

## Minutes

### Seventh Annual CRE Presbytery Meeting Houston, TX - 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Thursday & Friday, October 16 - 17, 2003

- I. **8:00 AM to 9:30 PM**  
**Ordination Examination of Dean Hellekson & Gene Franklin**
- II. **10:00 AM - Invocation –**  
Mr. Baker greeted those assembled. Ed Iverson opened the meeting in prayer.
- III. **Psalm Singing – Dave Hatcher – EEF (Kirkland, WA)**  
Mr. Hatcher led the assembly in singing Psalms (138, 103)
- IV. **Exhortation from the Scriptures – Eric Sauder – CREC (Glen Burnie, MD)**  
Mr. Sauder taught on I Cor. 3 1-11
- V. **Introduction of Visitors - Moderator**
- VI. **Roll call and establishment of a quorum – Moderator**
  - All Saints' Presbyterian (2002) – Brownstown, PA
    - Gregg Strawbridge
    - Marlin Detweiler
  - Christ Church (1997) -Moscow, ID
    - Doug Wilson
    - Chris Schlect
  - Christ Church (2001) – Spokane, WA
    - Joost Nixon
  - Christ Covenant Church (2000) – Lynnwood, WA
    - Steve Brown
    - Dean Hellickson \*non-voting delegate
  - Christ Reformed Evangelical Church (2000)-Glen Burnie, MD
    - Eric Sauder
    - Paul Hamelryck
  - Cornerstone Reformed Church (2000) – Carbondale, IL
    - Burke Shade
    - Tom Miller \*non-voting delegate
  - Eastside Evangelical Fellowship (1997) – Kirkland, WA
    - Dave Hatcher
    - Chris Butaud
  - Emmanuel Covenant Church (2000) - Phoenix, AZ
    - Jeff Niell
    - Richard Klaus
  - Grace Covenant Church (1998) - Texarkana, AR
    - Ben House
    - Tom Lincoln
  - Grace Covenant Church (2002) – Nacogdoches, TX
    - Randy Booth
    - David Alders

Immanuel Presbyterian Church (2002) – Fallon, NV  
 Ed Iverson

Langley Reformed Evangelical Church (2000) – Langley, BC  
 Gary Vanderveen  
 Ken Ewert

Providence Church (2002) – Lynchburg, VA  
 Virgil Hurt

Reformation Covenant Church (1999)- Oregon City, OR  
 Dennis Tuuri  
 Christopher Wilson

Tanglewood Baptist Church (2002) – Sand Springs, OK  
 Rogers Meredith

Trinity Church (1997) – Wenatchee, WA  
 Gene Helsel

A quorum was established with 24 of 38 possible delegates present.

**VII. Member Reports: (Maximum of 3 minutes each)**

- 1) **All Saints' Presbyterian (2002) – Brownstown, PA**  
 Greg Strawbridge gave the report for All Saints' Presbyterian
- 2) **Christ Church, Redmond (2001) – Crooked River Ranch, OR**  
 Brett Baker read the report for Christ Church, Redmond; a letter submitted by Jeff Harlow. Christ Church, Redmond has disbanded.
- 3) **Christ Church (1997) – Moscow, ID**  
 Doug Wilson gave the report for Christ Church, Moscow.
- 4) **Christ Church (2001) – Spokane, WA**  
 Joost Nixon gave the report for Christ Church, Spokane
- 5) **Christ Covenant Church (2000) - Lynnwood, WA**  
 Steve Brown gave the report for Christ Covenant Church
- 6) **Christ Reformed Evangelical Church (2000)-Glen Burnie, MD**  
 Eric Sauder gave the report for Christ Reformed Evangelical Church
- 7) **Cornerstone Reformed Church (2000) - Carbondale, IL**  
 Burke Shade gave the report for Cornerstone Reformed Church
- 8) **Eastside Evangelical Fellowship (1997) - Kirkland, WA**  
 Dave Hatcher gave the report for Eastside Evangelical Fellowship
- 9) **Emmanuel Covenant Church (2000) - Phoenix, AZ**  
 Jeff Niell gave the report for Emmanuel Covenant Church
- 10) **Grace Covenant Church (1998) - Texarkana, AR**  
 Ben House gave the report for Grace Covenant Church, Texarkana
- 11) **Grace Covenant Church (2002) – Nacogdoches, TX**  
 David Alders gave the report for Grace Covenant Church, Nacogdoches

- 12) **Grace Covenant Church (2001) – Sechelt, BC**  
Brett Baker stated that Grace Covenant is moving from a member church to a mission church under Langley Reformed Evangelical Church. Brett will give a broader report later.
- 13) **Grace Evangelical Church (1999) - Redondo Beach, CA**  
Brett Baker read a letter from Greg Bero stating that Grace Evangelical Church has withdrawn it's from membership in the CRE.
- 14) **Immanuel Presbyterian Church (2002) – Fallon, NV**  
Ed Iverson gave the report for Immanuel Presbyterian Church
- 15) **Langley Reformed Evangelical Church (2000) - Langley, BC**  
Garry Vanderveen gave the report for Langley Reformed Evangelical Church
- 16) **Providence Church (2002) – Lynchburg, VA**  
Virgil Hurt gave the report for Providence Church
- 17) **Reformation Covenant Church (1999) - Oregon City, OR**  
Dennis Tuuri gave the report for Reformation Covenant Church
- 18) **Tanglewood Baptist Church (2002) – Sand Springs, OK**  
Rogers Meredith gave the report for Tanglewood Baptist Church
- 19) **Trinity Church (1997) - Wenatchee, WA**  
Gene Helsel gave the report for Trinity Church

#### **VIII. Consideration of Fraternal Delegates (Recommend/Extend/Withdraw)**

##### **Christ Church (Moscow, ID):**

Church of the King (2001) - Santa Cruz, CA

Motion to receive Church of the King (Wilson, D/Shade)

Mr. Wilson gave brief status on Church of the King. Mr. Wilson apologized for not having the details of Church of the King information in the Presbyter's packet. He gave a verbal update on the church.

- Mr. Tuuri asked the question of Mr. Sandlin's amiability to join the CRE. Mr. Garaway stated that he is aware and is OK with it.
- Mr. Hatcher gave a brief statement affirming his observations of Church of the King.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Mr. Bill Garaway and Mr. James Ratliff to the table.

Christ Reformed Church (2002) – Albion, ME

Motion to receive Christ Reformed Church (Wilson, D/Iverson)

Mr. Wilson gave brief status on Christ Reformed Church. Mr. Schlect commended the presbytery to read about the church in the document included in the presbyter's packet.

- Mr. Iverson asked about their status with PCA. Mr. Wilson answered that all is well.
- Mr. Vanderveen asked what confession their coming in under. Mr. Schlect pointed to page 4.
- Mr. Niell asked Pastor Young about his exception to the WCF (found in the Presbyterian's packet). Pastor Young asked Mr. Nixon to help answer and the issue was clarified.
- Mr. Shade asked about the exception relating to the Lord's Supper. Pastor Young stated that there are credo families in the church.
- Mr. Schlect asked for a point of order – Article III from the book of procedures.
- Mr. Iverson asked if Presbytery should be questioning Pastor Young in this manner. It was pointed out that this is the means by which Presbytery looks at the church. It isn't an exam.
- Mr. Ewert asked if there are other men who are close to being elders so as to strengthen the session. Pastor Young stated that he agrees they need more, but he emphasized that it will move slowly.
- Mr. Helsel asked Christ Church if there is other information that would be applicable in this consideration. Mr. Wilson stated that he has no qualms at all with recommending the church.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if there was consideration of some elders' pro-tem to help with the session. Mr. Wilson stated that he is happier with two local elders as opposed a long distance second elder.
- Mr. Hatcher asked about Pastor Young's Eschatological view. Pastor Young stated he's moved from the dispensational, pre-millennial to a post-millennial view.
- Mr. Helsel asked if Pastor Young has any theological issues in joining the CRE. He does not.
- Mr. Helsel asked about future difficulties with the flock, and Pastor Young stated that he doesn't see big difficulties, but he'll have to continue the teaching he's been doing for two years on the value of the CRE, and Christ Reformed Church's membership in it.
- Mr. Meredith asked if the church was congregational, and was told no they are not.
- Mr. Hatcher asked if Christ Church has heard Pastor Young preach. Mr. Wilson has not heard him in person but has heard tapes. He stated that Pastor Young puts food on the table.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Pastor Rick Young and Ryan Young to the table.

Lakeside Church (2002) – New Berlin, WI  
Motion to receive Lakeside Church (Wilson, D/Booth)

Mr. Wilson gave a brief explanation of what is happening with Lakeside Church. He stated that Mr. Jeff Pennington is working on the many issues at Lakeside. Mr. Wilson desires to extend them. Mr. Niell pointed out information from prior minutes of Presbytery stating that Lakeside's status was already withdrawn in 2001.

Mr. Wilson withdrew his motion.

***Motion to adjourn for lunch – returning at 1:30 PM(Alders/Ewert)***  
*The motion passed unanimously.*

***Mr. Baker called the meeting back to order at 1:45 PM.***

***Mr. Hatcher led the Presbyters in the singing of Psalm 21***

**Christ Reformed Evangelical Church (Glen Burnie, MD)**  
~~Grace New Covenant Church (2002) – Walkersville, MD~~  
**They've never been fraternal delegation.**

**Eastside Evangelical Fellowship (Kirkland, WA)**  
The King's Congregation (2002) – Boise, ID  
Motion to receive The King's Congregation (Hatcher/Detweiler)

Mr. Hatcher gave a brief status on the church. He stated that the session of EEF has met with the session of King's Congregation several times over the past year. This past December the session ordained Alan Burrow and Bill Procter as elders. Mr. Burrow is the pastor.

Mr. Hatcher then invited questions to himself, or Mr. Burrows. He then followed on to stated that EEF has been in contact with the PCA and have Rob Rayburn's approval and blessing to all that is happening with The King's Congregation.

- Mr. Helsel asked Mr. Hatcher how they've evaluated the state of the elders of The King's Congregation.
- Mr. Vanderveen asked which confession will be adopted. Evangelical Statement with the addition of new sections on creation, government, etc.
- Mr. Wilson asked about the long term plan for the pastorate with the church. Mr. Burrows stated that he

aspires to the full time office of Pastor, but they will wait upon the Lord. He is a vocational attorney.

- Mr. Iverson asked for clarification on whether we will accept Mr. Burrows ordination. Mr. Wilson stated that there is no answer; as the CRE has some churches with a 2 office, and 3 office, and 4 office view – we must proceed cautiously. This dilemma exists because we don't have a standard for the CRE view of offices.
- Mr. Booth thinks we need to consider a change to the book of procedures or constitution regarding a man's credentials. Mr. Brown asked if that implies that the CRE will then hold the ordinations of these people. Mr. Wilson stated that the CRE shouldn't hold credentials, but we need some more work here.
- Mr. Schlect, the chair of the constitution committee, stated that he's heard the above conversation, and requested that we move back to the motion on the table.
- Mr. Alders asked for clarification on the PCA relationship. The PCA approached the CRE about starting a church in Boise, and it was clarified that the CRE doesn't start churches, but a local church could start there.
- Mr. Burrows clarified that the congregation isn't looking for it's first Pastor, it has one and he's it. Mr. Schlect spoke to this point – stating that a future agenda item (to be discussed in this years Presbytery), will require examination.
- Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Burrows for a background sketch of his qualifications to teach.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked why the church didn't choose a historical statement instead of Reformed Evangelical Statement.
- Mr. Schlect asked if the Apostles Creeds, the Nicene Creed, and Definition of Chalcedeon had been incorporated into their constitution.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Mr. Alan Burrows and Mr. Jeff Kesar to the table.

### **Emmanuel Covenant Church (Phoenix, AZ):**

Christ the King Presbyterian Church (2002) – Eugene, OR  
Motion to receive Christ the King Presbyterian Church  
(Niell/Schlect)

Mr. Niell gave a brief status on the church, and introduced the two elders of Christ the King Presbyterian Church. A number of years ago the two elders served as elders in the PCA. A leader in the PCA church recommended that they leave and start a

new church – with potential to join the CRE. They started with six families. Mr. Niell met with the pastor of the PCA church that they had left, and the pastor stated that he believes these men ought to be in ministry.

- Mr. Wilson stated that he knows many of the children from this congregation and believes them to be faithful and a great value to the Moscow community.
- Mr. Tuuri stated that he's heard all good information from them. He asked about the pastor of the ex-PCA church. Does Mr. Rench believe that a man should be de-frocked if his adult children depart the faith? Mr. Rench stated that an adult (35 years old) who leaves the faith is quite different from the school age person still living with them. Mr. Rench stated that he doesn't hold his position woodenly. He then followed on by saying the real reason for leaving the PCA church wasn't about a child that left the faith; it was through this dialogue that he discovered this man wouldn't be held accountable and for this reason they left.
- Mr. Meredith asked if Mr. Rench would or wouldn't have the pastor step down. Mr. Rench stated that it's not black and white. He'd have to examine the situation.
- Mr. Vanderveen asked which confession will be adopted. WCF.
- Mr. Wilson stated that these questions to Mr. Rench are not aimed at his qualification to teach, but rather to ensure the relationship with the PCA is in good standing.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Mr. Rench and Mr. Gowen to the table.

**Grace Covenant Church (Nacogdoches, TX):**

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (2002) – Hockley, TX  
Motion to receive Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church  
(Booth/Niell)

Mr. Booth invited Pastor Gene Franklin to the microphone. Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church had asked if Grace Covenant Church (Nacogdoches) to assist them in being a mission church, and they agreed. Mr. Booth has observed the church on many occasions. The church has 16 families and holds to the WCF.

- Mr. Helsel asked if there could be a quick update on the ordination exam from this morning. Mr. Niell stated that the committees' intention is to recommend him to the session.

- Mr. Shade asked if Mr. Franklin is full time with the church and followed on with some financial/vocational questions. Mr. Booth stated that Mr. Franklin receives about half of his salary from the church.
- Mr. Schlect asked about the confessions and which ones will be excepted. Mr. Franklin stated that they take exception with the paedocommunion position and the pope as the antichrist position.
- Mr. Shade stated that the WCF doesn't prohibit paedocommunion.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked about Mr. Franklin's training. He's stated that he's had no formal training, but he's does a lot of reading and he's spent a lot of time in the saddle.
- Mr. Meredith asked what he's been reading.
- Mr. Hatcher asked Mr. Booth if he's heard Mr. Franklin preach. Mr. Booth stated yes, and he stated that he's a very good preacher. Mr. Booth respects Mr. Franklin a great deal and speaks very highly of his family and his ability to Shepard.
- Mr. Detweiler asked if Hockley is a suburb of Houston.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Mr. Gene Franklin and Mr. Mike Chaney to the table.

### **Reformation Covenant Church (Oregon City, OR):**

Trinity Reformation Church (2001) – Salem, OR

Motion to receive Trinity Reformation Church (Tuuri/Booth)

Mr. Tuuri handed out a document on the church and Mr. Seraiah exceptions to the confession. Mr. Seraiah was a prior pastor of a CRE church, and has been called by Trinity Reformation Church. Mr. Seraiah stated that it's been a joy to be in Salem. Pastor Tuuri and Elder Wilson serve as elders Pro-Tem.

- Mr. Schlect asked if the pro-tem session will be dissolved upon acceptance.
- Mr. Nixon asked how many families are there. 9 families with 7 family visitor families.
- Mr. Schlect asked Mr. Tuuri how a discipline case would work.
- Mr. Shade asked Mr. Tuuri if there is only one elder at the church. If so, then doesn't it need two elders?
- Mr. Meredith asked if Mr. Seraiah has been a pastor before.



The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Baker welcomed Mr. Seraiah to the table.

**Providence Church (Lynchburg, VA):**

Covenant Reformed Church (2002) – Knoxville, TN

Motion to extend the fraternal status of Covenant Reformed Church (Hurt/Meredith)

Mr. Hurt introduced the elders Covenant Reformed Church. The church is now particularized and the church is growing well. They're about a year away from being considered into membership.

- Mr. Schlect asked if any of them have credentials.

The motion passed unanimously.

**IX. Seating of Visiting Delegations**

***Motion to take a short break – returning at 3:15 PM (Nixon/Butaud)***

*The motion passed unanimously.*

***Mr. Baker called the meeting back to order at 3:45 PM.***

**X. Seating of New Fraternal Delegations**

Grace Covenant Church (Nacogdoches, TX)

Motion to seat the following as fraternal delegates: (Tuuri/Helsel)

Christ Covenant Church (San Antonio, TX)

- Mr. Hatcher asked if there has historically been a lot of questioning during the seating of Fraternal Delegations.

The motion passed unanimously.

Christ Church (Moscow, ID)

Motion to seat the following as fraternal delegates: (Wilson/Nixon)

Ancient Hope Reformed Church (Mission Viejo, CA)

Christ Church, North Carolina (Cary, NC)

Providence Reformed Evangelical Church (Grand Junction, CO)

Covenant of Grace Church (Elk, WA)

Trinity Reformed Church (Moscow, ID)

Mitaka Evangelical Church (Tokyo, Japan)

Mr. Ralph Smith, pastor of Mitaka Evangelical Church, is a missionary sent by Christ Church, but the church is a church that's been functioning 1981.

- Mr. Butaud asked what Mitaka means.
- Mr. Meredith asked if this mission status will need to always continue. Mr. Smith stated that as long as they're not land owners they must have a sponsoring church.

- Mr. Detweiler asked if there is an expectation of Mitaka Evangelical Church becoming a full member. Yes.
- Mr. Schlect stated that the Mitaka church has been translating a lot of historical documents into the local language.
- Mr. Wilson added that we hope, someday, to have a Japanese Presbytery.
- Mr. Hatcher asked if Ancient Hope is a mission church plant of Christ Church.

The motion passed unanimously.

Cornerstone Reformed Church (Carbondale, IL)

Motion to seat the following as fraternal delegates: (Shade/Hatcher)  
 Christ the Redeemer (Pella, IA)  
 Christ Church (Searcy, AR)

- Mr. Shade gave an update on both churches.

The motion passed unanimously.

Reformation Covenant Church (Oregon City, OR)

Motion to seat the following as fraternal delegates: (Tuuri/Helsel)  
 Covenant Bible Church (Anchorage, AK)

- Mr. Tuuri gave an update on both churches.

The motion passed unanimously.

Reformation Covenant Church (Oregon City, OR)

Motion to seat the following as fraternal delegates:  
 (Strawbridge/Hatcher)

Christ Church of Livingston County (Howell, MI)

- Mr. Shade stated that Mr. Vaussen is pastoring two churches, so we need to be praying for him.
- Mr. Strawbridge stated that there is an issue with Mr. Shade's prior prosecutor and asked for broad prayer.

The motion passed unanimously.

## XI. Old Business

### A. Moderators Report:

#### a) Assistance to Grace Covenant Church – Sechelt, BC

***Mr. Baker read the following as his report:***

At last years' presbytery meeting, during the member reports, it became obvious that a situation had developed at the church in Sechelt, BC that was causing much grief and the delegation asked for the assistance of the CRE. Subsequently, the presbytery

commissioned the Moderator to look into the situation to render whatever assistance he could to the church and enlist others as needed.

The day after presbytery I met with the delegation to hear the details surrounding the situation. Discussions continued the next week during the Ministerial Conference in Moscow, ID. In a nutshell, a man had brought accusations against an one of the two elders in the church. Ultimately, this action affected the whole church, not the least of which was the remaining elder who had resigned after what he perceived was a show of no confidence from the body in his handling of the situation. However, according to their constitution, his resignation had not yet been finalized and he had no desire to withdraw his resignation.

Therefore, prior to his resignation becoming official with the counsel of the church in Langley, BC, we gave a recommendation to the body that their church become a mission work of the church in Langley. This was agreeable to the body and the elder's resignation was accepted leaving no on-site officers. From this point on, I worked closely with the session at Langley and was very thankful and am indebted to them for their faithful labors. Also I included three other CRE brothers as sounding boards for wisdom and accountability.

Our next step was to meet with the body with the exception of the accused and the former elder and we were able to get a handle on the bigger picture and of the nature of the culture at the church. There were many tears and deep hurts evident at the meeting. For the next few months our efforts were primarily focused on reading documentation and meeting with the two central figures and the former elder to determine where sin needed to be confessed and where reconciliation would be necessary. This process took longer than we hoped.

Also during this time we sought out witnesses from other churches to get their testimonies to attempt to determine the veracity of the claims made by either party. In the end, it was clear to us that accuser could not prove his case. However, it was equally clear that both parties had not acted charitably toward each other: the dialogue between them had become harsh and unproductive and that the issues at the heart of the conflict were differing perceptions on numerous issues. None of these issues were of a nature that lent themselves to being adjudicated in a trial and so we concluded that the best course of action was to pursue confession, forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation.

After eight visits to Canada, the last visit was a meeting with the congregation where we read to the body the things we had concluded. The accused used the opportunity to confess his sin, particularly of improperly responding to the accuser. Some were not pleased with our

findings or wanted to take further action. These issues are being addressed individually now by the church in Langley.

The church continues to meet weekly and the accused has moved away to seek employment in Vancouver, BC. Langley is providing direct oversight and will need to determine the viability of the church and whether to someday pursue a vocational Teaching Elder/Pastor.

In the meantime pastor Vanderveen is traveling to Sechelt every second Sunday to preach and encourage the congregation. This will continue for a period of six months at the end of which time the Langley session will evaluate the viability of the Sechelt church.

- Mr. Helsel thanked Mr. Baker for his labors in this area.
- Mr. Wilson seconded the thank you and requested it be added into the minutes.

**b) Charges against Douglas Wilson.**

***Mr. Baker then read the following document.***

June of 2002, I was called by two different members of Christ Church seeking advice on a situation which was troubling to them. One called me for advice because I was a long-time friend, the other because I was the Moderator of the CRE. Their concern surrounded the manner in which the Session at Christ Church was dealing with a recently revealed rebellious son of one of the existing elders. My counsel to both of them was the same; go to the elders and express your concerns and ask questions. Two weeks later, I received a call from my long-time friend and he expressed that his concerns had been satisfied. The other continued to grow more suspicious of the elders and began to paint a picture of a very large conspiracy and cover-up. At that point he represented himself and two other men in the church who shared the same concerns.

My involvement for a number of months was to assist the session at Christ Church in coming to a resolution and reconciliation with this group of three men. I was speaking to both parties and was treating this as strictly a session issue. Over the months I would receive documentation and phone calls from Charlie Nolan just keeping me apprised of what he was doing. At all times, especially after a very early request for CRE intervention, I pointed the three men back to the session to labor there in seeking a resolution.

In November of last year, while at the ministerial conference in Moscow, ID, I was contacted by Charlie Nolan who was requesting a meeting with me. I first conferred with Doug Jones to get caught up on their latest efforts to resolve the conflict and, at that time, he expressed that the session still was very unclear as to what exactly were this group's charges against the session. At our meeting

Nolan painted a grave picture and I encouraged him to clearly document his concerns and to provide the requisite witnesses.

Over the months, I had also been conferring with the Christ Church session and it appeared that there were genuine attempts to answer the concerns but nothing seemed sufficient.

Within a week after our November meeting, I was contacted by one of the three men who said that he was dropping out of the group and that he had come to terms with the session. He had met with them and no longer held to the same concerns as the remaining men, Charlie Nolan and Charlie Craig.

I had virtually no contact with the Charlies until the end of January when I received nearly 600 pages of documentation addressed to the Christ church session. In the cover letter, addressed to Christ Church, they withdrew their membership and made numerous declarations and gave warnings about unlawful behavior. At this time I had not treated this documentation as a request for CRE involvement. It appeared to me to be simply these men keeping me abreast of the interaction they are having with Christ Church.

Shortly after this, because this documentation included affidavits from a man who was formerly an elder but left the church 10 years ago (but was now attending a church in the area) an interaction between Christ Church and this man's current church, the Evangelical Free Church of Pullman developed and that relationship became strained. I was asked by the E Free church what the CRE involvement was and I explained to them that there was no case being considered and that this was strictly a Christ Church session issue.

In early April of 2003 I was asked by Charlie Nolan why I had thrown out the case. I explained to him that I had done no such thing because I had never received any formal request for the latest documentation to be considered at the CRE level. I had not thrown out the case because I had never been asked to take up the case. My assumption up to this point was that the Session at Christ Church was the primary party responsible for addressing these concerns. He agreed that he had failed to address any cover letter to me nor articulated any formal request for such involvement.

After receiving the formal request for CRE involvement on April 30th, 2003 it was obvious that the case was not in a format that aligned with our constitution. Most of the charges were against a single elder of the session, there weren't sufficient witnesses to all the charges, and the plaintiffs had withdrawn their membership from the church and denied any jurisdiction of Christ Church over them.

I felt that I had two options but was unsure of which option would be most appropriate. The first would be to reject the case out of hand due to its unconstitutional nature. The second option would be for the presbytery to determine that the case was unconstitutional and reject it. As I read our constitution, it appeared to me that it was the presbytery that was charged with determining that a case was unconstitutional or frivolous.

The question was how to get the Presbytery to hear enough of the case to evaluate the merits of the case without actually hearing the entire case. The solution was to request a 5 page abstract of the charges from the Charlies and subsequently a five page response from Christ Church for the presbytery to review.

I convened a group of 5 men from the CRE to act as an informal advisory board. We met on June 9th and discussed the case for numerous hours and our primary resolution was to attempt to persuade the Charlies to withdraw their accusations and pursue reconciliation with the Session. We also concluded that a Presbyterian rejection of the case would yield a more definitive, unified response than would a unilateral rejection by the moderator. Therefore, I agreed to go to Moscow to meet with the Charlies and plead with them to reconsider their charges.

I met with them on July 5th and they both refused to reconsider their charges and to prepare an abstract of the case. Given this, I felt that there was only one option and that was for me to reject the case on behalf of the presbytery. I notified the Charlies of this in a letter dated July 10th, 2003. I have not heard back from them.

- Mr. Tuuri asked about the correspondence with the Evangelical Free Church in Pullman, WA. Mr. Baker told to Doug Busby, pastor of Evangelical Free Church that the CRE wouldn't get involved this case as it is an issue for the Christ Church session.
- Mr. Tuuri asked for further clarification from Mr. Baker. Mr. Baker stated that at that time he started communicating with Mr. Busby and others from Evangelical Free Church he had received the accusations from the Charlies.
- Mr. Detweiler asked the session of Christ Church if they would do anything differently, in light of our constitution. Mr. Wilson responded by stating that the CRE constitution has ambiguity in it and this caused a lot more work than it should have for the Moderator.
- Mr. Wilson further stated that as the Kingdom goes forth, we can expect more unfounded attacks like these, and that the CRE constitution needs to have protection for all CRE members.

- Mr. Brown asked about the lack of two members who submitted the case in the first place. Mr. Wilson agreed and stated that these accusations were submitted unconstitutionally.
- Mr. Schlect responded to Mr. Detweiler's question by stating, yes, we wish this would have been handled differently. He complimented Mr. Baker for working so well with poor constitutional language surrounding these types of issues.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if the only issue before the CRE is the Charlies issue. Mr. Wilson said that today that's true. However, the Auburn Avenue issue may creep up. After the Charlies made their accusations public, Mr. Baker got involved.
- Mr. Tuuri and Mr. Wilson continued in dialog regarding the CRE's role in throwing this out or not. There was some question about whether Christ Church wanted the issue to be heard by Presbytery.
- In Jul. 2002 Mr. Baker told the group of three men that they needed to work this out with the Christ Church session. Mr. Baker did receive the formal charges by the Charlies in April, 2003.
- Mr. Burrow asked Mr. Schlect for clarification on Mr. Schlect's statement that the moderator throw this out 'because it's nuts'. Did he mean the process, or the content? Mr. Schlect responded by saying both.
- Mr. Ewert asked if Mr. Baker would read a section from the document again (the section on having 5 men provide a sounding board for Mr. Baker). Mr. Ewert asked if Brett would consider changing some of the language of this section.

Motion that the Presbytery commend Moderator Brett Baker for his handling of the Christ Church affair and accusations and that the Presbytery engage in a season of prayer for Brett's blessing and for prayer for Christ Church that God would confound her enemies now and in the future. (Shade/Hatcher)

Motion to amend the prior motion to add the CRE affirms the actions of the Moderator in rejecting the accusation of the Charlie Nolan and Charlie Craig which we believe to be frivolous and unconstitutional (Strawbridge/Iverson)

- Discussion ensued on this.
- Mr. Butaud wants the word frivolous stricken. He asserts that everyone has likely not read it, and that he thinks there may have been pastoral miscues.
- Mr. Detweiler disagrees with Mr. Butaud, stating that he did investigate at least one issue, and is satisfied that it is frivolous; therefore we can use this word.
- Mr. Booth suggested to Mr. Butaud that at least one statement being frivolous means the word can be used.
- Mr. Wilson questioned Mr. Butaud's statement that there were Pastoral miscues.

Motion to vote on the question (which ends all discussion)  
(Iverson/Alders)

The motion passed unanimously. (Voting on the question)

The motion passed with one nay (Butaud). (Amended motion)

The total, complete, motion reads:

Motion that the Presbytery commend Moderator Brett Baker for his handling of the Christ Church affair and accusations and that the Presbytery engage in a season of prayer for Brett's blessing and for prayer for Christ Church that God would confound her enemies now and in the future, and Presbytery affirms the actions of the Moderator in rejecting the accusation of the Charlie Nolan and Charlie Craig which we believe to be frivolous and unconstitutional  
(Strawbridge/Iverson)

The motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Niell asked when we'll pray

Mr. Shade led Presbytery in prayer.

Mr. Schlect and Mr. Wilson wanted to thank Presbytery for their work on this, with particular and personal thanks to Mr. Baker.

**Motion to change the agenda to pursue 11.C prior to 11.B. (Niell/Iverson)**

**The motion passed unanimously**

**C. Progress Report on drafting the History of the CRE document (Christ Church – Moscow, ID)**

Please see attached document entitled ***“Progress Report on the History of the CRE”***.

Mr. Schlect gave an update on the progress to date. He wanted to note that the history is instructional so as to show that the CRE sees itself tied to the saints in history.

Motion to extend the deadline of providing a written history of the CRE to 2006 (Schlect/Detweiler)

The motion passed unanimously

Mr. Schlect thanked Presbytery for the extension.



Motion for the CRE to designate New Saint Andrews College as the site for her archival depository. This includes minutes, reports, briefs, moderator's correspondence, and the like. The CRE further recommends to its constituent churches that they deposit their records for permanent archiving at New Saint Andrews College, as per the following guidelines in section IIIc1-5. (Schlect/Meredith)

- Mr. Alders asked if this would be the sole repository and if the CRE would retain ownership? Mr. Schlect answered by saying that this is different than the ongoing working records of Presbytery.
- Conversation ensued on what to do with the current documentation.
- Mr. Schlect pointed out that NSA would have ownership of the documents.
- Mr. Iverson cannot see any good reason why the CRE has to retain ownership.
- Mr. Detweiler pointed out that he could see the CRE wanting to publish the documents, so CRE may want to have joint ownership.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if there is historical precedence for seminaries retaining ownership.
- Mr. Wilson raised the point that the CRE was structured to be non-bureaucratic. If that's true, which it is, we shouldn't store it, we can always access it at NSA.
- Mr. Alders asked for further clarification on ownership. He's fine with storing at NSA, but wants more information on ownership.
- Mr. Booth asked about joint ownership.
- Mr. Helsel expressed nervousness with all of it being stored in one location. He also asked about putting it on CD Rom. Mr. Schlect pointed out that CD Rom isn't an acceptable format for long-term archival.
- Mr. Tuuri pointed out that we can always make our own copies.

The motion passed unanimously

***Motion to adjourn (Iverson/Helsel)***

***The motion passed unanimously***

***Mr. Baker called the meeting back to order at 8:00 AM.***

***Mr. Butaud opened the day in prayer.***

***Mr. Hatcher led the Presbyters in the singing of Psalm 2.***

***Mr. Baker pointed out that we failed to administer the oath (Article III.O.3) to the newly seated churches, per our constitution. Mr. Baker invited the men to stand and led them in speaking the oath.***

## **B. Subcommittee Report on Constitutional Review to Accommodate Plurality of Presbyteries. (Christ Church – Moscow, ID)**

Please see attached document entitled ***“Report to Presbytery” as appendix A.***

Mr. Schlect introduced the task of the committee and gave his thanks to Presbytery and the following men who labored with him on the committee: Randy Booth, Dave Hatcher, Garry Vanderveen, Burke Shade and Gene Helsel. He then gave some background on the history of the CRE constitution. Mr. Schlect pointed out that we need to ensure our constitution

Mr. Schlect highlighted the fact that the committee was given a two year mandate, of which they’ve completed one year. He did point out that the committee will continue to serve as editorial board for the history efforts that will continue through 2006.

Motion to change the personal on the committee, removing Gene Helsel, and adding Dennis Tuuri (Schlect/Ewert)

- Mr. Nixon asked why the change. Time and priorities is the reason for the change.

The motion passed unanimously

Onto the document: (Appendix A).

Committee Recommendation 1:

- Mr. Detweiler asked if this will address the two elder minimum vs. the pro-tem model. Mr. Schlect said yes, and more on that later.
- Mr. Butaud asked what the rationale was for the mission church language. Mr. Booth pointed out that a mission church is very different from a fraternal church. This will afford protection for the mission church.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked for clarification of the elders of the mission church. Mr. Booth agreed that pro-tem elders could be at the table but non-voting. Mr. Schlect further clarified the role of pro-tem elders.
- Mr. Iverson wondered if this will eliminate the fraternal status type of churches. Mr. Schlect said no, this recommendation does not change any verbiage with fraternal churches.
- Mr. Tuuri asked follow up questions regarding mission vs. fraternal churches.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked if you have church with one elder who’s been in existence for years, will they be required to be a mission church until they have two elders.

- Mr. Nixon asked if the church going from two elders to one elder would have to go an accountability status. Mr. Shade said yes, Article II.B.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if we should clarify the verbiage to emphasize the two elders.
- Mr. Detweiler suggested wording that says have at least two elders who are members of that church.
- Mr. Iverson asked for clarification on procedures.

Motion to change the verbiage of the recommendation from the committee, to read “have at least two elders who are members of that church.” (Tuuri/Detweiler)

The motion passed unanimously

The motion passed unanimously

- Mr. Wilson asked for a procedural clarification for the sake of time: Reserve comments to substantial changes, as opposed to being an editorial board.

Committee Recommendation 2:

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 3:

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 4:

- Mr. Schlect pointed out there are two parts to this, with a section of theological and a section of constitutional.
- Mr. Hatcher asked if we are creating a memorial. Mr. Schlect said yes, we are creating a memorial.
- Mr. Butaud cautioned the committee to consider whether it’s appropriate adopt the standard of covenant renewal as the CRE standard.
- Mr. Niell asked why we’re doing a memorial now, if we have to rework it for next year. Mr. Wilson said we don’t know that we will have to rework it.

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 5:

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 6:

- Mr. Butaud asked if we're removing the requirement for 60 days notification. Mr. Schlect said that this will be a procedural item, which still has teeth.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if there will still be a requirement for unanimous approval for agenda changes.
- Mr. Iverson asked if our procedures stated we need two-thirds approval for agenda changes. Mr. Baker said he thinks it's unanimous.
- Mr. Schlect pointed out that section XIII.E. address this, everyone was satisfied.
- Mr. Alders stated that this isn't in agreement with Roberts Rules, and that's OK.

The motion passed unanimously

#### Committee Recommendation 7:

- Mr. Hatcher introduced the change. This question was whether we'd have representation, at the Council, by Presbyteries, or churches. The motion reflects representation by Presbyteries.
- Mr. Wilson asked if there is any language that requires the moderator of a particular Presbytery be present at Council. Mr. Schlect accepted the recommendation.
- Mr. Tuuri asked for clarification on the representation allocation. Mr. Schlect clarified that there is equal representation, and recognizes that the committee needs to do more work on this. He referred the assembly to the position paper "Presbyteries on Councils".
- Mr. Baker asked if the chart will be in the constitution. Mr. Schlect stated no, it's an explanation tool for this presbytery. Mr. Wilson suggested that the chart be added to the book of procedures.
- Mr. Alders stated that he'd prefer this motion be postponed until the committee has fully fleshed out the Council and Presbytery future.
- Mr. Baker asked if there is an advantage to dealing with this now. Mr. Hatcher said yes, as it gives the committee clear direction. Mr. Tuuri added that there are different means of doing this, and wondered if we shouldn't look at other organizations. Mr. Schlect stated that the committee has done that, and it isn't what we want. Mr. Strawbridge stated that the PCA model causes good deliberation to be cut short. Mr. Schlect stated that the OPC has a lack of ecumenicity
- Mr. Butaud asked Mr. Wilson for clarification on his view of Presbytery representation at Council. Mr. Wilson stated that the equal representation model can cause a thousand person Council.
- Conversation about what is in the motion. Mr. Schlect clarified and the assembly agreed with his summary.

- Mr. Wilson/C asked who makes the decision for the number of representatives at Council. Mr. Schlect stated that the council does.

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 8:

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 9:

- Mr. Schlect stated this is not constitutional, but for the book of procedures.
- Mr. Baker asked if this address's how to conduct a trial. Mr. Schlect said that yes, this will help define whether a trial is needed.
- Mr. Baker & Mr. Schlect discussed the numbering of this section.
- Mr. Shade asked about the procedure for appeal not having a trial to appeal. Mr. Shade said that this presupposes there was trial. In the case of the Charlies, there wasn't. Mr. Wilson said ah ha.
- Mr. Tuuri & Mr. Wilson clarified the difference between an appeal and a complaint. The issue with the Charlies never had a court case, so this new section would've afforded the moderator to not hear the case.
- Mr. Tuuri asked if we'd still hear a complaint (the first time the complaint is made). Mr. Detweiler clarified. Mr. Wilson stated that we don't want, as a default matter of course, Presbytery to be the first audience to hear a complaint. Mr. Booth emphasized that the first place for a complaint is the local session.

Motion to amend the language section paragraph 7, "... at least three different CRE churches, excluding conflicts of interest ..."

The motion passed unanimously

- Mr. Tuuri assumes that unless stated otherwise, majority vote wins. Mr. Schlect agreed.
- Mr. Tuuri also stated that he likes the 4 weeks notice.
- Mr. Wilson stated that his language address two situations 1) the session disciplines a person, that person can appeal to Presbytery. 2) The session refuses to hear complaints from one or more members.
- Mr. Baker stated that in the case of session against the individual, there isn't an automatic appeal process. If a person doesn't like the discipline that the session is bringing, they may not appeal to Presbytery, they must bring charges against the session.

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 10:

- Mr. Booth introduced recommendation number 10 by reading the first paragraph.
- Mr. Booth introduced recommendation number 11 as a tie in with recommendation 10.
- Mr. Wilson asked the committee to consider for the work next year, that there is a conflict with a PCA church coming into the CRE as there will be two heads of the church. However (as an example), an SBC church could come into the CRE, as SBC churches are independent members of the convention.

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 11:

The motion passed unanimously

Committee Recommendation 12:

- Mr. Schlect stated the committee is open to format changes of the documents.

Motion to amend the language of General Council to read Church Council (Booth/Iverson)

The motion passed unanimously

The motion passed unanimously

***Motion to take a short break (Booth/Nixon)***

*The motion passed unanimously.*

***Mr. Baker called the meeting back to order at 9:56 AM.***

Committee Recommendation 13:

- Mr. Schlect pointed out that the remaining recommendations are to adopt the position papers. The point here is to approve the papers main conclusions. This is not an editorial board. Acceptance of these papers will send the committee back to do more work with guidance from Presbytery. Another purpose for these papers is to prompt Presbytery floor discussion. The committee needs to know what sort of body the CRE wants to be, and floor discussion of these papers will assist the committee in knowing this.
- Mr. Nixon asked if the Presbytery agrees to receive a position paper how the main conclusions of the paper will be known – the main conclusion is a subjective interpretation, so how do we

ensure we're all on the same page. Who defines the main conclusions? Mr. Schlect stated that definition of main conclusions comes from an exegesis of the document. Mr. Schlect will highlight the main conclusions as he presents each paper. Mr. Iverson stated that the committee will determine the main conclusions, but they do want input from Presbytery floor. Mr. Baker stated that the point here, is whether Presbytery receives the document, and the committee will take the floor discussion for future work on their part.

- A presbyter stated that he likes the term receives the paper, as opposed to adopting it.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked if the committee is asking Presbytery to adopt this paper.
- Mr. Wilson/C thinks it is significant to have these adopted as they will be in the minutes of Presbytery.
- Mr. Alders asked how many position papers there are.
- Mr. Schlect wants to ensure the assembly is clear on what adopting these papers means.

Motions to amend the language of recommendation 13, to read receive this position paper, instead of adopting this position paper.

By receiving this as a position paper, presbytery declares its approval of the papers main conclusions. Such reception will be understood by the Constitutional Review Committee as a directive from presbytery to do further work. Accordingly, we will return to presbytery in 2004 with recommendations inline with this paper's main conclusions. (Iverson/Hurt)

The motion passed unanimously

- Mr. Schlect now went on to discuss recommendation 13. He hopes that the outcome of recommendation 13 will enable Presbytery to act on recommendation 14.
- Some highlights of the position paper:
  - The notion we are criticizing here is that presbytery has "existence" or "life" only during the meeting, and that no presbyterial "life" exists outside the meeting.
  - The issue under discussion here is personalism vs. impersonalism.
    - Mr. Strawbridge raised some question regarding the nature of Presbyterial bodies. Mr. Schlect stated that he thinks Presbytery (Big P) documentation, contradicts presbyterial life. We're stratling Presbyterianism (Big P) and Dutch Reformed tradition.
    - Mr. Baker pointed out that the founding members of the CRE wanted to ensure that the CRE didn't have life outside of Presbytery (with the noted exception of

ongoing Moderator duties). Baker refers to Acts 15, while Mr. Schlect refers to Acts 20 to make their respective points. Mr. Baker continued to express concern about ongoing Presbyterian functions, and it consuming a lot of time.

- Mr. Wilson stated that we have a difficulty with what to call this. He also stated that the oath taken earlier is a misquote of Acts 20:28 (overseers vs, presbyters). He doesn't think this is a reversal of our founding principles, rather an application. There are connotations to Moderator, while the function of the Moderator is encapsulated in this word. Bishop has equal connotations which may be more accurate, and he's open to other biblical terms for the role (Shepherd or pastor – no one would know what pastor of the CRE means, and they'd have to ask). If we go with Moderator or Bishop we will be pushed by the assumptions that those two terms mean. Mr. Wilson doesn't like the term arch-bishop, it gives him the willies. He asks the committee to consider the other terms.
- Mr. Nixon doesn't agree with Mr. Schlect's premises. He doesn't agree that view of moderator being an impersonal office. Mr. Schlect states that a moderator seems like its cog in the wheel, and not a personal presence.
- Mr. Nixon said that in his tenure (2001) in the CRE he's seen Mr. Baker be very personal as the moderator, so rejects Mr. Schlect's premise.
- Mr. Iverson pointed out that we do need someone with Mr. Baker skills at running a meeting and doing the administrative tasks. He further stated that his session is opposed to the term bishop, but the amendments to the recommendation have prompted him to vote aye.
- Mr. Baker doesn't think that a lot of people know what the word moderator means.
- Mr. Booth raised the point that Mr. Baker acted with great personal presence, but we lacked apparatus, which tied his personal hands.
- Mr. Schlect gave a short example of how the position paper is poetic, not to be interrupted rigidly.
- Mr. Rench stated that he thinks of the CRE as churches and apparatus.
- Mr. Booth asked Mr. Schlect if he thinks the constitution and book of procedures are law or poetic.
- Mr. Shade asserts that the Moderator needs to be able to act with authority as a person representing the



Presbytery. Our constitution gives the moderator the personal freedom, in Articles III.J – K.

- Mr. Vanderveen stated that the committee wanted to give the moderator more flesh. The question is what kind of office is the moderator? Do we want an office that can Pastor – personal or impersonal?
- Mr. Hatcher reminded everyone that Presbytery charged Mr. Baker to go pastor Sechelt. It's not odd to have a Pastor who moderates the meeting, while it may be odd that we have a moderator who is charged to go Pastor.
- Mr. Nixon asked if the current language prevents the moderator from pastoring. Mr. Wilson answered by saying that the current language (moderator) is impeding his ability to pastor. As the term moderator connotes a non-pastoral meaning.
- Mr. Baker said it's wasn't the language of moderator that he felt tied his hands, he felt it was the language regarding judicial issues.
- Mr. Burrow commends the committee to continue, this is tough work, so be encouraged and keep slugging away.
- Mr. Schlect went back to a poetic example, and he emphasized that meaning is bigger than we think. We're invited to think and discern big when it comes to the meaning of terms.
- Mr. Schlect noted that the paper isn't disparaging offices, it's disparaging them when juxtaposed with personal.
- Mr. Schlect talked about the universe of discourse. We live in a world where a person can hate the President/Congress/Supreme Court, and still claim to be a good American. We think we can separate real persons from the non-personal entity of the CRE. When a person criticizes the moderator, Mr. Baker, we're all slapped. There are people who seek to avoid personal responsibility and hide behind the apparatus.
- Mr. Wilson stated that the apparatus was made for the man, not the man for the apparatus. We are all catechized well, and we need to be careful to not fall into the trap of our own sin while we are ensuring we steer clear of the sin that we see so clearly (the other guys). We want an organization of men that use the apparatus.
- Mr. Wilson also pointed out that moderator is not biblical term. He thinks we should call the moderator the same thing that James was at the council of Jerusalem.

- Mr. Wilson/C stated that he's appreciated the paper and has enjoyed learning from the discussion. He's opposed to receiving it, as it will be a matter of public record for the CRE & that may have the effect of offending other denominations that are referenced in the paper. He thinks these examples given were just used to make the point, not to disparage these other denominations. Mr. Wilson asked if we can receive it, for the committee sake, but not post it. Mr. Iverson thinks we can approve the motion, and not publish the document.
- Mr. Niell stated his opposition to the term bishop, but his agreement with using biblical terminology. He recommended that we use the term "overseer." This term rightly defines the office, avoids the negative connotations, and correctly reflects the Greek word 'episcopos.'
- Mr. Tuuri stated that there isn't clarity on the main conclusions of the paper.

Motion to table the standing motion indefinitely (Detweiler/Meredith)

The motion passed with 12 yeas, and 11 nays, and 1 abstain.

- Mr. Strawbridge asked what it takes to bring the motion back. A simple motion.
- Mr. Schlect asked if recommendation 14 was table as well. It is as it is tied to the recommendation 13 (as a motion).

Committee Recommendation 15:

- Mr. Schlect reminded the assembly of the changes in verbiage approved earlier (received vs. approved).
- Mr. Schlect gave a short discussion on higher vs. lower, and broader vs. local.
- Mr. Wilson speaks in favor of receiving this paper, with a noted concern in section III regarding "Disciplinary actions by presbytery or council may address persons and sessions, but not presbyteries. Mr. Schlect responded that the concern is noted, but this verbiage is to protect against casting out a presbytery, but not a list of churches that may all be a part of the same presbytery. Mr. Wilson pointed out that there may be a need for an admonishing to a presbytery, being mindful of not hammering faithful churches within that presbytery.
- Mr. Hatcher pointed out that the Apostles Creed would call this presbytery a church. Mr. Wilson agrees.
- Mr. Schlect stated that within the CRE, we have local then we have broad. Mr. Wilson added that we also have 'pieces of broad'.

- Mr. Nixon asked for a point of clarification on what mechanism exists to discipline individual churches with a presbytery. Mr. Schlect stated that there is no default action; rather presbytery would have to look into it on a case-by-case basis. Presbyteries are bound to abide by the council direction.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked if the council can reprove a presbytery. Mr. Schlect answered by saying that presbytery cannot reprove a session, without casting them out. Mr. Schlect has taken the information and will consider it, with the committee.
- Mr. Brown asked for an example of persons. Mr. Schlect gave one.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked what happens with a renegade church. Does the presbytery have the ability to discipline a church (sort of the same question as his above – or at least Mr. Schlect’s answer applies). Does Mr. Strawbridge have the authority to admonish a church (Matt. 18). Mr. Wilson said implicitly, but not explicitly. If presbytery can throw a church out, it follows – perhaps – that presbytery can perform discipline up to that point.
- Mr. Tuuri asked for clarification on a presbytery not submitting to the admonishment of council.

By receiving this as a position paper, presbytery declares its approval of the paper’s main conclusions. Such reception will be understood by the Constitutional Review Committee as a directive from presbytery to do further work. Accordingly, we will return to presbytery in 2004 with recommendations in line with this paper’s main conclusions.  
(Iverson/Hurt)

The motion passed unanimously

Motion to strike recommendation 14 from recommendation 13.  
(Booth/Nixon)

The motion passed unanimously

Motion to table recommendation 13 indefinitely (Booth/Detweiler)

The motion passed with one nay.

Motion to accept recommendation 14 striking the word bishop.  
(Wilson/Schlect)

- Mr. Nixon asked a question about VIII.A. He stated that if the actions of the moderator are not submitted to presbytery. Mr. Schlect pointed out that until the moderators actions are approved by presbytery they are not actually approved (even though the approval takes place after the fact). Also, if the moderator fails to report action, his actions will be nullified.

The motion passed unanimously

***Motion to adjourn for lunch – returning at 1:00 PM (Booth/Detweiler)***  
*The motion passed unanimously.*

***Mr. Baker called the meeting back to order at 1:05 PM.***

***Mr. Hatcher led the Presbyters in the singing of Psalm 5.***

Committee Recommendation 16

By receiving this as a position paper, presbytery declares its approval of the papers main conclusions. Such reception will be understood by the Constitutional Review Committee as a directive from presbytery to do further work. Accordingly, we will return to presbytery in 2004 with recommendations inline with this paper's main conclusions.  
(Iverson/Hurt)

The motion passed unanimously

**Motion to amend the agenda to address XII.A before XI.D (Detweiler/Butaud)**

**The motion passed unanimously**

***This is agenda item XII.A, and it is placed before XI.D per the prior motion.***

**A. Proposal to Modify Version of Apostles Creed – (Christ Church - Moscow, ID)**

**1. Proposal:** To modify Article XII.A, the 5<sup>th</sup> sentence of the Apostles Creed by adding the word Almighty at the end of “and sits at the right hand of God the Father;” so that it would read: “and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;”.<sup>3</sup>

- Mr. Wilson gave a brief overview of this changes stating that somewhere, the word Almighty had been omitted from the version of the Creed used by the CRE.

The motion passed unanimously

***This is agenda item XI.D, and it is placed after XII.A per the prior motion.***

**D. Subcommittee Report on Review of Ordination Procedures (Grace Covenant Church – Nacogdoches, TX)**

Please see attached documents entitled “***Guidelines and Instructions for the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals Presbytery Ordination Exams and Related Subjects*** “ and “***Study Guide for Ordination Exam***”

- Mr. Booth introduced the proposal.
- Mr. Wilson asked if we can receive this document as is, knowing that the committee will have to get the constitutional and book of procedures issues flushed out.
- Mr. Booth stated that he'd be willing to table it.
- Mr. Iverson thinks it'd be better to receive the document than table it.
- Mr. Baker & Mr. Alders discussed how we might receive this document.
- Mr. Booth asked if there is a way to adopt this provisionally.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked if the ordination procedures committee does the cleanup of this section, or does the constitutional committee.
- Mr. Wilson stated that this document shouldn't go into the book of procedures, as that will create a conflict between the constitution and the book of procedures.
- Mr. Booth asked if this document is acceptable, or do we need constitutional changes. Mr. Baker stated that the document needs to be harmonized with the constitution.
- Mr. Tuuri said he's has some concerns with the document but thinks we should receive it.

Motion to receive the Review of Ordination procedures document, and request a specific recommendation to follow regarding implementation of the paper at the next presbytery. (Strawbridge/Wilson)

- Mr. Detweiler asked if the document is binding.

The motion passed unanimously

## **XII. New Business**

### **B. Proposal to Add Policy on Receiving Appeals from Non-CRE Members (Christ Church - Moscow, ID)**

#### **1. Proposal:** Add the following paragraph to article III.Q

"If a complaint against a member session is brought by someone who is not a member of a CRE church, the CRE, in presbytery, Church Council, or through its appropriate moderator, can agree to hear the case if all of the following conditions have been met. (1) The moderator has a letter from the accused session in question declining to hear the case, or a letter advising him that the case was heard and rejected. (2) The moderator has a letter from the government of the church where the complainant is a member saying that the church affirms the truth of the Apostles' Creed, and agrees to hold the complainant accountable if the decision goes against him. If the complainant is an independent church, the moderator must have a letter of commitment from that church expressing their willingness to give due weight, respect and consideration to the decision of the CRE, and agreeing not to pursue the matter beyond the CRE decision. (3) The charges as framed have two or three available and accountable witnesses listed for each specified complaint.

(4) The complainant has not overtly discredited himself in his manner of bringing the charges."

Motion to accept the above verbiage (Wilson/Iverson)

- Mr. Wilson gave a brief overview of the reasoning behind this language.
- Mr. Baker asked if this language comports with the prior language provided by the constitutional committee.
- Mr. Shade asked if the reference to article III.Q is the right article. Mr. Baker stated that article III.Q is the correct article.
- Mr. Iverson commented that leaving it broad is good as it gives our moderator flexibility.
- Mr. Tuuri asked some questions about if the teeth in this will really hold for folks outside of the CRE. He'd like to see us have language that will apply to folks/churches outside the CRE.
- Mr. Wilson thinks is a good first step acknowledging it will likely have to be changed as we get into.

The motion passed unanimously

### **C. Proposal to Add a New Memorial on Homosexuality – Emmanuel Covenant Church (Phoenix, AZ)**

#### **Courage, Clarity, and Charity A Phoenix Declaration January 2003**

As Christian ministers standing in the stream of historic Christianity and rooted in the Evangelical heritage, we believe it is time to speak with courage, clarity, and charity to the issue of homosexuality that is besetting the Church at large. Confessing the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God (Isaiah 40:8; Luke 4:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), we believe that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently to the issue of human sexuality. In accordance with this belief, we must state that homosexuality in its varied forms, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, is out of accord with God's design for human sexuality and is sinful, therefore, in the eyes of God (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; 19:1-28; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; 2 Peter 2:6-8). The only remedy for this, and all other sin, is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). As ministers of this glorious gospel of God's grace, who are striving after faithfulness to God and His Word, we state the following as a call to the Church to return to faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.

#### **Courage**

In our time, many who are recognized as clergy are calling for and promoting a revision of the historic Christian understanding of God's Word concerning homosexuality. This teaching is out of accord with the Bible and leads the

flock of Christ astray. Such teaching arrogantly overturns God's holy standard dealing with human sexuality. Love for Christ and His Church compels us to speak truthfully about that which is false. Courage is needed to refute those who would call evil good and good evil. The example and teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles show clearly that false teachers are to be exposed and refuted so that the Church is protected (Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1-3). In an age that tolerates everything but the truth, courage is needed to speak the truth in love in an uncompromising manner.

### **Clarity**

The Bible provides a clear and consistent teaching in opposition to homosexuality. Modern attempts to subvert this clear teaching are without substance. The Word of God must not be held prisoner to alien philosophical or cultural agendas. If allowed to speak with its own authority, the Biblical teaching is seen to be utterly opposed to homosexuality and its attendant practices. Furthermore, the historic testimony of Christian interpretation is in perfect harmony with this position. Contrary to popularized agendas, the Bible and those who have officially taught Christianity throughout the ages have recognized the sinfulness of homosexuality. The interpretations of such teachers as Athenagorus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine are unanimous. The modern attempt to revise the Biblical teaching, claiming Biblical and interpretive support, is a theological and moral novelty.

### **Charity**

Love for neighbor compels us to remind those who are caught in the depths of sin that God in His holiness will not be mocked--He will bring judgment against sin. It is not an act of oppression or hate to point out the Divine condemnation of homosexuality. Rather, it is an act of kindness. We are opposed to the ill treatment that many people in favor of homosexuality have experienced; yet we deny that our disagreement and presentation of the Bible's teaching with regard to this subject constitutes ill treatment, hatred, or bigotry. In speaking the truth about the nature of homosexuality and God's opposition to it, we simultaneously hold forth the message of God's grace. God can and does forgive those who forsake the sin of homosexuality. God can and does bring freedom from bondage and cleansing of conscience to those who turn to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 3:21-26; 6:1-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 10:19-22). It is false compassion to accept and affirm those who are unrepentant in homosexuality. Charity demands that we speak the truth about God's holiness and His gospel.

Motion to receive the above document as a memorial to the CRE (Niell/Nixon)

- Mr. Tuuri asked if the name should still have "Phoenix" in it.
- Mr. Booth asked if we should clarify the reason for the document.
- Mr. Baker asked Mr. Niell if there is reason why the people mentioned in the document are not reformers. Mr. Niell are mentioned because they are in the heart of the debate.

The motion passed unanimously

Mr. Wilson exhorted the assembly to share this document with others in the church as an encouragement.

#### **D. Proposal for CRE Policy on Mission Church Status – Grace Covenant (Nacogdoches, TX)**

##### **PURPOSE:**

To provide guidelines for the establishment of a relationship between a sponsoring church (i.e., mother church) and a mission work (i.e., daughter church), and to set for the conditions for the particularization of that mission church.

##### **DEFINITIONS:**

Mission church: A constituted body of Christians under the oversight of a particularized church whose intent is to establish a new particularized church.

Particularized church: A constituted body of Christians who have met all the criteria established by this policy to become a separate church governed by its own session.

##### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Mission Church: A church shall be considered a mission church of a member CRE church when the following conditions have been met:
  - a. A constitution has been written to define and govern the mission work.
    - i. The mother church approves the constitution and doctrinal standards of the mission church (which may or may not be identical to mother churches).
    - ii. The mother church appoints a session *pro tempore* over the mission church.
    - iii. These actions put the mission church into existence.
  - b. Under this new constitution and session *pro tempore*:
    - i. New members can be received.
    - ii. The mission's constitution may be modified by its own amendment process.
    - iii. New officers may be examined, ordained and installed.
2. The Session:
  - a. The session *pro tempore* of the mission church shall be comprised of all or some designated part of the session of the mother church along with any duly elected and installed pastors/elders of the mission church until the rest of the conditions for particularization have been fulfilled.
  - b. This session *pro tempore* shall not be the session of the mother church, but only the session of the mission church.



- c. Upon the particularization of a church, the pastors/elders from the mother church who had been assigned to serve *pro tempore* on the mission church's session shall no longer be members of the new session. However, should the new church deem it useful, these former session members may continue to serve in an *ex officio* capacity for a season.
  - d. Acts of session *pro tempore* must be appealed first to the regular session of the mother church, whose acts may in turn be appealed to the CRE, as per constitutional procedure.
3. Conditions for Particularization:
- a. The mission church shall have its own constitution and bylaws.
  - b. The mission church shall be in existence for not less than two years.
  - c. The mission church shall have at least two member pastors/elders, not including pastors/elders of the mother church who have been assigned to serve *pro tempore* on the mission church's session.
  - d. The mother church may require other conditions.
  - e. The session of the mother church has formally acknowledged that conditions for particularization (a-d above) have been met.
  - f. Presbytery acknowledges that conditions a-e above have been met, and does so by receiving the mission church into presbytery membership.
4. Relationship to the CRE.
- a. All mission churches of CRE member churches shall automatically have mission status in the CRE.
  - b. This mission status may be maintained until the mission is particularized.
  - c. Once conditions are met for particularization, the mission church shall be eligible for full CRE membership at the next CRE presbytery meeting.
  - d. As extensions of a member CRE church, all mission churches shall meet the constitutional and doctrinal requirements of the CRE.
  - e. As extensions of a member CRE church, all mission churches shall have the protection of the CRE courts and other CRE constitutional protections and requirements.
5. Ordination of Teaching and Ruling Elders.
- a. As the daughter church is under the oversight of the mother church (a CRE member), all ordination exams shall be conducted under the oversight of the mother church and according to CRE guidelines.
  - b. The actual ordination and installation of officers shall be conducted under the oversight of the mission church session *pro tempore*.
6. Termination of Relationship:
- a. Termination of the relationship between mother and daughter church can happen in two ways:

- iv. The daughter church becomes particularized, defined by being received into CRE membership;
- v. A unanimous vote of mother church's session to terminate the relationship.

7. Visits:

- a. It is recommended that representatives of the mother church visit the mission church on a regular basis (perhaps quarterly), sometimes to conduct meetings or worship, and sometimes to observe.
- b. It is also recommended that the mission church cover the expenses of the mother church e.g., travel and honorarium.

Motion to incorporate this document (section 1, through section 7.v) into the CRE book of procedures. (Niell/Nixon)

- Mr. Booth gave some background on why this language should be added
- Mr. Baker wanted to ensure this comports with previously approved motions. Mr. Schlect stated that it did.
- Mr. Tuuri asked about the two churches that are plants of RCC (with one elder, and elders pro-tem from the RCC session), and how that will work itself out with the above language.
- Mr. Nixon isn't sure that they have to be declared to be not a church; they're just not a mission church of the CRE.
- Mr. Tuuri wondered if this document takes into account churches that already exist, but they're small and under an existing CRE church. Mr. Booth stated that this document does cover them.
- Mr. Shade asks what determines a church existence. Mr. Booth stated that when a church constitutes is when it begins its existence. Mr. Shade asked if this is a fixed rule, or is it flexible, and Mr. Booth stated that presbytery has the flexibility.
- Mr. Seraiah asked if the language allows for irregularities. Mr. Booth stated there is room.
- Mr. Baker used the Boise church under EEF as an example of how it may work, and asked for clarification of when Boise constituted. When they formed under EEF's constitution, or when they did their own? Mr. Strawbridge thinks that section I.A.i answers Mr. Baker's questions.

Motion to amend the prior motion so that section 3.b mission church shall have been formally constituted for not less than two years.

(Shade/Strawbridge)

- Mr. Detweiler doesn't like the amended motion, as it doesn't clarify anything more. He thinks we're quibbling. Mr. Booth stated that it's just trying to clarify when a church comes into existence.
- Mr. Butaud says that section 1.b implies it must be new. Mr. Booth clarified that the word new is new for the CRE not the church.

The motion passed with 3 nays.

Motion to amend the prior motion so that section 1.b mission omits the word new. (Butaud/Hurt)

The motion passed with 3 nays.

- Mr. Niell pointed out section 3.b. is mislabeled.

Motion to letter every sub point beginning with letter A under (Niell/Shade)

The motion passed unanimously

The motion passed unanimously

## **E. Proposal for Conducting an Election for Moderator/Moderator Pro Tem Eastside Evangelical Fellowship/Moderator**

### **1. Modification of Constitution:**

Strike the sentence “All nominations for the position of moderator must be pre-posted on the agenda” from paragraph III.D in the Presbytery section and IV.D in the Church Council section.

### **2. Addition to the Book of Procedures:**

#### **Conducting an Election for Moderator/Moderator Pro Tem of Presbytery or Church Council**

1. The Moderator will invite nominations from any delegate to presbytery. Nominations may be received ahead of time for publication on the agenda, but opportunity to nominate will continue on the floor of presbytery at the appointed time on the agenda.
2. In order for a nominee to be recognized as a candidate, his nomination must be seconded on the floor of presbytery, and the nominee must vocalize his consent to be a candidate. The nomination and second may not come from two elders serving in the same church.
3. In due time, moderator will close the nominations and identify the candidates.
4. Moderator will invite open discussion about the candidates. Delegates may use this time to ask questions of the candidates or elicit statements from them. Delegates may also speak for or against any candidate.
5. Roll call vote will be taken or at the Moderator’s discretion, a written ballot will be tallied. The candidate with the most votes will be the

next moderator. The current Moderator tallies the votes and then shall declare the winner.

In the event that only one candidate is nominated, the candidate must receive at least a three-fourths majority of the assembled delegate votes. If the candidate fails to achieve this majority, the nomination process begins again.

In the event of a tie, the current Moderator will cast a vote only to break the tie.

Motion to receive this into the constitution and book of procedures with changes as written above. (Butaud/Nixon)

- Mr. Detweiler asked why accepting a nomination from the floor of presbytery isn't allowed in the first place. Mr. Schlect answered that this is actually an important issue, as it enables the conversation with prospective moderators.
- Mr. Schlect likes the procedures, as written, when no moderator is elected.
- Mr. Wilson pointed out that the current language protects against the fast decision being foisted upon a potential moderator candidate.
- Lot's of discussion on what if there are no nominees.

Motion to amend the motion to strike the constitutional language changes (section I), leaving the book of procedures changes (section II) (Booth/Schlect)

The motion passed unanimously

Motion to amend the motion to add the language "If there are no nominees on the agenda..." before the beginning of section II.1 (Schlect/Shade)

- Mr. Detweiler said it's still confusing. Mr. Schlect agrees and discussion ensues on how to amend it.
- Mr. Butaud questions the issue of  $\frac{3}{4}$  majorities and its impact with a moderator-candidate failing to get elected.

The motion to amend was withdrawn.

- Mr. Schlect thinks that entirety of number is problematic.

Motion to amend the motion to change the title of section 2 to read "Conducting an Election for Moderator/Moderator Pro Tem of Presbytery or Church Council in the absence of nominees". Also striking the second sentence of section 2.1: "Nominations may be received...". Also deleting the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraphs of section 5. (Schlect/Hurt)

- Mr. Schlect says that the constitutional committee will take a look at this for next years presbytery.

The Motion passed unanimously

Motion to amend the word winner the results of the election in section 5.. (Vanderveen/Shade)

The Motion passed unanimously

- Mr. Shade asked for clarification on the final wording

The Motion passed unanimously

Motion to amend article III.D of the constitution: All nominations for the position of moderator must be pre-posted on the agenda. If there are no nominations the moderator shall receive nominations from the floor of presbytery. In the event that only one candidate is nominated the candidate must receive at least a three-fourths majority of the assemble delegate votes. (Booth/Helsel)

The Motion passed unanimously

***Break until 3:20.***

Motion to amend the constitution, article III.D. to read the following: All nominations for the position of moderator must be pre-posted on the agenda. If there are no nominations the moderator shall receive nominations from the floor of presbytery. In the event that only one candidate is nominated the candidate must receive at least a three-fourths majority of the assembled delegate votes. In all other cases, the nominee must receive more than 50% of the voting delegates to become moderator-elect. If none of the nominees meet this requirement, the nominee receiving the fewest votes will be eliminated and a revote taken. In the event that it becomes necessary to break a tie for a minority or a majority, the moderator will break the tie. In the case of a minority tie, the moderator decides who is eliminated. (Butaud/Detweiler).

- Mr. Baker clarified what the mechanics would look like.
- Mr. Tuuri questions why we want to define the process of how we get to the 50% + 1. It seems like we could let that happen naturally. Mr. Schlect like this process as it avoids a party system. Mr. Detweiler clarified to Mr. Tuuri satisfaction.

The Motion passed unanimously

## **F. Election of a New Moderator for the 2003 to 2006 term**

### **Nominations: Candidate Name/Candidate Church – (Nominating Member Church Name)**

1. Douglas Wilson/Christ Church, Moscow, ID – (Cornerstone Reformed Church)
  - Mr. Schlect gave a word on this agenda item. He pointed out that this body may cease to exist in its current form as the CRE may move into a plurality of presbyteries. This election could result in this moderator-elect may be the moderator for the Church Council. It's unclear how the formation of the pluralities of presbyteries will affect this newly elected moderator.
  - Mr. Hurt asked if we need to have the decision regarding plurality of presbyteries answered today.
  - Mr. Shade stated that we have to meet as a group in 2004, as we agreed to in last year's presbytery meeting.
  - Mr. Alders asked if the newly elected moderator will, in fact, be the Church Council moderator. Mr. Schlect responded by saying no.
  - Mr. Wilson pointed out that the Church Council moderator cannot be moderator for one of the presbyteries.

Motion: The moderator elected at this presbytery will become the moderator of the church council should we create the council within his three year term. (Schlect/Shade)

The Motion passed unanimously

Motion: To have moratorium on a plurality of presbyteries until 2005; tasking the constitutional sub-committee to explore and present a written plan to presbytery for the 2004 presbytery meeting for discussion at the 2004 presbytery meeting. (Wilson/Hurt)

The Motion passed unanimously

- Mr. Baker opened the floor for discussion on Mr. Wilson as a candidate.
- Mr. Schlect began by giving strong support for Mr. Wilson. Among other areas Mr. Schlect pointed to his qualifications for giving this assessment is that he's played in the same infield as Mr. Wilson. Mr. Schlect thanked Mr. Tuuri and Mr. Butaud for their courage in questioning the wisdom of this direction on the CRE list server. Mr. Schlect asked several question that he believes speak to Mr. Wilson's candidacy:
  - Why was there not a church-split at Christ Church when Mr. Wilson became post-millennial?
  - Why was there not a church-split at Christ Church when Mr. Wilson became paedo-baptistic?
  - Why are the only families to leave Christ Church during the Charlies issue, the Charlies themselves?

- Mr. Wilson then addressed the assembly. He stated that his concern isn't with a person who may vote no for good reason; his concern is that folks would vote no because of the non-biblical charges that have been levied against him. He has a right to justice. What is the burden of proof for the guilt, or partial guilt, of a person?

He stated that he's happy to be the moderator, and he's happy to not be the moderator.

- Mr. Hurt asked Mr. Wilson about a prior reference to his statement than he planned on withdrawing his name. Mr. Wilson is fine either way.
- Mr. Nixon asked Mr. Wilson why he thinks being the moderator would provide protection for himself. Mr. Wilson believes that the changes we made yesterday (regarding giving the moderator more teeth) address his most of his concerns.
- Mr. Niell complimented Mr. Schlect for his statements about Mr. Wilson, and stated that he is a wonderful child (parishioner) to his pastor. He then went on to say we need more pastors like this. Also, he felt that any reason to vote no for Mr. Wilson would not be driven by his qualifications as pastor.
- Mr. Baker asked if Mr. Wilson being the moderator could put himself in a position of needing to recuse himself as moderator if allegations were brought against him.
- Mr. Hatcher asked what else Mr. Wilson will do – if elected, in addition to ensuring there is a fire-wall around the CRE so there is protection for the churches.
- Mr. Wilson highlighted some data points from the Christ Church handout (the one with the blue cover).

Mr. Sauder left the meeting.

Motion to table the moderator election discussion for 10 minutes (Schlect/Iverson)

Motion passes with one nay.

The following motions reference a document that is attached to the minutes as **appendix "B"**.

Motion to accept items A – C of the blue packet provided by Christ Church (page 12) (Schlect/Iverson):

A. The paper titled, "Handling Accusations and Evidence," by Chris Schlect, will be read into the minutes. (See paper, attached.)

B. Presbytery directs the Constitutional Review Committee to return next year with a revision of this paper for final approval and placement into our Book of Procedures.

C. Until a final version of this paper is adopted into our Book of Procedures, the CRE hereby directs its moderator(s) as follows: Being informed by the principles set forth in the paper, "Handling Accusations and Evidence," the CRE moderator(s) will insist upon biblical standards in the following areas: (a) loyalty and partiality must be shown toward the accused; (b) witnesses must be biblically qualified; (c) charges must be clearly and properly formulated, with two or three qualified witnesses needed for each specification; (d) accusers may be neither anonymous nor hypocritical; (e) any accusation or circulated report that does not meet the standards of (a) through (d) must be dismissed with prejudice; which means that they may not even be given the tacit approval resulting from circulating the charges further or from investigating of the charges.

- Mr. Hurt asked how this will help with the moderator election discussion. Mr. Wilson answered by saying that if this approved he will withdraw his name and he has someone to nominate.
- Mr. Baker stated his concern that the presbytery only saw this yesterday.
- Mr. Tuuri likes the motion a great deal, but has great concern with the word partiality and its impact other faithful bodies & people.
- Mr. Strawbridge asked about Chris' interpretation of I Tim 5:21 with regards to impartiality. Mr. Schlect responded that it is because of the office of elder.

Motion: Amend the motion. Section C to now read biblically appropriate loyalty & partiality. (Hatcher/Detweiler)

- Mr. Butaud has questions regarding the word partiality.
- Mr. Burrows continues to have questions regarding the word partiality.

Motion passed with 4 nays.

Motion passed with 5 nays.

Moderator election motion is un-tabled as the 10 minute tabling has expired.

Mr. Wilson withdraws his name from the moderator election.

Mr. Wilson nominates Mr. Booth for moderator.

Mr. Booth agrees to accept the nomination with great fear and trembling.

Motion: To close the nominations and vote on Mr. Booth. (Iverson/Detweiler)

- Mr. Niell raised the concern that smaller churches may not have the financial means to pay for the burden of nomination.
- Mr. Detweiler stated that Mr. Booth should feel free to ask for funds from other CRE churches.

The motion passed unanimously.



The nomination passed unanimously. Mr. Booth was declared to be the moderator-elect.

**G. Election of a New Moderator Pro Tem for the 2003 to 2006 term  
Nominations: Candidate Name/Candidate Church – (Nominating Member Church Name)**

1. Chris Schlect/Christ Church, Moscow, ID – (Providence Church)

Mr. Baker opened the floor for discussion on Mr. Schlect as a candidate.

Motion: To close the nominations and vote on Mr. Schlect.  
(Iverson/Detweiler)

The motion passed unanimously.

The nomination passed unanimously. Mr. Schlect was declared to be the moderator pro-tem elect.

**H. Date and Location of 2004 Presbytery Meeting**

Motion: Hosted by All Saints Presbyterian in Lancaster, PA. on the 20, 21, and 22. (Schlect/Niell)

- Mr. Schlect recommended we extend presbytery to three days.

The Motion passed unanimously

**XIII. Psalm Singing: Dave Hatcher – EEF, (Kirkland, WA)**

Mr. Hatcher led the assembly in singing Psalms (100 and the Doxology)

**XIV. Closing Prayer – Brett Baker – EEF, (Kirkland, WA)**

Mr. Baker closed the meeting with prayer.

## APPENDIX "A"

### Report to 7<sup>th</sup> Presbytery of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals

#### PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Dear Brethren,

Our committee was appointed at the 2002 meeting of the CRE Presbytery, which approved the following:

Prior to dividing into more than one presbytery, appoint a committee to conduct a thorough review of the CRE Constitution. The committee is charged to (i) educate themselves in issues of polity that have arisen in church history and how they have been handled... (ii) prepare reports and, if it deems appropriate, proposed constitutional changes to both the 2003 and 2004 meetings of presbytery... (iii) communicate with the various sessions of CRE churches to gather input and reactions to drafts of their findings, and (iv) serve as an editorial board for the writing of the history of the CRE as per no. 2 above.

As a committee we have convened via electronic mail to deliberate over a number of matters. Many points in our discussion were informed not only by the readings recommended by the 2002 Presbytery (and other readings besides), but by our various experiences. Throughout our interactions our committee has enjoyed a strong consensus of thought.

We have also benefited from input we received from those outside our committee. When we published a draft of our findings to the CRE constituency, we received valuable input. It also became evident that we did not publish our draft in a timely manner; i.e., our time constraints placed an undue burden on some CRE constituents, and may not have allowed them sufficient time to digest the draft and prepare the sort of feedback they might have liked to offer. Please forgive us for hurrying you so.

We hereby present our findings to you, delegates to the 2003 meeting of the CRE Presbytery. We look forward to continuing our committee work through next year. In keeping with our appointed timeframe, we anticipate the completion of our work by the 2004 meeting of Presbytery.

Respectfully submitted,

Members of the Constitutional Review Committee:

Teaching Elder Christopher Schlect, Chairman (Christ Church of Moscow, ID)  
Pastor Randy Booth (Grace Covenant Church of Nacogdoches, TX)  
Pastor Dave Hatcher (Eastside Evangelical Fellowship of Bellevue, WA)  
Pastor Gene Helsel (Trinity Church of Wenatchee, WA)  
Pastor Burke Shade (Cornerstone Reformed Church of Carbondale, IL)  
Pastor Garry Vanderveen (Langley Reformed Evangelical Church of Langley, BC)

## **PART TWO: FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Each of the enumerated recommendations in this report should be considered a separate motion by the committee for presbytery action. Approval of one recommendation does not imply approval of any others.

If, upon reviewing our findings, any delegate believes that the specific language of any one of our recommendations could be improved, we invite that delegate to prepare an improved version prior to presbytery and circulate it ahead of time. On the floor of Presbytery, you may formally present your alternative versions when the time comes for discussion on our report.

### **A. Recommended Constitutional Changes**

#### **Committee Recommendation 1**

Modify II.K of the CRE Constitution by deleting what is indicated by ~~strikethroughs~~, and by adding the new underlined language.

Before a congregation ~~may~~ can be accepted into the CRE it must have its own constitution, been in existence for at least two years, have at least two elders, and have enough support from members to meet all regular expenses. Congregations seeking membership with the CRE which do not meet these criteria must come under the care of an existing CRE church and will be characterized as mission churches, ~~and once accepted~~, Mission churches may have non-voting delegations at presbytery and church council meetings. When such a ~~congregation~~ mission church comes to meet the criteria for a particularized church, they may be accepted into voting membership of the CRE by a two-thirds vote of presbytery.

Comment: Experience has shown that there have been varying understandings among us, and among outsiders, of our basic criteria for membership. Our proposal clarifies this. Our proposal is also consistent with another recommendation that has been brought before this presbytery.

#### **Committee Recommendation 2**

Modify III.Z of the CRE Constitution by adding the new underlined language.

The Presbytery shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of Presbytery. Presbytery is informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should Presbytery act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of Presbytery. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the moderator.

Comment: This introduces some accountability in connection with the Book of Procedures, while at the same time retaining its desired flexibility. If we do not follow our approved procedure, we at least ought to have a good reason for doing so.

### **Committee Recommendation 3**

Modify II.B. of the CRE Constitution by adding the new underlined language.

Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CRE church.

Comment (attributed to Mr. Vanderveen): We don't want to ignore those Dutchies!

### **Committee Recommendation 4**

First, replace section II.J of our Constitution, which currently reads,

The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture. This requires a practical understanding of *all* that Scripture teaches, including an understanding of lesser and greater matters (Matt. 23:24), Christian forbearance with weaker brothers (Rom. 14:1), liberty in worship which is not self-willed (Col. 2:20-23), and an avoidance of an overscrupulous zeal (1 Sam. 21:6; 2 Kings 5:18-19; Luke 4:16). We hold that in our corporate worship we are to be governed by the Word of God in its entirety. In this context alone, and with these constraints, we hold to what has been historically called the "regulative principle" (Deut. 4:2; Leviticus 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6:6-7). Specifically, we hold that worship is to be centered on the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17, 4:2), the faithful administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28: 19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26), with both Word and sacraments protected and promoted by conscientious, biblical church discipline (1 Cor. 11:17, 20).

...with this new language:

The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture.

Second, relegate the remainder of II.J. to the "memorials" section of our constitution, effective from now until the 2004 meeting of presbytery. In the meantime, presbytery charges this committee to develop improved and expanded wording of this memorial for permanent adoption in 2004. Meaning of "regulative principle" needs clarification, and committee will consider removing the buzzword "regulative principle" itself because of how it is variously understood. The refined memorial will also generally approve of the approach to worship that has come to be popularly referred to as "covenant renewal".

Comment: While our creeds and confessions ought to cover our regulation of worship, it is timely today that our Confederation underscores this matter explicitly. The right place for this is in our “memorials” section.

### **Committee Recommendation 5**

From III.O in the constitution, remove paragraph 1 and subheads a and b from paragraph 3. Insert them into the Book of Procedures as a new section. As for the remaining paragraphs 2 and 3 from III.O, insert them into current III.N as follows: paragraph 2 following the first sentence in III.N, and paragraph 3 as the final sentence of III.N. The current leading paragraph of III.O would remain as it is.

New III.N would read as follows (new insertions are underlined):

After sending at least one fraternal delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery, churches may be admitted to membership in a presbytery through a two-thirds vote of the presbytery at its next stated meeting. The presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CRE authority, and desire to uphold other CRE churches with all peace and love. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CRE, this entire document through Article XI must be adopted into that church’s constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CRE is finalized at that point, and not before. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CRE. Likewise, current members should pledge to uphold the new church in prayer and love.

Comment: We adopted our Book of Procedures in order to accommodate just this sort of stuff. For reference, the current language of III.O is reprinted below:

The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can still make motions but cannot vote.

1. Delegates about to become new members shall normally provide to the presbytery a one-page summary of their church (membership, elders, confessional standards, other useful descriptions, etc.)
2. The presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CRE authority, and desire to uphold other CRE churches with all peace and love.
3. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CRE. Likewise, current members should pledge to uphold the new church in prayer and love.
  - a. Upon being admitted into membership in the CRE, the Moderator will ask the following questions of the delegation from the new member church.

- i. “Do you, with all the officers of your church, commit yourselves in the sight of God and before Christ Jesus to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed the good confession before many witnesses?”
  - ii. “Do you, with all the officers of your church, sincerely receive and adopt the Doctrinal Standards of this Confederation, subscribing to those standards with honesty and in full submission to the Word of God, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”
  - iii. “Do you, with all the officers of your church, take heed unto yourself, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you presbyter, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood?”
  - iv. “Do you, with all the officers of your church, commit yourselves in faithfulness to the churches in this Confederation: to keep with them the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to pray for them, to comfort them, to encourage them, to admonish them, and to rule with them in accordance with the Constitution of this Confederation and in full submission to the Word of God?”
- b. When affirmative answers have been given, the moderator will then read the following statement, and then ask the delegates of all member churches to signify their agreement with a corporate “amen”.

### **Committee Recommendation 6**

Remove the first two sentences from VIII.E and insert them into the Book of Procedures as a new item. Modify the remaining sentence as follows: “Motions to amend Presbytery or Council agendas at the meeting require a unanimous vote.”

Comment: Again, we are trying to remove procedural items from our constitution. For reference, the current language of VIII.E is reprinted below.

The agenda of any stated presbytery meeting must be posted on the public electronic page maintained by the moderator of the meeting in question no less than thirty days and no more than sixty days before the meeting. The agenda of any stated council meeting must be posted on the public electronic page maintained by the moderator of the meeting in question no less than thirty days and no more than six months before the meeting. Motions to amend the agenda at the meeting require a unanimous vote.

## **B. On Representation at Council and Frequency of Council Meetings**

*Prepared by Dave Hatcher for the Constitutional Review Committee, and Approved*

### **Part 1. Representation at Council**

Section IV.B of our current constitution states,

Each congregation in a presbytery will send two elders as voting representatives to the meeting of church council—one a teacher or minister, and the other a ruling elder. In the absence of a teacher or minister, a second ruling elder may serve.

Our concern is that, as the denomination grows, we will too quickly have a council with far too many delegates for meaningful debate and deliberation to occur. Therefore, we propose that council delegates be sent from the presbyteries rather than from each church. When we have 25 churches—not far from now—we would be a council of fifty delegates! (This concern would be addressed by passing Recommendation 7, below, where we suggest a modification to Section IV.B.)

But we still desire our council to be as completely ecumenical as possible. Therefore, we would like to see the council and the presbyteries meet at the same time and at the same place for as long as this would work. There could be a format of recess taken during the church council where the separate presbyteries could then meet and have any final official deliberation within the presbytery. The following day (for instance) the council would reconvene and the representatives would be able to finish their deliberations on behalf of their presbyteries.

Thus, our proposal would also require all churches to send representatives to their presbytery meeting which would place them geographically “there” when council met. We would want to encourage all church representatives to be in the gallery of council not only to witness the proceedings, but to join in worship, prayer, and hearing exhortations from scripture as an entire denomination. (This point would be implemented by passing Recommendation 8 below, where we suggest a modification to Section IV.C.)

### **Committee Recommendation 7**

We propose a new Section IV.B. to replace the current version:

The various presbyteries will each send an equal number of delegates to council, not including the moderator of council among the number sent from his presbytery. Each council shall determine the number of delegates that will represent the presbyteries to the subsequent council; the number will be so determined as to create a council of between ten and eighteen delegates in all, not including the moderator of council. If there are more than nine presbyteries, each presbytery will be represented at council with two delegates.

The chart below displays how this recommendation, if adopted, would work out in practice.

Number of presbyteries in the Confederation	Number of council delegates per presbytery	Total number of delegates at council
2	5 to 9	10 to 18
3	4 to 6	12 to 18
4	3 or 4	12 to 16
5	2 or 3	10 to 15
6	2 or 3	12 to 18
7	2	14
8	2	16
9	2	18
10	2	20
11	2	22
12	2	24
and so on...		

Note: The Committee acknowledges that there are more issues connected to representation; see paragraph 4 on page 16 of this report.

## Part 2. Frequency of Council Meetings

Section IV.C of our current constitution states,

The council will have an [sic] stated meeting every five years. If three quarters of the presbyteries submit a written request to the moderator of the council, an *ad hoc* council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the council cannot be made at council.

In the course of our committee’s discussion, we have concluded that five years is too long a time between meetings. Our proposed revision of section IV.C also addresses a concern raised in Part 1 above.

### **Committee Recommendation 8**

Revise Section IV.C as below. New language is underscored; deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~.

The council will have ~~an a~~ a stated meeting every ~~five~~ three years. In the year that the council meets, presbyteries must have their annual meeting at the same place and time. If three quarters of the presbyteries submit a written request to the moderator of the council, an *ad hoc* council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the council cannot be made at council. The requirement that presbyteries convene at the same place and time as council does not apply to *ad hoc* meetings of council.



## **C. New Addition to the Book of Procedures**

### **Committee Recommendation 9**

Add the following as a new section to our Book of Procedures.

#### Procedure for Appeal

1. Amidst any appeals procedure within the CRE, reconciliation between parties will remain a central objective. Such reconciliation may render it unnecessary to press this procedure through to completion.
2. The moderator of the appropriate judicatory will determine whether a party is qualified to bring an appeal.
3. Appellant will notify both the respondent and the moderator of the appropriate judicatory of his intent to appeal within four weeks of the decision he is appealing.
4. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the moderator per his instructions, and the appellant must supply to the respondent a copy of all materials relevant to his appeal.
5. Once an appeal is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn without the approval of the moderator.
6. The moderator may seek the counsel of other presbyters to assist in his decision to hear or dismiss the case.
7. If the moderator chooses to allow the case to move forward, he shall appoint a court of at least three presbyters (representing at least three different CRE churches; no more than two from any one church) to hear the appeal and to render a decision. The court's decision will be regarded as the decision of presbytery, unless it is nullified by the full presbytery.
8. The court shall report their findings to the full presbytery. By vote, the presbytery will either sustain or, if there is cause, nullify the court's decision.

Comment: This proposal addresses how appeals are prepared and how to determine whether an appeal should be given a hearing. (Recall that last year we adopted a procedure for how to conduct a hearing.) The need for this new procedure was realized in connection with the Nolan-Craig charges that were brought against Christ Church this past year. No procedural guidelines were in place. Mr. Baker was left to shoot from the hip, and we are grateful for the wisdom he displayed. At the same time, everyone involved felt the awkwardness of devising a procedure for conflict resolution while the heat of conflict was upon us. Had a procedure like this been in place, some of this awkwardness would have been avoided.

## **D. Relations with Other Churches, Presbyteries and Denominations**

*Prepared by Randy Booth on behalf of the Constitutional Review Committee, and Approved*

We recognize that our churches might be involved with a variety of Christian associations and fellowship groups. Community or church alliances often exist for the

purpose of fellowship or the accomplishment of a common cause or service. These types of associations are not intended to serve any judicatory function and are therefore not in any conflict with the C.R.E. constitution. On the other hand, membership in another church denomination does involve constitutional obligations and would therefore preclude joint membership in the C.R.E. This does not, however, prevent that church, presbytery or denomination from entering into formal, fraternal, but non-binding, relations with the C.R.E.

### **Committee Recommendation 10**

Replace the last paragraph of our Constitution's Preamble, which is printed below. (Underscored portions will be affected if our recommendation is approved.)

Our desire is simply to acknowledge, preserve and manifest unity, preserve purity, and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. Association with this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful churches. Churches with existing denominational attachments may even be included in our confederation, depending on any constitutional restrictions maintained by that denomination.

...with the following language:

Our desire is to acknowledge, preserve and manifest unity, preserve purity, and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations.

### **Committee Recommendation 11**

We also recommend that the term "fraternal delegate" be changed in our constitution to "candidate church" as prescribed below. We do not want to suggest to others that we only have fraternal relations with churches that are considering membership in the C.R.E.

There are four places that "fraternal delegation" appears in the constitution.

1. III.N: Change "fraternal delegation" to "candidate delegation".
2. III.U: In both instances, change "fraternal delegation" to "candidate delegation."
3. III.V. I think this occurrence should be left, as it gets to what we are now thinking of when we think "fraternal".
4. III.W: First occurrence: change "fraternal status" to "candidate status";  
Second occurrence: change "fraternal delegation" to "candidate delegation."

## **Committee Recommendation 12**

Add the following new section to our Book of Procedures.

### *Formal, Non-binding Fraternal Relations*

The C.R.E. welcomes and encourages formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations. By “fraternal relations,” we mean to declare our mutual respect and acceptance of one another as members of the body of Christ. We expect to be able to speak to, encourage, and admonish one another. Moreover, such fraternal relations would allow us to share pulpits, transfer members and commune with one another.

The following procedures should be followed to establish formal, fraternal relations between the C.R.E. and other churches, presbyteries or denominations:

- Any church, presbytery or denomination that desires formal, fraternal relations with the C.R.E. may make such a request by submitting a letter to the Moderator of the C.R.E. Presbytery or General Council.
  - The Moderator of the Presbytery or General Council will present the request prior to the next presbytery or council meeting to her member churches.
  - The member churches will vote to enter or not enter into formal, fraternal relations with the requesting church, presbytery or denomination. A two-thirds vote of Presbytery or Council shall be required.
  - Upon the vote, the Moderator shall send a letter to the requesting church, presbytery or denomination, which shall state our formal acceptance or rejection of their request for formal fraternal relations.
  - All such actions shall be recorded in the minutes.
- C.R.E. Presbyteries or General Council may likewise submit request for formal, fraternal relations to other churches, presbyteries or denominations.
  - At the request of the Presbytery or General Council (two-thirds vote required), the Moderator of the Presbytery or General Council will send a letter to the church, presbytery or denomination, requesting formal, fraternal relations and ask for a written affirmative or negative reply.
  - Upon receipt of the written reply, the Moderator shall inform the C.R.E. member churches of the response.
  - All such actions shall be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Presbytery or Council.

## **E. Position Paper: *On the Moderator***

### **Committee Recommendation 13**

By adopting this as a position paper, Presbytery declares its approval of the paper’s main conclusions. Such adoption will be received by the Constitutional Review

Committee as a directive from Presbytery to do further work. Accordingly, we will return to Presbytery in 2004 with recommendations in line with this paper's conclusions.

Note: If presbytery adopts this paper, presbytery should state explicitly whether or not such adoption entails specific approval of Recommendation 14, which has been placed within the text of this paper.

### ***On the Moderator***

Position Paper by Chris Schlect

Approved and submitted to Presbytery by the Constitutional Review Committee

## **I. Introduction: A Few Concerns**

Our culture's idea of a "moderator" is saddled with baggage that we need to abandon. We in the CRE tend to think of "moderator" as an impersonal cog, turning in its place in an impersonal corporate machine. We view the moderator not as person, but as office. He is not a shepherd, he is an entity that holds a position with a formal title. This view is Gnostic to the core, as the present paper will show. It is a real problem and needs a real solution.

The problem emerges out of our idea of presbytery itself. Ontologically speaking, we tend to think of presbytery as having "existence" only for the duration of a duly constituted and called meeting. Upon adjournment, presbytery disappears into the ether. It reappears again, incarnating out of the ether when the next stated meeting is called to order. How do we pass the time between incarnations? American Presbyterians often do it with standing committees and clerks who continue the work of presbytery in an ongoing way. Of course, in theory these committees are not the "real" presbytery; all they can do is come up with proposals to present at the next incarnation of presbytery. But this theory does not comport with how God made the world, and we all know it. What standing committees and clerks actually do is the real, living-and-breathing labor of wrangling and deliberating and deciding and doing. *But not officially.* At the next magical incarnation, the committee reports to presbytery and the presbytery receives the report by means of motions and seconds and ayes. What could go wrong? Suppose several committee members step out of line and do evil. We all know what they'll do: they'll say, "*We didn't actually do anything, we're just a committee. It wasn't us. Don't blame us, blame presbytery.*" Here the platonic presbytery, by means of its mechanism and formalism, shelters evil men from face-to-face accountability. Conversely, mechanism and formalism can stand in the way of good people, true shepherds in the biblical sense, who must slog through red tape and "due process" in their labors to bring about real action. The history of American Presbyterianism is rife with illustrations. So it is wherever actions are carried out by esoteric offices rather than by flesh-and-blood shepherds. (Thankfully, the history of American Presbyterianism is also filled with glorious examples of shepherding.)

The notion we are criticizing here is that presbytery has "existence" or "life" only during the meeting, and that no presbyterial "life" exists outside the meeting. We tend to view presbyteries as abstract entities, apparatuses, made up of officers. But we should be viewing presbyteries as organic bodies made up of real persons. Our continental-Reformed brethren say that their broader assemblies disappear between meetings. Yet the many good, sound men in that tradition maintain their ongoing

interchurch life by other means, usually informal. We seek such a means as well, but prefer to formalize it.

This discussion bears importantly on our idea of what a moderator is. A prevailing thought is that the moderator's function is limited in scope to the presbytery meeting itself. In theory, all he does is preside over the meeting. True, he does things between meetings, but even this is tied to the meeting itself: he prepares the agenda ahead of time, then he deals with the minutes afterwards. This notion dehumanizes the person of the moderator, and is far more Gnostic than scriptural. I call it "Gnostic" because of the warped Christology lurking back of it. The body of Jesus Christ is not an ethereal, abstract, disconnected-from-time-and-history sort of thing. The body of Christ is not an "ecclesiastical body politic." The true body of Christ, the one the Bible speaks of, is made up of...well...bodies! These bodies, the saints, are fleshy things who eat and drink and do charity and greet one another with kisses and laugh and cry and sing with one another and who get in one another's faces when needed. And so it is with Jesus, born of woman, born under law, at with tax collectors, broke bread, served wine, washed feet. And we are His body. Where moderators preside over an inanimate object or a Platonic form, shepherds pastor a living body.

## II. Approaching a Solution

We need personal authority and personal accountability. What we do not need is apparatus. In one important sense (and certainly not in every sense—qualifications are forthcoming), the moderator ought to function like a bishop. Bear with me here. When we think of a bishop, we think of a living person who can talk and act with authority. So it should be with our moderator. Therefore, our constitution should authorize and charge our moderators to speak for the presbytery (or for the CRE if he is moderator of council). He should make decisions on behalf of the presbytery as he sees fit (within certain bounds, of course). He should function as a person, a shepherd, and not as an impersonal office-holder. In this respect (but not in a host of other respects), he functions like an Episcopalian bishop. In fact, to our shame and embarrassment, even a Roman Catholic Pope functions more biblically *in this one respect* than our warped notion of a moderator. A bishop or pope has real, personal authority and speaks with a person's voice.

Here come the qualifications. Of course, we think of other things when we think of a bishop or pope, things which we all despise. Episcopal bishops and Roman popes function unscripturally in the top-down force of their authority; they are not accountable to the church in a biblical way. We want nothing to do with that. *The issue under discussion here is personalism vs. impersonalism.* For all our valid complaints against episcopacy and papacy, we should concede that they outdo us in this area. Biblical leadership, authority, and accountability is personal. Where we Presbyterians are tempted to rule by apparatus, the Bible teaches us to shepherd.

The CRE moderator, and the various presbytery moderators, should be the personal embodiment of the CRE or of their respective presbyteries. Of course, in this role they are subject to the presbytery as a whole: their authority is derived from presbytery and can be removed by presbytery. Thus, a wayward moderator could be rebuked or even deposed in a presbytery meeting. And if a moderator really blows it and needs to be dealt with immediately, we have provision for calling an *ad hoc* meeting in order nullify his decision and, perhaps, to remove him and appoint another in his place.

What I am advocating here would, I believe, preserve an organic, day-to-day life of the CRE. The CRE would have an ongoing incarnation, embodied in a person, rather than an abstract existence between meetings of presbytery. It is the lack of this kind of personal shepherding which forces many presbyterians to commit their ongoing presbyterial work to impersonal standing committees, and to bureaucrats we call “stated clerks”. Ironically, Presbyterians become *de facto* Episcopalians when bureaucrats rule the church from the denominational home office.

The moderator we have in mind does not outrank any particular CRE elder. The moderator is chosen by the presbytery delegates, and any one delegate could take him to task before the whole presbytery; both the delegate and the moderator stand on equal footing, and the vote of presbytery decides between them. An action of our moderator is the act of presbytery, and our moderator must have the freedom to act for the good of the presbytery. Moreover, any and all of his actions are subject to review and nullification by presbytery (cf. Numbers 30). (In the same way, any act of presbytery could be nullified by a subsequent presbytery, of course within constitutional limits.)

### III. Particulars

A. One thing the term “bishop” has going for it is that we find it in the Bible. “Moderator” is not a biblical term, and it carries some unbiblical baggage. If we substituted the term “bishop” for “moderator,” the personal nature of the office would be underscored. Because we know that Scripture interchanges the terms “bishop” and “presbyter,” we would see to it that the unbiblical hierarchy that is often associated with the term “bishop” would be avoided. We believe that having a bishop of presbytery will actually help us to guard against the sort of episcopal hierarchy that creeps into other Presbyterian communions. In typical American Presbyterianism, standing committees and stated clerks run the show from the top down in Episcopalian fashion. As we see it, it is a personal, in-the-flesh, acting bishop, a man who is personally accountable to presbytery, who presents a biblical remedy to the Episcopalian tendencies latent in most forms of Presbyterianism.

We would adopt this language only if we also made clear that the bishop is one chosen from among bishops. If we reserve this title for the moderator-bishop only, we would also be employing an unbiblical usage of the term.

#### B. Specifics in the CRE Constitution:

##### Currently, VIII.A reads:

Neither council nor presbyteries will be considered as having acted unless a measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes.

Comment: One of the laudable purposes of this provision is to prevent presbytery from acting in a clandestine fashion. Every act of presbytery needs to be duly noted, and anything done under the table is not an act of presbytery. But there are two problems with the current language. First, it could be construed as saying that an action doesn't really become an action until the minutes are approved. Second, and more to

the present point, it precludes presbytery from acting through its moderator; a presbytery action can take place only by vote in a presbytery meeting. A simple rewording can retain the “above the table” principle while at the same time removing the concerns. Thus—

#### **Committee Recommendation 14**

##### Proposal for new VIII.A

Council or presbytery acts properly when either (a) in a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or (b) the act is declared in writing by the moderator [bishop] and then included in the moderator’s [bishop’s] written report to the next duly constituted meeting of presbytery or council. At the meeting, the relevant portion of the moderator’s [bishop’s] report must be received by presbytery or council through the process described above.

In another place we read,

##### Current III.K

As representative of that presbytery, the moderator has the authority to meet with the moderators of any other presbyteries to encourage them or to be encouraged, as well as to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of the churches within the other presbyteries. This should in no way be interpreted as a judicial or prelatical authority.

Comment: Here the moderator is invested with authority to “inquire.” The direction we are moving calls for more than this. Moreover, our current constitution expressly bars the moderator from wielding “judicial” authority. We are of a mind to change this; he *should* be granted judicial authority, but only with limitations and clearly-formulated accountability to presbytery. We haven’t yet devised new language. We are now seeking presbytery approval to move this direction as we prepare specific recommendations for next year.

We also read this language in the CRE Constitution:

##### III.D. (quoted in part)

The moderator will chair the following meetings, and will be the presbytery’s moderator, representative and spokesman for the next three years (Rev. 2:1; Acts 19:10, 20:28). The moderator will be the spokesman for the presbytery upon his election.

##### III.I.

The moderator has the authority to call an ad hoc meeting of the presbytery, with the issues related to the stated reasons for calling the meeting being the only agenda items.

##### III.J.

As representative of that presbytery, the moderator may encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his presbytery.

Comment: We believe that the direction we are heading is consistent with this language in our Constitution. Should we modify our constitution to refine the moderator [bishop] position, we may alter these sections, for reasons of style and clarity only, to make them fit with the refinements.

## **F. Position Paper: *Between Presbyteries and Council***

### **Committee Recommendation 15**

By adopting this as a position paper, Presbytery declares its approval of the paper's main ideas. Such adoption will be received by the Constitutional Review Committee as a directive to return to Presbytery in 2004 with recommendations in line with this paper's main ideas.

### ***Between Presbyteries and Council***

Position Paper by Chris Schlect

Approved and submitted to Presbytery by the Constitutional Review Committee

When Paul addressed the saints in Corinth, he addressed his audience as the Corinthian *church* in one place, and the Corinthian *churches* in another (1 Cor. 1:2 & 14:34). So when an offended person fails to win his brother after two attempts, and he is enjoined to "tell it to the church" (Matthew 18:17), what did Christ mean by *the church*? Certainly in its judicial and shepherding capacities, *the church* involves something broader than a local congregation by itself. For example, Paul charges the presbyters in Ephesus to shepherd not their own home congregations solely, but "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." These elders, who came not from one but from several congregations, were instructed to watch out for one another (Acts 20:28ff.). Moreover, when Peter exhorts the elders of the dispersion—who surely represented various congregations—he did so as "a fellow elder" (1 Peter 1:1 & 5:1). We also see in Acts 15 that the "apostles *and elders*" in Jerusalem render a decision about a matter that had arisen in Antioch, and the decision was authoritative well beyond these two cities. These examples show that elders have ruling interests beyond their own home congregation. (In making this observation, we do not lose sight of the fact that an elder's chief calling to his own congregation (1 Peter 5:2-5 & Heb. 13:17).)

It follows that we must recognize the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals as both *churches* and *church*. (We could speak similarly of the CRE in relation to non-CRE bodies.) This recognition informs how we should structure the relationships between our local sessions, our presbyteries, and our council.

In their extracongregational connections, how are elders to regard one another? The eldership is not tiered, not separated into higher and lower castes. While many of our churches distinguish between different kinds of elders (e.g., ruling vs. teaching elders), the scriptures warrant no hierarchical distinction among them in their ruling capacity. An elder is an elder; there are no lower and higher ranks within the eldership. This truth bears upon how sessions, presbyteries, and council relate to one another. The different judicatories, like the elders who comprise them, do not differ in rank. When a delegate to presbytery is appointed to represent his presbytery at council, we ought not think of him as having been promoted. Moreover, though this elder may be serving in a new



capacity, this new capacity is still that of elder and not of a different office. When a matter is appealed from session to presbytery, or from presbytery to council, we say in the language of Matthew 18 that the matter is still at that stage of being heard by the church. Such a matter is in process within *the church*; it is not being passed from “lower” to “higher” *churches* that are in turn governed by “lower” and “higher” officials. (This is consistent with our decision to reject the practice of pastoral membership in presbyteries rather than in local churches.)

It follows that council business is not fundamentally different from presbytery business, and that the two bodies function in the same way. The only material difference between council and presbytery, therefore, is breadth of representation: in council, all CRE member-churches are represented, whereas the presbyteries have smaller constituencies. It is therefore by reason of its greater ecumenicity, and for this reason only, that a determination of council carries greater weight than a determination of presbytery. From these observations we deduce the following points, which should be reflected in the constitution and procedures of the CRE:

1. Council may hear an appeal without it first being heard in presbytery. Practical and pastoral reasons may call for this. On the other hand, practical considerations (e.g., an overloaded agenda) may prompt council to remand the case to presbytery.
2. Appeals will move in the direction of greater ecumenicity: from session to presbytery and from presbytery to council. The only appeal from council is to a future council, though the future council would not be obligated to receive such an appeal.
3. Presbytery and council will speak with one voice, being as they are part of one organism of extracongregational church government. The presbyteries possess no sovereignty of their own. This has many practical implications. In the first place, presbytery must comply with a conciliar decision. While a presbytery could respectfully protest or remonstrate with council in an attempt to persuade council to revisit its decision, a presbytery could never refuse to comply with council. Were this not the case, we open the door to absurd scenarios. If we did countenance a presbytery refusing a conciliar directive, then council would likewise be forced to deal with that presbytery as a whole. The result could be that council removes *in its entirety* an allegedly wayward presbytery from CRE membership. But what if a faithful minority of churches within this ousted presbytery actually sided with council? Because they are part of this presbytery, these churches would be ousted along with the rest! (This is exactly what the PCUSA General Assembly did back in 1837, and the results were catastrophic. The mess wasn't straightened out until 1869, and hard feelings lingered well beyond that.) Therefore, council would never have cause to bring action against a presbytery as a whole. Nor would it be possible for a presbytery as a whole to secede from the confederation. Disciplinary actions by presbytery or council may address persons and sessions, but not presbyteries.

Nonetheless, we are a confederation. Yet we are a confederation of *churches*, not of *presbyteries*. Unlike a presbytery, a local session *does* retain sovereignty within the CRE. Therefore it is possible for a local church to secede from the confederation, thereby nullifying its CRE membership. (I suppose a collection of disgruntled CRE churches could secede at once, in cahoots with one another. This is how the OPC was created in 1936, and also how the PCA

formed out of the old PCUS in the early 1970s.) Likewise, a local church could be cast out of CRE membership after due process. (More on this in no. 5, below.)

Here is one wrinkle to consider for the future. Suppose in a single city (let's call it "Ephesus"), the elders over the various congregations are governmentally united with one another. They might be rightly referred to as both "*church* of Ephesus" and "*churches* of Ephesus." We might call them "the Presbytery of Ephesus." Because of their local connectedness, they would present a united front in all their interactions with the CRE. Since they are indeed confederated together as one, then the CRE may determine to address them as though they were a single local church. Thus the CRE could remove their lampstand.

4. Because we are a confederation of churches, the various churches of the CRE may organize into presbyteries as they deem appropriate, apparently without conciliar approval. Thus we read the following language in our constitution: "**III.A.** A minimum of two local churches are necessary to establish a presbytery (another term in common use is *classis*). Geographical boundaries for a presbytery will be established by each presbytery. Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this presbyteries are urged to remember the law of Christ (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9)." This means that three presbyteries that each have two churches in their constituencies (= six churches total) would have *three times* the representation at council as one presbytery with six churches in its constituency.

An additional concern about the current section III.A is realized as we consider this troubling scenario. As it stands now, any two CRE churches could sever their presbyterial ties and constitute themselves into one new presbytery for the purpose of advancing some novel distinctive they share. They are free to do this on their own, thereby bypassing presbyterial accountability and giving themselves a louder voice in council, where each of these churches is assured of sending a delegate to council.

We recommend that III.A be reconsidered in light of these concerns. Perhaps council should oversee the formation of new presbyteries.

5. Many of our non-CRE Presbyterian friends have alleged that the CRE structure is inadequate for dealing with renegade pastors or sessions. Indeed, there comes a time when the saints in a local congregation need to be protected from their wayward session. What help can the CRE offer these people?

We believe our constitution allows for a good answer to this question, but the answer should be made much clearer.

Here's how we think such a scenario should be handled. (a) The CRE should cast the church out of the CRE (after giving the session due opportunity to repent before it comes to this point). (b) The presbytery (perhaps through its moderator) should now look upon the faithful-but-oppressed saints within this wayward church with compassion, as sheep without a shepherd. It is our presbyterial duty to either find and recommend another church for these people, or assign the planting of a mission church in that same area, a church which would be a place where the oppressed saints from this wayward church find refuge, be fed, etc. (c) There may be an interim period when these people's memberships are assigned to a sound CRE church.

6. Constitution can be changed only by act of council. Each presbytery may modify the Book of Procedures as it deems fit, and proceed to carry on with business accordingly. At each meeting of council, any and all modifications to the Book of Procedures made in the presbyteries will be reviewed by council. Council will consider each modification as a proposal to be discussed and voted on. At meeting, council is responsible to settle upon a standardized Book of Procedures. (While the presbyteries are welcome to adopt new procedures or improve existing ones, they ought not revert back to procedures that council has already considered and rejected.)

## **G. Position Paper: Reorganization of the CRE Constitution**

### **Committee Recommendation 16**

By adopting this as a position paper, Presbytery declares its approval of the paper's main ideas. Such adoption will be received by the Constitutional Review Committee as a directive to return to Presbytery in 2004 with recommendations in line with this paper's main ideas.

### ***Reorganization of the CRE Constitution***

Position Paper by Garry Vanderveen

Approved and submitted to Presbytery by the Constitutional Review Committee

### **I. Introduction**

Our committee has agreed that the CRE Constitution could use organizational improvement. Such improvements will make the Constitution more understandable, and therefore more accessible and useful.

We propose to combine some of our main headings, rename some of them, and reorder them. Some sections would be rearranged as well. We also introduce new terminology, "Broader Assemblies," which would replace awkward references to both presbytery and council together.

### **II. Constitutional Refinements**

A. The new rubric will be like this.

Preamble

Article I. Authority of Scripture

Article II. The Offices

Article III. Local Congregations

Article IV. The Broader Assemblies

Article V. Assembly Protocol

Article VI. Missions

Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision

Article VIII. Amendments

Article IX. Memorials

Article X. Reformed Evangelical Confession

B. I've changed the name of "Article VI - Ministerial Calling" to "Article II - The Offices." I think it makes more sense to define the offices before considering the local churches and their assemblies. I've taken some paragraphs from the current "Article II - Local Congregations" and placed them here.

I believe that the proposed "Article II – The Offices" needs a little adjustment. The present constitution assumes a two office view, though it distinguishes between teaching elders and ruling elders. As it stands, at least one CRE congregation is explicitly and unashamedly three office: minister, elder, and deacon. We need to accommodate the three office view in the CRE constitution.

C. I've amalgamated Articles III, IV and IX. My proposal is titled "Article IV - "The Broader Assemblies." In this article, I have replaced the words "presbytery and council" with "broader assembly." "Broader assembly" has a long and venerated history in the Dutch Reformed Churches. I also believe that it reads easier than the cumbersome "presbytery and council."

D. In the reworked constitution below, I have incorporated many of the committee's constitutional recommendations

a. Committee Recommendation 1 becomes Section III.H.

b. Committee Recommendation 2 should be changed as follows and become Section IV.T.

~~Presbytery and Council~~ The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the moderator.

c. Committee Recommendation 14 above should be changed as follows and become Article V.A

Broader assemblies act properly when either (a) in a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or (b) the act is declared in writing by the moderator [bishop] and then included in the moderator's [bishop's?] written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the relevant portion of the moderator's [bishop's] report must be received by the broader assembly through the process described above.

At the end of this document, you will find a rewritten version of the constitution that incorporates some of the ideas that we have come up with below. The rewrite serves to display our ideas for reorganization.

### **III. Rewritten Constitution**

This rewrite is provided in order to display what our Constitution would look like if our ideas for reorganization were implemented.

#### **Preamble**

In the providence of God, the church of Jesus Christ goes through periods of spiritual growth as well as times of spiritual and doctrinal decline. In a period of decline, the need of the hour is for churches to return to the standards of Scripture, and to encourage other churches to do the same. We are convinced that we live in such a time and that a great need for such a common testimony exists. To that end we have gathered our churches together.

The name of this confederation of churches is the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE). As a *confederation*, we intend to form a broad connection between churches which, with respect to polity, is representative, being neither hierarchical nor autonomous. By *reformed*, we call to mind the need to restore the church from many contemporary abuses, as well as testify that we stand in the stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy. As *evangelicals*, we desire to confess the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in both love and doctrinal integrity. Our gathering of churches is not intended as a separation from other orthodox believers who confess the name of Christ, but rather as a gathering *within* that broader church, in order to work together effectively for reformation.

With patterns of church order and confessional standards, one of the fundamental requirements of Scripture is that of honesty (Ex. 20:16). Consequently, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we charge you, the generations who will follow us in this confederation, to submit to the Scriptures with sincere and honest hearts, and to the standards of this confederation as consistent with the teaching of Scripture. When a portion of our order and confession is found to be out of conformity to Scripture, we charge you to amend it honestly, openly, and constitutionally, as men who must give an account to the God who searches the hearts of men. We charge you in the name of the Lord to abhor all forms of ignoring our intentions in what we have set down through dissembling, reinterpretation, dishonesty, relativism, pretended explanations, presumed spiritual maturity, assumed scholarly sophistication, or outright lying, so that the living God will not strike you and your children with a curse. We charge you to serve Him in all diligence and honesty, so that the blessings of the covenant may extend to your children for a thousand generations.

Our desire is to acknowledge, preserve and manifest unity, preserve purity, and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations.

#### **Article I. Authority of Scripture**

**A.** The Scriptures are always the ultimate and inerrant court of appeal (Ps. 18:30; 119:89; Matt. 4:4; John 16:12-15; Rom. 3:1-2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet.

1:20-21). Because this is a constitutional document, a certain emphasis must be placed on creeds and confessions in what follows (Acts 15:1-31; 16:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7). However, in no way is it our intention to set such confessions of faith above or alongside the Scriptures. Our expectation is that all our churches will routinely teach and preach the whole counsel of God as expressed in Scripture (Acts 20:27; Matt. 4:4), and in all matters of doctrinal discussion and debate, an appeal to Scripture will always be the first resort. In accordance with our creedal and confessional standards, we acknowledge the preeminence of Scripture.

**B.** Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church order which are clearly required by Scripture, or required by deductions from Scripture which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence, with all things done in good order and biblical decency. We make no claim that every detail of our confederated order is found in Scripture. At all times, we seek to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3,13).

## **Article II. The Offices**

**A.** Christ has instituted two offices in the church: elder and deacon.

**B.** A distinction exists within the eldership which recognizes work done by elders who are especially given to the labor of word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17), such men commonly being called pastors or ministers. Those elders who do not serve in this capacity are commonly called ruling elders, and in some congregations there may be a third category called teachers. Each congregation will determine according to its own standards whether or not these various sub-offices are distinguished by means of separate ordinations. Within the CRE each elder must be a member of the local congregation which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.

**C.** The CRE affirms the need for spiritually-disciplined, well-educated pastors, qualified in their households, grounded in rigorous and wise handling of the Scriptures, and exhibiting a thorough understanding of the biblical world and life view (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).

**D.** Any institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CRE must be under the authority and supervision of a local session of elders in a local CRE church (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

**E.** Any candidate for pastor, minister, or teacher within the CRE will be examined by a local session of elders with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery will also examine him with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery may or may not recommend his ordination to the session of the local congregation. The local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. If a local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may or may not initiate proceedings according to Article IV.P.

**F.** If a minister or teacher has been ordained within the CRE, he may not be required by presbytery or council to undergo another examination. Such an examination may occur if both the calling church and the candidate agree to it. If a man has been ordained outside the CRE, then procedures may be modified by the presbytery to suit the circumstances.

**G.** Each candidate, regardless of his level of formal education, will be examined before ordination (See Article IX.C).

**H.** Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a **consistory**, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CRE church.

**I.** Each congregation will be served as possible by a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:5-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

### **Article III. Local Congregations**

**A.** We hold the local congregation has primacy in the structure of biblical church government (Heb. 13: 7, 17) without denying the important blessings and obligations which come from broader connections and fellowship.

**B.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith the *Apostles Creed*, the *Nicean Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon* (1 Tim. 6:12) in the form found in the *Reformed Evangelical Confession* below. Forms of the following creeds which have been modernized for spelling and usage are acceptable. Forms which have been altered with regard to doctrinal content are not.

**C.** Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:

1. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)
2. American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788)
3. The Three Forms of Unity:
  - Belgic Confession (1561)
  - Heidelberg Catechism (1563)
  - Canons of Dort (1619)
4. The London Baptist Confession (1689)
5. The Savoy Declaration (1658)
6. The Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article XII)

**D.** Inclusion in the CRE presupposes honest subscription by the eldership to whatever confessions are adopted, with any exceptions carefully noted prior to affiliation (Ex. 20: 16; Col. 3:9). If a difference of conviction arises after a church has become affiliated, then the presbytery must be notified before the adoption of confessional or creedal

exceptions by the local congregation which depart from, or may be at odds with, CRE standards.

**E.** All members in good standing in a local CRE congregation must be received by any other CRE church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CRE churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

In the transfer of members from one CRE church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.

**F.** Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

**G.** The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture.

**H.** Before a congregation *can* be accepted into the CRE *it must have its own constitution*, been in existence for at least two years, *have at least two elders*, and have enough support from members to meet all regular expenses. Congregations seeking membership with the CRE which do not meet these criteria *must come under the care of an existing CRE church* and will be characterized as mission churches. Mission churches may have non-voting delegations at presbytery and church council meetings. When such a *mission church* comes to meet the criteria for a particularized church, they may be accepted into voting membership of the CRE by a two-thirds vote of presbytery.

**I.** After sending at least one delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery, churches may be admitted to membership in a presbytery through a two-thirds vote of the presbytery at its next stated meeting. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CRE, this entire document through Article X must be adopted into that church's constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CRE is finalized at that point, and not before.

**J.** In making a motion to seat a candidate church, a sponsoring church needs to be prepared to answer questions concerning the general health of that church and the likelihood of that church being able to embrace the CRE constitution when considered for full membership. The church which makes the motion to seat the candidate church must be the church which moves to receive the church into full membership when that issue comes before presbytery. The church which moves to receive the church into membership must be prepared to answer questions related to the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession, and the moral, spiritual, and covenantal health of the families of the eldership.



**K.** The candidacy of a church will not be allowed to extend beyond the third presbytery meeting from which that church was first seated -- that is, two years after their first seating as a candidate church - unless a two-thirds vote by presbytery to override and extend the status beyond two years occurs.

**L.** When a church joins the CRE, the existing ordination of all its officers is thereby accepted, and does not necessitate a formal examination as with other candidates. Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning current pastoral and elder qualifications may occur in the discussion of that church's potential admission.

#### **Article IV. The Broader Assemblies**

**A.** There are two broader assemblies in the CRE: the Presbytery and the Church Council. A minimum of two local churches are necessary to establish a presbytery (another term in common use is *classis*). Geographical boundaries for a presbytery will be established by each presbytery. Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this presbyteries are urged to remember the law of Christ (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9). A minimum of two presbyteries are necessary to form the council (Acts 16:4).

**B.** Each congregation in a presbytery will send two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery - one a teacher or minister, and the other a ruling elder. In the absence of a teacher or minister, a second ruling elder may serve.

**C.** The presbytery will have a stated annual meeting. The council will have a stated meeting every three years. If three quarters of the churches submit a written request to the moderator, an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting can be called. If three quarters of the presbyteries submit a written request to the moderator, an *ad hoc* council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of presbytery or council cannot be made at presbytery or council.

**D.** Broader assemblies will elect a moderator from among the assembled delegates when that office is vacant. The moderator will be elected at the end of the assembly meeting. The moderator will chair the following meetings, and will be the assembly's moderator, representative and spokesman for the next three years (Rev. 2:1; Acts 19:10, 20:28). The moderator will be the spokesman for the assembly upon his election. All nominations for the position of moderator must be preposted on the agenda. The assembly will also elect a moderator *pro tem*, to serve in cases of the moderator's absence, or to fill out the term of the moderator if the office of the moderator becomes vacant.

**E.** At votes of the broader assemblies, each delegate has one vote. The moderator may not vote, and so in those cases when a church has only one vote because one of their delegates has been elected moderator, the church may put forth a new delegate to take the place of the moderator. If the church cannot put forth a replacement, the remaining delegate has two votes.

[Note: A further stylistic improvement might be to combine the items related to the moderator (§§ F through J below) into a one or two sections.]

**F.** No moderator may serve two consecutive terms as moderator (1 Pet. 5: 1-4).

**G.** Each moderator must be concurrently serving as a pastor, ordained teacher, or ruling elder in a local church. If a moderator ceases to serve in such a local office, then his term as moderator ceases at that time.

**H.** The moderator has the authority to call an ad hoc meeting of an assembly, with the issues related to the stated reasons for calling the meeting being the only agenda items.

**I.** As representative of that assembly, the moderator may encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his broader assembly. The moderator also has the authority to meet with the moderators of other broader assemblies to encourage them or to be encouraged, as well as to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of the churches within the other assemblies. This should in no way be interpreted as a judicial or prelatical authority.

**J.** Before his term is completed, a moderator may resign his position, or may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the assembly.

[Note: Approval of Presbytery's agenda item regarding mission churches may prompt a reworking of §§ K and L below.]

**K.** A visiting delegation of a church, forming church, or interested group may be seated at the discretion of the moderator. Such a seating is not part of the process of joining the CRE. Visiting delegations may not participate in the debates of the assembly.

**L.** The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can still make motions but cannot vote.

**M.** After a fair and open judicial hearing at presbytery, a congregation may be removed from membership in the presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery. Upon such occasions, the removed congregation retains the full right of appeal to council.

**N.** Issues relating to the local congregation which may lawfully be brought before the presbytery are specified in this section. All matters not itemized here must be adjudicated and resolved at the level of the local church.

Before any appeal is made, a matter must be first addressed at the local church level. Appeal may be made **(1)** when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of participating in or tolerating grievous dishonesty in subscription to the doctrinal or constitutional standards of the local church; or, **(2)** when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of gross misbehavior. In any case where at least two witnesses are from the same household, three witnesses

are required to hear the case. The presbytery must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals.

**O.** When an appeal comes to presbytery, a simple majority at presbytery is necessary to decide the issue. The matter may be appealed further to the council by the appellant. The council must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals.

**P.** The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are spiritually authoritative, but practically advisory. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the broader church, they may do so without deprivation of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, they may be removed from membership in the CRE, in accordance with Section [M below?].

**Q.** The assemblies may form no standing committees or boards. Every committee must be ad hoc and automatically dissolve when it completes its assigned task, or submits its assigned report to the assembly. Assigned tasks may not be open-ended, allowing for de facto standing committees.

**R.** A simple majority of an assembly may seat fraternal delegations from other Christian churches. Such delegations are encouraged to come as observers and friends, or as prospective members of the CRE. Members of fraternal delegations may not vote, although they may address the assembly at the invitation of the moderator. They may not participate in debate without unanimous consent of the assembled delegates.

**S.** Assemblies may from time to time address issues not included in the historic creeds and confessions by means of overtures, memorials (see Article IX), or confessional statements.

**T.** The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the moderator.

**U.** No broader assembly may own property. All property within the CRE will be owned by the local congregations. General costs associated with hosting a broader assembly will be borne by the host church of the broader assembly. Specific costs (e.g. food and travel) will be borne by the delegates or sending churches.

**V.** All retirement or pension plans for CRE ministers, teachers, missionaries, etc. will be under the authority, management and oversight of the local churches, and will not be the responsibility of the broader assemblies.

**W.** The moderator of the church council (or the sole presbytery until the formation of the church council) shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CRE's constitution reflecting all amendments and additions thereto. The

moderator will bear the responsibility for making the constitution available by means of electronic publishing.

## **Article V. Meeting Protocols**

**A.** Broader assemblies act properly when either (a) in a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or (b) the act is declared in writing by the moderator [bishop] and then included in the moderator's [bishop's] written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the relevant portion of the moderator's [bishop's] report must be received by the broader assembly through the process described above.

**B.** Full minutes of all the assembly's proceedings will be kept. The public minutes and records of the assembly will be published on a public electronic page maintained by the church of the moderator, with the moderator responsible for its contents. Minutes of confidential proceedings will be distributed in hard copy to all the churches in the presbytery. The costs associated with this process will be borne by the church of the moderator. Minutes must be posted within two weeks of their approval.

**C.** The minutes of the broader assemblies will be approved when the moderator has circulated a draft of the minutes within two weeks of the adjournment of the assembly. All suggested corrections must be made by the churches within a week, and a revised copy of the minutes will be circulated for final approval. The minutes require a two thirds majority to be approved. Lack of response from a church will be considered an affirmative vote. The final approval of presbytery minutes must occur within one month of the adjournment of presbytery. The final approval of council minutes must occur within six months of council.

**D.** The quorum for the broader assemblies will be two-thirds of the voting delegates.

**E.** The agenda of broader assemblies must be posted on the public electronic page maintained by the moderator of the meeting in question no less than thirty days and no more than sixty days before the meeting. Motions to amend the agenda at the meeting require a unanimous vote.

**F.** In order to set time limits for floor debate, a three quarters vote is required.

**G.** In order to call for the question, a three quarters vote is required.

**H.** The broader assemblies have the authority to call for an executive session at their discretion by a simple majority vote.

## **Article VI. Missions**

**A.** All supported international or domestic CRE missionaries will not be sent by the presbyteries or church council, but rather by the local church.

**B.** As appropriate, the other churches in the presbytery can offer encouragement and financial support, but the accountability of the missionaries will only be to the congregation which is the sending body.

**C.** As circumstances warrant, missionaries may seek a transfer of the sending authority from one local church to another, with the details to be worked out between the missionary and the elders of the respective congregations involved.

## **Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision**

**A.** The CRE holds as its foundational confession of faith the Apostles Creed, the Nicean [Nicene?] Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon. These confessions are included in Article X of this document.

**B.** The CRE holds generally to the system of doctrine reflected in the great creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Reformation, and consequently requires all confederated churches to hold to at least one of the particular statements listed in Article II.F.

[Note; A further stylistic improvement may be to combine §§ C through I below into fewer sections.]

**C.** Revisions to any portion of these confessions of faith must have a first reading at a stated meeting of the church council, and may then be brought to a vote at the subsequent stated meeting.

**D.** Three quarters of the presbyteries are required to propose revisions to this confession of faith.

**E.** Such proposed revisions will be placed on a list of potential revisions maintained by the moderator, to await consideration at the appointed time.

**F.** Three quarters of the presbyteries may remove proposed revisions to the confession of faith at any time prior to the council when they are to be voted on.

**G.** A proposed change in the confession requires a three quarters margin in order to pass.

**H.** This process of revision applies only to the confessional statements, and not to other portions of this constitution.

**I.** If a church's standing in the CRE is potentially affected by the process of confessional revision, that church has five years within which to make their first appeal to presbytery.

This concludes the Committee's report.

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## APPENDIX “B”

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### Handling Accusations and Evidence

Chris Schlect

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We are living in a season of slander, unwarranted accusations, and false reports against members of churches in our Confederation. Many have been circulated nationwide. If there has ever been a time for us in the CRE to seek scriptural wisdom in distinguish true from false charges, founded from unfounded charges, and how charges are to be handled, it is now. What should our response be?

First, we must welcome these trials in all joy, as the Apostle tells us (James 1:2), and to rejoice especially in this particular kind of trial. “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23).

Second, we must bury our individual identities into one another, even as we are in Christ and Christ is in us (John 17:21, Eph. 4:1-6, etc.). We in this Confederation must not react as Peter did. Peter, rather than identifying himself with Christ, played down his association with Christ. Indeed, Peter dissociated himself from the Church, the company of Christ, His body (“You are not one of this man’s disciples, are you? ...Did I not see you in the garden with him?” [John 18]). This was Peter’s sinful attempt to shield himself from an unjust attack against the Church. But dissociating oneself from the brethren is not a neutral activity, for communion with someone or other is inescapable. Indeed, to distance oneself from the brethren is an act of joining a rival communion, the very communion of those who berate Christ’s body. Consider Peter again: “And the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them and warmed himself” (John 18:18). Therefore, in this season of slander, we in this Confederation must own one another as brothers. We must do this even if it might result in getting muddied by the slander ourselves, or perhaps muddied by the more apparently (but not actually) benign “misunderstanding.”

Third, we must study and practice what the Bible teaches about dealing with accusations and charges. What follows is a cursory attempt at just that.

#### I. PARTIALITY

We know that the Bible expressly *forbids* that judges be “partial” in the sense of overlooking scriptural standards in a way that would lead them to call good “evil” and evil “good”. But the Bible *requires* partiality in another sense: we must be inclined to favor the accused and inclined against one who brings an accusation. In Biblical law, accuser and accused do not stand on equal footing. It is an accuser who must bring forward two or three witnesses, but no such obligation rests on the one being accused (Deuteronomy 19:15). The two-or-three-witness standard is what we might call a “burden of proof,” and when we consider the two sides in a dispute, we must place this burden on the one who brings a charge. No such burden rests on the accused; he need not make a case for his own innocence. He doesn’t need to prove anything, nor does the accused even need to say anything in his own defense.

Someone may ask you to produce reasons why you believe that a certain elder is *not* corrupt. Remember this standard; the Bible forbids you to think that you have to

produce reasons—unless, and not until, the accuser has first carried his burden of proof. The presumption of innocence is a biblical requirement. In a dispute between accuser and accused, the Bible requires partiality; we must favor the accused.

This point will be developed further as we turn now to the next head, the Bible's teaching on accusations.

## II. PROPER AND IMPROPER ACCUSATIONS

In showing deference toward the accused, we find in the Bible several important principles of propriety that an accuser must follow. A failure to abide by any one of these principles, so long as the failure remains unremedied, results in the disqualification of the accuser; his accusation may not be considered.

### A. Proper accusations come with two or three *qualified* witnesses

The Bible sets forth standards for witnesses, standards which deepen the burden of proof that is placed upon an accuser.

(1) First, a qualified witness testifies to what he *observed* rather than to *judgments, conclusions, or arguments* about the event he observed. The Bible describes the office of witness this way:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you... (1 John 1:1-3a).

One application of this text is that we must not confuse the roles of witness and judge. For example, judgments of this sort have little or no value because they are not witness testimony: "Pastor said thus-and-such, and at the time I understood this to be malicious." Here we make an important distinction between what the witness *witnessed* and what the witness *judged*. The witness can rightly be used to establish what it is that the pastor said, supposing he was there to hear it. But his assessment of the pastor's remark cannot be used to establish that malice took place. The witness may privately think that malice took place, but that's for the judges to decide.

A ludicrous example would be to call up a long line of witnesses, each of whom says, "I saw Pastor commit a murder last night," and nothing further. We have more than two or three, so shall we convict? Not at all; we do not need to hear the witnesses' opinions, we need to hear what the witnesses actually *saw*.

(2) Second, a qualified witness testifies to *his own personal experience* rather than *passing on the reported experience of someone else*. The common term for testifying to another's experience is "hearsay." Christ was careful to distinguish first-hand testimony from second-hand reports, which formed the basis for His challenge to Pilate: "Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about Me?" (John 18:34). We must therefore set aside any claim that fails Christ's challenge, claims such as these:

“My husband told me, and I swear to it, that he heard the Pastor say something malicious.”

“I read in the paper that someone said that Pastor is anti-semitic.”

(3) Third, a qualified witness offers testimony that is capable of being scrutinized—that is, it is capable of being inquired into further by the judges.

And the judges shall make diligent inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness... (Deuteronomy 19:18a).

This principle reinforces point (1) above: subjective arguments and private judgment-calls cannot be investigated or “inquired into further” by judges.

This principle also reinforces point (2) above: when someone reports hearsay, all that person tells is what a third party (we’ll call him “Enos”) alleges to be fact: “Enos told me that he saw and heard such-and-such.” With such testimony no judge can possibly “make diligent inquiry” as the Bible requires, for the judge has no access to this Enos character, though Enos—not the reporter of hearsay—is the one who supposedly saw and heard something.

We may add a word about affidavits under this point. Affidavits *in themselves* are not admissible for the purpose of establishing a fact. Why? Because judges cannot cross-examine an affidavit; a judge cannot “make diligent inquiry” into them. Affidavits are really just hearsay in written form. Does this mean that there is no place for affidavits (or other forms of hearsay, for that matter)? No, they do have a limited place. An affidavit may be received for a purpose *other than* to establish a fact. For example, when cross-examining a witness, the witness’s credibility may be impeached by pointing out that his present testimony contradicts a statement he made earlier in an affidavit. In this example, the affidavit is used not to establish any fact, but rather to point out that the witness is either confused or contradicting himself. A similar use of hearsay is also admissible, as seen in this example: Suppose it happens that last Friday Jack told Enos that, on the day before, he had heard Pastor say thus-and-such. But today Jack claims that what he heard the Pastor say was *not* “thus-and-such,” but something different. Here it would be permissible to bring Enos forward, and have Enos explain what Jack’s earlier story had been. What Enos would be reporting is hearsay—he’s repeating what Jack had told him. We do admit this hearsay, but mark the reason why: we admit it not in order to determine what it was that the pastor said, but in order to reexamine the competence of Jack’s testimony.

A second permissible use of an affidavit is to establish the state of mind of the one giving the statement. In such cases an affidavit corroborates whether the claimant acted (or responded) out of intent, fear, or duress, etc. (An affidavit does not corroborate whether a certain state of mind was present in another person.) A person’s subjective state of mind is not relevant in most cases, so this use of an affidavit will be rare. And here again, the same rule applies more broadly to hearsay. A witness can testify that he heard Enos yell, “Ouch!” which is technically hearsay, but is still admissible as evidence that Enos may have been experiencing pain.

A third legitimate use of an affidavit is for preliminary investigation. An affidavit may be used to decide whether or not a charge is credible and ought to be brought before a tribunal. Here an affidavit tells what a witness might assert in an upcoming trial. For this purpose affidavits can be very helpful: an accuser can present an affidavit as a way of showing the court that he is capable of bringing a witness. This helps the court determine whether or not to bring an accusation to trial. But remember the distinction: an affidavit *may* be received in order to show that a witness is willing to come forward with an allegation, but



it *may not* be received in order to establish or confirm that allegation—for that would be hearsay.

This leads us to an important corollary. A judgment based on affidavits alone would pervert justice. The Bible requires that, before a judgment may be rendered, “the judges shall make diligent inquiry,” and an affidavit cannot be cross-examined. Remember also,

The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him (Proverbs 18:17).

Therefore, those who pronounce judgments against a brother on the basis of affidavits alone (or worse, on the basis of circulated reports), have overlooked this clear biblical requirement. This is so regardless of what the affidavit or the informal report may include.

(4) Fourth, in order to be qualified, a witness must be accountable to the tribunal.

...if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done unto his brother; so you shall put away the evil person from among you. (Deuteronomy 19:18-19)

The principle is that those who are not members of a church, who are not accountable to any authority, may not be called as witnesses.

Some may complain that this is insufficient basis for dismissing an accusation, that we would be dismissing on the basis of a technicality. But do the Scriptures regard it as a “mere technicality”? Bear in mind that justice is hard and earthy work, work to be done within the context of covenant community, and it serves the whole community. This is clear in the next verse:

And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. (Deuteronomy 19:20)

Are issues of justice *nothing but* the guilt or innocence of the accused? Are they *nothing but* the truth or falsehood of this or that testimony? Those who would say so are in the grip of worldly philosophy, not Scripture. Were we to downplay this requirement as a mere “technicality,” we must first swallow unbiblical categories that are laden with individualism and the notion that truth is a disembodied, dissectible, context-less “idea-in-itself.” Against this, we must be steadfast in proclaiming that Truth is a Person, and that we are His body. For the good of the whole community, a false witness must be prosecuted. If a witness’s loyalty and accountability, especially in the context of church discipline, are but trivial matters, then what havoc do we make of the sacraments?

Once again, remember what we learned about partiality and burden of proof. An accountable witness is a biblically-mandated protection for the accused. The burden for an accuser is to bring not just witnesses, but accountable ones. And the accusers themselves must be accountable as well.

Having now developed this principle, we must qualify it. Christians must guard against wooden applications of a principle such as this. For example, do we disregard a police report about the drunken, brawling Pastor who was hauled out of a bar, simply because the arresting officer was not a church member? What about the bank security guard who caught Pastor with the teller’s money pouch? The hard answer is, it depends. There’s no one-size-fits-all solution. In our backslidden culture, sometimes we must depend upon the common-grace faithfulness of unbelievers as we labor to hold one another accountable. (Remember that a police officer can be fired for perjuring himself, and worse.)

We have now discussed what a qualified witness is. A qualified witness is (1) one who testifies to his own sensory observations, not to his own opinions or arguments. (2) Nor does he testify to what someone else may have observed, but only to what he has observed himself. (3) The testimony he offers is factually probative and capable of being scrutinized or cross-examined. And finally, (4) he—together with the accusers for whom he testifies—is capable of being held accountable for false testimony.

What does the Bible tell us to do with charges that lack qualified witnesses? The answer is clear, especially when such charges are brought against elders: *do not receive the charges*.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)

## B. “Dogpile” accusations must be dismissed

The Bible requires that charges, before they are even heard, must be formulated with clarity and specificity. Charges may not be offered in the form of a disorderly list of complaints smeared against the accused. Notice that Christ refused to defend himself in the face of accusations that were brought in a convoluted way. Consider his answer to the Jews:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone me?” (John 10:31-32).

Here, Christ demands that his accusers specify the particular event in which he sinned. How could he possibly give answer to a charge when his accusers do not specify what it is that they are holding against him? (This is the basis for the common-law notion of *habeas corpus*: it is unlawful to incarcerate a defendant without clearly stating what it is that he has allegedly done wrong.)

Now consider Christ’s response to the high priest:

The high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”

And when he had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, “Do You answer the high priest like that?”

Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?” (John 18:19-24).

Here Jesus reminds the High Priest that he may not adjudicate a matter for which charges are raised a hurly-burly fashion. Christ demanded that his accusers formulate a charge that has handles on it which can be grasped. The principles are these: (1) the alleged sin must be named (“bear witness of the evil”), (2) the event of sin must be specified (“For which of those works do you stone me?”), and (3) witnesses must be produced for each

specification (“Ask those who have heard me...bear witness of the evil”)—and we know from elsewhere that one such witness is not enough.

Now reflect upon the practicality of Christ’s standards for formulating charges. In John 8, John 10, and John 18, Christ was barraged by people whose criticisms festered against him. As their malice gathered steam, they attempted to convict him. Had a particular wrongdoing been specified against him, Christ might have been able to muster a defense. But how could Christ possibly defend himself against an amorphous onslaught of festering sentiment and malice? Christ demanded that his accusers identify, in a very clear way, what it was he had supposedly done doing wrong. He demanded clarity as to when, where, with whom, and before what competent witnesses he had done something wrong. In the absence of a clear and straightforward charge, plainly set forth, there can be no just opportunity for defense. Therefore, it is part of the accuser’s burden to bring a well-formulated charge.

What Christ demanded were accusers whose intent was to get at the bottom of a matter. Christ had no tolerance for accusations that start in one place, then shift to another, and then shift to yet another, heaping and piling on more and more charges, always raising more suspicion but never providing opportunity for resolution. Such accusations wage war against biblical clarity. These ungodly dogpiles are uncharitably designed to spread foul sentiment; they are convoluted bottomless pits. Accusations formulated in this fashion hope for *anything but* a clean conviction or a clean acquittal. Rather, their design is to smear. Christ recognized this sort of thing when he saw it, and He calls us to see it too and to call it what it is. It’s divisive sin.

### **C. Anonymous accusers must be dismissed**

When slanders and false reports circulate, those who spread them are filing their charges with the at-large court of public opinion, sometimes in newspapers and on the internet. But this impersonal court allows accusers to be anonymous; their chosen medium is the same one that enables a sixty-year-old man to successfully impersonate a twenty-year-old girl in his cyber-dating life. Such charges, and perhaps even documentation, are published to a watching world. They name the accused, but not the accuser. What is the Christian response? Jesus demands an answer to this question:

Which of you convicts me of sin? (John 8:46)

For their failure to answer this question, anonymous accusations must be ignored.

Of course, a related concern here is that an anonymous witness or accuser has no accountability to the tribunal, which we discussed above.

Another point in this connection is the violation of Matthew 18 process. Anonymous accusers prefer to bring their charges not “to the church,” but instead to the watching world. To these accusers, judgment begins on anonymous web sites and in back room whispers, but not in the house of God.

Anonymous accusations may not be heeded. Neither do they deserve a response from the accused.

### **D. Hypocritical accusers must be dismissed**

Christ refused to hear hypocritical witnesses.

He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first. (John 8:7)

Sometimes accusations are raised regarding sins of which accusers themselves are demonstrably guilty, as it was with those who accused the woman caught in adultery. For example, a session's counsel is refused a hearing in some quarters (i.e., "don't listen to what *they* say"), when the justification for not hearing is that the session is supposedly closed-minded to those who disagree with them. Or, a Pastor is accused of diverting attention from the truth by an accuser who refuses to state clearly where and when it was that Pastor did so. A session is accused of using malicious intimidation tactics from someone who threatens to file a lawsuit against the church.

Our Lord does not give these accusations the time of day. Neither should we.

### **III. FINAL PASTORAL DIRECTIVES**

#### **A. Do not listen to the charges.**

An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue (Proverbs 17:4).

According to the Bible, one can be a liar without even saying anything; a liar can be one who merely listens. Do not even give heed to false lips. Do not listen to a spiteful tongue. Unwarranted accusations oftentimes need to be confronted, we may not be content to simply leave them alone, allowing them to circulate to the next eager ear.

#### **B. Do not make idle conversation about charges.**

He who repeats a matter separates the best of friends. (Proverbs 17:9)

The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts. (Proverbs 17:14)

A fool's lips enter into contention... (Proverbs 18:6-8).

In an atmosphere of juicy accusations, people want to pay attention. This is a temptation that must be resisted.

#### **C. Learn these lessons in your homes.**

We in the CRE should be teaching these lessons to our wives and children. We need to apply these principles of Christian brotherhood in our homes, and within our churches, in business, in social gatherings, wherever. Do not listen to reports about what goes on in another's household. Don't concern yourself about, or allow yourself to take an interest in, what so-and-so did—*unless you are in a position to address the (alleged) problem*. We should teach our children not to give heed to false lips on the playground. Teach them that listening to gossip is a form of lying. Remind them that passing on unsubstantiated reports is hateful and stirs up strife, that it sows dissension among the brethren, which the Lord hates.

Our lives among one another, in our families and in our communion, are the Lord's training ground. It is in these little daily things where we learn how to deal with falsehoods and malicious reports. It is here where we become equipped to deal with the big-time slanders that come against us.

#### **D. Pray for one another.**

Our congregations need to know that elders need prayer. Elders bear responsibility before God, for their sakes, to discern between true and false charges, between upright and corrupt witnesses. Elders are also responsible to attend to the distress and hurt and destruction that are caused by false reports.

#### **E. Charge to Moderators within the CRE**

Being informed by the principles set forth above, moderators within the CRE are hereby charged to insist upon biblical standards in the following areas: (a) a biblical loyalty and partiality must be shown toward the accused; (b) witnesses must be biblically qualified; (c) charges must be clearly and properly formulated, with two or three qualified witnesses needed for each specification; (d) accusers must be neither anonymous nor hypocritical; (e) any accusation or circulated report that does not meet the standards of (a) through (d) must be dismissed with prejudice; which means that they may not even be given the tacit approval resulting from either circulating the charges further or from investigating of the charges.