

# Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church



## New Officer Training

November 2024

## **New Officer Training Agenda 2024**

### **MDPC Parlor**

**November 7: 6- 8:30 p.m.**

- 1. Officer Photos and Dinner**
- 2. Introduction of Officers – Beth**
  - a. Name
  - b. Spiritual Gift
  - c. Place of service as Elder or Deacon
- 3. The Call to Elder & Deacon – Alf**
  - a. Forms of church government
  - b. MDPC Strategic Goals
  - c. Shared Leadership Principles
    - i. Simon Sinek
    - ii. Patrick Lencioni
- 4. History of Elders & Deacons – Beth**
  - a. Document from Feb 2019
  - b. Acts 6
- 5. The Way of Discipleship: 6 Habits for MDPC – Beth**
  - a. Spiritual Disciplines: discuss strong/weak
  - b. “Life is More” questions in small groups
- 6. Nuts & Bolts – Jennifer**
  - a. FAQ and Communication
  - b. Review of Key Dates
  - c. Homework Assignments
  - d. Ordination/Installation

For next week please read Constitutional Questions to be answered in Ordination/Installation Service (Section 2 in your notebook)

**November 14: 6-8:30pm**

1. **Dinner**
2. **Introduction of any Officers who missed last time** - Beth
  - a. Name, Spiritual Gift, Place of service as Elder or Deacon
3. **Constitutional Questions to be answered in Ordination/Installation** – Alf
4. **Small Group Discussion**
  - a. Life is More - Beth
  - b. Gospel Clarity – what’s your elevator speech? – Clay
5. **ECO Polity & Essential Tenets Introduction** - Clay
  - a. Setup Continuing Ed Model
6. **Budget & Facility** – Marcus
7. **Nuts & Bolts** – Jennifer
8. **Communion Training in Chapel** – Rachel and Alf

# Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church



## New Officer Training

Week 1

From "Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time" by Greg Ogden – printed in SoJo Mail for 30 October 2003.

MEMO

TO: JESUS, SON OF JOSEPH, WOODCRAFTER CARPENTER SHOP, NAZARETH  
FROM: JORDAN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, JERUSALEM

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the 12 you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. Simon is under investigation for several murders. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,  
Jordan Management Consultants

# The Policy Governance® Model

Policy Governance®, an integrated board leadership paradigm created by Dr. John Carver, is a groundbreaking model of governance designed to empower boards of directors to fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organizations they govern. As a generic system, it is applicable to the governing body of any enterprise. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; to truly lead its organization.

In contrast to the approaches typically used by boards, Policy Governance separates issues of organizational purpose (ENDS) from all other organizational issues (MEANS), placing primary importance on those Ends. Policy Governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose, and only limit the staff's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.

The board's own Means are defined in accordance with the roles of the board, its members, the chair and other officers, and any committees the board may need to help it accomplish its job. This includes the necessity to "speak with one voice". Dissent is expressed during the discussion preceding a vote. Once taken, the board's decisions may subsequently be changed, but are never to be undermined. The board's expectations for itself also set out self-imposed rules regarding the delegation of authority to the staff and the method by which board-stated criteria will be used for evaluation. Policy Governance boards delegate with care. There is no confusion about who is responsible to the board or for what board expectations they are responsible. Double delegation (for example, to a board committee as well as to the CEO) is eliminated. Furthermore, boards that decide to utilize a CEO function are able to hold this one position exclusively accountable.

Evaluation, with such carefully stated expectations, is nothing more than seeking an answer to the question, "Have our expectations been met?" The board, having clarified its expectations, can assess performance in that light. This focused approach reduces the mountains of paperwork boards often feel obliged to review. Moreover, those boards which worry that they are only furnished the data management wants to give them find that, in stating their expectations and demanding a relevant and credible accounting of performance, they have effectively taken over control of their major information needs. Their staff no longer has to read their minds.

Policy Governance is a radical and effective change in the way boards conceive of and do their job. It allows greater accountability. Board leadership isn't just rhetoric. It's a reality.

For a comprehensive discussion of Policy Governance®, we suggest:

- *Boards That Make A Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations*, by John Carver,
- *Reinventing Your Board: A Step by Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance*, by John and Miriam Carver,
- *John Carver on Board Leadership: Selected Writings from the Creator of the World's Most Provocative and Systematic Governance Model*, by John Carver, or
- *Corporate Boards That Create Value: Governing Company Performance from the Boardroom*, by John Carver with Caroline Oliver.

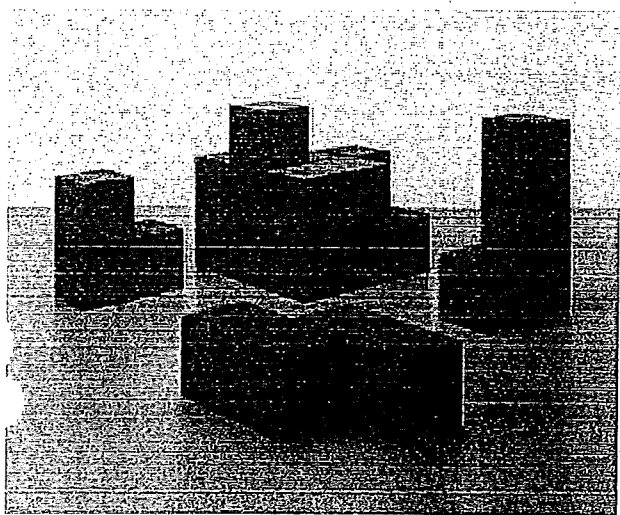
Learn more about these books on the [publications](#) page. All are available at [josseybass.com](http://josseybass.com).

A number of individual articles by John and/or Miriam Carver on corporate, NGO, and governmental governance can be found in [John's bibliography](#) or in [Miriam's bibliography](#).

# The CEO's Role in Business Model Reinvention

by Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble

FROM THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2011 ISSUE



ARTWORK: DAMIÁN ORTEGA, CONCRETE CUBE (BLACK), 2003, CAST CONCRETE WITH BLACK PIGMENT

Consider a few of the great innovation stories of the past decade: Google, Netflix, and Skype. Now ask yourself, why wasn't Google created by Microsoft? Netflix by Blockbuster? Skype by AT&T?

*To learn more about applying the three-box approach in your organization, please read "Transforming Your Organization with the Three-Box Approach."*

Why do established corporations struggle to find the next big thing before new competitors do? The problem is pervasive; the examples are countless. The simple explanation is that many companies become too focused on executing today's business model and forget that business models are perishable. Success today does not guarantee success tomorrow.

To assess your company's vulnerability, try this diagnostic: On separate index cards, write down all the important initiatives under way in your organization. Then create three boxes and label them "Box 1: Manage the Present," "Box 2: Selectively Forget the Past," and "Box 3: Create the Future."

Next, take a few minutes to imagine your industry in five, 10, or even 20 years—as far out as you can reasonably foresee. Consider all the forces of change your industry faces—technology, customer demographics, regulation, globalization, and so on. With those forces in mind, put your organization's initiatives in the appropriate boxes: those intended to improve today's business performance in box 1; those aimed at stopping something—underperforming products and services, obsolete policies and practices, outdated assumptions and mind-sets—in box 2; and those that prepare your organization for the long term in box 3.

For companies to endure, they must get the forces of preservation (box 1), destruction (box 2), and creation (box 3) in the right balance. Striking that balance is the CEO's most important task, but most companies overwhelmingly favor box 1. Forces of preservation reign supreme. Forces of destruction and creation are overshadowed, outmatched, and out of luck.

To be sure, the work of preservation—the day-to-day execution of the existing business model—is vitally important. CEOs must get box 1 right or their tenures will be short. They must concentrate daily on performance excellence and continuous improvement, as companies such as Wal-Mart and Southwest Airlines have done for years. The best box 1 companies are sleek and efficient, like a well-designed automobile. They coordinate an astonishingly complex array of human actions like so many gears, pistons, and camshafts.

But CEOs are not *just* responsible for box 1. They must also get boxes 2 and 3 right. Sadly, most chief executives ignore destruction and creation until it is too late. They bow to a myriad of short-term pressures: intense demands for quarterly earnings, risk aversion, discomfort with uncertainty, resistance to change, linear extrapolation from past experience, and unwillingness to cannibalize established businesses. As a result, many companies fail to transform themselves.

The failure may not be immediately apparent, but sooner or later most industries go through nonlinear shifts that threaten incumbents. For instance, breakthroughs in genetic engineering have revolutionized the pharmaceutical industry. New concerns about environmental quality have posed serious threats in energy-intensive sectors. Globalization has opened up India and China, where unfamiliar rivals are challenging established companies with ultra-low-price products.

While most companies neatly manage linear change, they are left befuddled by nonlinear change. Transformation efforts look meek at best, like futilely trying to turn a car into an airplane by bolting on two wings. Consider, for example, Sony's lagging positions in portable music players and electronic book readers, or Nokia's and Motorola's struggles to keep up with the rapid evolution of smartphones.

### The High Jump "Industry"

The history of the Olympic high jump event illustrates the importance of adapting to nonlinear change. It has evolved through four distinct "business models." Early on, the "scissors" style dominated the sport. It was much like hurdling. All high jumpers used the scissors approach, so winning meant being the best at it. The high jumpers were operating in box 1 (preservation). Had they been businesspeople, they would have been competing on cost, market share, and margins.

High jumpers remained in box 1 at their peril, however. Even the best athletes could improve upon the established technique only incrementally. The approach had severe limitations because the jumper's center of gravity had to rise much higher than the bar.

More-innovative jumpers broke the high jump down into two fundamentals: raising one's center of gravity (jumping higher) and raising it no more than necessary to clear the bar (avoiding "wasted lift"). It turned out that although finding ways to jump higher was quite difficult, athletes could find plenty of opportunities to avoid wasted lift. High jumpers created three new styles.

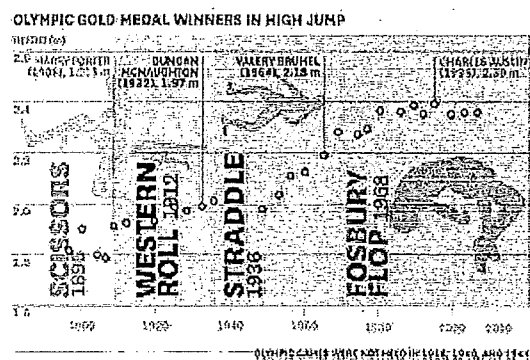
To win both today and tomorrow, CEOs must operate in all three boxes simultaneously. They must recognize that boxes 2 and 3 are not about what the business will be doing in 20 years; they are about the preparations it must make today. That's easier said than done, for it's not only a matter of balancing resources across the three boxes. The CEO must also know exactly what to destroy and what to create.

On the surface, box 2 is about pruning lines of business that are underperforming or no longer fit the company's strategy. Some companies do that consistently. For decades, for example, Corning has been eliminating mature businesses, such as cookware and light bulbs, to focus on high-growth opportunities. And when Japanese firms commoditized the market for dynamic random-access memory—a key component in PCs—Intel cofounder Andy Grove shifted the company into microprocessors. Such divestitures are traumatic but not conceptually mysterious. Pruning simply requires commitment from powerful executives.

It's harder to take a knife to a less-evident box 2 menace: organizational memory. As managers run the core business, they develop biases,

First, they invented the “western roll,” in which jumpers launched and landed on the same foot and kept their backs to the bar. Then they discovered the “straddle,” in which they launched and landed on opposite feet and faced the bar. Finally, in the 1968 Olympics, Dick Fosbury created the surprising Fosbury Flop, which required twisting 180 degrees and landing on one’s head. To succeed, Fosbury had to unlearn everything his coaches had taught him about speed, angle of approach, and technique.

Each new jumping style transformed the high jump “industry.” The innovators had to somehow forget best practices (box 2) and create next practices (box 3). Many other jumpers, trapped by the forces of preservation (box 1), failed to remain competitive.



assumptions, and entrenched mind-sets. These become further embedded in planning processes, performance evaluation systems, organizational structures, and human resources policies.

Organizational memory is particularly powerful in companies that tend to promote from within and to have homogeneous cultures, strong socialization mechanisms, and long track records of success. Such deeply rooted memory may be great for preservation (box 1), but if it is not tamed sufficiently (box 2), it gets in the way of creation (box 3). That’s why all box 3 initiatives must start in box 2. Bottom line: Before you can create, you must forget.

If organizational memory is not tamed, it gets in the way of creation. Before you can create, you must forget.

To understand how a company can manage all three boxes successfully, let’s look at Infosys Technologies Limited of India.

## Business Model Transformation at Infosys

On July 31, 2006, Infosys chairman N.R. Narayana Murthy stood before thousands of employees in Mysore, India, and pressed an orange button. Half a world away, trading commenced on the Nasdaq. His remotely ringing the opening bell, part of Infosys’s 25-year anniversary celebration, symbolized how the global economy was being transformed.

## The Transformation Process in Hindu Mythology

Hinduism provides a unique window into the three perspectives we focus on in this article: managing the present, selectively forgetting the past, and creating the future. The religion recognizes many gods but only three main deities: Vishnu, the god of preservation (box 1); Shiva, the god of destruction (box 2); and Brahma, the god of creation (box 3).

The Hindu mythmakers even paired each of the three gods with symbolically relevant wives. Vishnu was married to Lakshmi, who bestowed wealth—just as box 1 produces current income. Shiva's partner was Parvathi, who symbolized power, a vital box 2 necessity when selectively destroying the past. Brahma was betrothed to Saraswathi, who symbolized creativity, ideas, and knowledge—critical inputs in formulating box 3 strategies.

According to Hindu philosophy, the balanced interactions among the three gods create a continuous preservation–destruction–creation cycle that helps sustain all forms of life in a circle without a beginning or an end. Achieving that continuous cycle is a goal worthy of any farsighted organization.

For people trying to understand the offshoring phenomenon, Infosys was exhibit A. Indeed, it had inspired Thomas Friedman to write *The World Is Flat*. The company had demonstrated that its core service, custom software development for corporations, did not have to happen at the client site. Most of the work could be done thousands of miles away in talent-rich but low-cost India. Infosys dubbed its approach the “global delivery model.”

Infosys's rapid rise is legendary in India. In the 1980s the company was just a small group of programmers who had traveled from South Asia to the United States to offer their services. But in the early 1990s India's rapid deregulation and the rise of the internet opened the door for the global delivery model. Today Infosys is a \$5 billion IT services firm with more than 100,000 employees and a market cap of nearly \$40 billion.

During the late 1990s, with revenues growing rapidly, Infosys could easily have focused on preservation. But Murthy was intent on challenging the biggest companies in the IT services industry, including IBM and Accenture.

He and then-CEO Nandan Nilekani had a hypothesis about how the industry would evolve.

The company's most demanding clients were frustrated by having to work simultaneously with multiple services firms, each lacking full accountability. Eventually, Murthy and Nilekani believed, clients would hire just one firm that could deliver end-to-end IT services. The hypothetical company would provide a management consulting team that would redesign operations and write

specifications for new IT systems. That same company would then develop, test, install, and maintain the new hardware and software—and might even accept responsibility for executing routine client operations such as transaction processing.

This implied a dramatic industry transformation. If multiple rivals moved toward end-to-end services, former partners would become rivals. The industry would have room for only a handful of very large players. Infosys intended to be one of them—and to use its mastery of the global delivery model to outperform rivals. To accomplish that, the company needed to create several new services even as it continued executing its existing, fast-growing business. By pushing into boxes 2 and 3, Infosys grew 25-fold, from \$200 million to \$5 billion in the past decade. Revenues from services other than its original offering—custom software development—grew from a small base in the 1990s, to 40% by 2003, and to nearly 60% by 2010.

Infosys succeeded in avoiding the box 2 hazard of organizational memory. By building a parallel “box 2/3” world with different people and distinct processes, it was able to create the future while sustaining excellence in box 1. In the process, Infosys paid especially close attention to three critical disciplines: strategy making, accountability, and organizational design.

## Strategy Making

The central tenets of strategy making are well known. It should be an analytical, data-driven process that rigorously identifies customer needs, differentiates the company from rivals, and maximizes profits. But despite its many merits, this process also systematically squeezes out box 3 thinking.

Leaders who insist on rigorously analyzed data tend to resist making change on the basis of limited evidence or weak signals. The result: a short-term mind-set; a strict focus on existing customers, not emerging ones; an obsession with today's rivals, not potential entrants; an emphasis on leveraging existing competencies rather than building new ones; and a tacit assumption that lines of demarcation between markets are fixed.

Box 3 strategy making is very different. Endeavors of creation must begin with a destructive (box 2) action—abandoning traditional strategy practices in favor of new ones. Box 3 strategy is not about linear extrapolation from the past; it's about trying to anticipate nonlinear shifts. That's a tough—but necessary—concept to grasp if you're a senior leader who rose to the top of an organization by excelling in box 1.

For example, in 1999 IBM launched an effort to multiply computing speeds by a factor of 500. IBM's conjecture was that the next generation of supercomputers would not run on one super-fast chip but on huge networks of ordinary chips. IBM's machine, dubbed BlueGene, would, as imagined, run massive simulations for scientists who study climate change, particle physics, cellular processes, and more. The big unknown, however, was the relationship between the number of chips and the volume of communications among them. It was possible that the network that tied the chips together would clog up like Los Angeles freeways at rush hour. To pinpoint when that would happen, IBM developed a systematic test plan. It first built a prototype with just two chips, then four, then eight. It ran disciplined experiments with each prototype. If BlueGene were to fail, IBM would learn at the lowest cost possible. By 2007 the company had succeeded in building a 212,992-chip BlueGene, the fastest supercomputer in the world.

When leaders of box 3 initiatives learn fast (and at minimal cost), they make better decisions. They either find success or exit quickly and cheaply. But disciplined experimentation is not easy. As we describe in our book *The Other Side of Innovation*, best practices for planning experiments look almost nothing like best practices for ongoing operations. Therefore, it's critical to use distinct methods to evaluate the results of box 3 initiatives and the performance of their leaders.

Consider the negative consequences of subjecting a leader to a traditional, results-focused performance assessment while she operates in box 3. Uncertainties are high, and assumptions often prove wrong, yielding disappointing results and leaders who get defensive about them. Open discussion disappears, learning ceases, and bad decision making tends to ensue. Instead, leaders should be held accountable for learning quickly from disciplined experiments that they conduct in box 3. Administered properly, this form of accountability is anything but forgiving. It requires intense reasoning and ruthless analysis of assumptions.

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Infosys has developed a very strong culture of accountability for results. In fact, it created an acronym for its expectations of business unit leaders' actions—namely, that they be predictable, sustainable, profitable, and de-risked: PSPD. Still, Infosys maintains different kinds of expectations for new services—standards that allow for greater uncertainty but are no less forgiving.

Infosys smartly brought nontraditional voices into the box 3 strategy process. For example, it directly engaged a subset of its clients, in group and one-on-one meetings, to challenge the company's long-range assumptions and to make provocative suggestions for future growth. As a direct result of this interaction, Infosys chose to redouble its investment in an experimental business unit that offered packaged software for Indian bank branches—and to adapt it for worldwide use.

Thirty percent of participants in any strategy discussion should be younger than age 30, because they are not wedded to the past.

Infosys relied even more heavily on input from young employees. It assembled a Voices of Youth panel of high performers who participated annually in eight senior management meetings. In putting together this team, Murthy cited what he calls the “30/30 rule”: 30% of participants in any strategy discussion should be younger than age 30, because they are creative and not wedded to the past. In addition, Infosys created several inventive and colorfully named mechanisms—strategy graffiti walls, knowledge cafés, jam sessions, and speed-geeking—to continually attract thousands of young employees to the process. Jam sessions, for instance, are fast-paced roundtable meetings in which each participant has just one minute to give an impromptu response to questions such as “How can Infosys win in emerging markets?” The company even developed software that automated the process of sifting through huge volumes of responses, to identify common themes and unique ideas. Murthy credits youth involvement for sparking more than 10 R&D projects at Infosys, on topics ranging from health care to sustainability to education.

## Accountability

To succeed at preservation (box 1), successful companies develop mechanisms that hold individuals accountable for results. Those who deliver on time, on budget, and on spec should earn raises and promotions; those who don't are probably better suited for other careers. Companies with demanding performance cultures, such as GE, tend to do very well in box 1. But, again, initiatives to create the future must begin by forgetting the past. Strict accountability for results must be left behind to allow for conjectures about potential nonlinear shifts. Those conjectures are best tested by running disciplined experiments.

In 2002 Infosys launched a fundamentally new (box 3) business for the company: Infosys Consulting. Instead of producing custom software, the new consulting unit would advise clients on redesigning their operations; rather than calling on heads of IT, it would serve general managers. The core business of software programming was almost a science, whereas Infosys Consulting was more of an art.

Murthy and Nilekani knew it was unrealistic to expect its new service to immediately deliver predictable, sustainable, profitable, and de-risked results. So they exempted it from traditional performance review forums and had it report to an internal board of directors. That board looked for clear signs that Infosys Consulting was headed toward success. For example, it expected an upward trend in per-employee revenues as time dedicated to selling services declined and time dedicated to delivering services rose. The board also altered expectations about forecast accuracy for Infosys Consulting: not 99%, as required of established units, but 50%, at least at first. As the team learned, its forecasts naturally improved.

## Organizational Design

To achieve day-to-day excellence (box 1), companies must do more than hire and train outstanding individuals. They must optimize the way individuals collaborate—through job specifications, organizational designs, and work processes. When all individuals are perfectly aligned, companies become works of high art. However, a box 1 work of art is also a highly specialized machine. As such, it's unrealistic to expect to be able to just "squeeze in" a box 3 project. Special teams are essential. The first step in building them is a box 2 action—dropping standard organizational practices. Box 3 projects require zero-based, custom-built subunits.

Forming these subunits is an act of creation even more significant than generating a breakthrough box 3 idea. As we explained in "Stop the Innovation Wars" (HBR July-August 2010), it's much like building a new company from scratch. Outsiders play a critical role by bringing in new skills and catalyzing change. They are powerful box 2 agents because they naturally challenge assumptions.

Infosys Consulting was a box 3 project, so Murthy and Nilekani created a new, distinct subunit. They hired an outsider with 15 years of consulting experience to lead the effort, and they lured several more senior partners from other consulting firms. Then, rather than creating a unit based on

Infosys's existing organizational structure, they studied other firms' processes and organizational designs and altered them for the global delivery model. Today Infosys Consulting generates more than \$100 million in revenues annually.

That's a much more favorable outcome than what happened when one of the Big Three U.S. automakers first entered India in the early 1990s. The tremendous economic divide between India and the United States demanded a box 3 approach to making an automobile. Rather than creating a zero-based subunit in India to spearhead the effort, however, the company engineered the car in Detroit and, to cut costs, decided to put power windows only in the front doors. That decision initially seemed reasonable, but at that time any Indian who could afford a car could also afford a chauffeur. The owner, sitting in the back, had to use hand-crank windows. It's one reason why this U.S. automaker is still largely irrelevant in one of the world's fastest-growing automotive markets.

## Prioritizing for the Long Term

As we have discussed, the secret to winning over the long run lies in knowing what to forget and what to create. Still, every box 3 initiative requires a tough first step: making the commitment to launch. Shifting resources from the present to the future may be the most difficult challenge for CEOs, given the enormous short-term pressures they face routinely.

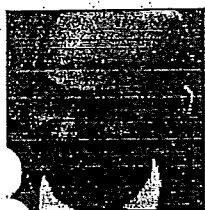
In its early days, Infosys had a *Fortune* 10 client that accounted for 25% of its revenues and was demanding substantial price concessions. Murthy walked away and accepted a devastating blow to short-term performance. His simple rationale: Infosys would never agree to a price so low that it would have to sacrifice service quality or cut investments in people, training, R&D, and technology. Doing so, he reasoned, would damage the brand and undermine the company's future.

The most intense short-term pressures come not from clients, however, but from Wall Street, which demands reliable earnings growth and richly rewards CEOs who deliver it. This powerful box 1 incentive cripples the forces of destruction and creation because box 3 projects inevitably have a worse-before-better impact on the bottom line. Further, CEOs' tenures are short relative to the rhythm of transformation efforts. By the time box 3 projects pay off, many will have retired, so they are tempted to focus on the immediate and leave on a high note.

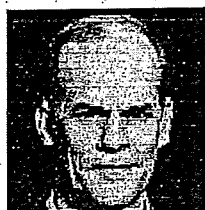
Murthy, by contrast, views Infosys as a lifelong endeavor. His approach to investors has been steadfast: Relentlessly promote long-term potential; immediately share short-term disappointment. Murthy volunteered the bad news of the loss of the major client to investors within 48 hours. Then he returned to finding the right balance among the forces of preservation, destruction, and creation. This balance is the secret to Infosys's mastery of both the present and the future, and it must be the foundation for any business institution that aspires to endure for generations.

To learn more about applying the three-box approach in your organization, please read "Transforming Your Organization with the Three-Box Approach."

A version of this article appeared in the January–February 2011 issue of *Harvard Business Review*.




Vijay Govindarajan is the Coxie Distinguished Professor at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business and a Marvin Bower Fellow at Harvard Business School. He is the author of *The Three Box Solution: A Strategy for Leading Innovation* (HBR Press, April 2016).



Chris Trimble is on the faculties of the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth and the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice. He is the author of *How Physicians Can Fix Health Care: One Innovation at a Time*.

This article is about **INNOVATION**

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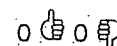
W Neder a year ago

Superb. The "3 Box Framework" is a good little retail idea that is fine enough as far as frameworks go, for sure. But the subtlety fleshed out in this piece in the less obvious corners of the discussion is well worth the time to read and think through.

Ideas like:

- \*the tensions that CEOs will face between their duty to be simultaneously preserving, destroying, and creating aspects of their organizations, and,
- \*the discussion about the intensity of the different external pressures that are created by the different box priorities and the sense of proportion that is needed, by leadership, to face them.

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# 1

## A Simple Framework for Leading Innovation: The Three Boxes

Leaders already know that innovation calls for a different set of skills, metrics, methods, mind-sets, and leadership approaches: they understand that creating a new business and optimizing an already existing one are two fundamentally different management challenges. The real problem for leaders is doing both, simultaneously. How do you align your organization on the critical, but competing, behaviors and activities required to simultaneously meet the performance requirements of the current business—one that is still thriving—while dramatically reinventing it?

Managers and executives, consultants and academics, and analysts and thought leaders around the world have long wrestled with this question, and in response, some of them have developed a concept known as “ambidexterity”: an organizational capability of fulfilling both managerial imperatives at once.<sup>1</sup>

## THE THREE-BOX SOLUTION

But what's missing is a simple and practical way for managers to allocate their—and their organization's—time and attention and resources on a day-to-day basis across the competing demands of managing today's requirements and tomorrow's possibilities. Managers need a simple tool—a new vocabulary, if you will—for managing and measuring the different sets of skills and behaviors across all levels of the organization. They need a practical tool that explicitly recognizes—and resolves—the inherent tensions of asking people to innovate and, at the same time, to run a business.

What's more—as anyone who has tried to lead innovation knows—the challenge goes beyond being ambidextrous in order to simultaneously manage today's business while creating tomorrow's. There is a third, and even more intractable, problem: letting go of yesterday's values and beliefs that keep the company stuck in the past.

What leaders need now is the Three-Box Solution.

### The Three-Box Solution

The ability to achieve significant *nonlinear* change starts with the realization that time is a continuum. The future is not located on some far-off horizon, and you cannot postpone the work of building it until tomorrow. To get to the future, you must build it day by day. That means being able to *selectively* set aside certain beliefs, assumptions, and practices created in and by the past that would otherwise become a rock wall between your business of today and its future potential. This basic idea is behind what I call the Three-Box Solution (see figure 1-1).

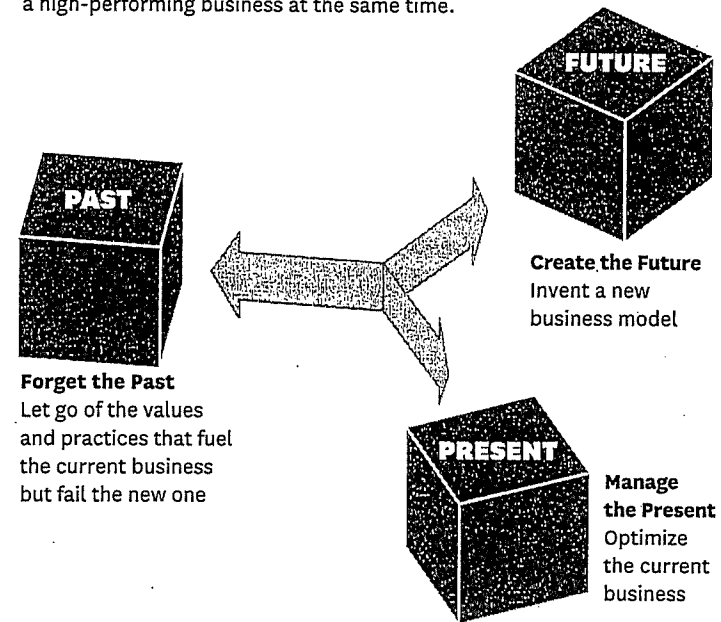
The Three-Box Solution is a simple framework that recognizes all three competing challenges managers face when leading innovation. It's a powerful guide for aligning organizations and teams on

## A Simple Framework for Leading Innovation

FIGURE 1-1

### The Three-Box Solution

By balancing the three boxes, managers can resolve the inherent tension of innovating a new business while running a high-performing business at the same time.



the critical but competing activities required to simultaneously create a new business while optimizing the current one. In the three boxes, companies must do the following:

- Box 1—Manage the present core business at peak efficiency and profitability.
- Box 2—Escape the traps of the past by identifying and divesting businesses and abandoning practices, ideas, and attitudes that have lost relevance in a changed environment.

## THE THREE-BOX SOLUTION

- Box 3—Generate breakthrough ideas and convert them into new products and businesses.

Success in each box requires a different set of skills, attitudes, practices, and leadership (see table 1-1).

TABLE 1-1

### The Three-Box Solution

	Strategy	Challenge	Leader behavior
<b>Box 1</b>	Run core business at peak efficiency; use linear innovations within existing business model to extend brands and/or improve product offerings.	Keep focus on near-term customer needs; optimize operations for high efficiency/lowest reasonable cost; reduce variance from plan; align rewards and incentives with strategy.	Set challenging goals for peak performance; analyze data to quickly spot and address exceptions and inefficiencies; create a culture of doing everything smarter, faster, cheaper.
<b>Leaders at all levels, especially CEOs, must pay regular attention to each box.</b>			
<b>Box 2</b>	Ability to build the future day by day begins here; create space and supporting structure for new nonlinear ideas; let go of past practices, habits, activities, and attitudes.	The past always fights back, so be prepared to make tough calls about values Box 3 needs to leave behind (remembering that some are still useful and needed in Box 1).	Establish formal regime of planned opportunism (i.e., gathering and analyzing weak signals); champion the ideas of maverick thinkers; do not tolerate obstructionism—set an example for the enterprise by visibly and publicly penalizing foot-draggers; anticipate the need for an orderly process of experimentation.
<b>Just as Boxes 2 and 3 must be protected, Box 1 must remain focused and undistracted.</b>			
<b>Box 3</b>	The nonlinear future is built mainly by experimentation that tests assumptions and resolves uncertainties, hedging risk; new learning either strengthens an idea or reveals its weaknesses.	It's not always obvious which ideas to pursue first—you need a method to gauge relative value and priority; expand variance, knowing success rate in Box 3 experiments is low; do not trim sails on Box 3 projects in a downturn.	Measure progress of Box 3 efforts not on revenue development but on the quality and pace of learning from experiments; since many nonlinear ideas launch into embryonic markets, it's important to test assumptions not only about the product but also the business model and the developing market.
<b>With the three boxes kept in balance, a business can change dynamically over time.</b>			

## A Simple Framework for Leading Innovation

By balancing the activities and behaviors associated with each box, every day, your organization will be inventing the future as a steady process over time rather than as a onetime, cataclysmic, do-or-die event. Simply put, the future is shaped by what you do, and don't do, today.

### What You Will Get from This Book

I have developed the Three-Box Solution over the course of thirty-five years of working with and doing research in corporations worldwide. It is the foundation of my thinking and teaching about strategy and innovation. In presenting the three-box framework to students and executives, I have been gratified to see how strongly it resonates with people. Business leaders from all kinds of organizations, such as GE, Tata Consultancy Services, Keurig Coffee, IBM, and Mahindra & Mahindra, who are featured in this book have told me they value the simplicity and clarity of the framework. But even more, they recognize that these ideas have the power to solve complex and intransigent business problems. As Beth Comstock, who serves as the president and CEO of GE Business Innovations and GE's chief marketing officer (CMO), told me:

*The three-box framework allowed General Electric to develop processes around our "protected class" of ideas that are given more time and space to prove their worth after they pass through an initial stage of rigorous testing. This "pivot-or-persevere" mind-set has allowed us to function more as a start-up and given rise to products such as the Durathon battery, which we took from lab to market in five years. Along with helping to set and align our portfolio, the three-box framework led us to think of innovation as a process. It's the way we're evolving the company and becoming faster, simpler, and more inventive.*

## THE THREE-BOX SOLUTION

Her colleague, Raghu Krishnamoorthy, the vice president of human resources at GE Crotonville, echoes these themes, emphasizing the lasting impact of the ideas on the company:

*The three-box framework gave our business teams the opportunity to reflect, debate, and establish the strategic center of gravity in both short and long terms. And it sparked new conversations within the organization relative to where energy and resources should be spent to achieve the best balance in managing "the current" while creating "the future." The approach proved to be effective across the company as leaders recognized a more powerful correlation between quantum improvements and quantum change and made a lasting impact in expanding our views, strengthening our culture, and positioning our organization for continued growth.*

My aim in writing the book is to provide insight and guidance that will help you and your organization attend to the long-term future with the same commitment and consistency with which you are driven to act on the clamorous priorities of the present. My hope is that the Three-Box Solution will make your job of leading innovation easier, with a simple vocabulary and set of tools that you can cascade down and across your organization, as GE has done.

*The Three-Box Solution* describes and illustrates, with in-depth examples, the framework for building the future *continuously* instead of waiting for the next crisis or for a new competitor to come out of the blue with a brilliant future you never imagined. The book is meant for leaders at all levels—from the small team to the functional department, from the business unit to the corner office, from managers responsible for the daily execution of the core business to those who drive and inspire innovation. The more people in a company who understand how the three boxes work, the better prepared that

## A Simple Framework for Leading Innovation

organization will be to anticipate and exploit changes of all kinds—to act instead of react. The Three-Box Solution framework has the potential to transform the future of any organization that embraces it, whether it's a large, for-profit enterprise; a midsize business; or a small nonprofit institution.

Let's turn to the story of one of those organizations.

## Transforming Hasbro

In the mid-1990s, toy giant Hasbro saw itself as a product company. Its offerings consisted mainly of toys (among them G.I. Joe, Transformers, and My Little Pony) and board games (The Game of Life, Monopoly, Candy Land, and Chutes and Ladders). Hasbro competed in an industry broadly referred to as "family entertainment"—toys and games described by marketers as appealing to "kids from two to ninety-two." Until the 1990s, people typically purchased Hasbro products in a retail store. Customers shopped, bought, and returned home with a toy or game.

Today, Hasbro is very different; it's a self-styled "branded-play company." Its relationships with customers may or may not begin with a physical product on a physical shelf. Instead, the Hasbro universe features numerous constellations serving as points of entry. Customers get to know and use Hasbro's core brands across multiple platforms: online games and fan sites, movies and television shows, digital gaming systems, and comic books and magazines produced through partnerships with Disney and other companies. The goal is to create many opportunities for ongoing exposure to, and experience of, the various Hasbro brands. Hasbro has parlayed the popular Transformers line, for example, into a wide array of media, products, and experiences. (See the sidebar, "Transformers' Metamorphosis into a Lifestyle Brand.")

## Transformers' Metamorphosis into a Lifestyle Brand

Hasbro's line of Transformers toys and action figures is aptly named. Since the creatively changeable products debuted in 1984, they've morphed into an ever-expanding array of branded manifestations beyond the toys themselves:

- Universal Studios Hollywood, Transformers: The Ride-3D (you must be at least forty inches tall)
- Movies and television shows
- Clothing (T-shirts, jackets, hoodies) in infant, child, and adult sizes
- Character costumes, including helmets, masks, armor, and weaponry
- Backpacks and lunch bags
- Games for Xbox and PlayStation console systems
- Room décor, including Transformers-themed comforters, sheets, pillowcases, and wall decals (be sure to get Mom's permission first)
- Print and digital comic books (through an arrangement with IDW Publishing)

Many of Hasbro's other brands have also pursued this kind of ubiquitous experiential marketing strategy—lifestyle brands that have a 360-degree impact and influence on consumers. While families might once have played

For Hasbro, the differences between the past and now are dramatic. Yet, over the years during which I have closely observed this company, I have been struck by the fact that the changes were not sudden but were the result of continuing attention, experimentation, and learning—some of it ambiguous or inconclusive—that spanned most



board games together on rainy days or in the evening, today they can wear branded Transformers clothing, go to Transformers movies, travel to theme parks to experience a 3D Transformers ride, or decorate their children's rooms with Transformers bedding. The Box 3 strategy is to create and capture value from the brand across multiple platforms.

Source: Photos copyright TRANSFORMERS® and copyright 2015 Hasbro, Inc. Used with permission.

of two decades. For Hasbro, inventing the future was more of a steady process than a cataclysmic event.

The story of Hasbro's transformation neatly showcases the themes at the heart of this book: how organizations can, in a balanced way, *manage their present core businesses at peak efficiency and profitability*

(Box 1); *escape the insidious traps of the past* (Box 2); and *innovate nonlinear futures* (Box 3).

### Why Is It So Hard to Balance the Three Boxes?

For a long time, I have been troubled to see how often organizations fail to invest wisely in their futures while instead placing dominant emphasis on the present. To be sure, the Box 1 present is vitally important. Box 1 is the *performance engine*. It both funds day-to-day operations and generates profits for the future. Where problems arise is when the present crowds out other strategic priorities—for example, when the *only* skills brought into a business are those that serve today's core.

That is shortsighted in every sense of the word. As Box 1 grows in dominance, Box 3 languishes and Box 2 barely exists. This is a tragic waste. Businesses achieve strategic fitness only when they thoroughly understand and carefully manage the benefits and risks of each of the three boxes. The three-box framework will help you deliver stronger overall performance and more-innovative futures while also building an organization fit to survive not just from quarter to quarter but for generations. As Karim Tabbouche, the chief strategy officer of VIVA Bahrain, told me: "Our planning process had become myopic and short term in nature, with our objectives becoming tactical and linear in nature. The three-box framework has challenged us to redesign the planning process, which would allow us to brainstorm Box 2 and Box 3 nonlinear initiatives in addition to undertaking Box 1 operational excellence initiatives. It is important to allocate resources to Box 1, Box 2, and Box 3 projects to maintain a healthy balance among the boxes."

Yet it is not surprising that so many organizations focus mainly—even exclusively—on Box 1. The Box 1 present is their comfort zone,

based on activities and ideas that are proven, well understood, and firmly embedded in the business. Most firms' organizational structures were built on the successes of the past, refined over time to support the priorities of the present core business, and focused on maximizing cash flow and profit generated by the core.

By comparison, the Box 2 work of avoiding the traps of the past is difficult and painful. It may require wrenching management decisions to divest long-standing lines of business or to abandon entrenched practices and attitudes that are unwelcoming or even hostile to ideas that don't conform to the dominant model of past success. Moreover, the Box 3 methodology for creating the future consists of leaps of faith and experimentation that are fraught with uncertainty and risk. The regime calls for entirely different management strategies and metrics than does the relatively settled and predictable work of executing the present core business at the highest level.

So Box 1 is, by contrast, a tranquil refuge:

- The rewards of focusing on the present are immediate, easy to forecast, and easy to measure. Markets apply continuous pressure on businesses to maximize present opportunities and opposing pressure to steer clear of nebulous long-term distractions.
- The skills and expertise needed to thrive in the present are known and abundantly available, whereas ten to fifteen years out is a black box. Every bet you place on the future is an exercise in brain-cramping guesswork. And the results likely won't be known for a long time to come.
- The risks of the present are relatively low. Those that exist—market volatility, macroeconomic forces, competitors' moves, and regulatory and political changes—are generally well understood and manageable through established means.

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- Even though the long-term risks of neglecting the future are immense, they are too distant and abstract to provoke a sense of motivating urgency.

Yet a sense of urgency is exactly what's needed. To become disproportionately devoted to Box 1 is to leave vital organizational muscles underdeveloped; when you suddenly need them in a pinch, they won't be ready. The only sane recourse is to exercise all of the organization's muscle groups regularly, just as you would to keep yourself physically fit. The three boxes, managed together and given the requisite ongoing attention, achieve a level of balance that in the long run helps organizations avoid self-inflicted crises and respond opportunistically to the unavoidable ones.

One of the things you will discover, once you begin to pay daily attention to each of the three boxes, is that they are interrelated and indispensable to each other. I like the way Hasbro CEO Brian Goldner describes them: "For me, the three boxes are like a Russian nesting doll. They are doppelgangers that are influenced by the shape and size of the others and can't be dealt with separately."

Another thing you will discover is that although they are interrelated, the three boxes call for divergent skills, disciplines, and management strategies. Leaders therefore need to become more than *ambidextrous*, as I mentioned earlier, as they transition among the boxes. Because it is so easy to default to Box 1, spreading attention around to all three will require conscious discipline. Hasbro's Goldner logs the amount of time he devotes to each box: "I quite literally review my calendar every week to make sure I'm allocating enough attention to Boxes 2 and 3."

The goal of achieving balance among the three boxes requires understanding that each box defines success in its particular context:

- The skills and experience you apply in Box 1 allow you to *operate at peak efficiency and execute linear innovations in your core businesses.*

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- The skills of Box 2 allow you to *selectively forget the past* by identifying and divesting businesses and abandoning practices, ideas, and attitudes that have lost relevance in a changed environment and would otherwise interfere with your focus on inventing the future.
- The skills of Box 3 allow you to *generate nonlinear ideas and convert them, through experimentation, into new products and business models.*

Ultimately, the Three-Box Solution is about managing the natural tension among the values of *preservation, destruction, and creation*—forces with which I was abundantly familiar growing up in India. (See the sidebar, "The Hindu Roots of the Three-Box Solution," for a glimpse into my framework's philosophical underpinnings.)

### The Success Trap

The biggest challenge you have in balancing the three boxes is that the greater your success in Box 1, the more difficulties you are likely to face in conceiving and executing breakthrough Box 3 strategies. This "success trap" typically arises not from willful inattention but from the overwhelming power of success that the past has brought.

The most pernicious effect of the success trap is that it encourages a business to suppose it already knows what it needs to know in order to succeed in the future. But that's not true. Organizations that do not continuously learn new things will die.

Like most other forms of popular entertainment, Hasbro competes in a "hits-based" industry, launching many new products in the hope that one or more will become the sort of breakout platform or franchise that vastly overcompensates for the cost of developing products that don't hit it big. Over the years, Hasbro has had its share of

## The Hindu Roots of the Three-Box Solution

In the Hindu faith, the three main gods are Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma. Vishnu is the god of preservation, Shiva is the god of destruction, and Brahma is the god of creation. This triumvirate of familiar Hindu deities corresponds to the work of sustaining a thriving business. Like Vishnu, the firm must preserve its existing core; like Shiva, it must destroy unproductive vestiges of the past; and like Brahma, it must create a potent new future that will replenish what time and circumstance have destroyed.

Hindu myth makers paired each of the three gods with symbolically relevant wives. Vishnu's wife is Lakshmi, who bestows wealth, just as Box 1 produces current profits. Shiva's partner is Parvathi, who symbolizes power, a vital Box 2 necessity when selectively destroying the past. Brahma is betrothed to Saraswathi, who symbolizes creativity and knowledge—the critical inputs for Box 3 innovations and the wellspring of future profits.

According to Hindu philosophy, creation-preservation-destruction is a continuous cycle without a beginning or an end. Each of the three gods plays an equally important role in creating and maintaining all forms of life. Further, Hinduism states that while changes in the universe can be quite dramatic, the processes leading to those changes usually are evolutionary, involving many smaller steps. Consistent with this philosophy, the work of sustaining an enterprise is a dynamic and rhythmic process, one that never ends.

I have never before encountered an organization that has encoded the Three-Box Solution into its organizational scheme as explicitly as Mu Sigma, a rapidly growing decision sciences and big data analytics firm with

legendary hits (Mr. Potato Head, G.I. Joe, and Transformers), each becoming a growth platform. But until twenty years ago, the company had continued to see itself as a toy and game manufacturer for the retail channel.

The risk for a business of Hasbro's type is that it could become complacent, resting on its laurels and perhaps failing to notice changes in the environment that could threaten a formerly secure business

headquarters in Chicago and an innovation and development center in Bangalore, backed by Sequoia Capital and General Atlantic. Inspired by his grandmother's narration of stories from Hindu mythology, Mu Sigma founder and CEO Dhiraj Rajaram has used the three main deities of the Hindu faith to conceive a sustainably harmonized approach to the cycles of preservation, destruction, and creation.

The company divides its leadership into three "clans"—the Vishnu (preservation), Shiva (destruction), and Brahma (creation). On the company website, the leadership team members are explicitly designated Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma. The designations are not arbitrary. They are based on an assessment of the natural propensities of each leader. The expectation is that having explicit roles will help the cause of harmony among the three boxes.

The three clans engage in a dynamic, cyclical process of challenge and response. According to Rajaram, "There is a contest among the clans, with each one testing the other to provoke the most rigorous defense of its plans and ideas." Vishnu challenges Shiva over what to preserve versus what to forget; Shiva challenges Brahma over which new ideas are truly worth pursuing. "Only when each intended move is explored and challenged from every angle can the best solutions emerge," said Rajaram. Creating the clans, he added, "was a way for the three-box concept to become ingrained in the company culture. It is the constant engagement of these three that helps organizations to benefit from change."

model. That is why organizations must develop the Box 2 capacity to overcome the influence of the past, to divest one identity in favor of another.

That said, one thing Hasbro has going for it is a history of executing sudden and startling mutations. Founded in the 1920s by three brothers named Hassenfeld, the company was first a textile-remnants business but soon began to manufacture pencil boxes and other school

supplies. When its pencil supplier raised prices, the company began manufacturing its own pencils, a successful enterprise that lasted into the 1980s and provided profits that funded other products and ventures. Coinciding with the postwar plastics revolution of the 1940s, the company launched its earliest toys (doctor and nurse kits with play stethoscopes, thermometers, and syringes). Mr. Potato Head debuted in 1952.

Businesses less metamorphic than Hasbro may face a steeper climb to develop their Box 2 disciplines. The work of Box 1, being founded on past success, is typically structured according to the operational disciplines engendered by that success. The fruits of success are real and the demands to sustain them are constant. From this defining DNA, firms create their systems, processes, and cultures. These structures shape the way an organization approaches everything it does: how it hires, promotes, invests, measures performance, formulates strategy, and evaluates ideas and opportunities. *Linear* ideas (those that conform with the past) tend to be adopted easily, whereas *nonlinear* ideas (nonconforming and therefore both uncertain and threatening) tend to be rejected easily.

One of the practical implications is that you don't want Box 1 teams being distracted from their performance goals—and they don't want to be distracted from the goals either. The general manager of MeYou Health, Trapper Markelz, told me about the time his company tried to use the “core” sales team to sell a radically new product:

*In 2014 my Box 3 dedicated team had a powerful new product. Initially, we used the [shared corporate] sales team, but it was not prioritizing our product because it targeted different customer segments at a different price point. Sales were lagging significantly behind targets. Before learning about three-box thinking, I believed this to be a training problem. After three-box thinking, I came to*

*understand the challenge: my business unit was asking the sales team to do different (Box 3), while the rest of the company was asking them to do more (Box 1). We can't expect them to do both. So I proposed to the CEO that we fund the creation of a separate sales and marketing team for my business unit.*

This is the trap that past success can engender. Ideas that differ substantially from those we are accustomed to almost always struggle to take root. As much as we might pay lip service to the fact that the future will differ dramatically from the past, we often behave as though it will be exactly the same.

Had Hasbro continued to see itself as a toy and game manufacturer whose customer relationships existed only at the retail point of sale, it would not be the successful company it is today. In the intervening decades, it transformed itself by shedding its old identities. That is among the many reasons why Box 2, whose mechanisms explicitly target success traps, is such an important enabler of Box 3 innovation. Later on you will see, in the example of United Rentals (chapter 4), that Box 2 disciplines can sometimes also be useful in helping to reconceive the way the Box 1 performance engine executes the core business.

### *Linear and Nonlinear Innovation*

Another challenge you will have in balancing the three boxes is that Box 1 and Box 3 require distinctive forms of innovation. Leading innovation calls for fundamentally different management approaches in the two boxes. That's why it is critical to distinguish between the respective types of innovation.

There are many typologies used to classify innovation: Innovations can be sustaining or disruptive. They can be incremental or radical.

They can be competency enhancing or competency destroying. They can relate to product or process. However, I divide *all* innovations into two main types:

- *Linear* innovations improve the performance of your *current* business model. As such, they are part of the work of Box 1. For example, Hasbro developed *Star Wars*-themed versions of two of its classics: the game of Monopoly and Mr. Potato Head ("Darth Tater"). Both were brand extensions within an essentially unchanged business model. This type of innovation builds on the present core, making use of Box 1 knowledge, systems, and structures. Linear innovation is thus straightforward, unambiguous, and unthreatening to the status quo.
- *Nonlinear* innovations, the domain of Box 3, create *new* business models by dramatically (1) redefining your set of customers, (2) reinventing the value you offer them, and/or (3) redesigning the end-to-end value-chain architecture by which you deliver that value. As you will see, Hasbro executed variants of all three approaches, offering new value to new sets of customers across a dramatically redesigned value chain.

### Preparing for Futures You Cannot Predict: Planned Optimism, Weak Signals, and the Daily Built Future

As the cliché asserts, "Fortune favors the well prepared." Equally true is that misfortune afflicts the unprepared. Partly because their energies are overinvested in the Box 1 present, leaders often find it difficult to remember that *the future is now*. It is built day by day, a little at a time, beginning with *what you do today that adds something new to*

*what you did yesterday*. Karan Gupta, managing director of IE Business School, told me that using the three-box framework has had an impact there:

*Though the three-box idea is simple, it is extremely difficult to put into practice. Getting out of one's daily activities and focusing on the future is easier said than done. However, applying the three-box model produces major impact. Constant reminders and the promise to "look in the mirror every day and ask oneself what one has done in Box 3 today" have helped our managers to excel in their daily activities and focus on the future. I noticed a remarkable change in managers. They performed their daily activities more efficiently so that they could free up time for Box 3 ideas.*

Daily investments in Box 3 activity prepare you for whatever the unknowable future brings—good or bad. Failing to make those investments will likely result in a disappointing or endangered future.

Why is it so difficult to practice this simple lesson? *Because when you neglect the future today, you don't see the damage today.*

Consider a Box 3 activity for an individual: doing regular exercise to ensure future health. Executives with hectic travel schedules commonly find it difficult to sustain an exercise routine. Everyone knows that travel can be draining. Since a single day's failure to exercise exacts what feels like only a trivial cost, it is easy to choose *not* to go to the hotel fitness room to exercise. However, the costs of this choice accumulate over time, leading to a future of declining health in the form of added pounds, greater unrelieved stress, lower energy and endurance, and perhaps the higher risk of a serious illness.

As with the failure to make ongoing investments in personal fitness, businesses that do not attend to their own futures day in and day out are likely to be surprised eventually by a crisis—one that may have

been brewing for years. On the other hand, if you proactively attend to the future *every day*, you earn the opportunity to shape the future to your advantage. Businesses must develop an active innovation culture through what I call *planned opportunism*. Planned opportunism is about a set of leadership behaviors and actions that *prepares you for the futures you cannot predict*. In practice, that means building an assortment of forward-looking competencies and embracing the disciplines of experimentation that create the flexibility to both pursue and shape the unexpected opportunities that come your way. The issue is not one of predicting the future; it is about being prepared for circumstances you do not exclusively control.

Planned opportunism is one of the Three-Box Solution's most important concepts. It is a way to compensate for unpredictability of all kinds—good and bad. A simple example of this lurks in an observation that many business thinkers have made but which most organizations find difficult to put into practice: businesses that make across-the-board cuts, including cuts to strategic activities, during a downturn recover less resiliently than those that make more targeted cuts or even increase their investments in key Box 3 initiatives. In the latter case, it is planned opportunism that allows a business to deal with difficult circumstances by acting from a position of strategic confidence rather than one of fear or panic.

Institutionally, Hasbro became quite good over the years at practicing planned opportunism. I have included in table 1-2 a list of strategic discontinuities—diverse nonlinear changes relevant to Hasbro's competitive environment—that occurred during the years between the mid-1990s and 2015. How likely is it that the Hasbro of twenty years ago could have predicted all of these changes? Not very. But it would have been able to generate informed hypotheses pointing in productive directions. To do that would have required a level of insight formed in part by what futurists call “weak signals.”<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 1-2

Twenty years of strategic shifts in family entertainment, 1995–2015

Technology	Family entertainment concepts	Retail channels	Demography	Globalization
Proprietary gaming systems/platforms	Families spend less time playing together; play is thus more age segmented.	Big-box stores drive retail consolidation, crowding out small mom-and-pop and boutique outlets.	Children “grow older younger,” lose interest in traditional toys at an earlier age.	Potential growth in emerging markets, where concepts of play are different and disposable income is low. But . . .
Robotics	Parents in two-income households spend less time with children but have more money to entertain children.	Large retailers drive economies of scale, demand high levels of supply chain integration.	Aging population makes grandparents a powerful buying segment; they often “own” play activities with grandkids.	. . . in emerging markets, new approaches to product design, manufacturing, and marketing will be needed to overcome cultural, market, and logistic barriers.
Rapid growth of internet and wireless, evolving to dominant entertainment channel	Parents prefer toys and games that offer enrichment value.	Big players offer private-label products.	Adults find opportunities for play in social and/or work settings (gaming as a strategy or simulation tool).	Thus, Western firms need to build new competencies.
Handheld digital devices and media (cameras, smartphones, tablets, etc.)	Many children are hyper-scheduled and have less leisure time; when they play, they are often by themselves and prefer fast-paced video games.	Bankruptcy of “traditional” competitors leads to further consolidation.	Growing minority populations soon gain majority status.	Growth potential in developed markets can be pursued through existing competencies.
Shrinking product life cycles plus rapid technology advances put intense downward price pressure on technology-based games.				

Weak signals consist of emergent changes to technology, culture, markets, the economy, consumer tastes and behavior, and demographics. As the term suggests, weak signals are hard to evaluate because they are incomplete, unsettled, and unclear. But they are the raw material for developing hypotheses about nonlinear changes in the future. Hasbro devised a method for tapping weak signals and using them to make inferences about possible futures that might develop.

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The process starts with these three basic questions:

- What particular factors and conditions does one's current success depend on?
- Which of these factors might change over time or are changing already, thus putting current success at risk?
- How can one begin to anticipate and prepare for these possible changes so as to cushion or even exploit their impact?

Having answered these questions, Hasbro over time was able to make what in retrospect were smart, nonlinear moves toward an unpredictable future. No matter what business you're in, you will benefit from being active rather than passive when dealing with time and change. That is the essence of the Three-Box Solution.

As Hasbro looked toward the future, it was able to anticipate some of the discontinuities. For example, the fact that both parents in many households held full-time jobs was already the US norm. Less clear was what that implied for the concept of family entertainment. A falling US birthrate meant Hasbro additionally faced a shrinking customer base. The company might also have seen the growing demographic diversity of its US customers. And as globalization accelerated, it might likewise have developed an appetite for the growth potential in markets around the world.

Similarly, there were weak signals even in the 1980s—the Atari video game and the personal computer revolution, for example—that gave early warning that technology would disrupt the gaming space. However, twenty years ago, there were significant unknowns about the evolution of technology-based gaming:

- How quickly would the internet become a potent channel?
- How could companies combine physical and virtual realms for their consumers?

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- Who would be the new competitors in this space (Electronic Arts? Nintendo? America Online? Sony?)?
- Who might be potential new partners (Marvel Comics? Pixar?)?
- Would the PC remain the predominant platform for home technology or would a new one (mobile phones) or an old one (television) supersede it?
- What would be the new economic model when the industry moved from "analog dollars" to "digital pennies"?

### Balancing the Three Boxes: Experiment to Grow Knowledge and Shrink Uncertainty

Across domains riven with uncertainty, the best way to address questions like those Hasbro faced is by conducting low-cost experiments meant to test critical unknowns en route to conceiving scalable new business models. As Goldner noted, "You must probe and learn to achieve clarity in embryonic markets." (As you will read in chapter 3, IBM's emerging business opportunities process was heavily focused on learning about technology markets so new that, like planets cooling from clouds of gas and debris, they were not yet fully formed.) In such circumstances, the experiments that arise from inferences based on weak signals must be accompanied by robust hedging strategies.

Experimentation is all about learning, but if you can't forget, you're unlikely to learn. To succeed in Box 3 creation, you must first excel in Box 2 destruction. The work of Box 2 often comes down to making key distinctions between values that are *timeless* (enduring for the long run) versus those that are *timely* (ultimately perishable with the passing of time). Think of roots and chains. If you cut a tree's roots, it dies. Therefore, leaders need to understand that their organizations' roots

have timeless value and need to be preserved. Conversely, every organization also accumulates chains consisting of once-timely ideas and activities that have lost their usefulness. If you do not find and break the chains, they will keep you from getting to the future.

Organizations need to test ideas for new lines of business both for their alignment with timeless values and for the timeliness of the opportunities they present. Part of the benefit of developing a process for making such judgments lies in its capacity to help enterprises stay centered within their mission and vision.

Hasbro has never lacked for creative ideas, but one of its ventures in the 1970s offers a cautionary tale about getting ahead of oneself. In 1970, when wild adventures in diversification were in vogue across many industries, the company launched a chain of nursery schools under the Romper Room brand (made famous by a popular children's television program). There was an element of timeliness to the idea; the administration of President Richard M. Nixon had recently begun a program of child-care credits. Moreover, Hasbro believed that the schools would build on its successful line of Romper Room-branded toys. But when a product company jumps into a service business, it risks violating a timeless value and venturing out of its depth. That's where Hasbro found itself. "We'd get phone calls saying, 'We can't find one of the kids.' The whole company would stop," Alan Hassenfeld, a member of Hasbro's founding family, told the *Wall Street Journal* in a December 13, 1984, article. After five years of a bold but ill-advised strategy, Hasbro exited the nursery school business.

Not every nonlinear idea will be right for your business. Part of a sound hedging strategy when experimenting with nonlinear ideas is to assess *how far may be too far* to stretch your existing business model and internal skills. By 1970, Hasbro had settled into being primarily a maker of toys. As it considered the Romper Room nursery-school idea—notwithstanding the brand leverage it stood to gain through the schools—Hasbro could have concluded that its internal skills

and culture didn't suit the demands of an early-childhood-education business model (whose degree of difficulty it may have underestimated). Getting out of the business required recognizing that the unfamiliar business model had taken Hasbro too far from its timeless center.

### Balancing the Three Boxes: Structure as a Lever to Unlock New Value

"Box 2 is the most challenging in a company like Hasbro that's been around a long time," said Goldner. (See the sidebar, "Hasbro's 'Forgetting' Challenges in the Mid-1990s.")

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#### Hasbro's "Forgetting" Challenges in the Mid-1990s

In light of the nonlinear shifts identified in table 1-2, one can speculate about several core assumptions that Hasbro needed to selectively forget to ensure future success:

- We are a product company.
  - We make analog-based games that have long product life cycles, command premium prices, and generate high margins.
  - We distribute through brick-and-mortar retail outlets.
  - Our consumers are kids fifteen years old and younger.
  - We make board games that promote face-to-face social interaction in a physical setting.
  - We are an American company.
  - And so on . . .
-

The key to a successful strategy of forgetting may turn out to require shaking things up by changing the organizational structure. Goldner remarked, "Hasbro was historically very siloed. So one of the first things we did [in the early 2000s] was move away from manufacturing categories toward a brand orientation under global brand leaders. This was a Box 2 move; we had to forget how we operated in the past." (Structural changes may sometimes be a necessary prerequisite to initiating programs of nonlinear innovation. In chapter 6, Mahindra Group CEO Anand Mahindra describes how changing the diversified company's organizational structure unleashed new market potential and a more entrepreneurial culture.)

Organizing around brand platforms gave Hasbro managers both the accountability and the authority to pursue myriad brand opportunities. And planned opportunism prepared the company to be flexible in developing strategies that could meet head-on the various changes in technology, demography, generational behavior, and global opportunity it already had identified.

In 2000, Hasbro had little presence in emerging markets. Since then, it has invested aggressively and now earns more than 50 percent of its revenues from non-US markets, including significant revenues in emerging markets. The company has increased its emphasis on digital gaming. Hasbro's global brand teams have leveraged core brands, such as Transformers, across multiple platforms: toys, movies, television, and the internet (including social media). In 2000, Hasbro's top-eight brands delivered 17 percent of total revenues; as of 2015, they accounted for more than 50 percent.

Between the end of 2000 and the first quarter of 2015, Hasbro's stock price rose from \$11 to \$72. This represented a compounded annual growth of 14 percent in market capitalization in fifteen years, despite the turbulence of the dot-com bust and the Great Recession. In sharp contrast, the stock price of Mattel, Hasbro's major competitor,

increased from \$15 to \$25 during the same period. Even though Mattel exceeded Hasbro in sales revenue—\$6.02 billion versus \$4.3 billion in 2014—both companies had a similar market capitalization as of April 2015.

One of Hasbro's strengths is the recognition that nonlinear initiatives sometimes require rebooting. In 2009, the company eyed the growing number of cable TV networks and chose to dive in, partnering with Discovery Communications to launch The Hub Network.<sup>3</sup> The audience grew to roughly 70 million homes over four years. Even so, Hasbro decided to pull back from the investment in 2014, giving Discovery controlling interest in a 60/40 split. The move "incentivized [Discovery] to more fully support the network" while allowing Hasbro to "[generate] significant merchandise sales from TV shows built around *My Little Pony*, *Littlest Pet Shop*, and *Transformers Rescue Bots* that air on the channel," said Goldner.

Hasbro added to its merchandising muscle by entering into a new agreement with Disney around the same time. Disney announced it was giving Hasbro global rights to manufacture dolls from its popular Disney Princess—eleven female characters, including Cinderella, Jasmine, Mulan, and Pocahontas—and *Frozen* lines. The agreement ended Disney's nearly twenty-year relationship with Mattel and opened new horizons for Hasbro, whose target market had been tilting predominantly male. This strategic initiative leveraged Hasbro's existing resources while still taking the company in a new direction.

Goldner has initiated innovations in structure and process to keep strategic thinking sharp and ensure that continuous focus is applied to Box 3 ideas: "We have a team called Future Now that works only on the future of our brands; they don't think about how to sell the brand this year." Hasbro also considers ways the boxes can intersect and provide mutual benefit. Goldner convenes what are known as "martini meetings," so named because brainstorming at the meeting follows

the shape of a martini glass. "We start at the rim, as far out as we can, and think about emerging technologies and new inventions. Real Box 3 thinking. Then we narrow these ideas down to those that are most promising. As we move closer to the stem, we see how those technologies can be applied to our current product lines."

New business structures are often indispensable to giving shape, method, and discipline to managing the boxes in concert. For both better *and* worse, organizations optimize around their core successes. It makes great sense to do so. But you must also create oases where you direct regular systematic focus beyond the near horizon of Box 1. Otherwise, lacking ready access to weak signals, your future will be starved of nonlinear ideas to develop. Regular meetings and deliverables make it more difficult to slide back into a habit of neglect.

The key point to take away here is that Hasbro has learned to see value in all three boxes, understands that they are interrelated, and has taken formal steps to ensure each gets the necessary attention.

### Keeping It Simple: Basic Principles of the Three-Box Solution

Oliver Wendell Holmes is said to have observed, "I would not give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." The meaning of this quote is frequently debated, but I take it to mean that Holmes judged an idea or a tool by its ultimate effectiveness. Until it shows its mettle, he doesn't give a fig; he remains a skeptic. I use the quote to suggest that this book will show how this simple framework can prove its mettle by helping you tame the apparent complexities of leading innovation. The denser the tangle, the more useful the tool.

The deceptively simple Three-Box Solution has only a handful of principles:

- You should engage in both linear (Box 1) and nonlinear (Box 3) innovations to ensure leadership in the future.
- Success in Box 1 is the primary inhibitor of taking bold action in Box 3. You must develop the discipline of selectively forgetting the past (Box 2) or the past will prevent you from creating the future.
- Optimizing current business models in Box 1 and creating new business models in Box 3 must be pursued *simultaneously*, yet they call for different activities, skills, methods, metrics, mind-sets, and leadership approaches.
- Managing the three boxes is a journey, not a project. Businesses fail at it when they are sporadic rather than continuous in seeking balance. Like gardens that need regular watering and weeding, each box requires ongoing attention.
- Don't think about the future as a far-off time. The future is actually now because you are building it day by day.

The next five chapters draw on varied examples, including a coffee-roasting and beverage-brewing company, a global network of Protestant churches, and a large equipment-rental business. Each is distinctively accomplished in using one or more of the three boxes, and a couple of them are exceptional at keeping all three in balance. Most have faced powerful "forgetting" challenges. None of them would ever claim to have all the answers; indeed, the work of trying to sustain balance is automatically humbling.

We will look at the three boxes one by one in the next three chapters, moving from the future (Box 3) to the past (Box 2) and returning to the present (Box 1). The Three-Box Solution is a concept to communicate the balance of leadership for the here and now, forgetting the past, and creating the future as a three-ringed circus occurring simultaneously. We return to the theme of balance across the three boxes in chapters 5 and 6.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find *takeaways* that distill the core message in a way you can share with others in your organization. A *tools* section, also at the end of every chapter, includes discussion points, questionnaires, and activities to help you and your team apply the ideas and develop your own Three-Box Solution.

We begin with the future (Box 3) in chapter 2 because the future is about creation, and creation not only precedes everything else, but the task of creating the future really is where the problem of balance lies. You'll want to start with a cup of strong coffee.

### Takeaways

- **Do not distract those who work in the core Box 1 business from their demanding performance goals.** Box 1 cannot execute Box 3 innovations. And that is OK. Remember that Box 3 cannot exist without Box 1. Also, what must be forgotten for the purposes of Box 3 may still be vitally important to Box 1.
- **Box 2 is the indispensable element of the Three-Box Solution.** Most organizations ignore Box 2 as they try to innovate their way to a new model. Even as old ideas and practices choke off the new future they're trying to create, organizations find it very difficult to overcome the power of the past. The more attention a company pays to Box 2, the more room there is for the Box 3 to achieve its goals. If Box 3 were an NFL quarterback, Box 2 would be the offensive line, providing time and flexibility in which to read the defense, execute, and, if necessary, improvise. Without a well-functioning Box 2 discipline, your Box 3 offense will be stagnant and predictable.
- **Good Box 3 hedging strategies are important.** In a regime of experimentation and learning, not every step along the way will be successful. You need to develop a process for hedging

risk. That typically means testing assumptions through iterative learning stages that, over time, resolve uncertainty and either produce growing confidence or reveal the need for a reboot or exit. Hasbro's 1970s venture into Romper Room-branded nursery schools might have benefited from better testing and hedging.

- **Create formal processes that both serve the goals of Box 3 and increase the likelihood of achieving balance among all three boxes.** Sustainable Box 3 activities require both structure and accountability. Hasbro CEO Brian Goldner inaugurated "martini meetings" and the Future Now team to keep Hasbro moving forward on Box 3 ideas. The martini meetings served the further purpose of identifying situations in which the three boxes might intersect. This became procedural reinforcement of the boxes' relatedness and ultimately contributed to balance. On a personal time-management level, Goldner audits the amount of attention he devotes to each box every week.
- **Think of the Three-Box Solution as endlessly cyclical.** You are always preserving the present, destroying the past, and building the future. In other words, the business models, products, and services you create in Box 3 will at some point become your new Box 1.
- **The Three-Box Solution imposes on leaders a requirement for humility,** because it is essentially a strategy for taking action through continuous learning. Learning is intrinsically a humbling activity; to learn is to admit you don't know everything. Almost every aspect of the Three-Box Solution framework is intended to increase opportunities to listen and learn. In my experience, the most effective leaders also happen to be good listeners, are never arrogant, and are able to disregard rank and status in the service of finding the best ideas. The examples in later chapters will bear this out.

## TOOLS

### Tool 1: Assess Your Business

Crafting Three-Box Solutions will require you to look at the way your business operates through a new lens. The starting point is to understand the way things operate now. For instance:

- How easy or difficult is it for your business to generate, refine, incubate, and launch new business ideas?
- Has your company, business unit, or functional department developed ongoing processes for identifying emergent trends, based on weak signals, that are likely to affect your business in the coming years?
- Describe your current planning process. Does it incorporate the voices of maverick thinkers? Does your population of mavericks feel empowered or, conversely, stifled?
- Describe your current method for resource allocation. Does it earmark funds for high-risk projects?
- Describe your current performance management system. Does it support experiments with unknown outcomes?
- Describe your current approach to talent acquisition. In addition to keeping Box 1 well stocked, do you also recruit talent that would support tomorrow's business?
- What particular factors and conditions does your current success depend on? Which of these factors might change over time, thus putting current success at risk? Do you have formal processes to anticipate and prepare for these possible changes so as to cushion or even exploit their impact?

- How much time does your management team currently spend on Box 1 versus Boxes 2 and 3?
- What barriers prevent your management team from spending more time on Boxes 2 and 3?

### Tool 2: Identify Weak Signals

After diagnosing your current situation, initiate conversations around Box 3 thinking. As a management team, identify the *weak signals* that potentially could transform your industry in the future. In particular, reflect on:

- **Customer discontinuities.** Are today's biggest, fastest-growing, or most profitable customer segments likely to be the same ones in ten to fifteen years? Who will be your customers in the future? Are there small or emerging customer segments today that are using or even customizing your products or services in unconventional ways? Which nonconsumers today could potentially become consumers in the future? What would be their priorities?
- **Technological discontinuities.** What disruptive technologies can open up new opportunity spaces?
- **Nontraditional competitors.** Are today's most potent competitors likely to be the same ones in ten to fifteen years? Who will you be competing against in the future? And on what basis?
- **New distribution channels.** Will there be fundamental changes in your go-to-market approach in the future? What possible supply-chain economies (or diseconomies) might your business face?
- **Regulatory changes.** What are the potential regulatory reforms? What new opportunities might they open up for you?



# MDPC Strategic Goals through 2027

In addition to our previous goals, we affirm the four central Strategic Guiding Priorities below that fuel the advancement of The Great Commandments (Matt. 22:34-40) and The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) with our head, heart, and hands.



## EVANGELISM/ CONVERSATIONS

*Know God's story through Jesus personally*

- A) Grow Alpha participants, testimonies of transformation in worship and online, and believer baptisms by 5% annually, so that more God moments become God movements.
- B) Take 75 staff and members through "The Witnessing Disciple" or equivalent annually, so we can put the Great Commission principles into greater practice.
- C) Partner with Steiger International to attend, practice, and mature in large & small Gospel sharing events & spiritual conversations in Houston and beyond.
- D) Create new avenues to incorporate Next Generation (Children with Parents, Youth, & Young Adult) as well as Multi-cultural congregations more fully and vibrantly.



## CONNECTION/ COMMUNITY

*Show after the example of Jesus that people matter more than programs*

- E) Koinonia and Team Building (Train, align, release laity and staff)
  - Offer and live into appropriate vulnerability/sharing opportunities, making time for the ones Christ came to save. Belonging often happens before believing in the 21st Century.
  - Focus our Leadership and Staff Annual Retreats on volunteerism, healthy teams, leadership succession, and ongoing teaching and training to enhance alignment and fruitfulness through 2027.
  - Onboard new and existing staff and lay leaders in our articulated culture, DNA, and being an ideal teammate for our programs and mission.
- F) Leadership Succession (laity and staff)
  - Provide off ramps and on ramps to our servant leaders so that all the areas of MDPC's life facilitate leadership development, appropriately honor sacrificial service, and replenish new blood into our ecosystem for sustainable and faithful ministry.



## FORMATION/ DISCIPLESHIP

*Grow in Jesus and His story*

- G) Align and coordinate intentional Christian Formation Pathways (especially relying on the wisdom and commitment of our senior generation):
  - For all ages and stages thru stair-stepped classes
  - Small groups
  - MDPC Institute
  - Events
  - Speakers
- H) Take a leadership role in pioneering and sustaining a Teaching Church Internship Program with ECO Seminary (and/or others) by equipping emerging leaders from and for the wider church and MDPC's own pipeline needs.



## SERVICE/ OUTREACH

*Go together to love generously*

- I) Equipping the Saints/Priesthood of All Believers/Volunteerism
  - Remake our Policies & Procedures so that our committees have 'At Large' members; offer a Spiritual Gifts Class annually to expand engagement of mutually life-giving & life-changing placements; and re-size Session to collaborate with Deacons in expanding our Eph. 4 '5-fold ministry' balance & effectiveness.
  - Have 75 staff & lay go through The Equipped Disciple or equivalent annually.
  - Put 100+ fresh (new or re-engaged) volunteers yearly in the 'game,' inside and outside our walls.

**Deacons at MDPC**  
**February 2019**

**A BRIEF HISTORY:**

Deacons have historically played an active and essential part in MDPC's ministry and governance structure. The ministry of deacons at MDPC has looked differently in various seasons of the church. But, excepting the years of 1995-2018, deacons have held elected offices at MDPC.

**1950's:**

Even before MDPC became an official church, deacons were responsible for the oversight of finance. A check for MDPC's first comfortable chairs (replacing iron folding chairs) was received by the deacons, who then authorized the purchase. Deacons were also key in establishing the Dollar-for-Dollar stewardship principle here at MDPC.

**1960's:**

Rev. Charlie Shedd knew the importance of connecting with each person who was a part of this faith community. He also knew that training those with gifts for prayer and care would "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:12). With that in mind, he developed an Undershepherd Program. Each undershepherd would pray daily for seven families, and faithfully contact them for connection and care. Little has been written about deacons during this time, but it seems that they cared for the finances of the church, while the undershepherds served as Christian care-givers and connectors.

**1970's & 1980's:**

Deacons were elected to three-year terms in Administration, Finance, Facility, and Pastoral Care. Likewise, elders were elected from among the laity to serve three-year terms on the Session. The Board of Deacons and the Session both had responsibilities for Administration and Oversight of MDPC. A third team of volunteers made up the Pastoral Care Committees.

**1990's:**

Over time, those involved in this bicameral system of church government encountered confusion, which came to a point of conflict when the Board of Deacons voted in favor of a certain financial decision, only to have Session defeat that same decision as an issue of Budget. Questions arose as to which group was truly responsible for the monetary decisions of the church.

At a joint meeting of the Session and the Board of Deacons on September 13, 1993, then Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Tom Tewell, led a brief discussion regarding the role of the Session and the role of the Board of Deacons, and the consideration of a plan to create a unicameral system. Positive comments included the prioritization of Pastoral Care, and the clarity of having all Financial functions in one place. The topic was sent back to a committee to be reviewed.

The committee was chaired by Lois Boston, with leadership also provided by Chuck Edwards. In an introductory email to Lois, Rev. Tewell wrote, "Currently, we are facing some problems in communication between the board of Deacons and the Session. The problem, in a nutshell, is that the Deacons often feel as if they have responsibility without authority. They are asked to make recommendations but have very little, if any, decision-making ability. We are also finding that the financial duties seem split between the Session and Board of Deacons, and, as we learned from the Financial Convocation, it is so great when everyone works together."

On October 11, 1993, it was moved that the Session endorse the principle of a unicameral form of government for MDPC, and develop plans to have the congregation adopt this plan in 1994. The new form of government would be designed with areas responsible for Christian Education, Outreach, Administration, Pastoral Care, Stewardship, Worship and Music.

By an act of Session on June 20, 1994, and a subsequent vote of the congregation on September 25, 1994, the governance of MDPC was converted from a bicameral to a unicameral system. The congregation of MDPC voted in the affirmative to elect as elders the persons serving as deacons, their terms of office to continue as originally elected. Thereby, the 29 active deacons became elders, retaining the ministry areas of responsibility and attending Session meetings.

#### **1995-2018:**

MDPC's Session maintains approximately 50 Ruling Elders, as well as the Teaching Elders (Pastors) currently serving MDPC. Caring Elders serve in the roles of Christian care-giving. They each represent strong teams of volunteers who are gifted for, and passionate about, offering prayer and care to those in need.

#### **CURRENT STATUS:**

##### **2019: Could the Deaconate be Reinstated at MDPC?**

In June of 2018, Session tasked Caring Ministries Pastor, Rev. Beth Case with the formation of a task force to consider a possible reinstitution of a Board of Deacons at MDPC. This Caring Ministries Vision Team (CMVT) includes:

John Kemper (Chairperson)  
Ollie Aldrich (Caring Elder)  
Dick Harris (Caring Elder)  
Mike Benes  
Kevin Cadwell  
Karen Elders  
Natalie Hall  
Margaret Humphreys  
Cristen Jones  
Bart Westmoreland

The CMVT rigorously discussed the concept and implementation of a Deacon Team. Faithful prayer was implemented as the CMVT considered Scripture, Responsibilities of Deacons, Models of Deacon Ministries, MDPC Advantage Goals, and Ministry Needs at MDPC.

##### **Scripture:**

Scripture tells of the first Deacons in Acts 6:1-7:

*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

*<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

#### Responsibilities of a Deacon Ministry:

Historically, Presbyterians in different regions of the United States have assigned deacon responsibilities in different ways. Churches in the Southern half of this nation commonly placed deacons in charge of Finance, Facility, and Caring Ministries. The pre-1994 model of deacons at MDPC aligned with what was common to Southern churches. Meanwhile, churches in the North asked deacons to focus on Christian care-giving ministries alone.

As we move forward with deacons in 2019 and beyond, we would recommend that deacons align their ministries with that of the deacons in Acts 6, focusing on Christian care-giving ministries.

#### Models of Deacon Ministry:

Presbyterian churches typically organize deacons in one of three models:

- 1) Parish/Zip Code Model: Deacons are responsible to contact and care for the members of a church within a certain region.
- 2) Affinity Group Model: Deacons are responsible for ministry to and care for the members of a certain age and/or stage of life.
- 3) Need-Based Model: Deacons are responsible for ministry to and care for members and friends of the church who find themselves in need of prayer, care, support, or encouragement.

As we move forward with deacons in 2019 and beyond, we are working to implement a Deaconate that blends the Need-Based Model, with the Affinity Groups Model.

#### MDPC Advantage Goals:

One of MDPC's 12 Goals is to increase volunteer engagement. The election of deacons, with their leadership, and their service, will help us make great progress toward achieving this goal.

#### Ministry Needs at MDPC:

The caring needs of MDPC are only increasing. This is due to the increase in membership, as well as the increased disconnect we encounter in society today.

### **2019 PROPOSAL**

Taking into consideration the above, the CMVT proposes that a Board of Deacons be reinstituted at MDPC:

- Building on the model set for us by Rev. Charlie Shedd in the Undershepherd Ministry, the deacon team would have at its primary goal prayer for all members, as well as caring and connecting efforts. In this way, the deacon team multiplies ministry and cares for the flock.
- Reflecting Scripture, this deacon team would look to the Christian care-giving needs. It would be piloted from the Caring Ministries Office.
- Keeping in mind the current strengths in Finance and Facility, this deacon team would leave those tasks to the Session and the Staff.
- Considering multiple conversations with other churches around the country, it has been advised that this deacon team would operate according to hybrid model of ministry, combining the need-based model with the affinity-based model.

- Respecting the importance of clarity, this deacon team would have access to funds within the Caring Ministries budget. The Session will retain oversight of, and accountability for, all financial matters.
- Honoring the history of Pastoral Care ministries of MDPC, this deacon team will affirm and connect with the many volunteers who offer care and prayer.
- Considering the diligence of the Nominating Committee, and the challenges of building a new team, the CMVT recommends seven deacon positions for 2019. Each of the two subsequent years seven deacons can be added. This will allow the deacon board to total 21, and to represent expanding areas of the church.
- Highlighting the importance of communication and connection between the Session and the Board of Deacons, the Session will retain at least one position for a Caring Ministries Elder.
- For the first year, the Pastor for Caring Ministries will moderate the deacon team. Following this, there will be an elected deacon who serves as Moderator for the deacons.

## **Biblical Insights for Church Officers**

### **Officer Training**

#### **Responsibilities of Leaders (Old Testament):**

- to govern the people
- to rule local government
- to govern national affairs

#### **Words for Leaders (New Testament):**

- *presbuteros* (elder) = presbyter = elder
- *episkopon* (overseer) = epi + skopos
- *diakonos* (deacon) = servant, minister

#### **Biblical Responsibilities of Church Leaders**

- governance
- discipline
- teaching
- pastoral oversight
- preserving sound doctrine
- shepherding = participle = the one who shepherds

**Scriptures:** Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 6:1-7; Romans 12:9-15

#### **Nomination Committee Considerations:**

- 1) minimum one year membership at MDPC
- 2) regular participation in worship, etc.
- 3) pattern of financial stewardship
- 4) called to office
- 5) gifted for ministry
- 6) kingdom-focused team player
- 7) affirmed by community of faith (external call)
- 8) internal call

#### **We are called to...**

- 1) lead by example
- 2) be men and women who serve
- 3) fidelity in marriage or chaste if single
- 4) a life submitted to the lordship of Christ
- 5) a life in the process of sanctification
- 6) spiritual maturity, commitment to growth

#### **Elders & Deacons: Unity of Purpose, Division of Labor**

- **ECO Polity 2.02** – Elders: oversee the spiritual health of the congregation as well as the congregation's faithfulness to God's mission...
- **ECO Polity 2.03** – Deacons: lead ministries that nurture fellowship and caregiving within and beyond the congregation...

- “The church exists as church only insofar as it is Christ’s body, in union with him, meaning also our union in him, both of which are a matter of his free and gracious choice.

The church has no other ground of being than Jesus Christ. This means in a primary way that the church is not the church as institution, or a voluntary collection of free, religiously and ethically motivated individuals, or, with its episcopate, as an historically ordered hierarchy that determines what it is and what it does.

It is Christ alone who determines the “that” and the “what” of the church, who loves the church and calls and forms it according to his own purpose. ...He is Lord of the church in whom and from whom alone it has life. As such, the church belongs to Christ, not to itself. The church is not self-referenced. In a primary sense, its being is iconic, not institutional, as it points away from itself to Christ.”  
-Rev. Dr. Andrew Purves

- “The church is herself only when she exists for humanity....She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, that it means to live in Christ, to live for others.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

- Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. ...Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

We are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body.

If you preach, just preach God’s message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.  
-Romans 12:1-2, 6-13

## Scriptural References – Key Verses Regarding Church Leaders

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### **Titus 1:5-9 (NIV)**

•The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. •An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. •Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. •Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. •He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

### **1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NIV)**

•Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. •Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, •not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. •He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. •(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) •He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. •He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

### **1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV)**

•To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: •Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; •not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. •And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

### **Acts 6: 1-7 (NIV)**

•In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. •So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. •Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them •and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." •This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. •They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. •So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

**Romans 12:9-15 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.



## Jesus Way + Jesus Truth = Jesus Life

**Y**our physical health essentially comes down to what you do and what you don't do. How do you eat? Do you exercise? Are you stressed? How's your sleep? Do you have a strong social network? All of these conditions affect your physical being. To attain good health, it will require action: working out, eating well, managing stress and sleep, and taking needed time for friends and family.

In a similar way, if we want to achieve Spiritual Health, we also must do the work necessary to be transformed into strong, functioning disciples

of Jesus. There are **six essential habits** that we must work to develop, and like good health habits, they require consistency, commitment, and practice in order to see maximum benefits. *Where* would you start? We're so glad you asked!

While the order in which you tackle the six habits is inconsequential, we've laid out for you on the back side of this page a series of more detailed bullets that illustrates what each practice might look like.

## Worship Consistently

*He [Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was His custom.*  
(Luke 4:16 NIV)

- Assembling on Sundays with sisters and brothers in Christ in English, Spanish, and Portuguese
- Asking God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to be present through each service
- Reading and reflecting upon the sermon's Scripture passage before the service begins
- Requesting God's power for the preacher, worship leaders, and musicians to proclaim the gospel
- Bringing your Bible so you can follow along with the preacher as she/he proclaims the Word
- Inviting a friend to attend a service with you
- Praying for everyone present to respond to the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit
- Volunteering in worship and music leadership

## Pray Daily

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

(Philippians 4:6 NIV)

- Interceding for His care and love for specific friends, loved ones, MDPC members, and others
- Asking Him for His empowerment in the mission of MDPC and the Church Universal
- Requesting God's wisdom for those who lead and guide our nation and all nations of the world
- Seeking His strength for those who grieve, mourn, face illness, and encounter challenges
- Petitioning for His encouragement for persecuted Christians throughout the world
- Using the phrases of the Lord's Prayer as a guide to an extended time of prayer
- Exploring the spiritual discipline of "lectio divina" as a means of praying through Scripture

## Study Diligently

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

(2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)

- Participating in an ongoing Bible study class or small group on Sunday mornings or during the week
- Reflecting upon at least one chapter of the Bible as part of your daily devotional time
- Reading through the entire Bible in a year through a specific plan for that purpose
- Committing to a Bible study class or group that uses weekly readings, homework assignments, group discussion and/or lectures, and mutual encouragement to move toward a richer level of discipleship
- Growing in knowledge and understanding of basic

Christian teachings in worship, Scripture, theology, and Presbyterian emphases

- Learning the riches of Christian faith and practice through focused in-depth studies on how to read and study Scripture, Old and New Testament surveys, Christian theology, Reformed and Presbyterian emphases, and Christian apologetics

## Witness Winsomely

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...* (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

- Inviting non-churched friends, family members, and neighbors to join you in an Alpha group
- Developing and practicing with friends a brief story of your faith journey
- Learning and preparing a conversational method of sharing the gospel to share with others
- Interceding in prayer for those not yet followers of Jesus Christ and for those bearing witness to them
- Standing for the Kingdom's values of grace, love, justice, and fairness

## Serve Joyfully

*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

(Colossians 3:17 NIV)

- Providing support and resources to a friend, loved one, or neighbor experiencing a difficult time
- Exploring your calling through your spiritual gifts, talents, and passions for service
- Engaging in short-term projects like Church in the City, Summer Celebration, and mission trips
- Assisting in the ministry of an MDPC Local or Global Outreach Partner
- Teaching or leading in Children's, Youth, Young Adult, or Adult Discipleship
- Encouraging and supporting others through Caring Ministries and Relationships Ministries
- Volunteering with MDPC administrative needs

## Give Freely

*Each of you should give what you have decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

(2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV)

- Seeing your time, abilities, and material goods as belonging to God, not to yourself
- Prioritizing your calendar in accordance with what God wants to do through your life
- Pledging your consistent financial giving to the mission of MDPC and to the worldwide Church
- Perceiving the New Testament teaches proportionate giving as the foundation for your giving
- Stair-stepping the growth of your trust upon God for all your needs as you mature in faith

# Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church



## New Officer Training

Week 2

### The Service of Ordination and Installation

The pastor shall ask those preparing to be ordained or installed to stand before the congregation and answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe in One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you boldly declare Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Lord of all and Head of the church?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the unique witness to Jesus Christ and the authority for Christian faith and life?
3. Will you receive, adopt, and be bound by the *Essential Tenets* of ECO as a reliable exposition of what Scripture teaches us to do and to believe, and will you be guided by them in your life and ministry?
4. Relying on the Holy Spirit, do you humbly submit to God's call on your life, committing yourself to God's mission, and fulfilling your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our confessions?
5. Will you be governed by ECO's polity and discipline? And will you be accountable to your fellow elders, deacons and pastors as you lead?
6. Do you promise to be faithful in maintaining the truth of the Gospel and the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?
7. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
8. a) *For Elders*: Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people in their worship, nurture, and service to God?  
  
b) *For Deacons*: Will you be a faithful deacon, serving the people, urging concern and directing the people's help to those in need?

# #LifelsMore

## STORY STARTERS

### FOUNDATIONS

1. One of my first memories of being in church is when \_\_\_\_\_  
and I remember feeling \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I first sensed my need for Jesus when ...
3. What made me most interested in following Jesus was ...
4. Who had the greatest influence on your faith (positive or negative) in its beginning?  
What did that person do?

### GROWING

5. The time I felt the greatest doubt or distance from God was...
6. The closest I have ever felt to God in my life was...
7. Since I entered into a relationship with Jesus, I have changed from  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. If I could name a turning point in my life for my relationship with God, it would be when...

### ONGOING

9. I have seen God answer my prayers in some pretty cool ways, like the time...
10. Jesus helps me in my daily life by...
11. If I were to tell someone why I'm a Christian, I would say ...
12. How have you seen God show up or impact your life in the past two months?

## **Gospel Clarity**

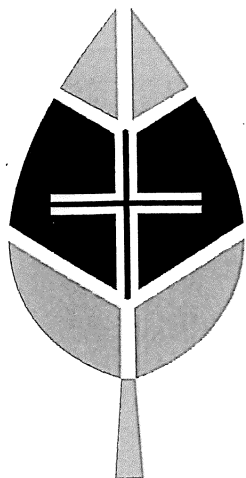
*Your experience with the #LifelsMore questions has set you up well for an important way to serve as a faithful witness for Jesus Christ: preparing, practicing, and sharing your Faith Story. What is your Faith Story? It's not a monologue, but a conversational way you can share what God has done and is doing in your life when He presents you with opportunities to talk with others. It is a 3-5-minute story that flows around three vital points:*

- ***Your life before Christ.*** *What did your life revolve around before Him? What did you lean on for hope, security, or purpose? If you grew up in a Christian home and cannot recollect a time before Christ, please discuss how your faith became yours and not simply that of your parents.*
- ***When Christ brought you to Himself.*** *It doesn't need to be a dramatic experience like the Apostle Paul's. You simply describe how a living faith in Jesus Christ became real to you. You may share struggles you experienced, or how you moved from "knowing about" Jesus to "knowing" Jesus, or when you gave Jesus control of your life as your Lord.*
- ***Your life since Christ.*** *Your life is by no means perfect, so you shouldn't feel compelled to imply otherwise. You are not the hero of this story. But how has Jesus made a difference in you? What motivates you now? How have you grown? What personal challenges remind you of your ongoing need for grace?*

***Prepare your Faith Story (outline, notes, or manuscript) on a separate piece of paper.*** *Remember to write as you speak, not for an English essay. Be honest and short (3-5 minutes!). Pray as you work on it.*

***Bring your Faith Story with you to the group meeting. In the group, you will divide into pairs, trios, or quads and share your stories with one another.*** *You may read it or speak extemporaneously. As time permits, you will get into a different pair and share your story again. If you keep to the 3–5-minute time recommendation, you may have two or three opportunities to practice your story and to listen to someone else's story. Please give each other helpful feedback and encouragement.*

***After you finish sharing your Faith Story and listening to others' stories, spend a few minutes as a group and debrief your experience.***



# ECO

A Covenant Order  
of Evangelical  
Presbyterians

## Our Core Values

The mission of ECO is to build *flourishing* churches that make *disciples* of Jesus Christ.

### JESUS-SHAPED IDENTITY:

We believe Jesus Christ must be at the center of our lives and making disciples of Jesus at the core of our ministry.

### BIBLICAL INTEGRITY:

We believe the Bible is the unique and authoritative Word of God, which teaches all that is necessary for faith and life. The prominence of God's Word over our lives shapes our priorities, and the unrivaled authority of the Bible directs our actions to be in concert with Christ's very best for our lives.

### THOUGHTFUL THEOLOGY:

We believe in theological education, constant learning, and the life of the mind, and celebrate this as one of the treasures of our Reformed heritage.

### ACCOUNTABLE COMMUNITY:

We believe guidance is a corporate spiritual experience. We want to connect leaders to one another in healthy relationships of accountability, synergy, and care.

### EGALITARIAN MINISTRY:

We believe in unleashing the ministry gifts of women, men, and every ethnic group.

### MISSIONAL CENTRALITY:

We believe in living out the whole of the Great Commission – including evangelism, spiritual formation, compassion, and redemptive justice – in our communities and around the world.

### CENTER-FOCUSED SPIRITUALITY:

We believe in calling people to the core of what it means to be followers of Jesus – what “mere Christianity” is and does – and not fixate on the boundaries.

### LEADERSHIP VELOCITY:

We believe identifying and developing gospel-centered leaders is critical for the church, and a great leadership culture is risk-taking, innovative, and organic.

### KINGDOM VITALITY:

We believe congregations should vigorously reproduce new missional communities to expand the Kingdom of God.

# **ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians Essential Tenets Summary**

## **Introduction**

- Two minds about essential tenets-type documents...
- Not a confession, but an indicator and summary of what we think the confessions say...
- "The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever"...

## **I. God's Word: The Authority for Our Confession.**

- God's authoritative self-revelation: The infallible Written Word and the Incarnate Word...
- Infallibility understood as "true," "truthful," and "trustworthy"...
- The Written Word and Incarnate Word can't be put against one another...
- The Scriptures will never lead us to be in opposition with the Spirit, and the Spirit will never lead us to be in opposition of the Scriptures...
- The confessions as secondary authority...

## **II. Trinity and Incarnation: The Two Central Christian Mysteries.**

- Trinity and Incarnation separate Christianity from all other religions/faith/spiritualities...
- Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit; one essence and three persons...
- Incarnation: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human at the same time...
- Can partially explain, but not fully explain, both mysteries....
- Ultimately the "proof" is by the Spirit and the Scriptures...

## **III. Essentials of the Reformed Tradition**

### **A. God's Grace in Christ.**

- The problem of sin: even our best motives/actions are mixed and all creation affected...
- Therefore God must make the first move toward us, as we cannot do so ourselves...
- The theme of adoption into God's new family is key...
- Jesus Christ is the only way to this adoption, into this new family of God ...

## **B. Election for Salvation and Service.**

- Humanity is unable to turn toward God on our own...
- God grants regeneration—new birth and life—through the Holy Spirit...
- Election isn't for our benefit alone, but to be part of God's redemptive purpose...
- Saved and sent out as witnesses through word, deed, attitude, and thought...

## **C. Covenant Life in the Church.**

- Since we're adopted into God's family, we find new brothers and sisters...
- Our community's ordinary/usual experience of God's sustaining grace is by the preaching of the Word, the administering of the sacraments, and the practice of mutual accountability...
- The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

## **D. Faithful Stewardship of All of Life.**

- A steward: someone who manages, not owns, and works for the true Owner...
- Our ministries reflect Jesus Christ's three-fold office: prophet, priest, and king...
- No part of human life is off-limits to God's sanctifying grace: heart, mind, and soul...

## **E. Living in Obedience to the Word of God.**

- Growth is the expected result of being in a saving and sustaining relationship with God through the Holy Spirit's presence and power...
- Prayer undergirds all our service to God...
- The Ten Commandments show us how to live a life pleasing to God...



# CONSTITUTION

## 2024

Essential Tenets  
Polity  
Rules of Discipline

# *ECO Constitution*

Revision: August 2024

Editor: ECO Synod, A Covenant Order or Evangelical Presbyterians ([office@eco-pres.org](mailto:office@eco-pres.org))



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# ECO Essential Tenets

## 2024

Building flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.

# Essential Tenets

Presbyterians have been of two minds about essential tenets. We recognize that just as there are some central and foundational truths of the gospel affirmed by Christians everywhere, so too there are particular understandings of the gospel that define the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition. All Christians must affirm the central mysteries of the faith, and all those who are called to ordered ministries in a Presbyterian church must also affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed tradition. Recognizing the danger in reducing the truth of the gospel to propositions that demand assent, we also recognize that when the essentials become a matter primarily of individual discernment and local affirmation, they lose all power to unite us in common mission and ministry.

Essential tenets are tied to the teaching of the confessions as reliable expositions of Scripture. The essential tenets call out for explication, not as another confession, but as indispensable indicators of confessional convictions about what Scripture leads us to believe and do. Essential tenets do not replace the confessions, but rather witness to the confessions' common core. This document is thus intended not as a new confession but as a guide to the corporate exploration of and commitment to the great themes of Scripture and to the historic Reformed confessions that set forth those themes.

**The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.** Each member of the church glorifies God by recognizing and naming His glory, which is the manifestation and revelation of His own nature. Each member of the church enjoys God by being so united with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit as to become a participant in that divine nature, transformed from one degree of glory to another and escorted by Christ into the loving communion of the Trinity. So we confess our faith not as a matter of dispassionate intellectual assent, but rather as an act by which we give God glory and announce our membership in the body of Christ. We trust that when God's glory is so lifted up and when His nature is thus made manifest in the life of the body, the church will be a light that draws people from every tribe and tongue and nation to be reconciled to God.

## I. God's Word: The Authority for Our Confession

The clearest declaration of God's glory is found in His Word, both incarnate and written. The Son eternally proceeds from the Father as His Word, the full expression of the Father's nature, and since in the incarnation the Word became flesh all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are offered to His disciples. The written Word grants us those treasures, proclaims the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and graciously teaches all that is necessary for faith and life.

**We glorify God by recognizing and receiving His authoritative self-revelation, both in the infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and also in the incarnation of God the Son.** We affirm that the same Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin Mary also inspired the writing and preservation of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit testifies to the authority of God's Word and illumines our hearts and minds so that we might receive both the Scriptures and Christ Himself aright.

We confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience, but this freedom is for the purpose of allowing us to be subject always and primarily to God's Word. The Spirit will never prompt our

conscience to conclusions that are at odds with the Scriptures that He has inspired. The revelation of the incarnate Word does not minimize, qualify, or set aside the authority of the written Word. We are happy to confess ourselves captive to the Word of God, not just individually, but also as members of a community of faith, extending through time and around the globe. In particular, we affirm the secondary authority of the following *ECO Confessional Standards* as faithful expositions of the Word of God: *Nicene Creed*, *Apostles' Creed*, *Heidelberg Catechism*, *Westminster Confession*, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, *Westminster Larger Catechism* and the *Theological Declaration of Barmen*.

## II. Trinity and Incarnation: The Two Central Christian Mysteries

### A. Trinity

The triune nature of God is the first great mystery of the Christian faith. **With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is both one essence and three persons.** God is infinite, eternal, immutable, impassible, and ineffable. He cannot be divided against Himself, nor is He becoming more than He has been, since there is no potential or becoming in Him. He is the source of all goodness, all truth and all beauty, of all love and all life, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The three persons are consubstantial with one another, being both coeternal, and coequal, such that there are not three gods, nor are there three parts of God, but rather three persons within the one Godhead. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. All three persons are worthy of worship and praise.

God has no need of anyone or anything beyond Himself. Yet in grace this Triune God is the one Creator of all things. The ongoing act of creation is further manifested in God's gracious sovereignty and providence, maintaining the existence of the world and all living creatures for the sake of His own glory. He is the Holy One, the ground of all being, whose glory is so great that for us to see Him is to die. Yet He has made the creation to reflect His glory, and He has made human beings in His own image, with a unique desire to know Him and capacity for relationship with Him. Since our God is a consuming fire whom we in our sin cannot safely approach, He has approached us by entering into our humanity in Jesus Christ.

### B. Incarnation

This is the second great mystery of the Christian faith, affirmed by all Christians everywhere: that **Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human.** As to His divinity, He is the Son, the second person of the Trinity, being of one substance with the Father; as to His humanity, He is like us in every way but sin, of one substance with us, like us in having both a human soul and a human body. As to His divinity, He is eternally begotten of the Father; as to His humanity, He is born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. As to His divinity, His glory fills heaven and earth; as to His humanity, His glory is shown in the form of a suffering servant, most clearly when He is lifted up on the cross in our place.

We confess the mystery of His two natures, divine and human, in one person. We reject any understanding of the communication of attributes that must result in a blending of the two natures such that Jesus Christ is neither truly God nor truly human. We insist upon sufficient distinction between the two natures to preserve the truth of the incarnation, that Jesus Christ is indeed Immanuel, God-with-us, not one who used to be God, nor one who has merely

been sent from God. Rather, in His coming we have seen God's glory, for Jesus is the exact imprint of God's very being and in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. **The divinity of the Son is in no way impaired, limited, or changed by His gracious act of assuming a human nature, and that His true humanity is in no way undermined by His continued divinity.** This is a mystery that we cannot explain, but we affirm it with joy and confidence.

This mystery of the incarnation is ongoing, for the risen **Jesus, who was sent from the Father, has now ascended to the Father in His resurrected body and remains truly human.** He is bodily present at the right hand of the Father. When we are promised that one day we will see Him face to face, we acknowledge that it is the face of Jesus of Nazareth we will someday see. The one who, for us and for our salvation, was born of Mary, died at Calvary, and walked with disciples to Emmaus is the same Jesus Christ who is now ascended and who will one day return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead.

Jesus promised His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless when He ascended into heaven, but would ask the Father to send them the Holy Spirit as a comforter and advocate. **We are able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God only through the work of the Holy Spirit.** He comes to us as He came to the gathered disciples at Pentecost: to kindle our faith, to embolden our witness, and to accompany us in mission.

### III. Essentials of the Reformed Tradition

#### A. God's grace in Christ

God declared that the world He created was good and that human beings, made in His own image, were very good. **The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and to evil, is not God's doing, but is rather a result of humanity's free, sinful rebellion against God's will.** God created human beings from the dust of the earth and His own breath, to be His images and representatives, conduits of God's grace to the creation. Since the fall our natural tendency is to abuse and exploit the creation, preferring evil to goodness. God also created human beings to speak His grace and truth to one another, to be helpers who are fit for one another, so that our social relationships would strengthen our ability to serve and obey Him. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to engage in relationships of tyranny and injustice with one another, in which power is used not to protect and serve but to demean. God further created human beings with the capacity for relationship with Him, with His law written on our hearts so that we had the ability to worship Him in love and obey Him by living holy lives. Since the fall, our natural tendency is to hate God and our neighbor, to worship idols of our own devising rather than the one true God.

As a result of sin, human life is poisoned by everlasting death. **No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God's design.** We are not merely wounded in our sin; we are dead, unable to save ourselves. Apart from God's initiative, salvation is not possible for us. Our only hope is God's grace. We discover in Scripture that this is a great hope, for our God is the One whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

This grace does not end when we turn to sin. Although we are each deserving of God's eternal condemnation, the eternal Son assumed our human nature, joining us in our misery and offering Himself on the cross in order to free us from slavery to death and sin. Jesus takes our place both in bearing the weight of condemnation against our sin on the cross and in offering to God the perfect obedience that humanity owes to Him but is no longer able to give. All humanity participates in the fall into sin. Those who are united through faith with Jesus Christ are fully forgiven from all our sin, so that there is indeed a new creation. We are declared justified, not because of any good that we have done, but only because of God's grace extended to us in Jesus Christ. **In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relation with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children.**

**Jesus Christ is the only Way to this adoption, the sole path by which sinners become children of God,** for He is the only-begotten Son, and it is only in union with Him that a believer is able to know God as Father. Only in Jesus Christ is the truth about the Triune God, fully and perfectly revealed, for only He is the Truth, only He has seen the Father, and only He can make the Father known. Only Jesus Christ is the new Life that is offered, for He is the bread from heaven and the fountain of living water, the one by whom all things were made, in whom all things hold together. The exclusivity of these claims establishes that God's love is not impersonal, but a particular and intimate love in which each individual child of God is called by name and known as precious; that God's love is not only acceptance, but a transforming and effective love in which His image within us is restored so that we are capable of holy living.

## **B. Election for salvation and service**

The call of God to the individual Christian is not merely an invitation that each person may accept or reject by his or her own free will. **Having lost true freedom of will in the fall, we are incapable of turning toward God of our own volition. God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy.** Each of us is chosen in Christ, who is eternally appointed to be head of the body of the elect, our brother and our high priest. He is the one who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, our divine Helper who is also Bridegroom, sharing our human nature so that we may see His glory. We who receive Him and believe in His name do so not by our own will or our wisdom, but because His glory compels us irresistibly to turn toward Him. By His enticing call on our lives, Jesus enlightens our minds, softens our hearts, and renews our wills, restoring the freedom that we lost in the fall.

We are all sinners who fall short of God's glory, and we all deserve God's eternal judgment. Apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ, we are incapable of being in God's presence, incapable of bearing the weight of His glory. We rejoice that Jesus Christ offers us safe conduct into the heart of God's consuming and purifying fire, shielding us with His perfect humanity and transforming us by His divine power. Having received such grace, we extend grace to others.

We are not elect for our own benefit alone. God gathers His covenant community to be an instrument of His saving purpose. **Through His regenerating and sanctifying work, the Holy Spirit grants us faith and enables holiness, so that we may be witnesses of God's**

**gracious presence to those who are lost.** The Spirit gathers us in a community that is built up and equipped to be light, salt, and yeast in the world. Christ sends us into the world to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Christ has commanded us. We are now in service to God's plan for the fullness of time: uniting all things in heaven and earth to Himself. To this end, we preach Christ, calling all persons to repent and believe the gospel. We also care for the natural world, claim all areas of culture in the name of Jesus, serve the poor, feed the hungry, visit the prisoner, and defend the helpless. We do this work not with any thought that we are able to bring in the kingdom, but in the confident hope that God's kingdom is surely coming, a day when suffering and death will pass away and when God will live among His people.

### **C. Covenant life in the church**

We are elect in Christ to become members of the community of the new covenant. This covenant, which God Himself guarantees, unites us to God and to one another. Already in the creation, we discover that we are made to live in relationships to others, male and female, created together in God's image. **In Christ, we are adopted into the family of God and find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father.** Our faith requires our active participation in that covenant community.

Jesus prays that His followers will all be one, and so we both pray and work for the union of the church throughout the world. Even where institutional unity does not seem possible, we are bound to other Christians as our brothers and sisters. In Christ the dividing wall of hostility created by nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, and language differences is brought down. God created people so that the rich variety of His wisdom might be reflected in the rich variety of human beings, and the church must already now begin to reflect the eschatological reality of people from every tribe, and tongue, and nation bringing the treasures of their kingdoms into the new city of God.

**Within the covenant community of the church, God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline.** First, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the word proclaimed may indeed become God's address to us. The Spirit's illuminating work is necessary both for the one who preaches and for those who listen. Second, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs that are linked to the things signified, sealing to us the promises of Jesus. In the Baptism of infants, we confess our confidence in God's gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit; in the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God's grace can make us new creations at any stage of our lives. Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a mark of entrance into the visible church, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes this sacrament efficacious in God's time to those whom God has called. In the Lord's Supper, we confess that as we eat the bread and share one cup the Spirit unites us to the ascended Christ, so that His resurrection life may nourish, strengthen, and transform us. Third, the community of the Church practices discipline in order to help one another along the path to new life, speaking the truth in love to one another, bearing one another's burdens, and offering to one another the grace of Christ.

#### D. Faithful stewardship of all of life

**The ministries of the church reflect the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king – reflected in the church's ordered ministries of teaching elders, deacons, and ruling elders.** We affirm that men and women alike are called to all the ministries of the Church, and that every member is called to share in all of Christ's offices within the world beyond the church. Every Christian is called to a prophetic life, proclaiming the good news to the world and enacting that good news. Every Christian is called to extend the lordship of Christ to every corner of the world. And every Christian is called to participate in Christ's priestly, mediatorial work, sharing in the suffering of the world in ways that extend God's blessing and offering intercession to God on behalf of the world. We are equipped to share in these offices by the Holy Spirit, who conforms us to the pattern of Christ's life.

**Jesus teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. There is no part of human life that is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God.** We reject the claim that love of any sort is self-justifying; we affirm that all our affections and desires must be brought under God's authority. We reject the claim that human souls are unaffected by the fall and remain naturally inclined to God; we affirm that soul and body alike must be cleansed and purified in order to love God properly. We reject the claim that the life of the mind is independent from faith; we affirm that unless we believe we cannot properly understand either God or the world around us. Historically, the Presbyterian tradition has been especially called to explore what it is to love God with all our minds, being committed to the ongoing project of Christian education and study at all levels of Christian life.

#### E. Living in obedience to the Word of God

**Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, which is initiated, sustained, and fulfilled by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.** The first response of gratitude is prayer, and the daily discipline of prayer – both individually and together – should mark the Christian life. The life of prayer includes praise to God for His nature and works, sincere confession of our sin, and intercession for the needs of those we know and for the needs of the world. As we practice the discipline of regular self-examination and confession, we are especially guided by the Ten Commandments. We therefore hold one another accountable to:

1. worship God alone, living all of life to His glory, renouncing all idolatry and all inordinate loves that might lead us to trust in any other help;
2. worship God in humility, being reticent in either describing or picturing God, recognizing that right worship is best supported not by our own innovative practices but through the living preaching of the Word and the faithful administration of the Sacraments;
3. eliminate from both speech and thought any blasphemy, irreverence, or impurity;

4. observe the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest, being faithful in gathering with the people of God;
5. give honor toward those set in authority over us and practice mutual submission within the community of the church;
6. eradicate a spirit of anger, resentment, callousness, violence, or bitterness, and instead cultivate a spirit of gentleness, kindness, peace, and love; recognize and honor the image of God in every human being from conception to natural death.
7. maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established by God at the creation or embracing a celibate life as established by Jesus in the new covenant;
8. practice right stewardship of the goods we have been given, showing charity to those in need and offering generous support of the Church and its ministries;
9. pursue truth, even when such pursuit is costly, and defend truth when it is challenged, recognizing that truth is in order to goodness and that its preservation matters;
10. resist the pull of envy, greed, and acquisition, and instead cultivate a spirit of contentment with the gifts God has given us.

In Jesus Christ we see the perfect expression of God's holy will for human beings offered to God in our place. His holy life must now become our holy life. In Christ, God's will is now written on our hearts, and we look forward to the day when we will be so confirmed in holiness that we will no longer be able to sin. As the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus leads us along the path of life toward that goal, bringing us into ever deeper intimacy with the Triune God, in whose presence is fullness of joy.



# ECO Polity

## 2024

Building flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Congregations and Their Covenant Partners

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." —Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)*

In ECO's Constitution, "shall" is used to describe that which is mandatory, "should" is used to express that which is expected to best practices, and "may" is used to express that which is permissible, but not required.

### 1. The Congregation

#### 1.0101 Nature and Purpose

The Church is visible whenever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name. The congregation is composed of members of the body of Christ who have covenanted together to engage in the mission of God in their particular context, with Jesus Christ as Head. Each congregation should strive to be a tangible, if provisional, demonstration of the Kingdom of God. Congregations exist in a variety of forms yet have these ends in common: sharing the Good News of reconciliation to God in and through Jesus Christ, gathering people for divine worship and nurturing relationships for spiritual accountability and mutual ministry, all the while making disciples to be the sent people of God in the world.

#### 1.0102 Covenants of Accountability

While believers may experience their membership in Christ's body in spontaneous and unstructured gatherings, they fulfill the Lord's purposes best when they covenant to fulfill the biblical vision of membership in particular congregations. These covenantal relationships provide the real-life context for the Holy Spirit's ongoing transformation of believers into spiritual maturity, by nurturing understanding, encouragement, correction, and discipleship-in-mission.

Similarly, though congregations discover that the Holy Spirit leads them to network with a variety of other congregations in order to fulfill the Lord's purposes, they covenant with other ECO congregations to form a distinct expression of the Church universal. These covenantal relationships provide the context for the Holy Spirit's continual reformation of the Church into a more faithful and effective participant in God's mission. By submitting to the spiritual authority of their colleagues, leaders of congregations honor Christ as the Lord of the Church, and welcome the opportunity for renewal and refinement.

#### 1.0103 Accountability to the Councils of ECO

A "congregation," as used in this *Polity*, refers to a formally organized community which is chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided in this *Polity* which is part of the *Constitution* (as defines in 6.01), and which is governed by the *Constitution* pursuant to a membership agreement entered into between such community and the presbytery. In

becoming covenant partners of the congregation, Christ-followers put themselves under the spiritual leadership of the session and wider councils.

#### *1.0104 Participation in Mission Affinity Groups*

Congregations are expected to enter into covenantal relationships with one another around common mission and ministry interests. Such relationships are meant not only to further the work of the Kingdom through collaborative effort, but also for mutual encouragement as we spur one another on to love and good deeds. Such mission affinity groups could be as few as two congregations seeking to minister to the homeless, or as many as five or six congregations seeking to plant a church. Other affinity groups might form between similarly sized congregations, geographic, cultural or demographic similarities, or future ministry goals. The desire is for churches to relate to one another through session-to-session relationships in whatever organic and creative ways help promote flourishing churches.

#### *1.0105 Participation in Presbytery's Annual Review Process*

Section 3.0103 (m) requires each presbytery to develop a process for each of their congregations to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of their ministry and mission and their adherence to the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20). Each congregation shall complete their presbytery's annual review process.

## **1.02 Church Planting and the Organizing of a New Congregation**

### *1.0201 Church Planting*

Jesus sent his disciples into the world to share the Gospel, baptize, and build the church. Today we continue to order our lives by the "Great Commission" in ECO by planting new churches. Church planting and becoming a church planter in ECO are guided by the latest edition of ECO's Church Planting Manual. ECO churches may support church plants and church planters in a variety of ways and each ECO church is encouraged to create its own policy of how it will do so.

### *1.0202 Organizing a New Congregation*

A congregation in ECO may be chartered only by the authority of a presbytery and shall function under the provisions of the *Constitution*. Ordinarily, new congregations will be formed from established church plants. New congregations may also be formed from campuses of existing ECO congregations or church plants formed, supported, and nurtured by an ECO congregation. In order for a new congregation to be chartered there shall be a pastor and elected elders leading the church body who fully meet the criteria of those offices as described in this *Polity*. It shall be the sole discretion of the presbytery to declare them an organized congregation upon the examination and approval of the pastor and elders who form the session. After the presbytery's approval, the congregation and the presbytery shall

enter into a membership agreement and the officers and pastor shall be ordained and installed by the presbytery.

### **1.03 The Membership of a Congregation**

#### *1.0301 Baptism and Covenant Partnership*

Through baptism an individual (infant, child, youth or adult) is joined to the Church universal, the body of Christ. The sacrament of baptism shall be approved for an individual, by a session, one time and all Christian baptisms will be recognized by ECO congregations. Through covenant partnership an individual is joined to the local congregation, and is able to be fully involved in its mission to the local community and the world.

#### *1.0302 Openness to All*

The congregation's fellowship shall be open to all who seek to explore spiritual life by participating in the fellowship of the risen Lord. The congregation shall be gracious in providing pastoral care to all who consider themselves a part of the congregation, in the hope that these spiritual friends might become members of Christ's body. All who put their trust in Jesus Christ are welcomed to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

#### *1.0303 Entry into Membership as Covenant Partners*

After completing a meaningful preparation process as determined by the session, those who wish to embrace the congregation's covenantal expectations may become covenant partners by action of the session after hearing testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. For those not previously baptized, the Sacrament of Baptism is to be provided for these new covenant partners and offered to children under their care. Individuals may testify to their faith in one of the following ways:

- a. Public profession of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, after the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit yields personal faith in Christ.
- b. Reaffirmation of faith, for those previously professing faith publicly and already baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If they are members or covenant partners of another congregation, this transfer of membership/covenant partnership shall be communicated to the former congregation.

### *1.0304 The Benefits of Covenantal Partnership*

Becoming a covenant partner is important not only to the congregation but even more importantly for the covenant partner, as they are positioned to receive encouragement, support, and correction that the Lord promises to those who share spiritual fellowship. In committing to the cause of a life lived in and through Jesus Christ, covenant partners grow in Christian community together to become more Christ-like. In Christian community, we realize the fullness of life together and life in Christ, and discover our unique place in a common mission and narrative of God's work. The covenant partner and the congregation are both blessed and become a great blessing as they covenant together, intentionally, in Christ's work.

### *1.0305 The Congregation's Expectations of Covenantal Partnership*

Each covenant partner shall strive to be faithful to Christ by participating in the congregation's worship, fellowship, and service on an ongoing basis. Faithfulness in Christ as a covenant partner, involves a commitment to growth into spiritual maturity as a disciple of Christ and dedication of time and talents to the congregation's mission and ministry, in accordance to the gifts that God has bestowed upon him or her. Faithfulness also involves the stewardship of finances. As each covenant partner grows in the grace of giving, financial support of the congregation's mission and ministry should grow, along with tangible support for other ministries that advance God's Kingdom. Those who are invited to take significant leadership roles in the congregation should be spiritually mature, carefully selected, trained and/or mentored ordinarily be covenant partners for at least a year, and shall agree and adhere to the *Essential Tenets* of ECO.

## **1.04 Categories of Membership**

The membership of a congregation of ECO includes baptized members and covenant partners.

### *1.0401 Baptized Member*

A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, but either has not yet made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or has not become a covenant partner.

### *1.0402 Covenant Partner*

A covenant partner is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into the membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's worship and work. Covenant partners are eligible to vote in congregational meetings.

## 1.05 Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of the congregation shall be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by its own rule, the congregation has adopted other procedures and practices.

### 1.0501 Quorum

The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and special meetings, as needed, with a quorum of ten percent of the covenant partners, unless the congregation, by its own rule, decides to alter the quorum requirement. Only those covenant partners present may vote in a congregational meeting.

### 1.0502 Calling Meetings

Meetings of the congregation may be called by the session, by the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the covenant partners. Adequate notice of the meeting shall be given including announcement in worship a minimum of two weeks prior, as well as the congregation's other avenues of communication.

### 1.0503 Business that shall be conducted at a Congregational Meeting

The following business items shall be conducted at a congregational meeting, but not necessarily at every congregational meeting; nor are congregational meetings limited to just the following:

- a. Electing elders, deacons (if the congregation chooses [See 2.03]), trustees, and if required by a congregation's own rule, Pastor or Associate Pastor Nominating Committees.
- b. Calling a pastor/head of staff, associate pastor, or to request the dissolution of such calls, unless the dissolution has already been effected by the resignation or retirement of the pastor/head of staff (associate pastor), where such resignation or retirement has been accepted by the session and presbytery.
- c. Buying, mortgaging, transferring, or selling real property.
- d. Requesting that presbytery dismiss the congregation to another presbytery of ECO, or requesting that the presbytery dismiss the congregation to another Reformed body. (Either requires a super-majority of two-thirds of the covenant partners present).
- e. Approving any amendments to the congregation's articles of incorporation, bylaws or other corporate governing documents and dissolution, merger and any other corporate action requiring voting member approval.
- f. Authorizing assistant pastors to serve on session with voice and vote by the congregation's own rule.

Whenever permitted by law, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting.

#### *1.0504 Moderator*

The pastor/head of staff shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the congregation. If it is impractical, or if considering actions pertaining to the pastor/head of staff, the pastor may ask another pastor or elder to preside with the session's approval.

#### *1.0505 Secretary and Minutes*

The clerk of session shall ordinarily serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If it is impractical, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting. The session shall review and approve the final form of the minutes.

### **1.06 The Session**

#### *1.0601 Purpose and Composition*

Every congregation is governed by its session. The session consists of the elders duly elected by and from the covenant partners of the congregation, along with the congregation's installed pastors, associate pastors and in accordance with the congregation's own rule assistant pastors who have been elected by the congregation. Also, by its own rule, the congregation shall determine the number of elders, their length of service, and the ordering of the session. The minimum number shall be three active elders plus the moderator.

#### *1.0602 Meetings of the Session*

The pastor shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the session. If it is impractical, the pastor may ask another pastor or an elder to preside, with the session's approval.

Meetings of the session, including its quorum, shall be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by their own rule, a congregation has adopted other procedures and practices.

The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly, and shall meet at the call of the moderator, at the request of two or more elders, or at the request of the presbytery. Full minutes of the meetings and actions of the session shall be maintained and shall be available to any covenant partner of the congregation or at the request of the presbytery.

#### *1.0603 The Responsibilities of the Session*

- a. The session has responsibility and authority for governing the congregation and guiding its mission for Christ in the world. In the Reformed tradition the marks of the church are the proclamation of the Word, the Sacraments rightly celebrated, and the exercise of discipline.

Therefore, the session shall: Provide for the worship and educational life of the congregation; provide a place where the congregation may regularly worship; provide for the regular preaching of the Word by persons properly approved; oversee the planning and the ordering of the worship services of the congregation; lead the congregation in ministries of evangelism, compassion, and justice; and develop and nurture relations with other congregations.

- b. Authorize and provide for the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper; authorize the administration of Baptism; exercise due care and provide sufficient education to the congregation and to new believers that the Sacraments may be rightly received as means of grace.
- c. Plan for and provide an effective disciple-making, ministry-discernment process for the congregation and new believers, equipping them to be missional Christians and being faithful to nurture them into spiritual maturity and significant ministry. Provide for and nurture the common life of the congregation; receive and dismiss covenant partners; exercise oversight of all programs and finances of the congregation; train, examine, ordain and install those men and women chosen to serve as elders and deacons; lead and teach the congregation in matters of stewardship and Christian living; direct the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all other organizations of the congregation; bear witness against error in doctrine and practice; and serve in judicial matters pertaining to the congregation as specified in the *Rules of Discipline*.
- d. Elect elder commissioners to the presbytery and may propose to the presbytery matters of common interest or concern as well as proposals to amend this *Constitution*. The maximum number of elder commissioners which the session may elect shall be equal to the number of pastors with voting authority as set forth in Section 2.0401 serving the congregation. The session is encouraged in its selection of elder commissioners to promote representation in areas of difference recognized as the basis of discrimination and inequality in church and society, namely race, ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, and age.
- e. Maintain a roll of covenant partners and a roll of baptisms. The session may by its own rule grant affiliate status to members of a congregation in another Christian denomination.
- f. The session shall adopt and administer an annual budget including all ordained clergy terms of call packages. The session shall make a budget summary available to covenant partners. The session shall purchase appropriate casualty and liability insurance for program, officers, and property. The session shall ensure the congregation's full-time pastor(s), and by law, full-time lay employees medical, short- and long-term disability, and life insurance. Sessions shall meet the minimum terms of call set by their presbyteries for all called and installed pastors, and by their own rule assistant pastors.
- g. Arrange for an independent financial review annually and shall publish the report to the congregation and to the presbytery.
- h. Evaluate the congregation's ministry and mission and report to the presbytery for reasons of mutual accountability and the sharing of best practices.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Ordained and Commissioned Ministry

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works and service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*  
—Ephesians 2:10, 4:11-13 (NIV)

#### 2.01 God's mission requires ordered leadership

Before the foundation of the world, God set a plan of mission to reconcile the world to Himself and chose to use the Church as His instrument of reconciliation. It is incumbent upon all members of the body of Christ to participate in the work of building one another up in Christ and be deployed for His work in the world. To that end, excellent leadership is critical in the Church today, and that is not limited to ordained leaders. God calls some individuals to exercise specific formal leadership, which is modeled after the mind of Christ. The Church should strive to develop strong leaders in every area of life and ministry who lead in the way of Jesus. While pastors, elders, and deacons have unique roles in the structure of the Church, we recognize the importance of ordained and lay leadership at every level.

While the specific offices recognized in ECO are elder, deacon, and pastor, ECO acknowledges that additional lay leadership is needed for effective ministry.

##### 2.0101 Qualifications of officers

Elders and deacons are ordained and installed by the session. Pastors are ordained and installed by the presbyteries. Ordaining bodies must ensure that all officers adhere to the *Essential Tenets* of ECO. Failure of officers to continue to adhere to these standards is grounds for a session or presbytery to remove an officer from service according to the *Rules of Discipline* in this *Constitution*.

##### 2.0102 Preparation and ordination of officers

Ordaining bodies shall determine the appropriate course of preparation, ensuring that candidates for ordination meet all the requirements in this *Polity*. After demonstrating their readiness for service through an examination process, the candidates shall affirm their vows and be ordained by representatives of that ordaining body in a service of public worship.

## 2.0103 Ordination vows

- a. Do you believe in One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and do you boldly declare Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and acknowledge Him Lord of all and Head of the Church?
- b. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the unique witness to Jesus Christ and the authority for Christian faith and life?
- c. Will you receive, adopt, and be bound by the *Essential Tenets* of ECO as a reliable exposition of what Scripture teaches us to do and to believe, and will you be guided by them in your life and ministry?
- d. Relying on the Holy Spirit, do you humbly submit to God's call on your life, committing yourself to God's mission, and fulfilling your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our confessions?
- e. Will you be governed by ECO's polity and discipline? And will you be accountable to your fellow elders, deacons, and pastors as you lead?
- f. Do you promise to be faithful in maintaining the truth of the Gospel and the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?
- g. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
- h. (1) (for elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people in their worship, nurture, and service to God?  
  
(2) (for deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, serving the people, urging concern and directing the people's help to those in need?  
  
(3) (for pastor) Will you be a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the good news, teaching the faith, showing the people God's mission, and caring for the people?

## 2.0104 Questions to the congregation

- a. (for elders/deacons) Do we, the covenant partners of this congregation, accept (names) as elders or deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the Constitution of ECO?

Do we agree to pray for them, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

Having answered these questions in the affirmative, those to be ordained shall kneel, if able, for prayer and the laying on of hands by other ordained officers.

*The Moderator will say to the ordained: You are now elders or deacons in the Church and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Amen.*

- b. (for pastor, associate pastor, and assistant pastor) Do we, the covenant partners of this congregation, accept (name) as our pastor (associate pastor, assistant pastor), called by God through the voice of this church to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of ECO?

Do we agree to pray for him (her), to encourage him (her), to respect his (her) decisions and to follow as he (she) guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

Do we agree to pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us?

Will we listen to the word he (she) preaches, welcome his (her) pastoral care, and honor his (her) servant leadership and authority as he (she) seeks to honor Jesus Christ?

- c. (all other pastors) Do we, the covenant partners and members of presbytery, accept (name) as a pastor (pastor in validated ministry, presbytery/synod officer), called by God to lead in the way of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of ECO?

Do we agree to pray for him (her) and to encourage him (her) as he (she) follows and serves Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

Will we listen to the word he (she) preaches, welcome his (her) pastoral care, and honor his (her) servant leadership and authority as he (she) seeks to honor Jesus Christ?

*Having answered these questions in the affirmative, the candidate to be ordained and/or installed shall kneel, if able, and the presbytery shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands, ordain the candidate to the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and install him (her) to the particular pastoral responsibility. The presbytery will invite other ordained pastors and elders to join in the laying on of hands.*

*The presiding member of the presbytery will say: You are now a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a pastor (associate pastor, assistant pastor, pastor in validated ministry) for this congregation (in this presbytery). Whatever you do, in word and deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Amen.*

## **2.0105 Installation of Officers**

*Officers that have been previously ordained as elders, deacons, and pastors are not ordained again upon a change in call but are installed into the new call. Elders and Deacons shall be installed by the session. Pastors/Heads of Staff and Associate Pastors shall be installed by the presbytery. The Ordination vows (2.0103) and Questions to the Congregation (2.0104) are used for installation of these officers. Assistant pastors and transitional pastors may be installed by*

*the session. Pastors in validated ministry may be installed by the session of a sponsoring congregation or by the presbytery.*

## **2.02 The Ministry of Elders**

Elders are given authority and responsibility, along with pastors, to oversee the spiritual health of the congregation as well as the congregation's faithfulness to God's mission. Elders may also be asked to preach and teach. Elders shall be elected by the congregation.

## **2.03 The Ministry of Deacons**

Ordinarily, the biblical office of deacon shall be utilized by the congregation. Deacons lead ministries that nurture fellowship and caregiving within and beyond the congregation. Deacons may also be asked to preach and teach. The congregation shall determine the manner in which they are selected for service. The session shall oversee and direct the ministry of the deacons.

## **2.04 The Ministry of Pastors**

Pastors are to use their spiritual gifts for ministry, with a particular emphasis on the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, and teaching (Ephesians 4:11-12). A pastor is to nurture the spiritual health and maturity of the body of Christ in order that the body may be equipped to partner with God in His redemptive work in the world. In addition to adherence to the *ECO Essential Tenets*, presbyteries, working together and with the synod, shall ensure that candidates for ministry are adequately trained for their task. Training shall include a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) and demonstrated competency in ministry proficiency, theological integration, spiritual and emotional health, and leadership skill accomplished with a master's degree from an accredited theological seminary in biblical or theological studies or ECO's Flourish Institute of Theology: School of Ministry or similar program established by ECO and ECO's Pastoral Ordination Preparation and Assessment. In extraordinary circumstances, a presbytery may waive the master's degree requirement of a candidate that demonstrates competency as described, completes ECO's Pastoral Ordination Preparation and Assessment, and receives a two-thirds affirmative vote from their first call presbytery Ministry Partnership Team and Presbytery Council. All pastors as defined in 2.0401, serving an ECO congregation, must hold their ordination in ECO or be received as affiliate pastors by the presbytery of jurisdiction.

### *2.0401 Categories and responsibilities of pastors*

Pastors are members of the presbytery. Thus, their ministry and calling is approved by the presbytery or its authorized team that is responsible for examining and credentialing pastors. All members of the presbytery have voice in its deliberations; and the right to vote is given to those serving in a pastoral capacity in a congregation. In order to ensure maximum deployment for the kingdom of God, as well as ensuring the core integrity of theology and ministry, categories and responsibilities of pastors are as follows:

- a. *Pastor/Head of Staff* – Pastors/Heads of Staff or Co-Pastors/Heads of Staff are called by the congregation and installed by the presbytery and shall have the responsibility to moderate session and congregational meetings. They are members of presbytery with voice and vote.
- b. *Associate Pastor* – Associate pastors are called by the congregation and installed by the presbytery upon recommendation of the session. They are members of presbytery with voice and vote.
- c. *Assistant Pastor* – Assistant pastors are called by the session or pastor/head of staff according to rule of the session. The session, acting as a pastor nominating committee, may propose to the congregation that an assistant pastor be called as an associate pastor. Assistant pastors are members of presbytery with voice and vote, and may, upon election by the congregation, serve on the session with voice and vote in accordance with the congregation's own rule.
- d. *Transitional Pastor* – Transitional pastors are called by the session and may be used in times of transition when a congregation is without a pastor/head of staff. Transitional pastors shall have the same responsibilities and privileges in presbytery as pastors/heads of staff.
- e. *Pastor in a Validated Ministry* – Pastors may be authorized to serve in validated ministries outside a local congregation. Validated ministries might include service in a presbytery, educational institution, hospital, or a variety of mission fields. The presbytery shall validate and annually review the pastor's ministry. Ordinarily, pastors in validated ministry will also be expected to take part in the life and ministry of a local ECO congregation. Pastors in validated ministries have voice and may be granted the right to vote if serving as a part-time assistant pastor.
- f. *Affiliate Pastor* – A pastor may be ordained in a different body and become an affiliate member of ECO. Affiliate pastors shall adhere to the Essential Tenets of ECO. The presbytery shall determine the suitability of an affiliate pastor. If an affiliate pastor serves as pastor/head of staff of a non-union ECO congregation, then the affiliate pastor shall have voice and vote in presbytery; otherwise the affiliate pastor shall just have voice. Affiliate membership ends when the pastor completes their call in the local ECO church.
- g. *Honorably Retired Pastor* – Pastors may request the status of honorably retired. Honorably retired pastors shall have voice but no vote in presbytery unless they are serving as an assistant or transitional pastor. Each honorably retired pastor is encouraged to become active in the life of congregation. A church session may commission an honorably retired pastor to administer the sacraments within that session's congregation. Such commission shall be for a defined period not to exceed twelve months and may be renewed indefinitely in increments of twelve month or less.
- h. *Pastor in between Calls* - Pastors may be authorized to remain members of the presbytery in between one call and another for one year after the last date of service to a congregation or validated ministry. This date may be extended by the presbytery up to six additional months, for a total of eighteen months. A Pastor in between calls has voice and no vote.

## *2.0402 Pastoral Covenant Groups*

Pastors and ministries are healthier when there are opportunities for mutually supportive relationships. Therefore, pastors shall participate in a pastoral covenant group with other pastors. The purpose of this group is to coach, encourage, and pray for one another as they strive for greater missional effectiveness. This pastoral covenant group shall:

- a. Explore the health of each other's current ministry.
- b. Explore the future objectives of each other's ministry.
- c. Address challenges and obstacles to meeting those objectives.
- d. Share best practices and insights.
- e. Explore each other's physical, spiritual, relational, and emotional health.

These pastoral covenant groups are self-selective. Under its Ministry Partnership Team (MPT), the presbytery shall ensure that all pastors are participating in a pastoral covenant group.

## **2.05 Commissioning for particular service**

### *2.0501 Deployment of officers for greater missional ministry*

In order to better facilitate the mission and ministry of a presbytery and its congregations, as well as to maximize the gifts of the totality of the body of Christ, it is often advantageous to commission elders and deacons to more extensive levels of service than ordinarily afforded these offices. There are two general ways in which officers may be commissioned to provide pastoral leadership and administer the sacraments. First, they may serve in various ways within a congregation under the supervision of the session and a pastor/head of staff or transitional pastor. Second, an elder or deacon may be commissioned to serve in the role of pastor/head of staff for a congregation or a church plant. It is appropriate to refer to individuals serving in either capacity as "lay pastor." The session shall pre-authorize the administration of the sacraments, and also determine the process by which pre-authorization occurs.

### *2.0502 Service within a congregation under the session and Pastor/Head of Staff*

The Church exists wherever two or more are gathered in the name of Jesus. Therefore, it is appropriate to celebrate sacraments in these smaller units. These smaller units include, but are not limited to: small groups, missional communities, retreats, leaders of satellite congregations, and house church gatherings. If an officer has been commissioned by the session to lead these groups in mission or ministry and has been appropriately trained, he or she shall be authorized to administer the sacraments in these communities. The pastor and

the session shall oversee those who are commissioned to such service within a congregation. This commission shall be for a period of twelve months and may be renewed indefinitely.

#### *2.0503 Service within a congregation as the Pastor/Head of Staff*

The presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, may authorize an elder or deacon to be commissioned to serve in the role of pastor/head of staff of a local congregation or a church plant. With approval of the presbytery, these individuals could moderate session and congregational meetings, administer the sacraments and, where allowed by law, perform marriages. The presbytery shall ensure training to include theological education, and ministry skill development as well as continued mentorship during this commission. This commission shall be for a period of twelve months and may be renewed indefinitely. Because these officers are fulfilling the pastoral role for a congregation, they shall be enrolled as members of presbytery during their commission and be given voice and vote at presbytery meetings. If these officers retire after completing their commissioned service, they may by written request and with the permission of the presbytery, remain members of the presbytery as "Honorably Retired Lay Pastors" with voice and no vote in the presbytery.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Councils of ECO

*Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times.*  
—Exodus 18:24-26 (NIV)

#### 3.01 Presbytery

##### 3.0101 Purpose

The presbytery, as a covenant community, exercises apostolic authority by and for the nurture and benefit of its congregations, that the communities they serve may know the love and invitation of Christ.

##### 3.0102 Membership

The members of the presbytery are its congregations, pastors installed in service to member congregations, pastors serving in validated ministries, and pastors honorably retired. Ordinarily, a presbytery shall be constituted of at least 10 but no more than 20 congregations, and geographically connected. A group of congregations may petition to the synod executive council to form a non-geographical presbytery for first language and cultural considerations.

##### 3.0103 Duties

The presbytery has the authority and pastoral responsibility to:

- a. Promote the health of the covenant community to the end that its congregations and members may bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.
- b. Charter and receive new congregations into the presbytery.
- c. Dismiss congregations to other presbyteries or denominations.
- d. Exercise special care and oversight of congregations that do not have an installed pastor, and appoint the moderator of such sessions.
- e. Dissolve congregations when their mission work has ceased.
- f. Authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper beyond particular congregations.
- g. Receive, dismiss, examine, install, provide pastoral care for, and discipline pastors.

- h. Enroll, dismiss, and examine candidates and ordain them to called service.
- i. Validate the call of pastors to service beyond a congregation.
- j. Settle differences between congregations and pastors.
- k. Propose and vote on amendments to the Constitution.
- l. Elect commissioners to wider councils of ECO, including the synod. In the selection of such commissioners the presbytery is encouraged to promote representation in areas of difference recognized as the basis of discrimination and inequality in church and society, namely race, ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, and age.
- m. Develop a process to assist its congregations in an annual review of their ministry and mission. It is expected the appropriateness of this process will vary based on a presbytery and their congregations' situation and context.

Examples of these processes include, but are not limited to, participation by the congregation in a congregational health self-study process or participation in a congregational health peer review process where two congregations review each other. The results of this annual process shall be reviewed and discussed by the presbytery with each congregation's session.

- n. Establish Minimum Terms of Call for all pastoral categories in P-2.0401 as needed.

### 3.0104 Meetings

The presbytery shall organize itself to accomplish these tasks and fulfill these responsibilities, and may delegate authority to elected committees, ministry teams, commissions. The presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice a year. Meetings of the presbytery, including its quorum, shall be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by its own rule the presbytery has adopted other procedures and practices. Each elder commissioner elected by a member congregation shall be entitled to vote at stated meetings. In addition, member pastors with voting authority as set forth in Section 2.0401 shall also be entitled to vote at stated meetings. The voting members of the presbytery shall have the authority to elect a governing council and to vote on all matters set forth in Section 3.0103. The voting members may also delegate to the presbytery governing council authority with respect to any such matter, other than the election of members to the presbytery governing council and permanent judicial commission, or the approval or concurrence of proposed amendments to the *Constitution*. Notwithstanding the above, in the case of a vacancy in a position on a presbytery's governing council or permanent judicial commission, the presbytery's governing council may appoint a person to fill that vacancy until the next called meeting of the presbytery. Each presbytery shall develop a manual of administrative operations setting forth its structures and procedures.

### *3.0105 Required Committees*

#### *a. Ministry Partnership Team*

Each presbytery shall elect a Ministry Partnership Team which shall have broad responsibility for the pastoral relationships of the presbytery. The Ministry Partnership Team shall have at least eight members, all elected by the presbytery, with membership being made up of an equal number of elders and pastors. No more than two members may be from the same congregation. Presbyteries who are unable to fulfill the minimum membership of the Ministry Partnership Team (MPT) may request an annual exception from the synod executive council. The Ministry Partnership Team shall be available to any session or member of the presbytery. The presbytery shall, by its own rule, delegate and determine the authority and functions of the Ministry Partnership Team. Included in this authority that may be delegated to the Ministry Partnership Team is the ability to approve ordination of candidates, transfer of pastors to and from its jurisdiction, and approve commissions for installation and ordination.

#### *b. Permanent Judicial Commission*

Each presbytery shall elect a Permanent Judicial Commission as specified in the *Rules of Discipline*.

### *3.0106 Presbytery Governing Council*

The presbytery governing council shall consist of a number of individuals determined by the presbytery, and shall be composed of pastors and elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the presbytery council consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a pastor or an elder. The presbytery council shall be responsible for the records, finances, policies, and procedures of the presbytery and shall perform any functions delegated to such council by the presbytery. The presbytery council shall have the authority to elect corporate officers (including a chief executive officer) and to hire staff to perform any such functions. The council shall review the chief executive officer's performance annually.

### *3.0107 Records*

The presbytery shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and make them available on request to any session or member of the presbytery. Each presbytery shall annually arrange for an independent financial review and shall publish the report in its minutes.

### *3.0108 Finances*

The presbytery may develop programs, engage staff, adopt budgets, and acquire and manage resources as it deems expedient to the mission of Christ. To support its function and ministry the presbytery may, by its own rule, apportion expenses to its function and ministry the presbytery may, by its own rule, apportion expenses to its congregations.

### *3.0109 Policies and Procedures*

Each presbytery shall establish processes and procedures for recruiting and encouraging candidates to the ministry.

Presbyteries shall work together and with the Synod to train and equip candidates for pastoral ministry.

Each presbytery shall adopt a policy for the prevention of sexual misconduct among its members. This policy shall govern the presbytery's congregations unless a particular session, with the consent of the presbytery, adopts its own policy.

## **3.02 Synod**

### *3.0201 Purpose*

The synod is the widest council of ECO giving support and guidance to the presbyteries and congregations. The synod shall assess and proclaim the missional vision and theology of ECO.

### *3.0202 Duties and Authority*

The synod shall:

- a. Provide linkage of presbyteries to one another for mutual encouragement.
- b. Correspond and connect with global mission partners, other denominations and ministry partners.
- c. Maintain and interpret the Constitution (Essential Tenets, Polity, and Rules of Discipline), as prescribed in Sections 6.01, 6.02, and 6.03.
- d. Where appropriate and necessary, provide services (i.e., pension and health insurance) for ECO.

### *3.0203 Meetings of Synod Commissioners*

The synod commissioners shall meet at least bi-annually. The meetings shall serve the purpose of encouraging presbyteries and churches in their mission as well as conducting the business necessary for the mission of ECO. Meetings of the synod, including its quorum shall be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, unless by its own rule the synod has adopted other procedures and practices. The synod commissioners shall have the authority to elect and remove members of the synod executive council and to amend and vote on proposed amendments to this *Constitution* submitted to the synod by at least two presbyteries. Voting members of the synod are those individuals commissioned by and from their presbyteries. Presbyteries shall commission an equal number of pastors and

elders. The synod, by its own rule, shall determine the number of commissioners from each presbytery, and each presbytery shall be entitled to at least one elder and one pastor commissioner.

### *3.0204 Synod Executive Council*

The synod executive council shall consist of between six and nine individuals, with at least three being elders and the remainder being ordained pastors. The synod executive council shall have the power to:

- a. Constitute, divide, and dissolve presbyteries, and settle disputes between them, provided any such action is approved by two-thirds of the members of the council then in office.
- b. Receive and approve union presbyteries into ECO, provided any such action is approved by two-thirds of the members of the governing board then in office.
- c. Adopt an annual budget and may receive, hold, manage, sell and expend funds and other assets.
- d. Elect corporate officers (including a president) and hire staff.
- e. Represent ECO to ecumenical and mission partners when needed.
- f. Develop a manual of operations for its activities and functions.
- g. Own the distinctive trademarks, trade names, and other intellectual property of ECO and protect against unauthorized use thereof.
- h. Exercise all other powers of a nonprofit corporation under applicable law.
- i. Interpret ECO's Constitution (Essential Tenets, Polity, and Rules of Discipline) between Synod Business Meetings as presented in Sections 6.01, 6.02, and 6.03.

### *3.0205 Records*

The synod shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and make them available on request to any member presbytery or congregation. The synod shall annually arrange for an independent financial review and shall publish the report in its minutes.

### *3.0206 Finances*

To support its function and ministry, the synod may, by its own rule, apportion expenses to its presbyteries and/or affinity networks.

### *3.0207 Policies and Procedures*

The synod shall develop a manual of administrative operations setting forth its structures and procedures.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Civil Authority and Property

*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

—Psalm 24:1 (NIV)

*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.*

—Psalm 127:1 (NIV)

#### 4.01 Incorporation and Trustees

Where permitted by civil law, each congregation, each presbytery, and the synod shall cause a nonprofit corporation to be formed and maintained through which it shall act legally. If incorporation of a particular congregation or presbytery is not permitted under applicable law, individual trustees shall be elected from the congregation's membership in the same manner as for electing elders, or by rule of the presbytery for its trustees.

##### 4.0101 The Congregation

The nonprofit corporation of a congregation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have all powers of a nonprofit corporation under applicable law, including the power to:

- a. Receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted at a duly constituted meeting.
- b. Accept and execute deeds of title to such property, and hold and defend title to such property.
- c. Manage any permanent special funds for the mission of the congregation.

A congregation's session shall serve as the governing board of the nonprofit corporation of such congregation unless the corporation's governing documents provide for a separate corporate governing board, in which case such governing board shall operate under the authority of the session. The session or other governing board shall elect an elder, pastor, or staff member to serve as the chief executive officer of the corporation and may elect other corporate officers as it deems appropriate or as required by law. The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session.

##### 4.0102 The Presbytery

The corporation of a presbytery so formed, or its individual trustees, shall have the power to receive, hold, encumber, manage and transfer property, real or personal. The presbytery shall

not, however, direct the use of, co-sign, or guarantee any debt instrument issued by a member congregation or any other entity (except a subsidiary of the presbytery), nor will it guarantee performance of any instrument securing such debt, be it mortgage or deed of trust or a security agreement.

A presbytery's governing council shall serve as the governing board of the corporation of such presbytery. Such governing board shall elect corporate officers as it deems appropriate or as required by applicable law.

#### *4.0103 The Synod*

The corporation of the synod so formed shall have the power to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, to accept and execute deeds of title to such property, and to defend title to such property.

The corporation of the synod shall have the power to manage any permanent special funds accepted by and for purposes directed by the synod.

The powers and duties of the synod corporation shall not infringe on the powers and duties of the synod, and the corporation shall in all matters be subject to the direction, review, and control of the synod exercised through the synod governing board.

The synod's executive council shall serve as the governing board of the corporation of the synod. Such governing board shall elect corporate officers as it deems appropriate or as required by applicable law.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Ecumenicity and Union

*Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

—2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

#### 5.01 Ecumenicity

ECO recognizes that God calls all to one faith, one Lord, one baptism in the body of Christ, the Church. The center of this life together is based in the covenant promises of the Lord, who is known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust in Christ as Savior and commit to life together with Christ as our Lord. As the called people of God, we desire unity of ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. As heirs of the Reformed tradition, we recognize that we are but one expression of that spiritual life together. We desire communication, cooperation, and partnership with other Christian groups, noting common goals where possible and conversation where core differences exist.

#### 5.02 Reformed and Presbyterian

We cherish our common history with all expressions of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. We wish to partner in mission and ministry, while confessing the common historical biblical and orthodox faith as given to us in God's Word, our authority for faith and life.

##### *5.0201 Union Congregations*

Congregations, historically members of the PC(USA) or other Reformed denominations, who wish to maintain that membership while joining with ECO and who recognize and teach the *Essential Tenets* may request to join a presbytery of ECO after a period and process of discernment, and a two-thirds vote of the congregation at a duly called meeting. This joint witness shall be formed in communication with the presbytery or comparable governing body of each denomination. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, any mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases where the other is permissive.

#### 5.03 Other denominations

Out of our common Protestant heritage, partnership and joint congregational witness will be encouraged where mission, ministry, and collegiality may be coordinated and approved by the appropriate governing bodies, and where the *Constitution* and *Essential Tenets* of ECO may be followed.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Constitution

#### 6.01 Composition of the Constitution

The Constitution of ECO includes the *Essential Tenets*, the *Polity*, and the *Rules of Discipline*.

#### 6.02 Amending this Constitution

Presbyteries may overture the synod of ECO for changes in this *Constitution* as follows:

- a. Two presbyteries must concur in the proposed changes and overture the larger body with changes.
- b. The synod may amend and transmit the proposed changes to the *Constitution* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote, and a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries shall be required for adoption.
- c. Any amendment to the *Essential Tenets* shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the synod present and voting. In addition, the affirmative vote of each presbytery for such amendment shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of such presbytery present and voting.

#### 6.03 Interpreting This Constitution

The Synod, its Council, and its Permanent Judicial Commission may interpret this constitution in the following ways described below. Such interpretation shall be binding on all ECO officers and councils. Any such interpretation shall not conflict with this Constitution or any ruling of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission.

- a. The Synod, when requested by a presbytery may, by resolution, interpret this Constitution.
- b. The Synod Executive Council shall interpret this Constitution when requested by a presbytery. Any interpretation of this Constitution by the Synod Executive Council shall be placed on the next Synod Business Meeting docket for the Synod's concurrence. If the Synod rejects the Synod Executive Council's interpretation of ECO's Constitution, the Synod may amend the interpretation at the same meeting.
- c. The Synod Permanent Judicial Commission shall have the authority to determine if the interpretation offered by the Synod is Constitutional when a remedial case is filed by a presbytery. A stay will automatically be issued pending the outcome of the case. If the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission rules that the Synod's interpretation is unconstitutional, the interpretation is void and will be reported at the next Synod Business Meeting.





# ECO Rules of Discipline

## 2024

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*  
- Galatians 6:1-2

## 1. Purpose of Church Discipline

- 1.1 All human beings are sinners by nature, by influence, by choice, and by action. Sin is destructive, contagious, parasitical, polluting, and disabling. The purpose of church discipline is redemptive: to correct and restrain sin; to help the spiritual growth of people; to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring covenant partners to repentance and restoration; and to correct the weaknesses, mistakes and offenses of individuals and councils. Appropriate reasons for discipline are actions contrary to the faith and practice to which, according to Scripture, all Christians are called, or which are contrary to the *Constitution* of ECO.
- 1.2 Discipline in the church should be appropriate to the nature of the error or offense. All acts of discipline, both for individuals and councils, should be weighed carefully, keeping in mind the purpose of discipline. In all cases, the process and procedures used in church discipline shall afford all the opportunity to be heard and shall be fair and just to all participants.
- 1.3 The traditional biblical obligation to conciliate, mediate, and adjust differences without strife is not diminished by these *Rules of Discipline*. The biblical duty of church people to “come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court...” (Matthew 5:25) is not abated or diminished. It remains the duty of every church member to try (prayerfully and seriously) to bring about an adjustment or settlement of the quarrel, complaint, delinquency, or irregularity asserted.

## 2. Judicial Process

- 2.1 Judicial process consists of two types of cases: remedial and disciplinary. A remedial case is one in which (a) an erroneous decision or action, or (b) an omission or failure to act, may be corrected by a council with higher or wider authority. A disciplinary case is one in which a church member or officer may be censured for an offense. Church officers are pastors, elders, and deacons. An offense is any act or omission by a member or officer of the church that is contrary to Scripture or the *Constitution* of ECO.
- 2.2 The responsibility and authority for discipline in a particular church belongs to the session. The responsibility and authority for discipline of pastors and lay pastors belongs to the presbytery. The responsibility and authority for remedial cases and appeals is the presbytery and the synod.
- 2.3 Each council shall enforce and recognize the judgments, decisions, and orders of every other council acting under the provisions of the *Rules of Discipline*.
- 2.4 Judicial process ends when a church officer or a member renounces the jurisdiction of the church. Should the accused in a disciplinary case renounce the jurisdiction of the church, the clerk or stated clerk shall report to the governing body both the renunciation and the status of the matter at that time, including the name of the accused, the date and fact of

renunciation during an investigation or hearing, and the charges filed, or, if the renunciation occurs prior to the filing of charges the nature of the complaint or alleged offense.

- 2.5 In the Rules of Discipline, any filings involving the PJC of the Synod shall be filed with a designated executive staff member appointed by the Synod Executive Council who serves in the role of Stated Clerk for official discipline actions in the Synod.

### **3. Judicial Commissions**

- 3.1 Each presbytery shall elect a permanent judicial commission from the pastors and elders within the presbytery. Once five (5) presbyteries have been established, the synod shall elect a permanent judicial commission. Each commission shall be composed of pastors and elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a pastor or an elder. The synod commission shall be composed of no fewer than five members distributed equally, insofar as possible, among the constituent presbyteries. The presbytery commission shall be composed of no fewer than five members, with no more than one of its elder members from any one of its constituent churches.
- 3.2 The term of each member of a permanent judicial commission shall be six years. Commissioners shall be elected in three classes, with no more than one half of the members to be in one class. When established for the first time, one class shall serve for two years, the second class for four years, and the third class for six years. Any vacancy due to resignation, death, or any other cause may be filled by the electing governing body, which may elect a person to fill the unexpired term.
- 3.3 No person who has served on a permanent judicial commission for a full term of six years shall be eligible for reelection until four years have elapsed after the expired six-year term. No person shall serve on more than one judicial commission at the same time.
- 3.4 The quorum of a judicial commission shall be a majority of the members. For judicial process, the session is a judicial commission and the quorum of a session for judicial process shall be the moderator of the session and a majority of the elder members.
- 3.5 When a church or council is a party to a case, members of a judicial commission who are members of that church, or of that council, or of churches within that council shall not participate in the trial or appeal of that case.
- 3.6 A judicial commission shall exercise the powers and responsibilities entrusted to it by these *Rules of Discipline*, and is authorized to deliberate upon and conclude any matters submitted to it under these Rules. A judicial commission may hold a pre-hearing conference, require the exchange of lists of witnesses and exhibits, may request written briefs from the parties, provide for reasonable discovery of evidence, set reasonable schedules for discovery, briefs, and the hearing of the case, and take such other action as may be necessary to provide for a full and fair hearing for all participants. A judicial commission shall have full authority and power to control the conduct of the hearing and of

all parties, witnesses, counsel, and the public, including removal of them, to the end that proper dignity and decorum shall be maintained. Questions as to procedure, the competency of witnesses, or the admissibility of evidence arising in the course of a hearing shall be decided by the judicial commission after the parties have had an opportunity to be heard.

#### **4. Remedial Cases**

- 4.1 A remedial case is initiated by the filing of a complaint with the stated clerk of the governing body having jurisdiction. A complaint is a written statement alleging: (a) an erroneous decision or action, or (b) an omission or failure to act. The filing of a complaint does not, by itself, stay enforcement of the decision or action.
- 4.2 The action or decision of a council or of a judicial commission may be suspended by a stay of enforcement. To seek a stay of enforcement, the complainant or appellant shall deliver to the stated clerk a copy of the complaint or notice of appeal and a request for stay containing a short statement of the basis for challenging the decision or action, and a short statement of the harm that will occur if the decision or action is not stayed. The stated clerk shall promptly transmit the request for stay to all members of the judicial commission eligible to participate in consideration of the complaint or appeal. A stay of enforcement shall be entered when it is signed by at least three of the members of the judicial commission having jurisdiction to hear the complaint or appeal on the decision or action. A stay of enforcement has no evidentiary or procedural effect on the merits of the case.
- 4.3 Remedial complaints shall be filed within ninety days. Those eligible to file such a complaint are: (a) a pastor or an elder enrolled as a member of a presbytery, or one who has been dismissed by a presbytery in the same 90 days, against that presbytery, and the complaint is filed with the synod; (b) a session against the presbytery, and the complaint is filed with the synod; (c) any council against any other council of the same level, and the complaint is filed with the council immediately wider than the council complained against; (d) a covenant partner of a church, or one who has been dismissed by a session or in the same 90 days, against the session of that church, and the complaint is filed with the presbytery; (e) a presbytery against the synod, and the complaint is filed with the synod.
- 4.4 A complaint shall include the following: (a) the name of the complainant and the name of the respondent; (b) the alleged erroneous decision, action, omission, or failure to act which shall include the date, place, and circumstances thereof; (c) the reasons for the remedial complaint; (d) the interest or relationship of the complainant, showing why that party has a right to file the complaint; and (e) the relief requested.
- 4.5 A copy of the complaint shall be delivered to the respondent and the complainant shall file with the stated clerk a receipt signed by the respondent or an affidavit of personal service.
- 4.6 The respondent shall file with the stated clerk a concise answer within forty-five days after receipt of the complaint, and shall furnish a copy of the answer to the complainant. The answer shall admit those facts alleged in the complaint that are true, deny those allegations

that are not true or are mistakenly stated, and present other facts that may explain the situation.

- 4.7 The hearing in a remedial case shall be conducted by the judicial commission. Each of the parties in a remedial case shall be entitled to appear and may be represented by counsel, provided, however, that no person shall act as counsel who is not a member of ECO. No member of a judicial commission shall appear as counsel before that commission while a member. Counsel need not be a paid representative or an attorney-at-law.
- 4.8 A member of a judicial commission is disqualified if the member is personally interested in the case, is related by blood or marriage to any party, or has been active for or against any party. Any member of a judicial commission may be challenged by any party, and the validity of the challenge shall be determined by the remaining members of the permanent judicial commission.
- 4.9 At the hearing on a remedial complaint, the parties shall be given an opportunity to make opening statements, present evidence, and the parties shall be given an opportunity to make final statements, the complainant having the right of opening and closing the argument. The judicial commission shall then meet privately to decide the case.
- 4.10 The judicial commission shall then decide the case. If the complaint is sustained either in whole or in part, the commission shall either order such action as is appropriate or direct the lower governing body to conduct further proceedings in the matter. A written decision shall be prepared and shall become the final decision when a copy of the written decision is signed by the moderator of the judicial commission. A copy of the written decision shall be delivered to the parties to the case. The decision shall be filed with the stated clerk of the governing body that appointed the judicial commission.

## **5. Disciplinary Cases**

- 5.1 A disciplinary case is initiated by submitting a written statement of an alleged offense to the clerk of session or the stated clerk of the presbytery. The statement shall give a clear narrative and allege facts with supporting information, that, if proven true, would likely result in disciplinary action.
- 5.2 Upon receipt of a written statement of an alleged offense, the clerk of session or the stated clerk of presbytery, without undertaking further inquiry, shall report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the accused or the nature of the alleged offense, and refer the statement immediately to an investigating committee. A session shall not grant a certificate of transfer to a member, nor shall a presbytery grant a certificate of transfer to a minister, while an inquiry or charges are pending.
- 5.3 When a written statement of an alleged offense of sexual abuse toward any person under the age of eighteen, or who it is alleged lacked the mental capacity to consent, has been received against a pastor, the stated clerk receiving the allegation shall immediately communicate the allegation to the judicial commission. The moderator of the judicial

commission shall within three days designate two members of presbytery (who shall not be members of the investigating committee) to determine whether the accused shall be placed on a paid administrative leave during the resolution of the matter. The cost of such shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary. While administrative leave is in effect, the pastor may not perform any pastoral, administrative, educational, or supervisory duties, and may not officiate at any functions such as Baptisms, funerals, or weddings.

- 5.4 Upon receiving a written allegation of an offense, the council having jurisdiction over the accused member shall appoint an investigating committee to determine whether charges should be filed. An investigating committee shall have no more than five but no less than three members. A session shall not appoint members of the session as members of the investigating committee. A presbytery may provide by rule for appointment of an investigating committee.
- 5.5 The investigating committee shall: (a) provide the accused with a copy of the statement of alleged offense; (b) make a thorough inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the alleged offense; (c) examine all relevant papers, documents, and records available to it; (d) ascertain all available witnesses and inquire of them; (e) determine whether there are probable grounds or cause to believe that an offense was committed by the accused; (f) decide whether the charge(s) filed can reasonably be proved, having due regard for the character, availability, and credibility of the witnesses and evidence available; (g) report to the governing body having jurisdiction over the accused only whether or not it will file charges; and (h) if charges are to be filed, prepare and file them and designate one or more persons (to be known as the prosecuting committee) from among its membership to prosecute the case.
- 5.6 The investigating committee, prior to filing charges against an accused, may initiate alternative forms of resolution to determine if agreement can be reached among all parties involved concerning any charges which may be filed. If such agreement is reached, the investigating committee shall report it to the judicial commission for its approval.
- 5.7 If the investigating committee decides to file charges, it shall inform the accused in writing of the charges it will make, including a summary of the facts it expects to prove at the hearing to support those charges. It shall ask the accused if that person wishes to plead guilty to the charges to avoid a full hearing and indicate the censure it will recommend to the judicial commission.
- 5.8 If no charges are filed, the investigating committee shall file a written report of that fact alone with the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery, and notify the person who submitted the written statement. If no charges are filed, the disposition of the investigating committee's records shall be in accordance with session or presbytery policy.
- 5.9 No charges shall be filed later than three years from the time of the commission of the alleged offense, nor later than one year from the date the investigating committee was formed, whichever occurs first, except as follows. For instances of sexual abuse of another person, the three year time limit shall not apply. Charges may be brought regardless of the

date on which an offense is alleged to have occurred. Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to: (a) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (b) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position.

- 5.10 All disciplinary cases shall be filed and prosecuted by a governing body through an investigating committee and a prosecuting committee. The prosecuting committee is the representative of the church and, as such, has all of the rights of the appropriate governing body in the case. Each charge shall be numbered and set forth the conduct that constituted the offense. Each charge shall state (as far as possible) the time, place, and circumstances of the commission of the alleged conduct. Each charge shall also be accompanied by a list of the names and addresses of the witnesses for the prosecution and a description of the records and documents to be cited for its support. Every charge shall be prepared in writing and filed with the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery. Upon receipt of a charge, the clerk of a session shall present the charge to the session at its next meeting. Upon receipt of a charge, the stated clerk of the presbytery shall immediately forward it to the judicial commission of that presbytery.
- 5.11 The hearing in a disciplinary case shall be conducted by a judicial commission. Each of the parties in a disciplinary case shall be entitled to appear and may be represented by counsel, provided, however, that no person shall act as counsel who is not a member of ECO. No member of a judicial commission shall appear as counsel before that commission while a member. If the accused in a disciplinary case is unable to secure counsel, the judicial commission shall appoint counsel for the accused. Reasonable expenses for defense shall be authorized and reimbursed by the governing body in which the case originated. Counsel need not be a paid representative or attorney-at-law.
- 5.12 A member of a judicial commission is disqualified if the member is personally interested in the case, is related by blood or marriage to any party, or has been active for or against any party. Any member of a judicial commission may be challenged by any party, and the validity of the challenge shall be determined by the remaining members of the judicial commission.
- 5.13 The proceedings shall ordinarily be conducted in open session; however, at the request of any party, or on its own initiative, the judicial commission may determine at any stage of the proceedings, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, to exclude persons other than the parties and their counsel.
- 5.14 The accused in a disciplinary case is presumed to be innocent until the contrary is proved, and unless guilt is established beyond a reasonable doubt, the accused is entitled to be found not guilty.
- 5.15 The judicial commission shall determine all preliminary objections and any other objection affecting the order or regularity of the proceedings. It may dismiss the case or permit amendments to the charges in the furtherance of justice, provided that such amendments

do not change the substance of the charges or prejudice the accused. If the proceedings are found to be in order, and the charges are considered sufficient, the accused shall be called upon to plead 'guilty' or 'not guilty' to each charge. The plea shall be entered on the record. If the accused declines to answer or pleads 'not guilty,' a plea of 'not guilty' shall be entered on the record and the hearing shall proceed. If the accused pleads 'guilty,' the council shall proceed to hear evidence of harm, mitigation, rehabilitation, and redemption, and to determine the degree of censure to be imposed.

- 5.16 If a plea of not guilty is entered on the record, the parties shall then be given an opportunity to make opening statements. The prosecuting committee shall present its evidence in support of the charges, subject to objection and cross-examination by the accused. The accused shall have the opportunity to present evidence, subject to objection and cross-examination by the prosecuting committee. The prosecuting committee then may introduce additional evidence, but only to rebut evidence introduced on behalf of the accused. This additional evidence is subject to objection and cross-examination by the accused. The parties shall be given an opportunity to make final statements. The prosecuting committee shall have the right of opening and closing the argument.
- 5.17 The judicial commission shall then meet privately. All persons not members of the session or permanent judicial commission shall be excluded. After careful deliberation, the judicial commission shall vote on each charge separately and record the vote in its minutes. In order to find the accused guilty of a charge, the judicial commission must find that the pertinent facts within that charge have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Proof beyond a reasonable doubt occurs when the comparison and consideration of all the evidence compels an abiding conviction that the material facts necessary to prove the charge are true. No judgment of guilt may be found on a charge unless at least two-thirds of the members of the judicial commission eligible to vote agree on the judgment. When a judicial commission has arrived at a decision, the moderator shall, in open meeting, announce the verdict for each charge separately.
- 5.18 If the accused is found guilty or after a guilty plea, the judicial commission shall permit the parties to present evidence as to the extent of the injury suffered, mitigation, rehabilitation, and redemption. This evidence may be offered by either party or the original accuser or that person's representative. The person who was directly harmed by the offense may submit a victim impact statement. That statement shall not be subject to cross-examination. The judicial commission shall then meet privately to determine the degree of censure to be imposed. Following such determination and in an open meeting, the moderator of the judicial commission shall then pronounce the censure. A written decision stating the judgment on each charge and the determination of the degree of censure, if any, shall be prepared. It shall become the final decision when signed by the moderator of the judicial commission, and shall be filed with the clerk or stated clerk of the council. The clerk or stated clerk of the council shall deliver a copy of the decision to each party named in the decision.

## 6. Censure and Restoration in a Disciplinary Case

- 6.1 The degrees of church censure are rebuke, rebuke with supervised rehabilitation, temporary exclusion from exercise of ordained office or membership, and removal from ordained office or membership. Rebuke is the lowest degree of censure for an offense and is completed when pronounced. It consists of setting forth publicly the character of the offense, together with reproof.
- 6.2 Rebuke with supervised rehabilitation is the next to lowest degree of censure. It consists of setting forth the character of the offense, together with reproof and mandating a period of supervised rehabilitation imposed by the judicial commission. The judicial commission shall formally communicate to the supervising entity and the person censured the goals of the rehabilitation and the specific authority conferred on the supervisor(s). The description of the rehabilitation program shall include a clear statement of how progress will be evaluated and how it will be determined when and if the supervised rehabilitation has been satisfactorily completed.
- 6.3 Temporary exclusion from the exercise of ordained office or membership is a higher degree of censure for a more aggravated offense and shall be for a definite period of time, or for a period defined by completion of supervised rehabilitation imposed by the judicial commission. If the period of temporary exclusion is defined by completion of supervised rehabilitation, the judicial commission shall formally communicate to the supervising entity and the person found guilty the specific authority conferred on the supervisor. During the period of temporary exclusion from ordained office, the person found guilty shall refrain from the exercise of any function of ordained office. During the period of temporary exclusion from membership, the person found guilty shall refrain from participating and voting in meetings and from holding or exercising any office. If a pastor is temporarily excluded from the exercise of the office of ordained minister, the presbytery may, if no appeal from the case is pending, declare the pastoral relationship dissolved. A person under the censure of temporary exclusion shall apply in writing to the council, through the clerk of session or stated clerk, for restoration upon the expiration of the time of exclusion or completion of the supervised rehabilitation pronounced. The council that imposed the censure shall approve the restoration when the time of exclusion has expired or when the council is fully satisfied that the supervised rehabilitation pronounced has been completed. A person under the censure of temporary exclusion from the exercise of ordained office or from membership may apply in writing to the council that imposed the censure (through its clerk) to be restored prior to the expiration of the time of exclusion or the completion of the supervised rehabilitation fixed in the censure. The council may approve such a restoration when it is fully satisfied that the action is justified.
- 6.4 Removal from office or membership is the highest degree of censure. Removal from office is the censure by which the ordination and election of the person found guilty are set aside, and the person is removed from all offices without removal from membership. Removal from membership is the censure by which the membership of the person found guilty is terminated, the person is removed from all rolls, and the person's ordination and election to all offices are set aside. If a pastor is removed from office without removal from

membership, the presbytery shall give the pastor a certificate of membership to a church of the pastor's choice. Any pastoral relationship is automatically dissolved by the censure.

## **7. Appeal**

- 7.1 An appeal of a remedial or disciplinary case is the transfer to the next wider council of a case in which a decision has been rendered in a smaller council, for the purpose of obtaining a review of the proceedings and decision to correct, modify, set aside, or reverse the decision. Either party may initiate an appeal by the filing of a written notice of appeal.
- 7.2 In a remedial case, the notice of appeal shall not suspend any further action implementing the decision being appealed unless a stay of enforcement has been obtained in accordance with the provisions of 4.2 above.
- 7.3 In a disciplinary case, the notice of appeal, if properly and timely filed, shall suspend further proceedings by lower councils, except that, in the instance of temporary exclusion from exercise of ordained office or membership or removal from office or membership, the person against whom the judgment has been pronounced shall refrain from the exercise of office or from participating and voting in meetings until the appeal is finally decided.
- 7.4 On application, the judicial commission of the wider council may grant a petition for withdrawal of an appeal. The judicial commission shall deny a petition if its approval would defeat the ends of justice.
- 7.5 The grounds for appeal are: (a) irregularity in the proceedings; (b) refusing a party reasonable opportunity to be heard or to obtain or present evidence; (c) receiving improper, or declining to receive proper, evidence or testimony; (d) hastening to a decision before the evidence or testimony is fully received; (e) manifestation of prejudice in the conduct of the case; (f) injustice in the process or decision; (g) error in constitutional interpretation; and (h) in an appeal by a person found guilty, undue severity of censure.
- 7.6 A written notice of appeal shall be filed within forty-five days after a copy of the decision has been delivered to the party appealing. The written notice of appeal shall be filed with the clerk or stated clerk of the lower governing body that elected the judicial commission from whose decision the appeal is taken. The party appealing shall provide a copy of the notice of appeal to each of the other parties and to the stated clerk of the governing body that will hear the appeal. The written notice of appeal shall include the following: (a) the name of the party or parties filing the appeal, called the appellant or appellants, and their counsel if any; (b) the name of the other party or parties, called the appellee or appellees, and their counsel if any; (c) the governing body from whose decision the appeal is taken; (d) the decision, and date and place thereof, from which the appeal is taken (enclose a copy of the decision with the notice of appeal); and (e) a statement of the alleged errors of the judicial commission which conducted the hearing that are the grounds for appeal.

- 7.7 A copy of the notice of appeal shall be delivered to each of the other parties and the appellant(s) shall file with the stated clerk a receipt signed by the other parties or an affidavit of personal service.
- 7.8 Within forty-five days after the receipt of a written notice of appeal, the clerk of session or stated clerk of the lower governing body shall list in writing to the parties all of the papers and other materials that constitute the record of the case. Within fifteen days thereafter, any party may file with the stated clerk of the lower council a written statement challenging the accuracy or completeness of the record of the case as listed by the stated clerk. The written challenge shall state specifically the item or items which are claimed to be omitted from the record of the case.
- 7.9 The stated clerk of the lower council shall certify and file the record of the case, which may include authenticated copies of parts of the record, and shall include any written challenges disputing the completeness or accuracy of the record, with the stated clerk of the wider council. If anything material to either party is omitted from the record by error or accident or is misstated therein, the omission or misstatement may be corrected. The parties may stipulate to the correction, or the judicial commission of the lower council may certify and transmit a supplemental record. All other questions as to the form and content of the record shall be presented to the judicial commission of the higher governing body.
- 7.10 Within thirty days after the date of the filing of the record on appeal, the appellant shall file with the stated clerk of the wider council a written brief containing specifications of the errors alleged in the notice of appeal and arguments, reasons, and citations of authorities in support of the appellant's contentions as to the alleged errors specified. The brief shall be accompanied by a certification that a copy has been furnished to the other party or parties. For good cause shown, the stated clerk of the wider council may extend this time limit for a reasonable period. Failure of appellant to file a brief within the time allowed, without good cause, shall be deemed by the judicial commission an abandonment of the appeal
- 7.11 Within thirty days after the filing of appellant's brief, the appellee shall file with the stated clerk of the wider council a written brief responding to the appellant's brief. The brief shall be accompanied by a certification that a copy has been furnished to the other party or parties. For good cause shown, the stated clerk of the higher governing body may extend this time limit for a reasonable period. Failure by appellee to file a brief within the time allowed, without good cause, shall constitute waiver of the rights to file a brief, to appear, and to be heard.
- 7.12 Upon receipt of the record and the briefs, or upon the expiration of the time for filing them, the stated clerk of the wider council shall transmit the record and briefs to the judicial commission. At any time after an appeal is received by a judicial commission, the commission may direct the parties or their counsel, if any, to attend a prehearing conference, to seek agreement on any of the disputed issues in the appeal, and to take other action which might reasonably and impartially narrow the dispute and expedite its resolution.

- 7.13 The moderator of the judicial commission shall notify the parties of the date when they may appear in person or by counsel before the judicial commission to present the appeal. Failure of a party to appear in person or by counsel shall constitute a waiver of participation in the hearing on appeal.
- 7.14 At the hearing, the judicial commission shall determine whether to receive newly discovered evidence; and give opportunity to be heard on the grounds of the appeal to those parties who have not waived that right, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument.
- 7.15 After the hearing and after deliberation, the judicial commission shall vote separately on each specification of error alleged. The vote shall be on the question, "Shall the specification of error be sustained?" The minutes shall record the numerical vote on each specification of error. If none of the specifications of error is sustained, and no other error is found, the decision of the lower governing body shall be affirmed. If one or more errors are found, the judicial commission shall determine whether the decision of the lower council shall be affirmed, set aside, reversed, modified, or the case remanded for a new hearing.
- 7.16 A written decision shall be prepared, and shall become the final decision when a copy of the written decision is signed by the moderator of the commission. The decision shall be filed with the stated clerk of the council that appointed the judicial commission and delivered to the parties to the case.

# Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church



## New Officer Training

Nuts and Bolts

## KEY DATES

### 2024

**New Officer Training:** 11/7, 11/14

**Session Meeting: 6:30 PM, Chapel**

December 16

**Deacon Friendsgiving:**

November 17

### 2025

**Ordination and Installation of Officer Class of 2027**

January 12

**Officer & Staff Retreat**

January 24 & 25 at MDPC

**ECO National Gathering**

January 27-29 – Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, TX

**2025 Session Meetings | 6:30 PM**

January 24                      Friday Night- Staff and Officer Retreat at MDPC

February 24

March 24

April 28

May 19                      THIRD Monday

June 23

July                      No Meeting

August 25

September 22

October 27

November                      Confirmation Sunday Morning Session Meeting - date TBD

December 15                      THIRD Monday

**2025 Diaconate Meetings | 12:30– 2:00 PM**

January 12

January 24-25- Officer & Staff Retreat

March 2

April 13

May 18

June   No Meeting

July   No Meeting

August 10

September 14

October 19

November date TBD- Deacon Friendsgiving

## **Presbytery Meetings**

TBD

## **Communion Dates**

Sun, Jan 26	Communion at all three English Services
Wed, March 5	Ash Wednesday   Communion & Imposition of Ashes 12pm & 6:30pm
Sun, Mar 23	Communion at all three English services; First Communion
Thurs, Apr 17	Maundy Thursday   Communion 7pm
Sun, June 1	Communion at all three English Services
Sun, Aug 3	Communion at all three English Services
Sun, Oct 5	World Communion  First Communion
Sun, Nov 30	Communion at all three English Services  First Sunday in Advent
Fuente	First Sunday of each month

## **Baptism Dates**

Sun, Jan 19	Baptisms
Sun, Mar 2	Baptisms
Sun, April 6	Baptisms
Sun, May 11	Baptisms  Mother's Day  Immersion & Sprinkling @ 9:45 & 11:15
Sun, June 15	Baptisms  Father's Day
Sun, Jul 20	Baptisms
Sun, Aug 10	Baptisms
Sun, Sept 7	Baptisms
Sun, Nov 16	Baptisms  Immersion & Sprinkling @ 9:45 & 11:15
Sun, Dec 14	Baptisms  Third Sunday in Advent

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Officer Training 2024**

### **1. *What have I gotten myself into?***

In general terms, you have been elected by MDPC's congregation to provide *leadership* and *representation*. Your *leadership* will help create vision and make decisions which are in the best interest of the church. Your *representation* will allow the Session and/or the Deacon Board to be a place where the views and needs of the congregation can be acknowledged.

### **2. *What is expected of me?***

Officers are to provide a *leadership example* to the congregation. They are to walk with God. Growing in Christ, they are to reflect the character of Jesus. As such, they should practice the highest moral and spiritual standards, being guided by God through the Holy Spirit and the Bible. This leadership includes: (1) seeking to know Jesus Christ as intimately and personally as possible; (2) being a faithful student of the Bible, and letting the authority of scripture shape one's life; (3) regularly attending Sunday worship at MDPC, and serving communion as needed; (4) supporting MDPC's ministries with regular and faithful financial contributions, with *tithing* (10% of one's income) as the minimum goal; and faithfully participating in the leadership and decision making for MDPC.

### **3. *What meetings am I to attend?***

- Regular Session meetings are generally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 6:30pm. The December meeting is often held on an alternate day/date. There is no Session meeting in July or November. Meetings normally last about 90 minutes. Very rarely it may be necessary to call a special meeting for a specific issue.
- Regular Deacon meetings are generally held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month 12:30pm-2:00pm. Deacons can also be called together should a specific need for care, connection, or community arise.
- The Annual Officer/Staff Retreat is usually held the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Friday & Saturday of January.
- Congregational meetings are normally in a Rolling format that includes each of the 5 Worship Services. These typically occur 2 times a year, or as needed.
- Ministry area meetings take place as scheduled by each respective department.
- Presbytery meetings take place 1-2 times per year. MDPC sends elder commissioners, along with its installed pastors, to each meeting. Participation by Elders is on a volunteer basis, but we ask that you attend at least one meeting during your term of service as an Elder. Participation by Deacons is welcome and would be only on a voluntary basis.

**4. *What is the difference between elders and deacons?***

Here at MDPC, Elders are responsible for the spiritual leadership of the church, including the teaching of Scripture and for the oversight of administration, facility, and finance. Deacons are responsible for visionary and responsive resources that connect and care for the congregation.

**5. *How are decisions made at Session meetings?***

We try to keep the bureaucracy to a minimum, but we do follow *Robert's Rules of Order* for any decision making. In the simplest of terms, it follows these steps: (1) introduction of subject; (2) a motion is made by an elder; (3) that motion is seconded by a different elder; (4) discussion and questions; (5) vote is taken with a simple majority ruling.

**6. *How do items get on the Session agenda?***

The Moderator (Senior Pastor) determines the agenda for Session meetings in consultation with the other Pastors, the Clerk(s), Treasurer(s), Personnel Chair and Chief Operating Officer. New business items should come to Session only after having been vetted and endorsed by a respective committee.

**7. *How is Session and Deacon Board information communicated?***

We do as much as possible electronically via email. Committee minutes (including minutes of the Deacon Board) are submitted electronically to Jennifer Vajdos, and she posts them on a secure Officer Resource page on the website in advance of the Session meeting (password: TeamMDPC). Session minutes and agendas are distributed likewise.

**8. *Does the Session conduct any business electronically?***

Electronic meetings are somewhat contrary to the principles of our Constitution, and so we use them *sparingly*. Only non-controversial issues which have some time-sensitivity will be sent to the Session for an e-vote. The Moderator has the discretion to decide when to use an e-vote. The Session will be asked to ratify the e-vote at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

**9. *How do I get information about MDPC's ministries?***

We suggest you consult the following sources: MDPC's website ([mdpc.org](http://mdpc.org)), Sunday worship guide, MDPC weekly email, or contact the respective department by phone. Our website also has a complete listing of staff extensions and email addresses. MDPC has standardized email addresses with this formula: first initial, last name @mdpc.org (e.g., [jvajdos@mdpc.org](mailto:jvajdos@mdpc.org)).

**10. *What are MDPC's office hours?***

MDPC is officially open from 8:30am-5:00pm. Administrative and support staff are usually here during those hours. Pastors and directors are often here during those hours but have greater variation in their weekly schedule. Most Pastors and Directors have Sunday duties, and therefore take Friday off.

**11. *Who has authority for what at MDPC?***

The following table provides an overview of authority guidelines within the framework of ECO polity.

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Pastor</b>
1. Electing elders, deacons, and trustees	1. Provide opportunities for evangelism	1. Selecting scripture to be read in worship
2. Calling a pastor or pastors	2. Receive new members	2. Preparing and preaching the sermon
3. Changing the terms of call for a pastor	3. Lead in mission of whole church	3. Writing and offering prayers during worship
4. Buying, selling or mortgaging real property	4. Provide worship for congregation	4. Selecting the music to be sung in worship
5. Granting permissive powers	5. Provide spiritual growth of church members	5. Determining the use of drama, dance or other art forms in worship
	6. Develop and supervise educational programs	6. Creating processes that result in vision and goals for a particular season.
	7. Lead in personal and social healing	
	8. Challenge people regarding stewardship	
	9. Establish annual budget, distribute benevolences, order offerings, and inform congregation of decisions.	
	10. Lead for change, renewal and reformation	
	11. Engage in growth and education of elders	
	12. Instruct, examine, ordain and install elders and deacons	
	13. Delegate the work and supervise the Deacons	
	14. Provide for administration and HR of church staff	
	15. Maintain regular and continuing relationships with higher governing bodies	
	16. Establish and maintain ecumenical relationships	
	17. Serve in judicial matters	
	18. Keep an accurate roll of church membership	

# Homework Assignments

## #1 Spiritual Gift Inventory

**Due November 7** | Bring with you to our first officer training for discussion.

125 Questions; 20-45 minutes: <http://buildingchurch.net/g2s.htm>

Answer for what IS true for you!

## #2 Test Your New MDPC Email!

**Due November 14** | You will receive several emails this coming week to your newly activated **@mdpc.org** email address. Please utilize it to ensure it is working prior to our next training session!

## #3 Child Protection Training

**Due November 30** | Online Video & Quiz. You will receive an email with a link prior to our second training.

## #4 Background Check

**Due November 14** | You will receive an email with instructions prior to our second training.

## #5 Sexual Misconduct Policy

**Due November 14** | You will receive the policy via email prior to our second training. I will have printed copies of the signature page for you on the 14<sup>th</sup> or you may scan and email back to Jennifer V. if not in attendance.

## #6 Biography

**Due November 30** | Email to [jvajdos@mdpc.org](mailto:jvajdos@mdpc.org)

A brief summary (**180 words or less**) of your family, what you do or have done professionally and here at MDPC, perhaps your sense of call to your ministry area of MDPC, and any other information as you deem appropriate. This biography and your officer photo will be distributed to the congregation on *Installation Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025*.

## #7 Written Personal Testimony

**Due November 30** | Email to Alf Halvorson: [ahalvorson@mdpc.org](mailto:ahalvorson@mdpc.org)

Most importantly each testimony should include information on your acceptance of Christ, your faith journey, and your sense of call to a particular ministry area of MDPC. Please include other information as you deem appropriate.