

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE
SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIES AND REFORMED CHURCHES

WHEREAS, the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC) has been called into existence by God's providence and out of a heartfelt desire to foster Biblical Presbyterianism; and

WHEREAS, the CRPC accepts the original Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1647) as its theological statement of faith; and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the CRPC to unite with other expressions of the body of Christ as a manifestation in this imperfect world of the unity for which Jesus prayed on the eve of His atoning death;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

- (1) That the CRPC hereby resolves to establish, in conjunction with one or more other groups, the Society of Presbyteries and Reformed Churches (SPARC), in accordance with the attached Constitution and Rules for Assemblies;
- (2) That the effective date of the establishment of this association shall be when notice is received by the CRPC Correspondence Secretary that at least one other presbytery has agreed to become a charter member of the association and has been approved by the American Presbytery of the CRPC;
- (3) That the establishment of this association is with a view toward eventual church union.

CONSTITUTION OF THE
SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIES AND REFORMED CHURCHES

I. NAME. The name of this association shall be the “Society of Presbyteries and Reformed Churches” (“SPARC”).

II. DOCTRINAL BASIS OF THE SOCIETY. The Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly (1647) serve as the doctrinal basis for this Society.

III. PURPOSE. The purpose of the Society shall be as follows:

- a. to provide for a common identification among those who are members;
- b. to provide opportunities for fellowship, edification, and instruction;
- c. to foster discussion on topics of mutual interest;
- d. to assist the constituent bodies to present a united testimony before a watching world;
- e. to encourage closer relationship among the members, with a view toward eventual union;
- f. to provide for the adjudication of matters which are appealed or referred.

IV. MEMBERSHIP. Membership is open to presbyteries (known also as “classes”) and churches unaffiliated with a presbytery, which subscribe to the confessional standards of the Westminster Assembly. (Simultaneous subscription to other orthodox creeds, such as the Three Forms of Unity, is acceptable.) Unaffiliated churches which are members of the association may be grouped, for purposes of this association, into a “Company of Churches.” Presbyteries and churches are admitted to membership after recommendation by a two-thirds affirmative vote by the Executive Committee, and approval by two-thirds of the constituent presbyteries.

V. ORGANIZATION. There shall be an Executive Committee of the association, comprised of two representatives (pastors or elders) from each presbytery and of two representatives (pastors or elders) of any existing “Company of Churches,” which shall coordinate any planning for conferences and assemblies. The officers of the association shall include a President, a Vice-President, and a Secretary, elected for one-year terms.

VI. PROCEDURES AND FUNCTIONS.

a. The members of the association shall normally meet once a year, for fellowship and edification.

b. The constituent presbyteries and churches agree to consult with one another on matters of mutual interest and concern, and in accordance with the principles of love and fellowship to apprise each other of all official actions and significant developments. The position papers and documents which have been adopted by any member presbytery or church are commended for study and encouragement. Constituent members that are concerned with actions taken by other members are encouraged to approach them, in love and humility, to resolve any misunderstandings or concerns.

c. These presbyteries and churches, in accordance with the rules agreed upon by the association, agree to convene an assembly whenever absolute necessity arises, to consider matters which are appealed or referred from a constituent. Presbyteries and Sessions are strongly urged that they successfully and in love adjudicate matters before them so as to make appeals a rare occurrence.

VII. ASSEMBLIES.

a. Whenever a judicial appeal or reference shall be received, arising from a constituent body of the Association, the Executive Committee shall consider whether the matter should be heard at an Assembly called for the purpose of adjudicating the matter. If the Executive Committee, by two-thirds majority vote of those members who are not from the constituent body from which the appeal or reference has arisen, is of the opinion that the matter should be heard, then an Assembly shall be called by the Executive Committee for the purpose of adjudicating the matter. An Assembly shall also be called for this purpose if two-thirds of the constituent presbyteries determine that the matter should be heard.

b. Any judicial appeal or reference arising from an unaffiliated church shall go directly to an Assembly called for the purpose of adjudicating said matter.

c. Any judgment or opinion rendered on a judicial matter by an Assembly should be accorded respect by the body from which the appeal or reference arose. A presbytery or church which ignores the judgment of an Assembly or which pursues a course of action contrary to said judgment, is subject to having its membership in the association terminated.

d. Each presbytery and the "Company of Churches" shall be entitled to send twice the number of representatives to Assemblies as they are able to have representatives on the Executive Committee.

VIII. CHURCHES UNAFFILIATED WITH A PRESBYTERY. Unaffiliated churches are encouraged to affiliate with a presbytery as soon as practicable. If, after three years of membership, an unaffiliated church has not affiliated with a constituent presbytery, that church shall lose all voting rights within the association, including within the "Company of Churches"; and none of that church's representatives shall be afforded the privilege of being on the Executive Committee.

IX. AFFILIATION AND DISAFFILIATION. Each member presbytery and church shall specify its principles and procedures of affiliation and disaffiliation. Any presbytery or church may withdraw from the association with reasons, and with opportunity for members of the association to discuss the matter with the presbytery that is contemplating leaving the association.

X. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP. Membership may be terminated after a judicial hearing at a duly called Assembly (see VII.a.).

XI. AMENDMENTS. This Constitution may be amended upon recommendation by the Executive Committee and approval by three-fourths of the constituent presbyteries. The Rules for Assemblies may be amended upon recommendation by the Executive Committee and approval by three-fourths of the constituent presbyteries.

XII. DISSOLUTION. Upon the tenth anniversary of the establishment of this association, it will automatically be dissolved, unless one-half of the constituent presbyteries determine to continue it. At any time, if two-thirds of the Presbyteries vote to dissolve the association, it shall be dissolved.

SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIES AND REFORMED CHURCHES

RULES FOR ASSEMBLIES

1. Whenever an Assembly shall be called, the President of the Executive Committee shall serve as the Convener. If he is unable to act, then the Vice-President of the Executive Committee shall act in his place, followed by the Secretary. If none of these officers is able to act, then the oldest minister present shall act as the Convener. The first order of business for the Assembly shall be the election of a Moderator, followed by the election of a Clerk. Other officers, such as Vice-Moderator, Assistant Clerks, Parliamentarian(s), and others, may also be elected.
2. All proceedings in conjunction with an Assembly, including the scheduling of the meeting, and all rulings during the meeting, shall conform to the Scriptural principles of love and humility.
3. An appeal is a written plea for a hearing by the Assembly on some decision or act made by a court of original jurisdiction. A member in good standing subject to a constituent body is entitled to submit an appeal to the Society for its consideration, but only after that body's highest judicatory has had opportunity to act. Judgment rendered in an appeal shall respect the standards of the body from which an appeal arises, and accordingly shall not violate or go contrary to those standards.
4. A reference is a written representation and application made by a court of original jurisdiction for advice or other action on a matter pending before the court. Judicial references are particularly appropriate when the court of original jurisdiction is seriously divided, or cannot render a verdict without impropriety (such as because of manifest prejudice or conflict of interest). Any infliction of censure shall be according to the standards of the body from which the matter arose.
5. At any hearing of an appeal or a reference, all parties shall be entitled to be heard fairly. A party has the right to be represented by counsel; all such counselors must be believers who subscribe to the doctrinal standards of the Westminster Assembly.
6. In the case of an appeal, the appellant shall have the right to open and close during the time of oral argument. The appeal shall be decided based upon the written record. If the written record is incomplete (such as not including the transcribed testimony of witnesses in the case of a trial), then the matter shall automatically be returned to the court of original jurisdiction with instructions to rectify it. (In a case in which the court of original jurisdiction is not able to produce a complete record, the Executive Committee shall have authority of automatically returning the matter, without the need to call an Assembly.)
7. In the case of an appeal, the Assembly shall vote on each specification of error. (Members of the body from which the matter arose are prohibited from voting on the appeal.) If one or more specifications of error should be sustained, then the Assembly shall return the matter to the court of original jurisdiction with instructions as to how to rectify the error(s). Regarding a judicial case that is appealed, the Assembly may reverse or annul a decision by the court of original jurisdiction; may return the matter for a new trial or proceeding; or may render the verdict that should have been rendered.
8. All hearings of an Assembly shall be open to the public, unless the Assembly determines by a three-fourths vote to go into executive session. No hearing on doctrinal matters shall ever be held behind closed doors. During deliberations on matters before it, the Assembly may, by three-fourths vote, vote to go into executive session. Any vote to go into executive session shall be considered a debatable motion. While any discussion in executive session remains confidential, all actions taken by the Assembly (including the transcribing of testimony) are public, by definition, and should be published along with the other minutes of the Assembly.
9. There should be a timeliness to the filing of appeals and to the disposition of all matters which come to an Assembly. Normally, appeals should not be entertained if they are filed longer than ninety (90) days after the act or decision was made.
10. In order to expedite the hearing of a matter, the Executive Committee shall be authorized to distribute the record of the case to members of the Assembly prior to its convening.