Peter 2:1:* “Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.”

*C-7.254–.255 (Larger Catechism):* See also *C-4.112 (Heidelberg Catechism).*

#### **“Q. 144. What are the duties required in the Ninth Commandment?”**

“A. The duties required in the Ninth Commandment are: the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors, loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatters, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

#### **“Q. 145. What are the sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment?”**

“A. The sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment are: all prejudicing of the truth, and the good name of our neighbors as well as our own, especially in public judicature; . . . speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling; . . .”

G-1.0304: See I.2. above.

### Examples

- *A minister repeats a story about the mayor without checking the facts.*
- *An elder perpetuates an unverified rumor about misuse of money by the denomination.*
- *A member yells, swears, and calls the minister names in order to intimidate the minister into a particular action.*
- *A minister talks negatively about the chair of a committee who won't acquiesce to the minister's wishes.*
- + *A recently ordained elder attempts to dispel unfounded rumors about the personal life of the moderator of the property committee when a conflict develops over a building renovation.*

## I.8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

### References

*Psalms 51*: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions," et seq.

*Proverbs 28:13*: "No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

*Matthew 18:21–22*: "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy times seven.'"

*Philippians 2:3*: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves." See also *Proverbs 22:4*, *1 Peter 5:5–6*.

*James 1:21*: "Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls."

*James 5:16*: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

*1 John 1:8–9*: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

C-4.088–.089 (*Heidelberg Catechism*): See also C-4.090–.091.

**“Q. 88. How many parts are there to the true repentance or conversion of man?”**

“A. Two: the dying of the old self and the birth of the new.”

**“Q. 89. What is the dying of the old self?”**

“A. Sincere sorrow over our sins and more and more to hate them and to flee from them.”

C-7.254–.255 (*Larger Catechism*): See I.7. above.

C-6.086 (*Westminster Confession of Faith*):

“As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof, upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy: so he that scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.”

C-9.21 (*Confession of 1967*):

“The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of mankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to men, moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.”

## Examples

- *A minister threatens to sue whenever she disagrees with the actions of presbytery concerning her behavior in the pastorate and the possible dissolution of her pastoral relationship.*
- *A trustee refuses to acknowledge mistakes, blaming them on the financial secretary.*
- + *A minister organizes a feedback group to assist in his growth and development and help him see past his blind spots.*
- + *A member apologizes for unkind words, mistaken statements, or failure to follow through on task.*

## II

**I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry.**

### References

*Joshua 7:19*: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’”

*Psalms 69:5*: “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.”

*I John 1:5–7*: “. . . God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” See also *Ephesians 5:8–12*.

*G-1.0303*: “That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.”

**Therefore I will:**

**II.1. Preach, teach and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;**

### References

*Leviticus 19:15*: See I.4. above.

*2 Samuel 12*: Story of Nathan’s encounter with David, the king regarding Bathsheba, at v. 7: “Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord . . .’”

*Jeremiah 26*: “Jeremiah’s Prophecies in the Temple.” See especially vs. 14–15: “But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.” See also *Jeremiah 28*, story of Jeremiah and the yokes of wood and iron.

*Acts 10:34*: See I.4. above. See also *James 2:8–9*.

*Acts, Chapters 24–26*: Story of Paul’s trial in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Caesarea. See especially 26:22–23: “To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

*I Peter 3:13–18*: “Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good con-

duct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God."

*C-7.269 (Larger Catechism):*

**"Q.159. How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?"**

"A. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the Word are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season, and out of season, plainly, not in the enticing word of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God. . . ."

*G-6.0304:* "It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. . . . They should cultivate their ability to teach the Bible and may be authorized to supply places which are without the regular ministry of the Word and Sacrament."

*G-6.0402:* "It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session."

*G-14.0801c:* "When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)–(6) below."

#### *Examples*

- *A minister fails to address a particular issue from the pulpit even though the text and context warrant it because she knows it will offend a member of the congregation.*
- *A minister does not express his opinion openly regarding local pollution because he pastors a church in a small company town.*
- + *A deacon risks addressing racism and poverty in his affluent Anglo congregation even though he suspects the challenge will not be welcome.*
- + *An elder defends a person under her supervision from racist attacks from the elders's own supervisor.*

## **II.2.Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;**

### **References**

*Genesis 38:* Story of Judah and Tamar.

*Genesis 39:* Story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

*Psalms 55:20:* "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me. . . ."

*Matthew 26:48–49:* "Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him."

*C-4.105:*

**"Q.105. What does God require in the sixth commandment?"**

"A. That I am not to abuse, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor, either with thought, or by word or gesture, much less by deed, whether by myself or through another, but to lay aside all desire for revenge; and that I do not harm myself or willfully expose myself to danger. This is why the authorities are armed with the means to prevent murder."

*G-3.0101b:* "God liberated the people of Israel from oppression; God covenanted with Israel to be their God and they to be God's people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord; God confronted Israel with the responsibilities of this covenant, judging the people for their unfaithfulness while sustaining them by divine grace."

cf: *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993) (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 572), Section II.B.2, Standards of Conduct:*

“Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor’s, counselor’s, officer’s, or supervisor’s responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.”

#### *Examples*

- *A single minister has sexual relationships with a single member of his congregation.*
- *A minister of pastoral care whose primary role is counseling fails to arrange for regular supervision.*
- *A male head of staff begins each staff meeting with a brief devotional period, then transitions into the business of the meeting by telling an off-color joke. The nervous laughter of the staff (both male and female) registers their disapproval of this behavior. The head of staff considers the laughter as reinforcement and refuses to stop the behavior.*
- + *A single minister who desires to date a member of the congregation arranges for spiritual direction and counseling to explore the meaning of that desire.*
- + *A church’s youth director arranges for an adequate number of male and female adult chaperones for every youth trip event.*

### **II.3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;**

#### **References**

*2 Samuel, Chapters 11 and 12:* Story of David and Bathsheba.

*Matthew 20:25–28:* “But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”

*Matthew 23:8, 10–12:* “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. . . . Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

*1 Peter 5:1–3:* “Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.”

*C-5.157 (Second Helvetic Confession):*

“THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH. Now, therefore, it is fitting that we also say something about the power and duty of the ministers of the Church. Concerning this power some have argued industriously, and to it have subjected everything on earth, even the greatest things, and they have done so contrary to the commandment of the Lord who has prohibited dominion for his disciples and has highly commended humility (Luke 22:24 ff.; Matt. 18:3 f.; 20:25 ff.) There is, indeed, another power that is pure and absolute, which is called the power of right. According to this power all things in the whole world are subject to Christ, who is Lord of all, as he himself has testified when he said: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ (Matthew 28:18), and again, ‘I am the first and the last, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Hades and Death’ (Rev. 1:18); also, ‘He has the key of David, which opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens’ (Rev. 3:7).”

*C-9.40 (Confession of 1967):* “. . . Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition.”

*G-1.0307:* “That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church governing body ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all

their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.”

*G-6.0102*: “One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. The existence of these offices in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. These ordained officers differ from other members in function only.”

*G-11.0403b*: “The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.”

*G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

*W-7.4002*: “Reconciliation: Justice and Peace:

“Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for

- “a. dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- “b. exercising power for the common good,
- “c. supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- “d. working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- “e. welcoming the stranger in the land,
- “f. seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- “g. bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- “h. redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world.”

#### *Examples*

- *A head of staff calls upon others to take assignments without giving time to prepare, changes schedule without warning, does tasks that fall in others’ areas of responsibilities.*
- + *The chair of the nominating committee keeps before the committee and the session the importance of extending opportunities to serve, to be looking for “Who is not here.”*
- + *A minister sees that the new chair of the property committee is insecure with her new responsibility and devotes special time for leadership training, enabling her to do this job well.*
- + *A minister gathers information for the session and invites outside resource persons to assist the session regarding how to invest a large bequest.*

#### **II.4.Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;**

#### **References**

*Matthew 6:24*: “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” See also *Luke 16:13*.

*G-6.0202a*: “. . . When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice.”

#### *Examples*

- *An elder recommends buying insurance coverage whose premiums are higher than those of another agent because she is related to the first agent.*
- *A minister tries to persuade an auto mechanic member of the congregation to provide free service for her car.*

- *A minister has a joint discretionary bank account with the church that no one is permitted to review.*
- + *A minister whose spouse owns a local business encourages her not to solicit business or clients from the congregation.*
- + *A Committee on Ministry member recuses himself from the committee's discussion of a conflict in the congregation where he is pastor.*

**II.5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the covenant community for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;**

**References**

*2 Samuel 11*: David and Bathsheba story.

*Psalms 55:20*: "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me."

*C-5.157 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

"THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH." See II.3. above.

*C-9.47 (Confession of 1967)*: See I.3. above.

*D-10.0401*:

"b. Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to

"(1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or

"(2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position."

Cf: *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures* at II.2. above.

*Examples*

- *A minister requests loans and gifts from a parishioner, i.e., an auto loan, tickets to sports events, or use of a vacation home.*
- *A minister uses a church member's business connections to lobby the chairperson of a pastor nominating committee in another church where the minister is seeking a new call.*
- + *A tent-making minister refrains from soliciting business for his secular employment from members of the church.*
- + *An elder, acting as youth group sponsor, sensitively declines sexual invitation by teenager from an abusive home and assists teen to find counselor.*

**II.6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;**

**References**

*Proverbs 11:13*: "A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence."

*Proverbs 25:9-10*: "Argue your case with your neighbor directly, and do not disclose another's secret; or else someone who hears you will bring shame upon you, and your ill repute will have no end."

*C-7.254-.255 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.7. above.

cf: *A Resolution on Clergy Confidentiality*. Adopted by the 199th General Assembly (1987)

"... the 199th General Assembly (1987) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

"1. Reaffirms the historic position of the Presbyterian Church that it is a spiritual and professional duty of clergy to hold



in confidence matters revealed to them in their counseling, caring, and confessional ministries, and that being called to testify in a court of law does not negate this sacred obligation, the law of God being prior to the laws of human courts.”

*D-9.0101*: “A member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who feels injured by rumor or gossip may request an inquiry for vindication by submitting to the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery a clear narrative and statement of alleged facts.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister uses confidential information as thinly veiled sermon illustrations.*
- *An elder tells a church member about the personal problems shared during a session’s prayer time.*
- + *At the presbytery’s request, a session maintains confidentiality concerning allegations of embezzlement by the pastor until the presbytery’s investigation process is complete.*
- + *A minister breaks the bond of confidentiality when he knows a child is abused and at risk for suicide.*

### **II.7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;**

#### **References**

*Romans 12:3–8*: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

*Ephesians 4:7, 11–12*: “But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, . . .” See also [I Corinthians 3:6–7](#).

*C-5.151 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“ORDINATION. And those who are elected are to be ordained by the elders with public prayer and laying on of hands. Here we condemn all those who go off of their own accord, being neither chosen, sent, nor ordained (Jer. ch 23). We condemn unfit ministers and those not furnished with the necessary gifts of a pastor.”

*G-6.0105*: “Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God’s providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the Church.”

*W-1.1005a*: “. . . The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, orders and empowers the new community of the covenant. To each member, that Spirit gives gifts for building up the body of Christ and for equipping it for the work of ministry.”

*W-6.3003–.3004*: “Some in the community of faith who have special gifts and appropriate training are called in the church to the particular ministry of pastoral counseling with individuals and with groups formed for this purpose.

“In certain circumstances the ministry of pastoral care may call for referral to specialized ministers or others qualified by credentials and faith-perspective to provide appropriate counseling or therapy.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister advises members on their financial investments and retirement planning.*
- *A minister continues to counsel a member even though the person’s needs are beyond the minister’s level of competence.*

- + *A minister declines to serve as executor of a member's estate.*
- + *A church preschool director refers parents of deeply troubled toddler to child psychologist.*

**II.8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;**

**References**

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 20:17*: “Bread gained by deceit is sweet, but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.”

*Romans 13:7*: “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

*Galatians 6:3*: “For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.”

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.6. above. See also *C-4.110 (Heidelberg Catechism)*.

*Examples*

- *A minister purchases books of published sermons and preaches them as her own, and uses prayers for worship published by others without citing the source.*
- *A music director photocopies music for the choir's use.*
- *A minister censured by presbytery for sexual misconduct deletes the final page required page of his Personal Information Form (certifying no sexual misconduct findings or charges) as he seeks a new call.*
- *A church member who is a therapist is found to have misrepresented his professional qualifications.*
- + *An elder who is a church educator gives proper credit for copyrighted intergenerational materials and lesson plans instead of using them as if they are her own.*

**II.9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness which might compromise my ministry;**

**References**

*Exodus 20:15*: “You shall not steal.”

*Proverbs 22:7*: “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”

*Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13*: See II.4. above.

*Luke 12:29–31*: “And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

*Romans 13:8*: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

*Hebrews 13:5*: “Keep your lives from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’”

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism)*: See I.6. above.

*Examples*

- *A minister with heavy seminary debts and undergraduate guaranteed student loans defaults on the student loans and is later embarrassed by being pursued by the government for defaulting.*

- *A minister buys expensive furniture from a church member who owns a furniture store. When the minister moves to a new call, none of the debt has been satisfied and the store owner pursues collection through the new presbytery.*
- + *Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry makes financial management counseling and assistance with debt available as a part of its service to ministers. A minister with large debts seeks and accepts financial management counseling.*

**II.10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;**

**References**

*Exodus 20:15:* “You shall not steal.”

*Luke 16:1–3, 10–13:* “Then Jesus said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ . . . Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. . . . if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’ ”

*1 Corinthians 4:1–2:* “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”

*C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism):* See I.6. above.

**Examples**

- *A wealthy church member learns that the minister has been enriching his family for five years with frequent thousand dollar gifts that the member had intended for the church’s emergency fund.*
- *An elder who serves as treasurer pays her personal bills with church funds.*
- + *At the end of the year, a minister discovers that she was overpaid for continuing education expenses and returns the money to the church.*
- + *A minister starts an accounting system for the pastor’s discretionary fund with accountability to the finance committee.*

**II.11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;**

**References**

*Exodus 23:8:* “You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.”

*Ecclesiastes 7:7:* “Surely oppression makes the wise foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart.”

*Acts 4:32–5:11:* See story of Ananias and Sapphira’s sale of land, concealing their holdback of part of the proceeds forwarded to the congregation.

*1 John 2:15–16:* “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

*C-7.251 (Larger Catechism):* See I.6. above.

*G-10.0102n:* [The session . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including . . . personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff . . .”

*G-11.0103f*: [The presbytery . . . has the responsibility and power]  
“to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

*G-12.0102f*: [Synod . . . has the responsibility and power]  
“to consult with its member presbyteries with regard to . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

*G-13.0201i*: [. . . General Assembly . . . Council . . . shall have the following responsibilities:] “to consult with the synods with regard to equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

#### *Examples*

- *Without disclosing his sources, a minister accepts expensive gifts from wealthy members and friends of the church, such as season tickets to sports events, membership in the local country club, all-expenses paid cruises, use of vacation houses, new cars, and payment of private school or college tuition for his children.*
- + *A minister receives two frequent flier tickets as a gift from a church member in order to take a winter vacation in a warm climate. When negotiating with the session for the time away, the minister discloses the gift of the tickets.*
- + *A presbytery staff member trained as a certified leader in a program area is asked to help a congregation in another presbytery. He discusses with the personnel committee whether an honorarium may be received, and what limitations should apply.*
- + *A tent-making minister entering a new presbytery negotiates the secular part of employment with the committee on ministry and shares the details with the session so that all parties are aware of the extent of this employment and its compensation.*

## **II.12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;**

### **References**

*Joshua 7*: Story of Achan. See especially vs.19–20: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’”

“And Achan answered Joshua, ‘It is true! I am the one who sinned against the Lord God of Israel. This is what I did.’”

*2 Corinthians 5:19–20*: “. . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

*1 Thessalonians 5:12–13*: “But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

*C-5.165 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“DISCIPLINE. And since discipline is an absolute necessity in the Church and excommunication was once used in the time of the early fathers, and there were ecclesiastical judgments among the people of God, wherein this discipline was exercised by wise and godly men, it also falls to ministers to regulate this discipline for edification, according to the circumstances of the time, public state, and necessity. At all times and in all places the rule is to be observed that everything is to be done for edification, decently and honorably, without oppression and strife. For the apostle testifies that authority in the Church was given to him by the Lord for building up and not for destroying (II Cor. 10:8). And the Lord himself forbade the weeds to be plucked up in the Lord’s field, because there would be danger lest the wheat also be plucked up with it. (Matt. 13:29f.)”

*C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: See Above, Introduction, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

*C-6.109 (Westminster Confession of Faith)*: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.” See also *G-1.0301*.

*G-1.0302*: “That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.”

*G-1.0305*: “. . . while under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” See also *G-1.0307* at II.3. above.

*G-2.0200*: See Introduction above, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

*G-6.0108*:

“a. It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

“b. It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves. (*G-1.0301*; *G-1.0302*)”

*G-14.0405b(3) (5)*, *G-14.0207c, e*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

*D-1.0101*: “Church discipline is the church’s exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. Thus, the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. In all respects, members are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process, and it is the intention of these rules so to provide.”

#### *Examples*

- *An elder whose viewpoint does not prevail at a session meeting threatens to resign unless the decision is reversed.*
- *In a triennial visit, the Committee on Ministry discovers that a minister is making improper use of a pastor’s discretionary fund. The minister refuses to discuss this matter with COM, insisting that this is purely between the minister and the session.*
- + *A minister refuses to leave the session meeting during a triennial visit, seeing no value in giving the elders a chance to discuss anything on their minds which they might be uncomfortable saying in her presence.*
- + *When asked to conduct a private baptism for the grandchild of a church member, a minister uses The Book of Confessions to explain that baptism is an act of the covenant community to be conducted in the context of corporate worship. Even when the member suggests that no one needs to know about the baptism and offers a substantial honorarium, the minister holds firm.*

### **II.13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;**

#### **References**

*Ezra 7:10*: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.” See also *Neh. 8:13*.

*Psalms 32:8–9*: “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.”

*Proverbs 9:9*: “Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous, and they will gain in learning.”

*Colossians 3:16*: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

*Titus 1:9*: “He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.”

*Re mentoring*: Note especially Paul’s relation to Timothy, as expressed in *1 Timothy*:

*4:16*: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

*6:20–21*: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

“Grace be with you.”

*2 Timothy 3:10–11; 14–17*: “Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. . . . But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

*C-9.49 (Confession of 1967)*: “. . . effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world.”

*G-10.0102k*: [re: the session’s responsibility and power]: “to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session;”

*G-11.0103f*: “The presbytery is responsible for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical district. It therefore has the responsibility and power . . . to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of leadership development, church officer training, . . .”

*G-14.0305j(2)*: “By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by . . . presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery’s plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth . . .”

*G-14.0801d*: “The commissioned lay pastor shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the committee on ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.”

*Cf. Minutes of the 204th General Assembly (1992), ACC Opinion L*, paragraphs 21.257–.258, p. 323.

“*Request 89-6* asks whether elders and deacons who have been previously ordained and, at a later time, reelected to be active officers may be required by session to be trained or examined for their new service.

“Session may require such training or examination under *Book of Order*, G-10.0102j that lists as one of the responsibilities and powers of a session ‘to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session.’”

### *Examples*

- *A minister fails to participate in any continuing education program, merely spending his study leave money on books for his library.*
- *A minister diverts continuing education funds to vacation activities.*

- + *An elder participates in presbytery-sponsored lay spirituality training events.*
- + *A presbytery designs a mentoring program for every pastor entering the presbytery.*

**II.14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office, speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;**

#### References

*Deuteronomy 34:9:* “Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

*2 Kings 2:1–14:* Elisha inherits Elijah’s mantle.

*Romans 13:7:* “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

*1 Corinthians 3:3–9:* “. . . For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human?”

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession):*

“THE NATURE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. Paul explains simply and briefly what we are to think of the ministers of the New Testament or of the Christian Church, and what we are to attribute to them. ‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God’ (I Cor. 4:1). Therefore, the apostle wants us to think of ministers as ministers. Now the apostle calls them *uphretaV*, rowers, who have their eyes fixed on the coxswain, and so men who do not live for themselves or according to their own will, but for others—namely, their masters, upon whose command they altogether depend. For in all his duties every minister of the Church is commanded to carry out only what he has received in commandment from his Lord, and not to indulge his own free choice. And in this case it is expressly declared who is the Lord, namely, Christ; to whom the ministers are subject in all the affairs of the ministry.”

*G-14.0405b(5), (7), G-14.0207e and g:* See ordination vows above at Introduction.

#### Examples

- *A minister talks openly about the mistakes her predecessor made and characterizes him as a poor pastor and administrator.*
- + *A new minister takes his predecessor to a lunch at which they agree that when a family in the church asks that previous pastor to conduct a wedding or funeral, the new pastor will conduct the service, assisted by the previous pastor.*
- + *A congregation celebrates the accomplishments of prior ministries at anniversaries of the church.*
- + *A former pastor is approached by members of the congregation complaining about the new pastor. The former refers the members back to their new pastor for candid conversation.*

**\*\*II.15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;**

#### References

*1 Corinthians 3:3–9:* See II.14. above.

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession):* See II.14. above.

G-11.0502: (Re: Committee on Ministry)

“f. It shall counsel with sessions regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor, and it shall provide lists of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by the presbytery to supply vacant pulpits. Concurrence of the presbytery through its committee on ministry is required when a session invites an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor as provided for in G-14.0513b and c. . . .”

“i. It shall serve as an instrument of presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations between ministers and churches. . . .”

G-14.0405b(7), G-14.0207g: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0605: “When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the committee on ministry of the presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter.”

#### Examples

- *A minister who moves from one church in a metropolitan area to another undermines the continuing ministry of her former parish by encouraging persons from that church to transfer their memberships to her new church.*
- *A minister moves seven hundred miles away from his former parish, but five years later continues to accept telephone calls from elders and to comment on issues before the session.*
- + *A minister whose retirement date is six months away declines to recommend names of interim pastors to the session as his replacement, telling the session that committee on ministry will provide them with such names.*
- + *On the last Sunday prior to leaving a call to become chaplain at a nearby hospital, a minister reads to the congregation the presbytery’s ethics policy for ministers who leave a call. The departing minister assures the members of his love for each of them and indicates that all member contact by him will cease.*

**\*\*II.16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and**

#### References

*I Corinthians 3:3–9*: See II.14. above.

*C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession)*: See II.14. above.

G-14.0405b(5): See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0606: “Former pastors, associate pastors, and assistant pastors may officiate at services for members of a particular church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.”

#### Examples

- *A minister leaves youth work in a Presbyterian church to work for a nearby church of another denomination in direct competition for the youth of the community.*
- *A minister agrees to do wedding for charter member’s granddaughter without first talking with his successor and being invited to participate.*
- + *A minister from a small town is in the city making hospital calls when she discovers that an elder whom she knows from*



*a presbytery committee is in the hospital. She contacts the elder's pastor before stopping in for a brief pastoral visit with the elder.*

+ *A minister calls her successor before agreeing to participate in the funeral of a close friend in that congregation.*

**\*\*II.17. Consult with the committee on ministry in presbytery of residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.**

### References

*1 Corinthians 3:19–23*: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness,’ and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—All belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”

*G-11.0412b*: “Honorably retired ministers are encouraged to transfer their membership to the presbytery in which they live and the presbytery is encouraged to receive them. If they are active in presbytery, additional elders may be elected to keep a proper balance between ministers and lay persons at the presbytery meetings. (G-11.0101b) Presbyteries should encourage honorably retired ministers to use their experience and skills in creative and meaningful ways. Those who are able and willing to reengage in ministry and service to others should relate to a particular church or presbytery. For those who do not or cannot, the presbytery should provide nurture and support.”

*G-14.0606*: See II.16. above.

### Examples

- *A retired minister moves to a new community and strikes up a friendship with the associate pastor of the church where he worships. He is drawn into becoming the associate's advocate as the committee on ministry and the session negotiate with the associate pastor about leaving the call.*
- *A retired minister joins a holistic health clinic as its “spiritual advisor” without contacting the committee on ministry.*
- + *A retired minister who moved to a new presbytery approaches committee on ministry to offer his services for supply preaching and for moderating sessions of churches without an installed pastor.*
- + *A retired minister requests permission to act as the chaplain in a retirement home located within a presbytery that is not his presbytery of membership.*

## III

**I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the church universal.**

### References

*Galatians 6:9–10*: “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

*C-5.127 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“PARTS OR FORMS OF THE CHURCH. The Church is divided into different parts or forms; not because it is divided or rent asunder in itself, but rather because it is distinguished by the diversity of the numbers that are in it.”

*G-4.0200–.0203*: “The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it. The Church is fellowship of believers which seeks the enlargement of the circle of faith to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone.

“There is one Church. As the Bible speaks of the one body which is the Church living under the one Spirit of God known through Christ, it reminds us that we have ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.’ (Ephesians 4:5–6)

“Visible oneness, by which a diversity of persons, gifts, and understandings is brought together, is an important sign of the unity of God's people. It is also a means by which that unity is achieved. Further, while divisions into different denomina-

tions do not destroy this unity, they do obscure it for both the Church and the world. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity and is willing to seek and to maintain communion and community with all other branches of the one, catholic Church. (G-15.0000)”

*G-15.0101*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to manifest more visibly the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and will be open to opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and action with other ecclesiastical bodies and secular groups.”

**Therefore I will:**

**III.1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;**

#### References

*Ephesians 4:4–6*: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

*C-5.126 (Second Helvetic Confession)*:

“ONLY ONE CHURCH FOR ALL TIMES. And since there is always but only one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, Jesus the Messiah, and one Shepherd of the whole flock, one Head of this body, and, to conclude, one Spirit, one salvation, one faith, one Testament or covenant, it necessarily follows that there is only one Church. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. We, therefore, call this Church catholic because it is universal, scattered through all parts of the world, and extended unto all times, and is not limited to any times or places. . . .”

*C-9.40 (Confession of 1967)*: See II.3. above.

*G-1.0303*: See II, Introduction above.

*G-4.0200–.0203*: See Introduction to Section III, above.

*G-15.0101*: See Introduction to Section III, above.

*G-14.0405b (7), (9), G-14.0207g, i*: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

#### Examples

- *A minister votes in favor of the presbytery’s budget, then recommends to the session that it withhold funds from the presbytery.*
- + *A minister who serves as interim pastor in churches around the country changes presbytery membership each time in order to have closer accountability and better relationship with the presbytery in which each church is located.*
- + *A retired elder spends three months as a volunteer in mission.*
- + *An elder agrees to represent the presbytery at the regional council of churches meetings.*

**III.2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;**

#### References

*I Corinthians 12: 26–30*: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. . . . Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

*I Thessalonians 5:12–13*: See II.12. above.

*C-6.186 (Westminster Confession of Faith):* “By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is his body. He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members. He gives efficacy to the Word and to the ordinances of the gospel. By him the Church will be preserved, increased, purified, and at last made perfectly holy in the presence of God.”

*G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e:* See ordination vows above at Introduction.

#### *Examples*

- *Some ministers develop a negative climate in presbytery by competing with, judging, and demeaning their colleagues.*
- + *A presbytery sponsors cluster support groups for ministers, elders, and other lay leaders.*
- + *Retired ministers and members-at-large in a presbytery voluntarily step forward to preach on occasion without honorarium so that each installed minister can have an occasional Sunday off.*
- + *An elder takes time to listen to the pain felt by a fellow elder over the direction of the congregation’s evangelism program.*

### **III.3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations;**

#### **References**

*Exodus 20:17:* “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

*Matthew 7:12:* “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

*C-7.256–.257:*

#### **“Q.146. Which is the Tenth Commandment?”**

“A. The Tenth Commandment is, ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.’”

#### **“Q.147. What are the duties required in the Tenth Commandment?”**

“A. The duties required in the Tenth Commandment are: such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul towards our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto and further all that good which is his.”

*G-4.0104:* “Each particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. Its officers are ministers of the Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. Its government and guidance are the responsibility of the session. It shall fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister calls on persons who are members of other congregations when they are hospitalized, develops a relationship with them, then encourages them to join his church.*
- + *An elder encourages an active member of another congregation to assume volunteer leadership positions in the church where that person is a member.*
- + *A minister leads session in cooperating with presbytery in new church development in nearby community, inviting members to transfer to the small organizing congregation.*
- + *A minister provides pastoral care for a member of a colleague’s congregation while the colleague is on vacation. She then gently discourages the member’s interest in transferring her membership, and consults with her colleague about the request.*

### III.4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

#### References

*Micah 6:8*: [The Lord] “has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

*C-9.41–.42 (Confession of 1967)*: “The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God’s revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God’s revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God’s revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

“The Christian finds parallels between other religions and his own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God’s judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all men. The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all men whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.”

*C-9.46 (Confession of 1967)*: “The reconciliation of man through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world’s poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls every man to use his abilities, his possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to him by God for the maintenance of his family and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise men’s hopes for better conditions and provide them with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

*G-3.0401*:

“The Church is called:

“a. to a new openness to the presence of God in the Church and in the world, to more fundamental obedience, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;

“b. to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity;

“c. to a new openness to the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world;

“d. to a new openness to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be a more effective instrument of mission in the world.”

*G-15.0104*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek new opportunities for conversation and understanding with non-Christian religious bodies in order that interests and concerns may be shared and common action undertaken where compatible means and aims exist.”

*G-15.0105*: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will initiate and respond to approaches for conversation and common action with movements, organizations, and agencies of the business, educational, cultural, and civic communities that give promise of assistance toward accomplishing the mission of the Church in the world.”

*W-7.4003*: “There is no peace without justice. Wherever there is brokenness, violence, and injustice the people of God are called to peacemaking

“a. in the Church universal fragmented and separated by histories and cultures, in denominations internally polarized by mutual distrust, and in congregations plagued by dissension and conflict;

“b. in the world where nations place national security above all else, where the zealotry of religion, race, or ideology explodes in violence, and where the lust for getting and keeping economic or political power erupts in rioting or war;

“c. in communities racked by crime and fear, in schools and workplaces marked by vicious competition and rebellion against order, and in households and families divided against themselves, scarred by violence and paralyzed by fear.”

#### *Examples*

- *A minister refuses to participate in ministerial groups and community projects that include persons outside the Christian faith.*
- *An elder makes disparaging, negative comments about other Christian groups and other faith traditions.*
- + *A minister takes her turn as the volunteer police chaplain in her community.*
- + *An elder participates in a Presbyterian-related mission trip to the Middle East, visiting with both Muslim and Jewish communities.*

\* The examples are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

\*\* These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

- + Indicates example of appropriate conduct.
- Indicates example of inappropriate conduct.

#### **Abbreviations for Sources and References:**

*The Book of Confessions*: C

Form of Government: G

Directory for Worship: W

Rules of Discipline: D

Translation of the Bible—New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)