



Bylaws

The scepter by which King Jesus rules his church is the Bible. To administer the work of the church we also have a constitution, otherwise known as the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. These Standards consist of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline and the Directory of Public Worship (www.arpsynod.org/pdf/Standards/Standards.pdf). The following bylaws provide further detail concerning the government and ministry of Good News Presbyterian Church.

Approved February 8, 2009
Amended February 10, 2012
Amended October 8, 2017

BYLAWS OF GOOD NEWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PREAMBLE

Good News Presbyterian Church seeks to glorify God by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping his people to worship, serve, and enjoy him forever. Recognizing the need for an orderly and well-defined procedure for administering the affairs of the congregation, we, the members of Good News Presbyterian Church of Frederick, Maryland, do hereby adopt these as our bylaws.

ARTICLE I - FORMATION

Good News Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and is under the jurisdiction of the Northeast Presbytery. These bylaws seek to be in accordance with the Form of Government (“FOG”) of the ARP Church (www.arpsynod.org/pdf/Standards/Form%20of%20Government.pdf). Should any provision of these bylaws be in conflict with the provisions of the FOG, the FOG shall prevail.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Members: A member of the church shall be defined as a person who is received into the church by the session, in accordance with Chapter 5 of the FOG. There are three categories of membership: (1) communicant, (2) non-communicant, and (3) associate.

Section 2. Communicant: A communicant member is one who has been baptized; has made public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and has submitted to the ministry, governance, and discipline of the Church. Communicant members shall have the right to vote in congregational meetings (if at least 16-years-old) and hold church office (if at least 21-years-old). Communicant members shall have the right to receive the Lord's Supper and to present their children for baptism.

Section 3. Non-communicant: Non-communicant members are the baptized children of at least one communicant member. They are entitled to the ministry and governance of the Church with a view to their entering into communicant church membership. They may not vote in congregational meetings or receive the Lord's Supper.

Section 4. Associate: An associate member is one who temporarily dwells in the geographic area of the church but does not want to transfer membership from one's home church. An associate member shall have all the rights and obligations of a communicant member, except for voting in congregational meetings and holding church office.

Section 5. Application for Membership: In order to be received into membership (communicant or associate), a person should typically complete an appropriate membership course and be examined by the session in regard to their faith in Christ, as outlined in the FOG chapter V.

Section 6. Erasure: Erasure is the removal of the names of members from the church roll.

a. It is presupposed that:

- (1) A church member in good standing is always at liberty to have his membership transferred to another Bible teaching church.
- (2) A church member who is under church discipline may not request to have his name erased from the church roll.
- (3) A church member who forsakes the assembly of God's people in a Bible teaching church shall be warned that such negligence is a sin (Hebrews 10:25).

b. For cases in which the procedure of restoration prescribed in Matthew 18:15-18 is not applicable, the names of members may be removed from the roll of the church by erasure according to the following provisions:

- (1) **Administrative** - When a member unites with a church of another denomination without a certificate of demission, the session may erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.
- (2) **Disappearance** - When a member cannot be found, the session may, after having made a diligent effort to locate this member, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.
- (3) **Irregular Dismissal** - When a member desires dismissal to a church of which the session cannot approve as a church of biblical faith and practice, nor a church which will advance his spiritual interests, and he cannot be dissuaded, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the session has instituted disciplinary action against him for some offense. On being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes. Erasure under these circumstances is a form of church discipline.
- (4) **Withdrawal** - When a member informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of Good News Presbyterian Church (and does not transfer his membership to another Bible teaching church), and the efforts of the session to dissuade him from his course have failed, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes, unless the session institutes or continues disciplinary action against him. Erasure under these circumstances is a form of discipline.
- (5) **Absence** - When a local member, without adequate reason, persists in attending a church of another denomination in preference to his own, or persistently and over an extended period of time, absents himself from the stated worship services of the church, his name may be erased from the roll according to the following procedures: he shall be earnestly

and personally dealt with by the session. If this effort fails, he shall be notified (by letter and/or email) that at a meeting of the session not less than two months later his standing shall be reviewed. The session shall inform him of the time, date, and place of this meeting and invite him to show why his name should not be erased from the roll. If satisfactory reasons are not presented, the session shall erase his name from the roll, record the circumstances in its minutes, and send notification to him. Erasure under these circumstances is a form of discipline.

- (6) **Non-communicant** - When a non-communicant member neglects the ongoing exhortation of the session to profess faith in Christ and rejects the covenantal responsibility of submission to home or church, the session may upon prior notification (by letter and/or email) erase his name from the roll.

Section 7. Membership Rolls: Membership rolls shall be maintained by the session in accordance with of the FOG (VI.E “Rolls of Church Members”). In addition, a roll shall be maintained of the unbaptized children of communicant members.

ARTICLE III - OFFICERS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1. Officers: The officers of the congregation shall be the ruling elders in active service on the session, the deacons in active service on the diaconate, the trustees, and if the congregation chooses, the congregational chairman. They shall be communicant church members at least 21 years of age.

Section 2. Ruling Elders: Ruling elders, individually and jointly with the pastors, are to lead and shepherd the church (I Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:17, 28-38). They oversee, care for, teach the Bible to, pray for, guide, correct, and guard the flock of God.

Section 3. Deacons: Deacons are servants (Acts 6:1-7). They are men (Acts 6:3; I Tim. 3:11-12,15) who carry on a ministry of mercy to those in distress or material need, oversee the church’s property and financial affairs, and encourage stewardship among the members.

Section 4. Trustees: The trustees shall be 3 active or inactive elders and up to 2 active or inactive deacons who, on behalf of the church, hold title to all property belonging to the congregation. Any inactive elders or deacons who serve as trustees must be members in good standing. The trustees serve under the authority of the session.

Section 5. Congregational Chairman: The congregation may choose to elect a congregational chairman from among the ruling elders. The congregational chairman presides over all congregational meetings in the absence of the pastor. His term of office begins on his election and shall be for one year. He shall be eligible to succeed himself for up to three 1-year terms.

Section 6. Nomination and Preparation of Elders and Deacons: The session shall serve as the nominating committee. Church members may submit officer nominations to the nominating committee. Before making a nomination, the nominator shall ask the potential nominee if (1) he

believes he fulfills the scriptural qualifications; (2) he is willing to faithfully serve; (3) he can affirm the officer vows with a clear conscience.

The session shall examine nominees in doctrine and practice, including questions about their personal faith in Christ and devotional lives, their marital faithfulness and moral purity, their reasons for believing they are called to office, and their willingness to faithfully carry out the duties of office. Those nominees who pass the examination will be on the ballot at the congregational meeting held annually on the second Sunday in February.

At the time of the election, opportunity shall be given for additional nominations from the floor to be made by any member, provided that the nominee is present or has given prior consent. If nominations are made from the floor the session shall arrange for the instruction and examination of the nominees and the election shall be postponed to the following week.

Section 7. Election of Officers: Voting for ruling elders and deacons shall be by secret ballot. Two-thirds of the votes of active communicant members entitled to vote, present at the time of election, shall be required to elect.

Trustees and a congregational chairman may be elected by acclamation if the number of nominees is the same as the number to be elected; otherwise a plurality is sufficient for election.

Section 8. Vacancies: For good cause an officer may resign from office. A vacancy also occurs when an officer ceases to exercise the duties of his office (Book of Discipline, VIII.B.) or to be a member in good standing (FOG VI.E.1). Vacancies shall be filled at the annual congregational meeting.

Section 9. Installation of Officers: The terms of officers shall begin with their installation and conclude when their successors are installed, ordinarily on a Lord's Day in February. No member shall serve on the session and diaconate at the same time. Elders may serve on the diaconate and deacons on the session at the expiration of their terms without the lapse of one year. Trustees and the congregational treasurer may serve in another office concurrently.

ARTICLE IV - PASTORS

Section 1. Pastoral Responsibilities: It is the charge of the pastor (teaching elder) to feed and tend the flock as Christ's minister and with the other elders to lead them in service for the sake of Christ.

The pastor shall pray for and with his people; read the Scriptures; preach the Word; teach, reprove, exhort and comfort; administer the sacraments; pronounce the blessings of God upon the people; officiate at weddings and funerals; preside over the session with the full right to vote; and serve with the ruling elders in all matters pertaining to the government, discipline, worship, and education of the congregation. He shall serve as an advisory member on all committees in the congregation. The pastor shall also serve, with ruling elders in the higher courts of the church.

The pastor shall visit, counsel, pray for, and be available to members of the congregation. He shall visit the sick, afflicted, and aged. He, like all officers, shall admonish those who are guilty of conduct unbecoming to their profession or who are indifferent to their religious duties. In carrying out his many responsibilities, he shall give priority to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4), preparing God's people for works of service (Eph. 4:11-12).

Section 2. Associate Pastors: The terms of the call for an associate pastor shall specify the particular function which he is to fulfill in the congregation. His work shall be under the supervision of the pastor and the session. (FOG, X.E.3)

Section 3. Election and Dissolution: The pastor (and associate pastors) shall be called and elected by the congregation in accordance with the FOG (X.E). The call and election shall also be guided by the Manual of Procedure of the Northeast Presbytery.

The dissolution of a pastoral relationship shall be by action of the presbytery. Such action may be initiated by the pastor, the congregation, or the presbytery in accordance with the FOG (X.F. "Procedure for the Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships"), and the Manual of Procedure of the Northeast Presbytery.

ARTICLE V - THE SESSION

Section 1. Purpose: The Session is the governing body of the church and consists of its ruling and teaching elders. The Session shall have the power and the authority to make rules that are consistent with Scripture, the FOG, and these bylaws. The session is charged with the spiritual oversight and government of the church, subject to the Northeast Presbytery and "shall have as its primary responsibility the initiation, planning, organization and administration of programs designed to enable the church to carry on the mission of God in Christ's church by word and deed in the community and also in the Presbytery, the General Synod and the whole world" (FOG XI.B.1).

Section 2. The Permanency of the Office: The number of ruling elders shall remain unfixed. The office of elder is permanent. In order to provide officers respite, an elder may take a sabbatical, having consulted with the session. These elders will continue to carry out their primary responsibility of shepherding the members of the church, but will not have a vote on sessional matters.

An officer may resign from office at any time, having consulted with the session.

Any ruling elder who has served the church faithfully but whose ability to render active service is limited because of age, physical ability, or other cause, may be elected Ruling Elder Emeritus. Such election shall be by the action of the congregation upon condition that the said officer is willing to accept this title as one of honor (FOG IX.B.5). Elders Emeritus may attend session meetings but may not vote.

Each November elders and deacons shall undergo a review by the session of their fitness to continue in office in regard to the following:

- a. Their faithfulness in carrying out their ordination vows.
 - i. Do you believe in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things for the Church, which is His Body?
 - ii. Do you reaffirm your belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of the living God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice, to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken at any time or upon any pretext?
 - iii. Do you accept the doctrines of this Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith and do you resolve to adhere thereto?
 - iv. Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church?
 - v. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (deacon) in this congregation; and do you promise to perform faithfully all the duties of the office; and do you promise to endeavor by the grace of God to live your life in Christian witness before the church and in the world?
 - vi. Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the session and to the higher courts of the Church?
 - vii. Do you promise in all things to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the church?
- b. Their maintaining the character qualities for church office as summarized in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Section 3. Powers and Responsibilities: The session has power to decide who shall be members of the church and receive them as members; to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of members; to admonish, rebuke, suspend, or remove from membership those found delinquent; to transfer members to other churches; to exercise authority over the worship of the congregation, including the worship music, and over the uses to which the church building and properties may be put; to supervise Christian education for all ages; to supervise the work of the diaconate, the board of trustees, and all other groups in the congregation, and may void or amend any of their actions or return them for further consideration; to instruct, examine, ordain, and install ruling elders-elect and deacons-elect; to establish such committees as it deems necessary for the work of the congregation; to select from among the ruling elders representatives to the presbytery and General Synod; to approve the congregational budgets and other important financial decisions before presentation to the congregation for adoption; to authorize special offerings for congregational causes and all general collections; to perform these and other functions in maintaining good order and promoting the edification and growth of the church in accordance with the applicable provisions of the FOG including the assumption of shepherding and spiritual oversight of the church.

Section 4. Moderator: The pastor, by virtue of his office, shall be the moderator of the session. The moderator shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the session and shall conduct such meetings so as to facilitate free and respectful debate and decision making.

Section 5. Vice Moderator: The session shall appoint a vice moderator who may perform, in good faith, the moderator's duties if the moderator is absent or is unable or refuses to act, and if any emergency arises requiring immediate action. Associate pastors may substitute for the pastor as moderator of the session at the discretion of the pastor and the session. An associate pastor or vice moderator shall have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the moderator.

Section 6. Clerk of Session: The clerk of session shall, in good faith, keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the session and of the proceedings of all congregational meetings, record same in a suitable well-bound book, and see that meetings of the congregation are called and announced as herein provided. The clerk shall notify in writing all persons elected at the annual meeting or a special meeting called for this purpose and shall instruct them of any action of the congregation affecting the administration of their duties. The clerk shall oversee the maintenance of the roll of all members of the congregation in good standing as determined by the session and such other rolls as may be required. The clerk shall furnish the nominating committee the names of all officers, the names of those whose terms are expiring and information as to their eligibility for re-election or for another office. The clerk shall be custodian of the records of the session and the annual reports and shall provide such reports and records as required by Presbytery. The session shall elect its clerk annually from among its members.

Section 7. Meetings: The session shall meet at least monthly and shall convene at the call of the moderator, or at the request of two ruling elders, or at the request of the presbytery. Either oral or written notice, including the date, time and place of a meeting, shall be given at least two days before a meeting.

Section 8. Quorum: The session may conduct the business of a meeting when a quorum of ruling elders in active service is present. The session shall determine the number of its members necessary for a quorum, provided such a quorum be not less than a pastor and two ruling elders, or three ruling elders if the church is currently without a pastor.

ARTICLE VI - THE DIACONATE

Section 1. Organization: The diaconate shall consist of the deacons in active service with the pastor(s) and congregational treasurer serving as advisory members. The deacons shall annually elect a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary. They may appoint sub-committees, as needed, which may include other members of the congregation. The diaconate shall determine the number of members necessary for a quorum and shall institute rules of procedure in accordance with good business practice and accountability.

Section 2. The Permanency of the Office: The number of deacons shall remain unfixed. The office of deacon is permanent. In order to provide officers respite, a deacon may take a

sabbatical, having consulted with the session. These deacons will continue to carry out their primary responsibility of shepherding the members of the church, but will not have a vote on diaconal matters.

An officer may resign from office at any time, having consulted with the session.

Any deacon who has served the church faithfully but whose ability to render active service is limited because of age, physical ability, or other cause, may be elected Deacon Emeritus. Such election shall be by the action of the congregation upon condition that the said officer is willing to accept this title as one of honor (FOG IX.B.5). Deacons Emeritus may attend session meetings but may not vote.

Each November elders and deacons shall undergo a review by the session of their fitness to continue in office in regard to the following:

- a. Their faithfulness in carrying out their ordination vows.
 - i. Do you believe in one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and acknowledge Him Head over all things for the Church, which is His Body?
 - ii. Do you reaffirm your belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of the living God, the only perfect rule of faith and practice, to which nothing is to be added and from which nothing is to be taken at any time or upon any pretext?
 - iii. Do you accept the doctrines of this Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith and do you resolve to adhere thereto?
 - iv. Do you accept the government, discipline, and worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church?
 - v. Do you accept the office of ruling deacon in this congregation; and do you promise to perform faithfully all the duties of the office; and do you promise to endeavor by the grace of God to live your life in Christian witness before the church and in the world?
 - vi. Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the authority of the session and to the higher courts of the Church?
 - vii. Do you promise in all things to promote the unity, peace, purity, and prosperity of the church?
- b. Their maintaining the character qualities for church office as summarized in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Section 3. Meetings: The diaconate shall meet at least monthly and shall convene at the call of the pastor, the session, the diaconate chairman, or at the request of two deacons. Either oral or written notice, including the date, time and place of a meeting, shall be given at least two days before a meeting.

Section 4. Duties and Responsibilities: “The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy and service after the example of Christ.” “The Diaconate shall be responsible for the

congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress" (FOG, VII). To serve in the community the diaconate may coordinate its services with those of local social agencies. It shall administer benevolent funds.

The diaconate "shall also encourage practice of total stewardship among the members of the congregation. It shall plan, in collaboration with the session, the causes toward which the offerings of the congregation shall be directed; devise effective methods of securing and receiving those offerings; secure and receive special offerings as directed by the session and the higher courts of the church; and see that all offerings are properly distributed. It shall have the care of the general property of the congregation, both real and personal" (FOG, VII). The diaconate in coordination with the session and trustees, shall negotiate buying, selling and leasing of church property, including an accounting accuracy check on settlement documents where applicable.

Other duties and responsibilities may be assigned by the session or the congregation.

ARTICLE VII - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Section 1. Organization: The trustees are empowered to act in all proper ways for the church according to the doctrine, custom and usage of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and shall be duly elected by the members of the church to hold office according to law and the custom and usage of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church as prescribed in its Form of Government. The church, therefore, shall be represented in all legal matters by a board of trustees, which shall organize soon after each annual installation of officers by electing a president, a vice president, and a secretary, who shall also be the officers of the corporation. The board of trustees shall determine the number of members necessary for a quorum and adopt such rules as may be deemed necessary.

Section 2. Terms of Office: The number of trustees shall be determined by the congregation, from time to time, upon recommendation of the session. They shall be divided as nearly as possible into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual congregational meeting by the members of the congregation for a term of three years. Trustees shall be active or inactive elders and eligible for re-election for successive terms.

Section 3. Meetings: Meetings shall be called by the chairman or by the session.

Section 4. Duties and Responsibilities: The trustees, as officers and representatives of the church, shall sign and seal legal documents associated with purchasing, selling, leasing or mortgaging property for the church. Important legal papers shall be held in a safety deposit box in a bank. The trustees are under the authority of the session and their powers and duties shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session and diaconate.

Section 5. Secretary of the Board of Trustees: It shall be the duty of the secretary of the board of trustees to keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the trustees, to record said minutes in a well-bound book to be submitted to and reviewed by the session. The secretary shall be custodian of

all valuable papers such as deeds, vehicle titles, insurance policies, annual reports, records, papers of historical interest, and papers ordered to be placed on file by the church and shall deliver the same to the succeeding secretary.

ARTICLE VIII- COMMITTEES

Section 1. Nominating Committee for Pastor: When required, the session shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a nominating committee for pastor. The session shall make suggestions as to the size and composition of the committee, and the procedure to be followed. After acting on these suggestions, the congregation shall proceed with the election of the committee.

Section 2. Nominating Committee for Officers: The session shall serve as the nominating committee for church officers. This committee shall proceed to determine the qualifications and availability of its proposed nominees for the respective offices to be filled.

Prior to the annual congregational meeting, the nominating committee shall submit to the congregation a list containing names for the offices to be filled.

Section 3. Financial Review Committee: A financial review committee of at least two members, appointed by the deacons, shall perform such reviews, tests, and examinations of each year's financial records of the church as shall be determined necessary by the session. Such work should generally include review of a sample of disbursements for authorization and support, and reconciliation of significant bank and investment accounts to the records of the financial institution. The results of such procedures shall be reported to the congregation at the annual congregational meeting. Alternatively, the diaconate may meet the requirements of this provision by engaging the services of a third party (i.e. a nonmember of the congregation) to perform such agreed upon procedures. In such case, a financial review committee shall not be appointed.

Section 4. Other Committees: Other standing committees (e.g. missions, Christian education) and special committees with limited tasks may be appointed by the session, the diaconate, and/or the congregation. The pastor(s) shall be an ex-officio member of all such committees.

ARTICLE IX - FINANCES

Section 1. Offerings: The work and mission of the congregation shall be supported by the voluntary contributions of its members and friends. Giving in proportion to income is set forth in Scripture (I Corinthians 16:2) and giving no less than a tithe is commended. Annual reports of contributions from each contributor shall be provided to them by the church treasurer.

Because the church and its outreach should be financed by tithes and offerings given as an act of worship, the church shall not sponsor sales or fundraising programs (though church members may privately do so). There shall be no general or special collections without approval of the session.

Section 2. Budget: The deacons shall draft a budget annually, taking into consideration submissions by the members and various committees of the church. The deacons will then meet with the session for discussion, suggestions and amendments. The amended budget shall be submitted to the session for revision and/or approval, and then presented to the congregation for adoption at the annual congregational meeting.

Adjustments to the approved budget may be made as necessary by the session after consultation with the diaconate or by the diaconate with the approval of the session.

Section 3. Congregational Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

- a. Duties: The treasurer shall be responsible for administering the funds and finances of the church. The treasurer shall keep an accurate accounting of all receipts and expenditures; shall be responsible to the diaconate; and shall be an advisory member of the diaconate. A monthly financial report shall be furnished for inclusion in the minutes of the diaconate. The assistant treasurer shall work with and under the treasurer.

- b. Nomination and Election: Church members may submit to the nominating committee nominations of church members for the positions of treasurer and assistant treasurer. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual congregational meeting. The treasurer and assistant treasurer shall be elected each year at the annual congregational meeting for a term of one year and shall be eligible for re-election for up to two additional successive terms. After three successive terms the treasurer and assistant treasurer shall be ineligible to hold these positions for one year.

The treasurer and assistant treasurer may be elected by acclamation if the number of nominees is the same as the number to be elected; otherwise a plurality is sufficient for election.

- c. Safeguards: Before assuming office, the deacons shall commission a background check and credit check on the treasurer-elect and assistant treasurer-elect. The treasurer, assistant treasurer, and deacon charged with immediate oversight of the treasurer and books shall have no conflict of interest, such as familial relations.

ARTICLE X - PASTORAL CARE AND MINISTRY

Section 1. Biblical Counseling: The church encourages its members to follow the teaching of the Bible in confessing their sins to and in seeking counsel from one another, and especially from our pastoral counselors.

The church's counseling shall be based on scriptural principles rather than on principles derived from secular psychology or psychiatry. Neither pastoral nor lay counselors in this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

Although some members of the church work in professional fields outside the church, when serving as pastoral or lay counselors within the church, they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services that they do outside the church. Members who have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. Our pastoral or lay counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisors and also to help members consider outside advisors recommendations in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

Section 2. Confidentiality: All members are expected to guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them, to refrain from gossip and respect the confidence of others. Our pastors, elders and deacons shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling.

Although confidentiality is to be respected, there are times when it is appropriate and biblically necessary to reveal certain information to others. Pastors, elders or deacons of this church may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- a. When a pastor, elder or deacon is uncertain how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other pastors or elders in this church, or, if the person attends another church, from the pastors or elders of that church.
- b. When the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is deemed to be acting illegally or in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene.
- c. When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary in the judgment of the pastor or elder to institute disciplinary proceedings, or to seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church.
- d. When reporting is required by law (e.g., suspected child abuse).

The pastors, elders or deacons may, but need not, provide those counseled with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.

Section 3. Conflict Resolution: This church is committed to resolving in a biblical manner all disputes that may arise within our church body. This commitment is based upon God's command that Christians should strive earnestly to live at peace with one another and that when disputes arise, Christians should resolve them according to the principles set forth in the Bible (e.g., Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-2), including the principle that believers should not sue one another (1 Cor. 6:1-11). We believe that these commands and principles are obligatory on all Christians and absolutely essential for the well-being and work of the church. Therefore, any and all disputes among members in this church shall be resolved according to biblical principles.

When a member of this church has a conflict with or is concerned about the behavior of another member (regardless of whether the matter would be considered an “offense” as defined in the Book of Discipline), that member shall attempt to resolve the matter in the manner set forth in the Book of Discipline and these bylaws. In the event that the conflict cannot be resolved or the behavior corrected, the conflict shall be resolved within the church courts, as set forth in the Book of Discipline. The session may, at its discretion, recommend a mediation service or arbitration, or may be willing to assist in said mediation or arbitration.

Section 4. Children’s Workers: Those who serve in the nursery and regularly work in the youth ministry of this church shall undergo a criminal background check.

Section 5. Church Discipline: Church discipline shall be carried out according to the Book of Discipline in the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

ARTICLE XI – TEACHERS

Section 1. Qualifications: Only communicant church members and associate church members skilled in teaching may serve as regular teachers in the church.

Section 2. Examination: All teachers must be examined by the session or representatives of the session to confirm that they accept the doctrines of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and the expression of their own faith. Prospective teachers shall disclose any exceptions they take to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The session shall determine whether or not such exceptions are substantial enough to disqualify them from teaching in this church.

ARTICLE XII - ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual written reports shall be made by the session, diaconate, board of trustees, congregational treasurer, and all organizations of the Church. The reports will be distributed with the proposed budget in advance of the annual congregational meeting each year. The session shall set the standards and requirements for the reports so they have historical, operational, and informational value.

ARTICLE XIII - CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Section 1. Annual Meetings: Unless otherwise scheduled by the session, the annual meeting of the congregation shall be held on the second Sunday of February after the morning worship service. At the annual meeting the voting members shall elect ruling elders, deacons, a congregational treasurer and assistant treasurer, and trustees; adopt an annual budget; and transact any other business as may come before the meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings: The session or the presbytery may call special meetings of the congregation. Notice of all called meetings must state the purpose of the meeting and only business so stated shall be transacted.

Section 3. Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at least seven days beforehand at the morning worship services. The notice shall specify the time, date, place, and the principal items of business.

Notice of the annual meeting, or called meetings shall be mailed to member households at least 10 days before the meeting. Announcement shall be made of the meeting in the church bulletin or the church newsletter, on each of the three Sundays prior to the meeting. The proposed budget, annual report, and/or report of the nominating committee shall be made available to the congregation in the church building at least one week in advance of the meeting. Copies will be sent to members when requested by them.

Section 4. Officers: At congregational meetings, other than meetings called by the presbytery or for the election of a pastor, the pastor shall preside as moderator, and the clerk of session shall serve as secretary (FOG III.G.2.h.). If the presbytery calls a congregational meeting, it shall appoint one of its own members to preside (FOG III.G.2.i). Otherwise, if the church is without a pastor or the pastor is unable to serve, the session shall appoint one of their members to call the meeting to order and to preside over the meeting. If the clerk of session is not available to serve as secretary at a congregational meeting, the session shall appoint one of its members to serve in that position.

Section 5. Quorum and Voting: One-fourth of the active communicant members entitled to vote, as determined by the Session, shall constitute a quorum. All communicant members in attendance, who are not under church censure, are entitled to vote within the limits set by these bylaws. The election of elders and deacons shall be by secret ballot.

Section 6. Rules of Procedure: Unless otherwise provided, the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, shall guide the proceedings of the meeting.

Section 7. Order of Business: All congregational meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer. Per the FOG, the usual order of business at the annual congregational meeting shall be as follows:

- (1) The meeting shall be called to order by the presiding officer and prayer shall be offered.
- (2) The minutes of the previous meeting shall be read for information if there is any unfinished business recorded in the minutes.
- (3) Action shall be taken upon any unfinished business disclosed by the minutes.
- (4) Committees shall report as necessary and said reports may be acted upon.
- (5) Other business shall be considered as indicated by the notice of the meeting. For example,
 - The nominating committee shall report on nominations and elections be held.
 - The church budget shall be presented for adoption by the congregation
- (6) The minutes of the current meeting shall be read and adopted.
- (7) After a motion the meeting shall adjourn.

ARTICLE XIV - AMENDMENT

Section 1. The session shall review these bylaws at least biennially to determine the wisdom or necessity of amendments and proposed amendments as deemed advisable.

Section 2. These bylaws, with the exception of provisions required by the laws of the State of Maryland and the FOG, may be amended. Church members may recommend amendments to the session. Because Presbyterian church government is rule by elders, the session shall propose bylaw amendments to the congregation. Two-thirds of active elders must approve the proposed amendments before their presentation to the congregation.

A majority vote of those present at a congregational meeting, notice of which shall be mailed to member families at least 10 days in advance, is required for adoption of proposed amendments.

Section 3. Church members and elders alike retain the right to appeal to the Presbytery concerning amendments that they believe violate Scripture or the Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.