

# HANDBOOK

for Leaders

# MARANATHA CRC

Edmonton, Alberta



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## Revision History

Revision Number	Revised By	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
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## **Section 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 OUR VISION**

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church participates in God's great mission in the world - the redemption of His whole creation:

- Our worship services enable people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities to glorify God while being motivated and equipped for His service;
- We intentionally reach out to our immediate community with a special emphasis on refugees and immigrants;
- Our ministries foster fellowship and discipleship, encourage growth and accountability, and help members discover and use the fruits and gifts the Holy Spirit has entrusted to them.

### **1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS *HANDBOOK***

To identify and explain the procedures to be used by Council, its committees and the ministry leaders.

### **1.3 USE AND UPDATING OF THIS *HANDBOOK***

- A. This *Handbook* is on our [website](#). The Administrative Director is responsible for ensuring that it is kept up to date as changes are made by Council.
- B. It is the duty of all office-bearers to be fully acquainted with its contents. Part of the first Council meeting in September is to be devoted to doing that.
- D. Deviation from the procedures described in this *Handbook* requires approval of Council.
- E. Members on committees or functions listed in this *Handbook* shall receive a copy of their committee's or function's policies or procedures.

## Section 2 Council

### 2.1 CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND MUTUAL CENSURE

Christian Reformed Churches have embraced the Presbyterian form of church government which is described in our Church Order. **Highlights** of the Presbyterian form of government:

1. All authority belongs to Jesus Christ. He alone is to be obeyed.
2. Jesus rules his church with the “Word”.
3. In exercising this rule Jesus makes use of men and women for the welfare of the congregation.
4. Those in office exercise the supervision and care of the church not individually but corporately, as Council or Consistory (elders) of the church.
5. The authority is spiritual in nature. It seeks to serve in Christ’s name.
6. All the work must aim at the glory of God, subject to the Word, and stir members to greater faith and love and obedience.
7. The church through delegated representatives cooperates in broader assemblies to uphold the Gospel, maintain unity and promote Christ’s cause and kingdom in the world.

Those provisions come to expression in our church order Article 29: *Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration. The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.* Whatever the majority decides becomes binding for all. However, decisions should be arrived at with as much unanimity as possible and when conclusions have been reached, they should be considered settled.

Congregational meetings shall be conducted by the Council and only those matters which it presents shall be considered. The Council through these meetings *informs, consults* and *submits* matters to the vote of the church. Proposals presented to the meeting by Council cannot be radically altered by motions from the floor. The president or chairperson of Council brings forward the proposals of Council on behalf of *all Council members* who by common consent are *duty bound* to bring the proposals as a *united body* to the meeting and defend and clarify that proposal when called upon to do so. Office bearers attend the meeting as office bearers and *not* as members. They exercise their duty as *leaders* and as a consequence no office bearer can speak or vote *against a proposal of Council*, but may use their office to inform members why Council has taken a certain action or made that particular proposal (for instance the budget).

As we have accepted that our Reformed churches are Presbyterian in government, this means that office bearers are equal in authority and have no supervisor but Christ as the head of the church. As a result of this form of government the churches established the practice of *mutual supervision*. Office bearers and churches supervise each other. Article 36 of the Church Order states: *The Council, at least four times a year, shall exercise mutual censure (Censura Morum) in which office-bearers assess and encourage each other in the performance of their official duties.* This is intended to be a rich experience of candid conversation and evaluation in which elders and deacons together ask themselves:

- How are we doing?
- What are we doing that we should continue doing?
- What are we not doing that we might consider doing?

- What are we doing that we should decrease, or stop?

In the church of Jesus, accountability is always in season!

## **2.2 NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCEDURES (of elders and deacons)**

- A. Elders and deacons are urged, during the season, to consider potential candidates for office bearers.
- B. Two weeks prior to the Council meeting in March the congregation will be invited to submit to Council names of members whom they consider qualified to be nominated as elder or deacon.
- C. At the March meeting time will be devoted to discuss the qualities needed for a member of the church to be seriously considered for the office of elder and deacon.
- D. A list of nominees shall be established, including from congregational input, by a separate motion for each nominee, which should be made by the district elder of the prospective nominee.
- E. Nominees must be limited to:
  1. Those clearly familiar with God's Word and with the Church Order.
  2. Those who, in good conscience, can sign the Covenant for Office bearers and answer the questions asked of them in the form of installation in the affirmative.
  3. Those who have been out of office for at least two years unless special circumstances prevail.
  4. Those who do not have a spouse serving on Council.
- F. The district elders will inform nominees that their names have been placed on the nomination list for office bearers before the names are published in the bulletin. No name may be removed from the nomination list unless lawful objections are received.
- G. Council reserves the right to over-rule any person's objections to his/her nomination and to remove any name from the list if deemed wise. Final nominees need not be informed again of their nomination.
- H. Council will call a congregational meeting, ordinarily on a Sunday in May following the morning service, for the purpose of voting. The Chair of Council or in his absence another Council member will introduce the nominees and give the necessary instructions.
- I. The Executive will appoint a ballot-counting committee to count the ballots and report to the Executive immediately after the counting is completed.
- J. Nominees will be considered elected from the candidates with the highest number of votes and each elected nominee must have received a majority vote.



- K. The Council shall set the date for the installation of office-bearers, ordinarily on the last Sunday of May. The term of office is three years from the month of June just after the date of installation.

## **2.3 COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- A. Meetings are ordinarily held on the first Wednesday of each month. All office bearers are expected to attend.
- B. Meetings are open to any member of the congregation unless Council has declared a meeting to be restricted because a delicate matter needs to be discussed. The contents of such discussions are not to be disclosed to anyone who is not a member of Council. Any member of the congregation who wishes to bring a matter to the attention of the Council may do so by letter, by making a personal appearance or by notifying the Clerk.
- C. The usual order of business is as follows:
  - 1. Opening of the meeting with the reading of a passage from Scripture and prayer.
  - 2. Roll call.
  - 3. Additions/deletions to the agenda.
  - 5. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.
  - 6. Business arising out of the minutes.
  - 7. Membership matters.
  - 8. Correspondence.
  - 9. New business or Other Matters.
  - 10. Reporting by:
    - a. Pastor
    - b. Elders
    - c. Deacons
    - d. Committees
    - e. Anyone else as required.
  - 11. Question Period.
  - 12. Closing.
- D. The Chairperson of Council is responsible for ensuring good order. Some of the rules are:
  - 1. Matters should be brought up in the form of specific motions or recommendations.
  - 2. No one should ordinarily speak more than twice on a given issue.
  - 3. The mover or supporter of a motion may be the last speaker before the vote is called.
  - 4. All remarks must be addressed to the chair.
  - 5. No one may speak until they are recognized by the Chair.
  - 6. Important items which are introduced at a meeting without prior notice will ordinarily be deferred to the next meeting.
  - 7. Notices of motion, submitted to the Clerk by Council members in writing, will be placed on the agenda of the next regular Council meeting.
- E. A printed agenda is to be prepared by the Council Executive and made available to each Council member on the Sunday prior to the meeting.

- F. The Chair of Council should be prepared to present whatever the Executive wishes to report.
- G. Correspondence to be acted upon should be listed on the printed agenda with a brief note concerning its content.

## **2.4 EXECUTIVE OF COUNCIL**

- A. The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson of Council, the Pastor, the Clerk of Council, the General Alternate (Vice-chairperson) of Council and the Chairperson of the Deacons or, in his/her absence, the General Alternate of the Deacons.

**Note:** The Chairperson of Council may be the Pastor or another suitable elder or deacon.

- B. **Duties** include:
  - 1. Meet a week prior to the Council meeting to prepare an agenda for that meeting. Agenda should include a brief explanation of items to be discussed and have information of importance attached. Agendas must be available to each Council member the Sunday prior to the Council meeting.
  - 2. Implement Council decisions.
  - 3. Make recommendations to Council on important matters to shorten required debate at Council meetings.
  - 4. Make decisions on routine issues, e.g. correspondence received, etc and report these decisions to Council.
  - 5. Make recommendations to Council regarding membership requests.
  - 6. Recommend to Council persons for various committees and functions when vacancies occur.
  - 7. Make adjustments as required to the districts of each elder prior to the first Council meeting in June.
  - 8. Exercise leadership of Council in order that all matters are dealt with in a proper and efficient manner.

## **2.5 CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL**

- A. The Chairperson is elected by Council in June of each year immediately following the appointment of newly elected office bearers.
- B. **Duties** include:
  - 1. Serving as the Chairperson of Executive, Congregational, Council, Elders and Finance & Admin meetings.
  - 2. Serving as liaison between the Finance and Administration committee and Council and informing the committee of all pertinent Council decisions.
  - 3. Preparing donation sheets for each elder with the help of the Contributions Record Keeper. These sheets are to be updated at the beginning of the year, for the previous

year's contribution and at the beginning of October for the third quarter donations of each year.

4. Furnishing the church treasurer with authorization whenever a decision of Council affects church expenditures.
5. Contacting all persons who have been recommended or nominated, inquiring if they can accept specific positions, and after Council's appointment, informing members of their appointment and explaining the duties involved.
6. Carrying out all decisions of Council jointly with the Executive.
7. Assisting the Pastor in all matters of concern in the church.
8. Being prepared to provide an alternate to lead the worship service in case the designated person is unable.
9. Ensuring that all rules, including rules of parliamentary order for the Council meetings, are properly observed.
10. Ensuring that the stipulations of the Church order are followed.
11. Stating and explaining the business to be transacted at meetings. The chair should not accept any motion made by a member unless the member has clearly stated the motion and the entire Council understands its precise meaning. After a motion has been made, supported and discussed, the chair should once again state the motion very clearly before a vote is taken.

C. The Chairperson of Council may be exempted from Pastoral care visiting.

## **2.6 CLERK OF COUNCIL**

A. The Clerk is elected by Council in June of each year immediately following the appointment of newly elected office bearers.

B. **Duties** include:

1. Preparing, in consultation with the Executive, the agenda for each regular meeting of the Council. This agenda must be available to the members of Council on the Sunday prior to the meeting.
2. Recording, and keeping in a safe place, the minutes of Council, Consistory and Congregational meetings.
3. Handling all correspondence on behalf of Council, corresponding by letter when necessary and keeping copies of letters.
4. Keeping a record of the visits made by each elder and Pastor.
5. Preparing a report on Council meetings for the congregation via the church bulletin on all matters that are of interest and concern to the members of the church.
6. Providing the bulletin editor with announcements concerning the meetings of Council, Congregational meetings and other matters as required by Council.
7. Obtaining copies of whatever material is required by Council members, such as:
  - Church Yearbook, Church Order, Acts of Synod
  - Elders' Handbook, Deacons' Handbook
  - Documents for meetings

8. Preparing assignment sheets for the following:
    - a. Elder of service for the worship services.
    - b. Elders for communion services.
    - c. Annual society visits by elders and deacons
  9. Providing district elders with up-to-date membership records
  10. Preparing ballots for all elections of elders and deacons.
- C. The Clerk may be exempted from Pastoral care visiting except to maintain contact with members who live out of town and to visit them when they come home.

## **2.7 GENERAL ALTERNATE (VICE-CHAIRPERSON) OF COUNCIL**

- A. The General Alternate is elected by Council in June of each year immediately following the appointment of newly elected office bearers.
- B. **Duties** include:
1. Fulfilling the functions of the Clerk or the Chairperson during the absence of either one.
  2. Arranging for someone to conduct the worship services during the absence of the Pastor (Pulpit Supply).
  3. Special projects as assigned or willing.

## **2.8 CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS (MEMBERS MEETINGS)**

- A. Congregational meetings must be held at least twice a year. One meeting, held in late November or early December, is for the congregation to discuss and approve the budget as proposed by Council. A second meeting is held in March for the purpose of giving the congregation the opportunity to review the financial statements of the previous year and to listen to reports dealing with church activities. Additional congregational meetings may be scheduled by Council as required. The agenda for all meetings should normally be made known to the congregation at least two Sundays prior to the meeting.
- B. Year-end reports are presented to the Annual congregational meeting. Reports should include:
1. The financial statement approved by Council.
  2. The Auditors' Report
  3. The annual report of the Clerk of Council.
  4. The financial statement of the deaconate.
  5. Annual reports of all programs and ministries.
- C. All elders, deacons and confessing members are expected to be present at every congregational meeting.
- D. The Chairperson of Council ensures that the congregational meetings are announced from the pulpit on the Sunday prior to the meetings.

- E. Quorum is the lessor of 20 members or 20% of the active Members present at the meeting.

## 2.9 CLASSICAL MATTERS

- A. Delegates to Classis (a regional group of CRC churches) must be appointed by the Council prior to each scheduled meeting of Classis. Council must allot sufficient time to discuss the Agenda of Classis so that the delegates may know the sentiments of Council. Since Classis is a deliberative body, delegates may vote according to their own convictions but in general must convey the sentiments of the Maranatha Council.
- B. The Pastor and other delegates must report back to Council on those decisions and actions taken by Classis which are of importance and of interest to Council.
- C. All Council members should participate in discussions with church visitors representing Classis.

## 2.10 SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Article 63 of the Church Order says it well: *Each church shall minister to its children and youth—and to the children and youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by nurturing their faithful participation in the Lord’s Supper, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.*

Our Safe Church policy is very long and detailed. It cannot be shared with other churches. The policy is on our [website](#) and is accessible only to members of Maranatha CRC who have the password.

Therefore, we include in this *Handbook* only some excerpts from the introduction:

- A. We believe it is the responsibility of Maranatha CRC to provide a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults who are in attendance at Maranatha’s facilities or who participate in Maranatha-sanctioned activities and programs wherever they may be carried out.
- B. We recognize that we are a reflection of God’s love to those in our care and we take our responsibility seriously. Micah 6:8 presents this challenge: *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* Micah suggests that the Lord requires three things of us:
  - a. *To act justly* – we must work for justice, seeking to promote the truth and speak out on behalf of the vulnerable.
  - b. *To love mercy* – compassion needs to be the bedrock of all our work.
  - c. *To walk humbly with our God* – every area of our lives needs to be marked by humility, righteousness and integrity.

- C. We recognize that providing a safe place for children, youth and vulnerable adults is also a legal requirement. We have a legal responsibility to ensure that a plan for protecting children, youth and vulnerable adults is in place and is diligently followed. Our legal responsibility includes being accountable for the actions of our employees and volunteers, that as a church we could be held vicariously liable for their actions. This policy and the guidelines contained within it are to help us in fulfilling our responsibilities to provide as safe and nurturing environment as possible for children, youth and vulnerable adults. In partnership with parents, we, as a church, seek to provide quality care and instruction to families and in this way, promote spiritual growth at every age level.

## Section 3 Duties of Elders and Deacons

### 3.1 ELDERS AND PASTORAL CARE

#### A. Districts:

1. Every year each elder is assigned a group of members which is called a district.
2. Each elder may be assigned to the same district for the entire three year term in office.

#### B. Visiting duties:

1. Each district elder should ordinarily visit each family or youth member in his district at least once a year.
2. Special attention should be paid to those who are inactive or "fringe" members.
3. Visits should be made promptly to persons who have recently joined Maranatha or who have shown an interest in doing so.
4. A district elder together with another member of Council must visit persons who wish to publicly profess their faith in the Lord or who wish to marry in the Lord.
5. Visits should be made promptly to those who have experienced a death in the family and the district elder should attend the funeral if possible.
6. Any person or family requesting a transfer of membership to Maranatha should be visited by a district elder before approval is given at a Council meeting.

#### C. Other Duties:

1. In the case of the death of a church member, each district elder should inform the members in his district as well as the district deacon. An exception may be made to this rule when a Sunday falls between the death and the funeral.
2. Advise the deacons of families who require financial assistance.
3. Attend weddings of persons in the district and present the wedding Bible.
4. Carry out assignments which include the following:
  - a. Serving as elder of service.
  - b. Serving at the Lord's Supper.
  - c. Making Ministry visits.An elder who cannot fulfil one of these assignments at the scheduled time is responsible for finding a replacement.
5. Be available to the Pastor (as well as the Pastor's wife, if appropriate) to discuss the work of the Pastor in all its facets, as it is perceived by the Pastor himself, by Council and by the congregation.
6. Advise the Pastor in the performance of his function. The positive aspects of the Pastor's performance should be emphasized in order to enhance his effectiveness; they should also try to find and suggest ways and means to strengthen aspects of the Pastor's work if and where that is desirable. The aspects of the Pastor's duties to be considered include:
  - a) The effectiveness of the Pastor's preaching
  - b) The visiting of the sick, the widow(er)s, the troubled
  - c) The relationship with Council and the congregation
  - d) The teaching of the youth of the church

7. Uphold the Pastor and his family in prayer and encourage the congregation to do so.
8. Attend all Elders, Council and Congregational meetings.
9. Attend all worship services.

### **3.2 ELDER OF SERVICE**

- A. Each elder, in rotation, will be the elder of service during the worship services. The Clerk prepares the schedule for these assignments, providing each elder with a copy and posting a copy on the bulletin board. Anyone who cannot fulfil an assignment must find a replacement.
- B. **Duties** include the following:
  1. Arrive in the meeting room at least 15 minutes prior to the service.
  2. Check the bulletin for any announcements that should be made by the Pastor.
  3. Lead in prayer before the morning service to ask for the Lord's blessing and lead in thanksgiving prayer after the evening service.
  4. Lead the Pastor or person leading the worship service into the auditorium and shake hands with him before he proceeds onto the pulpit. Shake hands again when the service has concluded. This symbolizes a transfer of authority to and from the Council to the Pastor.
  5. Ensure that a visiting Pastor conducting the service is familiar with the order of worship.
  6. Join the Pastor at the exit to greet the departing congregation (*morning service only*)

### **3.3 ELDERS' (CONSISTORY) MEETINGS**

- A. **Purpose:**
  1. To listen to the reports of each elder on the Pastoral visits that have been made.
  2. To offer mutual advice and counsel in the work of caring for the spiritual wellbeing of all the members of the districts.
  3. To decide upon disciplinary action when deemed necessary.
- B. Meetings are ordinarily held on the third Wednesday of the month.
- C. The Clerk should keep an accurate account of the minutes of each meeting and keep a record of all visits and disciplinary actions.
- D. All disciplinary actions are the responsibility of the elders. Actions which require an announcement to the congregation or the approval of Classis will be decided upon by the full Council upon the recommendation of the elders.



### **3.4 DEACONS (DIACONATE) DUTIES AND MEETINGS**

#### **A. Duties:**

1. Each deacon is assigned to one or more districts in the congregation. They should become familiar with the families in their district. They should visit the elderly, widows, widowers, shut-ins and the sick. Moreover, they must seek to mercifully assist those who are in need by providing financial assistance and/or counsel as required and as agreed upon by the deacons.
2. The deacons plan and prepare a schedule of offerings for the church's worship services. This plan must be approved by Council. The first offering in the morning service is for the General Fund and the second offering is for a cause which seeks to advance the Kingdom of God. The offering in the evening service will be for various causes.
3. The deacons ordinarily receive the offerings during the worship services according to a schedule mutually agreed upon by the deacons.
4. Deacons are requested to consult with the district elders if a family or person in their district is in need of attention. The purpose of this is to keep each other informed and to support each other's efforts.
5. Each deacon should attend important occasions of those in their district.

#### **B. Meetings:**

1. The diaconate meets once a month as arranged by the deacons.
2. The diaconate elects its own chairperson, secretary, treasurer and general alternate.
  - a) The Chairperson chairs the meetings, prepares the agenda for each meeting, oversees the work of the deacons and reports on their work to Council.
  - b) The secretary keeps an accurate account of all diaconal decisions, prepares for the church bulletin any relevant announcements or items of news that are of interest to the congregation and handles all diaconal correspondence.
  - c) The treasurer keeps an accurate account of the moneys received and disbursed from the Benevolent Fund.
3. Representatives are elected each year to the following:
  - N.A.D.C.
  - Worship Committee
  - Refugee Committee
  - Missions Committee
  - Interfaith meetings

## Section 4 Job Descriptions for Staff

### 4.1 PASTOR'S (MINISTER'S) DUTIES

- A. **Conduct regular worship services** in which the Word of God is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered:
1. Lead two public worship services each Sunday, unless other arrangements have been approved by Council.
  2. Conduct worship services on special days to be observed by the churches in the denomination, e.g. Good Friday, or in specially-called services, e.g. Prayer Service for a specific purpose.
  3. Administer baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  4. Conduct wedding services upon request of Council. The Pastor may occasionally, with permission from Council, perform a wedding in a private gathering of relatives or friends.
- B. **Exercise Pastoral care:**
1. Visit with members of the congregation in order to feel the spiritual "pulse" of the congregation.
  2. In consultation with the elders or deacons, visit the troubled and spiritually wayward. Spiritual counselling may be called for in some instances; in other cases, referrals to professional counselling services may need to be made.
  3. Visit the sick, the elderly and the bereaved.
  4. Conduct funeral services upon request of Council. The Pastor may occasionally conduct the funeral of someone who is not a member of our church.
- C. **Take an active part** in the instructional program of the church:
1. Plan programs and materials for church school classes and fellowship group meetings.
  2. Advise other ministries concerning materials selection and purchasing.
  3. Teach a regular church school class and conduct a pre-confession class, (other classes are usually taught by competent, confessing members of the congregation).
  4. Conduct counselling sessions with those desiring to be married in the Lord.
- D. **Encourage and stimulate** the congregation in its church-related activities:
1. Encourage outreach and evangelism as opportunities arise.
  2. Stimulate vibrant worship by participating in the work of the Worship Committee.
- E. **Attend meetings:**
1. Attend monthly Executive, Council and Elders' meetings.
  2. Attend Classis meetings as the ministerial representative of our church.
- F. **Form and maintain relationships:**
1. Report to the Elders and Council concerning the work done and visits made; this is primarily to provide accountability.
  2. Maintain meaningful liaison with the Deacons.
  3. Maintain a good liaison with the district elders and deacons, in order to alert them to needed visits and/or action.

4. Consult with the Executive to arrange for vacations, Sundays off and other absences.
5. Maintain contact with other CRC Pastors, as well as with local clergy.

## **4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR**

- A. The Admin Director is appointed by the Council upon recommendation of the Finance and Administration committee. This is a salaried position, established as per annual budget.
- B. **Duties:**
1. Maintain the membership database and church website.
  2. Maintain the outdoor church sign.
  3. Coordinate with bulletin editor and Pastor regarding bulletin announcements.
  4. Provide administrative assistance as needed for the Pastor, Council, committees, programs and congregational meetings.
  5. Attend Council meetings: assist with agendas and minutes.
  6. Serve as Maintenance coordinator for the church, including grounds maintenance.
  7. Pick up and distribute church mail.
  8. Serve as administrative contact for classical and synodical requests and reports.
  9. Serve as Privacy Officer and assist Safe Church committee by ensuring that volunteer police checks and other requirements are met.
  10. Coordinate church bookings with custodians and other staff.
  11. Maintain an email list and send news to members as required.

## **4.3 BULLETIN EDITOR**

- A. The bulletin editor is appointed by the Church Council upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee, and must be a mature and confessing member of the congregation.
- B. **Duties:**
1. Edit the contents of the weekly church bulletin in consultation with the Pastor and Administrative Director.
  2. Make arrangements for the duplication and distribution of the bulletin.
  3. Email *Orders of Worship* to visiting Pastors or service leaders for inclusion in the bulletin.
- C. The bulletin editor may abbreviate or edit bulletin announcements to conserve space and must ensure that the content of the Church bulletin reflects the official witness and proclamation of the Reformed Faith.

#### 4.4 MEDIA EDITOR

- A. The media editor is appointed by the Church Council upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee, and must be a mature and confessing member of the congregation.
- B. **Duties:**
1. Enter all required information in the computer for projection during worship services. This includes duty assignments, announcements, responsive readings, songs, sermon slides and anything else required by the Council, Pastor or Musicians.

#### 4.5 CUSTODIAN

A. The custodian is appointed by the Council upon recommendation of the Finance and Administration committee. This is a contract position, established as per the annual budget.

**B. Primary Duties:**

1. Preparing the church building for (includes opening and closing and securing the building):
  - Worship Services
  - Weddings
  - Funerals
  - Congregational meetings
  - Church School classes
  - Other approved functions

Securing the building involves checking for unlocked doors and windows, reporting any unauthorized occupants, and turning off lights.

2. Preparing Coffee for:
  - Congregational meetings
  - Occasionally for other services
3. Preparing for Communion Services:
  - Preparing the table
  - Setting out chairs
  - Assist the deacons with preparing the bread and wine
4. Weekly Janitorial Services:
  - Clean, wipe, sweep, mop or vacuum floors (especially the nursery)
  - Spot clean carpets
  - Empty/clean wastebaskets and trash containers
  - Replace burnt out light bulbs
  - Refill restroom dispensers
  - Wash and sanitize toilets and sinks

- Wipe mirrors
  - Laundering towels/clothes
5. Occasional, when needed Janitorial Services:
    - Replace batteries in smoke detectors
    - Maintain vacuum, brooms, mops and squeegees
    - Wash walls
    - Dust pew
    - Wash interior and exterior windows
  6. Minor maintenance and repairs:
    - Remove debris from sidewalks and stairs in areas within sixteen feet of building
    - Replace broken switches, fixing door handles, minor leaks etc.
    - Handle recycling materials.
    - Notify the Administrative Director for all necessary repairs. The custodian is not responsible for the outside maintenance and snow cleaning; however, the custodian is to assist in cases of emergency.
  7. Submit expenses monthly.
  8. Possess the following qualities: Ability to perform physically demanding tasks, ability to work without supervision, proficient in English, interpersonal skills, attention to detail, attending to emergencies when necessary.

#### **4.6 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

This is a paid contract position. Remuneration will be determined by the Finance and Administration committee, payable in 12 monthly installments.

##### **Summertime Duties:**

- Cut grass once a week
- Fertilize lawn area in spring and fall
- Water during dry periods
- Plant flowers in flowerbeds in spring
- Maintain flower bed borders, shrubs and trimming.
- Keep Church property reasonable free of weeds, debris, sand, etc, especially sidewalks (including public sidewalks) steps and entrances.
- Remove annual flowers before winter

##### **Wintertime Duties:**

- Keep Church property reasonable free of debris, sand etc., especially sidewalks (including public sidewalks) steps and entrances.

- Remove snow as soon as reasonable after a snow fall within 24 hours and at least half an hour before the start of a worship service on Sunday, and any wedding or funeral service during the week.
  - Give special attention to the handicap parking next to the Church building and assure accessibility from the parked vehicle to the sidewalk by cleaning snow and ice from that area as much as possible.
- A. Sanding and the application of de-icing chemicals shall be done in time for all worship services and when needed during the week. Driving lanes on the parking lot and the back alley shall also be sanded in severe icy conditions.
- B. The Admin Director is responsible for informing the contractor about special church services or events during the week.
- C. Tools for maintenance will be provided by the maintenance contractor. Flowers, plants, fertilizer, sand, weed control and de-icing materials may be obtained with the approval of the F&A Committee and paid for by the Church. The removal of accumulated snow on Church property shall be the responsibility of the F&A committee.
- D. The F&A committee reserves the right to cancel the contract and withhold payment if the contractor fails to perform the stated maintenance requirements. In the event that a dispute shall arise between the contractor and the committee, final judgment shall rest with Council.

## **Section 5 Job Descriptions for Volunteers**

### **5.1 CONTRIBUTIONS RECORD KEEPER**

- A. The Contributions Record Keeper is appointed by Council.
- B. **Duties:**
  - 1. Purchasing and preparing for distribution sets of contribution envelopes for the members of the congregation. A set of envelopes is to be prepared for every family and single confessing member and every adult baptized member. The Administrative Director will assist in preparing a list of contributors. Envelopes are made available to the congregation by Christmas each year. Any sets of envelopes not picked up by the middle of January are to be delivered by the district elder.
  - 2. Preparing confidential contribution sheets for each district elder so that each elder may be aware of the contributions of the members in the district. These contribution sheets are to be updated in January for the previous year's contributions and in October for the third quarter of the year.
  - 3. Keeping an accurate record of the donations of each contributor and providing them with a statement of donations for the period ending September 30<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. Tax receipts shall be created and distributed after the end of each year for income tax purposes.
  - 4. Give contribution envelopes to new members.

### **5.2 USHERS' GUIDELINES**

- A. Be dependable in serving: be familiar with the schedule and arrive at Church at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the service when it is your turn to serve.
- B. Take your turn as indicated on the schedule. If you cannot be there, make arrangements for a replacement and notify the head usher of the change.
- C. Wear your badge whenever you are serving. The worshippers must be able to identify you as an usher.
- D. Offer to escort people into Church when it is busy. Ask people where they prefer to sit, escort them there and hand them a copy of the Church bulletin. Be aware of where the empty seats are.
- E. Be on the lookout for people needing songbooks or bulletins.
- F. Open or close curtains and doors as required. It is your responsibility to make everyone as comfortable as possible.
- G. After service duties:
  - 1. Open the doors.

2. Assist people who require help with stairs, elevators or information.

### **5.3 SOUND TECHNICIANS**

- A. The head Sound Technician is appointed by Church Council upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee.
- B. The head Tech arranges for other volunteer technicians to assist as required for each church service and for special services such as marriages, funerals and congregational meetings.
- C. The head Tech creates a sound schedule every year. If a tech cannot be available for a service, he/she must find a qualified replacement.
- D. Sound techs control and adjust microphones and record each service on CD. The CD is given to the Admin Director immediately after each service to post on the website.
- E. Sound techs provide hearing assist aids to members who require them.

### **5.4 MEDIA TECHNICIANS**

- A. The head Media Technician is appointed by Church Council upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee.
- B. The head Tech arranges for other volunteer technicians to assist as required for each church service and for special services such as marriages, funerals and congregational meetings.
- C. The head Tech creates a media schedule every year. If a tech cannot be available for a service, he/she must find a qualified replacement.
- D. Media techs control projection of songs, litanies, sermon slides and anything else that needs to be projected for the congregation.

### **5.5 HALL MONITORS**

Hall Monitor responsibilities are designed to maintain the safety and security of all persons in the church building gathered for church services at Maranatha. This includes morning, evening and special services.

- A. In order to be considered qualified to perform the duties/responsibilities of the Hall Monitor the scheduled person must be a current member of Maranatha council. The Hall Monitor must have a current Criminal Record history check, including vulnerable sector check. The Hall Monitor should not be related to both nursery personnel.



- B. The Hall Monitor for a church service cannot also be performing the duties/ministry of the:
- Media Projectionist;
  - Sound Technician;
  - Nursery or Sunday school teacher; or
  - Praise team/musician.
- C. **Duties:**
1. Arrive at Maranatha no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of any church service;
    - In the event a scheduled Hall Monitor knows he/she will not be able to fulfill their duties/responsibilities, the Hall Monitor shall contact another qualified person prior to the commencement of the church service.
    - The church service will not commence until a qualified person is identified to be Hall Monitor.
  2. Be aware of the locations of all fire extinguishers, first aid kits and defibrillators and ensure they are accessible.
  3. Visit the nursery 5 minutes before the service and identify yourself as the Hall Monitor.
  4. Should the nursery attendant(s) require additional personnel or the scheduled person(s) do not arrive, the Hall Monitor will:
    - Notify the Nursery coordinator to locate a suitable replacement. If a replacement cannot be located, then;
    - Notify a parent to take over responsibilities of the Nursery. If no parent will volunteer, then;
    - Notify the Pastor and/or the Elder of Service and an announcement will be made from the pulpit before commencing the church service that 'X' number of person(s) are required to assist in the nursery. Once enough persons are identified and have left the sanctuary, the church service can begin.
  5. Once the ushers have taken their seats (usually 10 minutes into the church service) the Hall Monitor shall exit the sanctuary and complete a "walk-through" of the building. A "walk-through" shall consist of the following:
    - Checking the entire interior of the building including coat rack areas, all empty/unlocked classrooms/offices and each bathroom.
      - i. To check a bathroom of the opposite gender, the Hall Monitor shall knock on the door with sufficient force, edge the door open and announce in a clear voice: "Hall Monitor. Is there anybody in here requiring assistance?" Pause and listen for a moment to ensure no one responds.
      - ii. If assistance is required, either request permission to enter, or in the event of a non-emergency situation, advise a person of the same gender in the sanctuary to provide assistance.
    - Checking the exterior of the building and ensuring the doors are locked (excluding the main front entry doors).

6. Upon dismissal of Sunday school children from the sanctuary, the Hall Monitor shall exit the sanctuary at the same time, checking in with the head Sunday school teacher/leader to confirm there is an adequate number of teachers and helpers. In the event there are not enough teachers and/or helpers the Hall Monitor shall ensure the following:
  - Hall Monitor or a Sunday school teacher proceeds to the sanctuary to locate additional person(s) to assist.
7. Upon ensuring there are enough person(s) assisting with Sunday school, the *Hall Monitor* will check on the Nursery room before returning to the sanctuary.
8. Approximately half-way through the sermon, the Hall Monitor will check on each Sunday school room, the Nursery and each bathroom.
9. At the conclusion of the sermon, the Hall Monitor will check on each Sunday school room, the Nursery, each bathroom and visually monitor the parking lot.
10. If after a church service begins a person or group enters the Church, the Hall Monitor will welcome them to Maranatha and provide assistance in locating a seat in the sanctuary. If the person or group requires something other than finding a seat, the Hall Monitor will ask the custodian (or any other person) to locate a second member of Council to assist in order to not leave the person or group unattended and the situation/request should be handled with at least 2 Council members present.

## 5.6 HALL MONITOR CHECKLIST

1. Arrive at Maranatha no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of any church service.
2. Be aware of the locations of all fire extinguishers, first aid kits and defibrillators and ensure they are accessible.
3. Visit the nursery 5 minutes before the service and identify yourself as the Hall Monitor.
4. Be aware of the mandatory ratios of personnel to children:
  - 2 personnel for every 10 children ages 0 - 5 years
  - 2 personnel for every 20 children ages 6 – 12 years
5. Should the nursery attendant(s) require additional personnel or a scheduled person does not arrive:
  - Ask the Nursery coordinator to locate a suitable replacement. If a replacement cannot be located, then;
  - Ask a parent to take over responsibilities of the Nursery. If no parent will volunteer, then;
  - Ask the Pastor and/or the Elder of Service to make an announcement from the pulpit before the church service that 'X' number of person(s) are required to assist in the nursery. Once enough persons are identified and have left the sanctuary, the church service can begin.
6. **WALK 1:** 10 minutes into the church service do a “walk-through” of the building:

- Check the entire interior of the building including coat rack areas, all empty/unlocked classrooms/offices and each bathroom.
  - Check the exterior of the building and ensure all doors are locked except for the main front entry doors.
7. **WALK 2:** Accompany Sunday school children when they are dismissed for classes. Check in with the head Sunday school teacher/leader to confirm there is an adequate number of teachers and helpers. In the event there are not enough teachers and/or helpers:
    - Hall Monitor or a Sunday school teacher proceeds to the sanctuary to locate additional person(s) to assist.
  8. Check on the Nursery room before returning to the sanctuary.
  9. **WALK 3:** Half-way through the sermon check on each Sunday school room, the Nursery and each bathroom.
  10. **WALK 4:** At the conclusion of the sermon check on each Sunday school room, the Nursery, each bathroom and visually monitor the parking lot.
  11. If during any church service, a person or group enters the Church, welcome them to Maranatha and provide assistance in locating a seat in the sanctuary.

## **5.7 CHURCH DIRECTORY**

- A. The Admin Director and Clerk of Council are responsible for preparing annually an up-to-date list of all members of the congregation for inclusion in a church directory.
- B. The list of members for the directory shall include the names of the members of each family and the names of individual members living outside the family setting. The list must also include the names of those who worship regularly with us but who may not be members.
- C. Council favours the printing of a city-wide church directory of the Christian Reformed Churches in Edmonton. If the greater Edmonton CRC community fails to arrange for the printing of such a directory, a local directory will be prepared at appropriate times for members of the Maranatha congregation only.

## **5.8 TREASURER**

### **Duties:**

- A. Disburse monies on behalf of the Church under the direction of Council.
- B. Issue and sign cheques on behalf of the Church.
- C. Maintain payroll records and accounts payable records.

- D. Invest funds belonging to the Church as directed by Council.
- E. In cooperation with the Counting Committee, record and deposit the monies received by the Church into the proper bank accounts.
- F. Keep a full and accurate account of all assets, liabilities, receipts and disbursements of the Church, including the following:
  - (i) recording the Church income and receipts
  - (ii) recording Church disbursements
  - (iii) preparation of monthly bank reconciliations
  - (iv) preparation of monthly bank statements
- G. Present and explain the annual Budget and Financial Statements to the congregation.
- H. As a member of the Finance & Admin Committee, assist in annual budget preparation.
- I. Ensure that no member of the Council receives any remuneration for services on Council from the Church unless such monies are for purposes of reimbursing such member for legitimate expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, or unless such monies are for purposes not relating to that person being a member of Council.
- J. Be the custodian of all financial documents of the Church, including mortgage documents, legal papers relating to the property, and insurance policies.

## **5.9 GREETERS**

- A. Prior to every Sunday morning worship service, two members of the congregation greet worshippers as they arrive in the front foyer.
- B. A head greeter is assigned by Council to create a schedule; greeters normally are scheduled every 8 weeks or so.
- C. Visitors must be welcomed warmly and invited to join the congregation for refreshments after the service. Any questions about bathrooms, nursery etc are answered.
- D. For Lord's Supper services, Council members are assigned to greet members and visitors. In addition to a warm welcome, visitors are invited to participate in Communion and are informed of our Lord's Supper participation policy which is that all baptized Christians, including children, are welcome.

## **Section 6 Ministries**

### **6.1 WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS**

- A. After a new member or family is accepted into the fellowship of our church, they will be assigned to a specific elder's district. The elder is expected to make a "Get-Acquainted Visit" as soon as possible during which the elder should seek to acquaint the new member with the history of the Maranatha congregation and invite the member(s) to participate in the activities of the church (ministries, groups, programs, etc.).
- B. The Pastor will arrange for a public welcome of new members during a worship service.
- C. The Clerk must see to it that an announcement, including address, postal code and phone number, appears on the church bulletin concerning the new member's acceptance into the fellowship of the church.
- D. The Clerk must contact the Contributions Record Keeper to provide the new member(s) with contribution envelopes.
- E. The Clerk will provide the district elder with the particulars of the new member and also update the church register.
- F. Each new member or family shall be provided with the following:
  - 1. List of districts.
  - 2. Church Directory.
  - 3. Picture directory
  - 4. Box of contribution envelopes.

### **6.2 CHURCH SCHOOL**

- A. The church school classes are planned by the Pastor for children in grades 6-12. The materials to be used and the appointment of teachers are to be approved by the Council in the summer prior to the beginning of the church season.
- B. The minister normally teaches the pre-confession and Grade 11/12 classes. Other classes are taught by mature, confessing members of the congregation.
- C. Ordinarily, classes begin in September and continue until Easter.
- D. All materials, including books, are paid for by the Church.
- E. The elders must visit each class annually according to a schedule prepared by the Clerk. Any elder may be called upon to make these visits and to report to Council their evaluation of the teaching and the response and interest of the students.

### **6.3 SUNDAY SCHOOL**

- A. The purpose of Sunday School is to supplement the teachings of the church in terms understandable to children.
- B.
  - 1. Teachers should be adult confessing members who are faithful in their relationship with God. Each teacher must have a helper who is normally a younger member of the church.
  - 2. Teachers must be able to teach at the level of their students.
  - 3. They must use the curriculum that has been approved by Council and should be open to instructions and suggestions.
- C. New leaders should have the opportunity to become familiar with the material and to get to know the students and other teachers before they begin to teach.
- D. The Sunday school Superintendent is appointed by Council for a period of three years.
- E. The Superintendent should have a meeting with the Sunday School teachers at least once during the term in order to determine if any improvements need to be made.
- F. Each class must be visited by an elder at least once during each term. This is to provide encouragement for the teachers and students and accountability to Council.
- G. Liaison with Council is through either the Pastor or the elder who visits.
- H. Age groups of classes will be determined by the Superintendent and teachers each year depending on the number and ages of the students.

### **6.4 NURSERY COORDINATOR**

- A. The nursery coordinator is appointed for a three-year term by Council upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee.
- B. The nursery coordinator prepares schedules for attendants and generally supervises the nursery. The coordinator shall also clean and maintain all toys quarterly.

### **6.5 HOMEWORK CLUB**

The Homework Club meets on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 where immigrant refugee children from grades 1-12 are welcome to come to get help with their homework. The time includes specific homework help and supervised educational games to allow more social learning.

This is a time of building community and friendships among the children and the adult helpers. The club has up to 20 children attending on a weekly basis and about 10 adult helpers.

## **6.6 CADETS**

Cadets is a club for boys grades 3 to 6 (ages 8 to 11), which meets every second Monday night from 7:00-8:30 p.m. The boys will study the Bible, do badge work, make crafts, and participate in other fun activities including a snow derby and a pine car derby. This group is currently not active.

## **6.7 GEMS**

The name "GEMS" stands for *Girls Everywhere Meeting their Saviour*. This program is open to all girls ages 7-11 (grade 2 to grade 6). On average, GEMS meets two Thursday evenings plus one Saturday afternoon per month. Join us for crafts, stories, and a whole lot of fun while learning about God and the Bible!

## **6.8 YOUTH GROUP**

This group is for youth in junior and senior high school. From pumpkin carving, bubble gum sculpture making, and gingerbread house creating to bowling, from discussions to movie making, from attending conventions to throwing a red carpet awards evening, they do it all. The group typically meets 2-3 times each month: two Friday evenings and an occasional Saturday.

## **6.9 COLLEGE & CAREERS**

This group is for young adults ages 19-35 who are attending college or beginning a career. They meet occasionally to discuss topics ranging from book readings to video series with study guide questions to stir conversation and discussion. Members of the group take turns hosting the evening and leading the discussion.

## **6.10 COFFEE BREAK**

Coffee Break is a Bible Study program for women. It meets in church on Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11 a.m. from October to the end of April. The program has been running in Maranatha since 2000.

Meetings include a social time and a Bible study using the *Discover Your Bible Series*, an inductive Bible study from Faith Alive Christian Resources. As well as lively discussions, the group spends time in prayer and singing. At Easter and Christmas they enjoy special litanies and lunches.

Women from our church and from outside of our church and of any background, age and Christian experience are welcome!

## **6.11 PRAYER MINISTRY TEAM**

Believing that prayer is vital to our church, both locally and beyond, the Prayer Group of Maranatha strives to be a place of openness and honesty, to pray for church leaders and ministries, share concerns and blessings with each other and bring them to God in prayer.

Meetings are at the church on the first and third Monday evening of each month, October through June. The group spends time in reflection and prayer, bringing the needs and praises of the church and community that are brought forward through the church bulletin, prayer request box and verbally.

All are welcome, whether regularly or occasionally, to attend this casual yet meaningful gathering.



## Section 7 Committees

### 7.1 WORSHIP COMMITTEE

- A. The Committee will consist of at least 3 confessing members of the congregation who reflect the diverse nature of our membership, plus a representative of Council, the Music Ministry Leader, and the pastor. The term will be 3 years, extendable in one-year increments as approved by Council. Once a year, roles on the committee will be discussed and appointed according to consensus conversation.
- B. Council encourages the Worship Committee to plan meaningful, God-glorifying worship services reflecting our theology. Our services recognize that our church is made up of individuals who respond to our Lord in different ways.

This shall be accomplished by:

1. Planning the liturgy around the Reformed practice of:

- Entering into the presence of God
- Confessing our sins
- Assurance of the forgiveness of our sins
- Hearing God's word proclaimed
- Bringing our tithes and offerings
- Worshipping God with prayer and song
- Going out to serve God and our neighbour

2. This should involve:

- Songs of praise, celebration, confession, and thanksgiving
- Litanies, responsive readings, and various forms of media
- Music groups and choirs to lead congregational singing
- Choosing music to reflect the diversity of the congregation
- Encouraging and assisting the development and growth of members through their participation in the services

3. Planning special services

C. Other responsibilities:

1. To support the Music Ministry Leader in their task of preparing schedules, coordinating, appointing, training and supervising musicians and song leaders, and arranging for guest musicians
2. Making recommendations to Council regarding the purchase of approved Bibles and hymnals.
3. Arranging for flowers, decorations and banners in the church sanctuary and lobby when appropriate.
4. Arranging for legal use of copyright material by obtaining appropriate licenses and permission for use.
5. Arranging for guest musicians.

- D. The Worship Committee operates within an annual budget determined by Council.
- E. The Worship Committee reports to Council through minutes of its meetings and its Council representatives.

## **7.2 FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE)**

### **A. Organization:**

- 1 The Finance and Admin Committee consists of five members appointed by Council to their respective functions. The five members are: Chair of Council, who is also chair of this committee, Admin Director, Treasurer and two members at large. Immediate family members should not serve together on this committee.
- 2 Members of the committee shall be appointed for three year periods. For vacancies in committees under their supervision, they shall make recommendations to Council. The committee meets at any time there is a need to do so.
- 3 The signature of the treasurer and another confessing member of the congregation shall be required on all cheques above a certain amount, as set by decision of Council.
- 4 The Treasurer has specific responsibility for the counting committee and reports to the Finance and Administration Committee.

### **B. Duties include:**

1. Administration of the properties, funds and revenues which include the following:
  - a) The collection of budget contributions by methods which are approved by Council.
  - b) The maintenance of proper financial records and the establishment and maintenance of proper files and documents.
  - c) The maintenance and repairs of Church buildings and properties, including lawn care and snow removal.
  - d) The control and distribution of all meeting space of the church.
  - e) The supervision of the following committees and people: the counting committee, Treasurer, nursery coordinator, bulletin editor, custodian and sound and media technicians.
  - f) The maintenance of adequate insurance coverage on church property.
2. Financial administration subject to the following conditions:
  - a) That it shall disburse and collect all monies funds and revenues which as set out in the annual budget, which shall be approved by Council.
  - b) That it shall not purchase, sell or otherwise dispose of assets, nor engage mortgages, loans or debentures, without the express consent of Council.
  - c) That it shall maintain all valuable papers and documents in the safe or in another designated safe place, approved by Council. These files and documents shall be available at all times to all persons authorized by Council.
  - d) That the committee shall report as follows:
    - a) A monthly report to Council of any activities that need to be brought to the attention of Council.

- b) A monthly report on the bulletin, consisting of a report on actual receipts, compared with the budgeted amount and an evaluation of budget requirements.
  - c) Verbal reports as requested by Council.
  - e) That the Finance and Administration Committee will submit requests for expenditures, which are in excess of those approved in the budget, to Council.
  - f) That the Finance and Administration Committee will submit annually, prior to February 1st, a report to the Council listing the previous year's finances and activities.
  - g) That the committee shall submit to the full Council, prior to the November meeting each year, a proposed budget for the following calendar year, complete with detailed explanations (*see section 8.11*).
3. Coordination and supervision of the work of the committees mentioned above, subject to the following provisions:
- a) That it shall not engage or dismiss any member of a committee, or the custodian, without having obtained the prior approval of Council.
  - b) That it shall recommend to Council one person for each vacancy in any of the committees, so that Council may make the appointments.

**C. Council and the Finance & Administration Committee:**

1. The responsibility for the administration of the properties, funds and revenues of the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton lies with Council. The execution of this administration is delegated to the Finance and Administration Committee. The Finance and Administration Committee reports to and is responsible to the full Council.
  2. In accordance with the above, Council shall refer to the Finance and Administration Committee for study and recommendations all matters relating to the administration of the Maranatha Church, before making a decision on such matters.
  3. Council decides in all matters not expressly set out in the above or in all doubtful matters.
  4. According to Church Order Article 32d of the Supplement and the decisions of Synod 1963 (*Acts of Synod 1963, Page 51ff*) and Synod 1970 regarding proper incorporation of each church, the Council members in common as trustees of this church have the authority to *bargain, sell, convey, mortgage, lease or release any real estate, and to erect churches, parsonages, etc.* and to *alter and repair the same and to fix the salary of anyone in its employment* provided the affirmative vote of the majority of the church members is first obtained.
- D. The Finance and Administration Committee must ensure that all those engaged in performing duties under the supervision of the committee are properly informed in writing of the details of the duties involved. The committee shall meet, as it deems necessary, with each of the persons and committees it supervises.

### 7.3 MISSION FUND COMMITTEE

- A. The committee will promote the work of Home and World missions in the Maranatha congregation.
- B. The committee will implement ways and means to encourage contact with and spiritual support for people supported by the Maranatha Congregation.
- C. The committee shall review a request for funds from any person working or desiring to work in mission outreach, and shall recommend to Council ways and means to raise funds for that person or the project that person is involved in.
- D. The committee shall, as a rule, limit itself to considering requests for support from persons who are working for CRC recognized agencies or who are members of our own Maranatha CRC working in mission outreach.
- E. The committee shall make recommendations to Council regarding an application for funds.
- F. A ruling on an application by the committee shall normally be made by Council within 30 days.

### 7.4 FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

- A. Consists of two or three mature and confessing members of the congregation. They are appointed directly by the Church Council upon recommendation of the Executive of Council.
- B. **Duties** include reviewing the financial records of the Church treasurer and reporting directly to the Church Council prior to the congregational meeting in March.

### 7.5 COUNTING COMMITTEE

- A. Consists of five mature members appointed by the Church Council upon recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee and/or the Executive. The committee must have a Chairman, appointed by Council in cooperation with the Finance and Administration Committee, who is responsible for making bank deposits of money collected and counted. The committee shall also appoint a checker.
- B. **Duties** include:
  - 1. Meeting bi-weekly to count the offerings and contributions of the congregation.
  - 2. Depositing the funds at the bank as per instructions by the Finance and Administration Committee.
  - 3. Reporting to the Finance and Administration Committee through the Church treasurer.
  - 4. Both Chairman and checker must initial count sheet.

## **7.6 REFUGEE COMMITTEE**

- A. The purpose of the Refugee Committee is to sponsor refugees from various refugee camps around the world. The Committee consists of 5 members at large and meets as needed.
- B. The first priority is to sponsor Christian families. The committee identifies individuals or families and, following Council approval, helps them prepare their applications which are submitted to the Federal Government via the Refugee Office at World Renew.
- C. When the sponsored individual or family arrives in Canada the committee assists with housing, furniture, clothing, groceries, etc. The committee also assists with obtaining documents such as a SIN number, an AHC number, bank accounts, doctors, and school registration.
- D. The church is legally responsible for refugees for one year after they arrive in Canada. During that time and afterward assistance is given as needed. The church membership is encouraged to help financially and in other practical ways.

## **7.7 SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

The social committee is comprised of four active members who organize and arrange various social events for the congregation. Volunteers are called upon to assist when necessary. The committee helps our church family to grow closer together by enjoying Christian fellowship.

### **Duties:**

- A. Organize events as requested by Council and other committees such as cake-servings, potlucks, bike trips, baby showers, Bible study lunches, Sinterklaas and the church campout.
- B. Propose and organize new activities and events that involve as many members as possible.

## **Section 8 Guidelines and Procedures**

### **8.1 WORSHIP SERVICES**

- A. Our worship services are held each Sunday at 10:30 am and 6:30 pm.
- B. Special services on special days are held at times decided by Council. These include services on New Year's Day, Ascension Day, Thanksgiving Day, Good Friday, Christmas and New Year's Eve.
- C. A praise book may be used in conjunction with the *Psalter Hymnal* and *Lift Up Your Hearts*.
- D. The Pastor and worship committee should encourage other members to participate in a variety of ways during the worship services.
- E. See Worship Committee (section 7.1) for more details on our worship services.

### **8.2 LORD'S SUPPER PROCEDURES**

Church Order Article 59a: *All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Supper and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation in an age- and ability appropriate way under the supervision of the elders.*

- A. The Lord's Supper is celebrated eleven times a year: seven times during morning services and four times during evening services. The Lord's Supper is celebrated during the Good Friday service.
- B. The elders who are to serve the elements of the Lord's Supper are appointed by the Clerk of Council and the schedule will be posted on the Council's bulletin board the Sunday prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- C. Elders will serve as greeters prior to the service and inform visitors that we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper and that all baptized Christians are welcome to participate, including children.
- D. All baptized and confessing members are invited to participate in the Lord's Supper. Baptized members under the age of 18 who have not yet professed their faith are invited under the auspices of their parents.
- E. Preparatory forms or other means to remind the congregation that the Lord's Supper will be celebrated the following Sunday, shall be used the week prior to every Lord's Supper.

### **8.3 INFANT AND ADULT BAPTISM PROCEDURES**

- A. The minister and/or district elder shall visit the parents of a new-born child in order to discuss and arrange for the child's baptism.

In certain cases it is incumbent on the minister to obtain the approval of Consistory before making arrangements for the baptism of children of the congregation, e.g. when the parents have been unfaithful in church attendance, or have failed to provide support for the work of the church even though they are able, or when they have generally failed to exhibit a Christian walk of life.

- B. Parents of children to be baptized should make themselves familiar with the baptism form of their choice.
- C. Parents of children to be baptized are asked to arrive in the Council room at least ten minutes prior to the service. The elder of service will lead in prayer and usher the parents into the church auditorium at the same time as the office-bearers. The Pastor will present the parents with a *Certificate of Baptism* after baptism.
- D. After the service the Pastor, elders and deacons will congratulate the parents after which the congregation will have the opportunity to do the same.
- E. Children who are adopted into a believing home may be baptized when requested by the parents, even if the final adoption papers have not yet arrived. Each case is to be considered on its own merits and approval must be given by the Elders.
- F. Adults who have not been baptized shall receive holy baptism upon public profession of faith. The form for the Baptism of Adults shall be used for such public professions (*Article 57 of the Church Order*).

### **8.4 PROFESSION OF FAITH PROCEDURES**

- A. Anyone wishing to make public profession of faith must obtain approval from Council. This approval is based upon the recommendation made by the district elder and another Council member following an interview used to determine why the individual wants to make profession of faith and how well the individual understands the meaning of this decision. A guideline is available for conducting the interview (*section 8.5*). Instruction in the doctrine of the Christian Reformed Church should precede profession of faith.
- B. Profession of faith must be made using a form approved by Synod.
- C. A memento, in the form of a Bible or a book of daily devotions, shall be given to those who make public profession of their faith

## 8.5 PROFESSION OF FAITH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Church Order Article 59b: *Baptized members shall be encouraged to make a public profession of faith with the use of a prescribed form in a public worship service. This public profession of faith includes a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. Before their profession of faith, they shall give an appropriate testimony of their faith, life, and doctrine to the elders. The names of those who will make a public profession of faith shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before their profession takes place. Upon their public profession of faith, they shall be designated as "confessing members".*

As interviewers of candidates for profession of faith, we must seek to do the Lord's will. The interview, therefore, must be spiritual in character and must aim at assuring the interviewer that candidates are aware of their motivations for confessing their faith, that they have a faith to confess and that it is the Christian faith, and that they are seriously intent on living by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, with the gracious help of God and in the context of the fellowship of the Lord's people. The interviewer should begin and end the interview with prayer. Following are a series of suggested questions:

### A. **Motive:**

1. Why do you want to be a Christian? Why do you want to publicly profess your faith?
2. Do you yourself think that you are ready to profess your faith? How do you know?
3. Are you aware of the Spirit's leading you to do it?
4. Are you glad that you have been baptized? And do you see a connection between your baptism and your profession of faith?

### B. **Doctrine:**

1. The word "gospel" means "good news". What's so good about the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. You say that Jesus is your Saviour. What does he save you from? And how does he do that? And why does he do it?
3. Would you say that you feel ready to profess your faith, that you are a sinner or a saint? Or, are you perhaps both?
4. Can you as a Christian live apart from the church? Why do we need the fellowship of fellow believers?
5. What importance does the preaching of the Word have for you? Do you like to go to the worship services?
6. What do you think of the Christian Reformed Church? Are you happy to be a member of it? What is there about it that attracts you to it?
7. Do you have any reservations about the teachings of the Christian Reformed Church? What do you think of its creeds?
8. Does it matter to you to which church you belong?
9. Why is the death of Jesus so important?



C. **Life:**

1. What does it mean to you to say that Jesus is your Lord?
2. Why is the resurrection and ascension of Christ so important?
3. Are you happy to be a Christian? What makes you happy? Could you die happily as well as live happily?
4. How do you go about seeking fellowship with the Lord Jesus? Do you practice daily reading of the Bible and prayer?
5. You say that you want to serve the Lord. How are you going to do that? I mean, how do you determine the Lord's will for your life?
6. What do you understand by "church discipline"? Is it a threat to you or is it a comfort?
7. How will you seek to determine your financial contributions to the church? Will you also use the budget envelopes?
8. Will you attend the worship services and congregational meetings on a regular basis?
9. Will you be willing to serve in church activities? Will you volunteer?
10. What spiritual gift do you have that you think could be of benefit for the common good of the church?
11. Will you seek to support all kingdom causes with prayer, moral support and involvement whenever possible?
12. Do you consciously seek to be one of the Lord's witnesses? How do you do that?
13. Can you honestly answer affirmatively the questions of the Form for the Public Profession of Faith?

## 8.6 MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

- A. The Council shall take steps in their Pastoral work (family visiting, preaching and teaching) to remind the congregation of the scriptural command to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). Christians may never marry one who is merely "nice" or who merely comes from a "good family," but are commanded to marry only one who is a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and is responsibly committed to the establishment of a distinctively Christian home. Failure to obey this command can only lead to misery later on and will break down the communal life of God's people (cf. also 11 Corinthians 6:14-15; Ephesians 5:21-33). Article 69 of the Church Order reads:
- *Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care to marry only in the Lord.*
  - *Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers as provided for in the official form. Marriages may be solemnized either in a worship service, or in private gatherings of relatives and friends.*
  - *Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God.*
- B. Couples contemplating marriage in Maranatha CRC. shall ordinarily give four months' notice of their intentions to the church Council (via the Clerk or the Pastor). The Pastor who is to officiate at the wedding ceremony will be responsible for conducting marriage counselling to assist the couple to plan the marriage ceremony and to prepare themselves for the establishment of a

distinctively Christian home, reserving the right to ask the couple to postpone their wedding if he feels that they are not yet ready for it. For marriage not only concerns the well-being of a husband and wife, but also the quality of our church life. Hence, the church must have time to be convinced that the marriage is being entered into according to the Word of God. Only then can the church, in good conscience, cooperate in the solemnization of the marriage.

1. Upon such notice of intention, the Council shall appoint two elders to visit with the couple in order to evaluate the couple's commitment to the establishment of a Christian home.
  2. Should a couple, one of whom is not a member of the CRC, or a couple which has not yet publicly professed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, desire to be married in Maranatha CRC, two elders, one of whom is the district elder, shall interview the couple on the issues of "marrying in the Lord" and "confessing Christ as Lord and Saviour" in order to determine the couple's sincerity and readiness to establish a Christian home. The couple shall be encouraged to profess their faith before they marry. The Council reserves the right to refuse permission to be married in the Maranatha CRC.
- C. The couple to be married should expect to be introduced to the congregation on the Sunday prior to their wedding ceremony, and the congregation shall be encouraged to attend the wedding and to share in the joy of the couple. Marriage ceremonies ought to be integrated into the life of the congregation and ought to be considered as gatherings of the church (cf. I Cor. 12:12-26).
- D. Couples shall have the choice of a marriage in a weekday service, but may also consider being married during a Sunday worship service. If the marriage is to take place during the week, the couple shall be encouraged to earnestly invite all the members of the congregation. Preaching of the Word of God should be part of the wedding ceremony. The district elder is expected to attend the wedding in his/her official capacity.
- E. Couples, as well as their families, shall be encouraged to have celebrations that are distinctively Christian in character. Alcoholic beverages should be served, if at all, only in moderation.

## **8.7 MARRIAGE PROCEDURES**

- A. Couples wishing to have a church wedding should notify the Pastor or Clerk of Council at least four months prior to the intended wedding date.
- B. The Pastor who intends to officiate at the wedding is responsible for the pre-marital counselling necessary to assist the couple in establishing a distinctively Christian home.
- C. Couples contemplating marriage should be urged to enrol in a premarital counselling course sponsored by the Edmonton Christian Reformed Churches or by the Pastor.

- D. The district elder and another office-bearer must meet with the couple to discuss the couple's commitment to establishing a Christian marriage and home and make a recommendation to Council after this visit.
- E. Couples should be introduced to the congregation during the morning service on the Sunday just prior to the wedding.
- F. The district elder assigned to the couple should represent the Council at the wedding.
- G. After the ceremony the couple will be presented, on behalf of the congregation, with a wedding Bible.

## 8.8 MARRIAGE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Young couples contemplating marriage in the Maranatha CRC are to be interviewed by the district elder (along with one other office-bearer) for the following reasons:

1. To give expression to the belief that marriage is of utmost importance to the health of the Lord's Church because it establishes a home which in turn is the nucleus of society. Where there are healthy marriages there also will be healthy homes, and where you have healthy homes you have a healthy church, and where you have a healthy church you have a healthy society. We have a real interest and concern in marriage therefore and we must do our best to help young couples to build distinctively Christian homes by their marriages.
2. The elders of the church ought to be assured that the marriage being contemplated is indeed a marriage in the Lord and that a believing, godly home is to be established. Hence, by means of these interviews, we may learn about the couple's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their commitment to live for the Lord and their awareness of the meaning of a Christian home.
3. That the elders may also become aware of any concern with the couple that may require further attention is also of value to the church Council.

Here follow some suggested questions for such interviews:

- A. **Marriage Readiness:**
  1. How long have you known each other? Do you know each other well?
  2. Where and how did you meet?
  3. Do you believe that the Lord brought you together? How do you know that?
  4. Have you prayed together? Have you also prayed about your intended marriage?
  5. Why do you want to marry? What motivates you?
  6. Do you consider yourselves ready for marriage? Do you see it as a life-long commitment? What does it mean to be "committed"?
  7. Do you find it fairly easy and comfortable to talk together about your faith in the Lord?
  8. Is it the sincere intention of both of you to build a Christian marriage and a Christian home? What does that mean to you?
  9. Have you read over the Marriage Form? Does it reflect the biblical teachings concerning marriage?

**B. Marriage and the Church:**

1. Why do you want to get married in the church? Do you see it as a "right" or a "privilege"?
2. Do you understand why the church, through its Council, has such an interest and concern in your marriage?
3. Is the church important to both of you? Do you intend to worship together on a regular basis? Why? Or ... why not?
4. Have you professed your faith in the Lord Jesus? If you don't feel ready to do so, then can you honestly say that you are ready to marry?
5. Do you both pray for the church?
6. Has the church found a place in your budget?
7. Can you comfortably discuss the life of the church together?
8. Will you keep the church informed about matters concerning your life? e.g. change of address, sickness or other crises, etc.
9. Will you welcome the elders when they come for family visiting?

**C. Marriage and the Home:**

1. Do you plan to have regular family devotions? How do you plan to go about it?
2. Will both of you be working outside the home?
3. Do you look forward to having children? How will you make decisions in this regard?
4. Should the Lord bless you with children, will you seek to provide a Christian education for them?
5. Have you involved your parents in your marriage plans? For example, have you consulted with them about your plans?
6. Have you sought to prepare some kind of family budget?
7. What will you do if serious conflicts arise in your marriage? Will you call the Pastor or an elder or deacon when you need help?
8. Do you consciously seek to cultivate friendships within the Christian community? For example, do you participate in a discussion group of any kind? Are your friends also Christians?
9. What significance do you see the Gospel of Jesus Christ to have for your marriage and your home life?

## **8.9 GUIDELINES FOR FUNERALS: MEMBERS OF MARANATHA**

A. There are no fees for the use of church facilities by members of Maranatha.

B. **Funerals** - guidelines to be followed:

The family will ordinarily arrange with the Pastor to have the funeral in our church building. If that is the case, the Pastor will advise the custodian as soon as possible about the probable day and time of the funeral, the probable arrangement for the funeral and whether lunch/refreshments are likely to be part of the arrangements.

The Pastor will advise the family that the above arrangements need to be confirmed with the custodian.

The custodian will arrange for preparation of any refreshments/lunches etc., as discussed with the family and will invoice the family for the expenses.

**Note:** in connection with this, it's good to keep in mind the three types of funeral services that may take place:

1. Funeral service, with funeral directors' staff present, and refreshments to be served after interment.
2. Funeral service, with funeral directors' staff present, but without use of lower level facilities.
3. Memorial service, after interment, with refreshments to be served afterwards.

- C. Members have to make their own arrangement for the services of musicians, sound system operator and minister if our own is not available.

No fees will be charged for the services of the minister, custodian, musicians or sound technician. If there are any expenses associated with the services of any of the above functionaries, the cost will be absorbed by our church capped, however, at the following levels:

Minister (if not our own):	\$85.00
Musicians, in total:	\$75.00
Sound technician:	\$20.00

- D. In case there are any differences of opinion as to how the above rules are to be interpreted, the Executive of Council will make the final decision.

## **8.10 GUIDELINES FOR USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES**

Following are guidelines for the use of our church facilities, procedures to be followed with weddings and funerals, the fees associated with the use of the church building and the services of the various functionaries. These guidelines are to be reviewed every third year, beginning in the fall of 2016.

- A. Church-owned equipment, such as tables, chairs or musical instruments, shall not be taken from the church building, unless approval has been obtained from the Finance & Administration Committee or the Chair of Council. Equipment may be used for our own church functions at other locations, e.g. at the Northeast Christian School gym. Arrangements should be confirmed with the custodian.
- B. Permission for the use of the church auditorium or meeting rooms in the basement (e.g. reception) must be obtained from the Admin Director. When permission is obtained, the party requesting the use of the facilities must confirm the arrangements with the custodian.
- C. The Church limits the use of the church facilities to church-approved programs and purposes which are consistent with the constating documents of this Church.
- D. Conditions attached to the use of the church building:

1. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed in the church building, with the exception of wine for a toast at a wedding or reception.
  2. Functions or meetings on Saturdays must end no later than 11:00 pm, to allow time for preparation for Sunday services.
  3. Any group using the church building must see to it that the rooms used are left in good condition or additional charges may apply.
- E. There are no fees for the use of church facilities by members of Maranatha.
- F. In the case of weddings, where at least one of the parties is a member of Maranatha, members will have to make their own arrangements for the services of a minister, musicians and sound system operator. No fees will be charged for the services of the minister and the custodian, while members are responsible for any fees associated with the services of musicians, sound system operator and outside minister.
- G. Fees for the use of facilities to non-members are set as follows:
- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| Church auditorium:                              | \$150.00 |
| Lower level and kitchen:                        | \$150.00 |
| Church auditorium plus lower level and kitchen: | \$225.00 |
- The custodian will receive \$75.00 out of the above fees as compensation for extra work. Where the services of the minister, organist or sound system operator are required, (funerals, weddings, etc.) the following fees are applicable:
- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Minister:         | \$85.00   |
| Musicians:        | \$75.00   |
| Sound technician: | \$20.00 (compensation for wage loss not included) |
- H. In case there are any differences of opinion as to how the above rules are to be interpreted, the Executive of Council will make the final decision.

## **8.11 BUDGET FORMATION**

- A. The Finance and Administration Committee is responsible for preparing the annual budget of the church. All budgetary concerns or changes must be evaluated by this committee. The Finance and Administration Committee has the responsibility for making the proposed budget available to the members of Council at least one Sunday prior to the November Council meeting.
- B. The F & A Committee is responsible for initiating salary proposals for the minister and the custodian. In the case of the custodian the committee will consider economic factors and remuneration for similar work. In the case of the Pastor, the committee will consider economic factors, synodical guidelines and the range of salaries for ministers of the Christian Reformed Churches in Edmonton and elsewhere. At least one elder will visit with the Pastor and his wife to discuss the recommendations.
- C. The Council discusses and adopts the proposed budget, with amendments if required.

- D. The Clerk prepares copies of the proposed budget on behalf of the Council for each family of the congregation, to be distributed at least one Sunday prior to the congregational meeting.
- E. The Treasurer is responsible for explaining and the Chair of Council for defending the proposed budget at the congregational meeting.
- F. The congregation votes on the proposed budget after discussion. No amendments are allowed, as the whole budget is presented to the congregation for approval. In case the budget is not accepted by majority vote, it will go back to Council for reconsideration.
- G. Before the Council may make a decision concerning non-budgeted financial items, the matter must be referred to the Finance and Administration Committee for comment.
- H. Council has committed the congregation to the budgeted 100% for Classical and Synodical ministry shares. Deviation from this rule must be approved by Council.
- I. In order to make payment as required in the budget, and there is a shortage of funds, a line of credit might be established with the bank if required, providing the congregation is immediately notified of such action.

## **8.12 EMERGENCY EVACUATION GUIDELINES**

**In the Event a fire occurs during a worship service the following rules and regulations will apply:**

- 1) A person sitting closest to the South wing door will head for the kitchen and notify the Fire Department immediately. A request will be made from the pulpit for an orderly evacuation. In addition any person with a cell phone should attempt a 9-1-1 call.
- 2) The Church address is posted at the phone location.
- 3) Elders, Deacons and Hall Monitor, regardless of where they sit are designated as "WARDENS" to maintain order at specific exits.
- 4) Persons in charge of children in both the nursery and Sunday school rooms shall be responsible for evacuating the children via the nearest usable exit.
- 5) The WARDENS are to stand by the exterior exits and are to assist in the evacuation on the outside. Should the window exits be needed the WARDENS will proceed to assist as needed on either side of the window.
- 6) The congregation will leave via the nearest and safest usable exit. The WARDENS will assist to determine which exits are the most suitable.
- 7) Leave all your belongings behind. Do not attempt to retrieve any item that is not on your person.
- 8) The Physically Handicapped will be carried out by the nearest able bodied person in the vicinity. If needed the WARDENS shall designate an able bodied person.
- 9) Use of the elevator is STRICTLY PROHIBITED.
- 10) WARDENS will conduct a final sweep thru the auditorium and basement as needed.
- 11) WARDENS should be familiar with the location of fire extinguishers should the need arise.

12) A WARDEN shall assume control outside and assemble everybody in the designated muster point determined as the northwest corner of the parking lot near the fence.

**A copy of these guidelines and evacuation diagram shall be posted at each normal exit and at each doorway in the basement. One copy shall remain on the pulpit.**

## **8.13 FAMILY VISITING GUIDE**

### **Introduction**

Family visiting on an annual basis is required by the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church. Article 65: *The office-bearers of the church shall extend Pastoral care to all members of the congregation and to others whenever possible. Home visitation and other methods, such as spiritual mentorship and personal contact, shall be used to encourage them to live by faith, restore those who err in doctrine or life, and comfort and assist those experiencing adversity.* The practice is not explicitly required by any passage of scripture, but nevertheless the following passages certainly speak of annual family visiting. Every elder should be thoroughly familiar with these passages: Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Peter 5:1-5; John 15:1-17; Hebrews 13:17; Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23; I Thessalonians 5: 12-22 (especially 14).

Elders do not have the right to visit in believers' homes for the purpose of family visiting just because they are an elder! It does have a bearing, however, since it is ultimately Jesus Christ who appoints the elders and they must do the work in the name of Christ in obedience to him as their SENDER. Elders are appointed by the Spirit of the Lord who led the congregation to choose these men to be their elders (overseers) because they were recognized as the best qualified among the congregation for the task of tending the flock of God.

But the elders' authority lies in the fact that they bring the Word of God to the members of the church. The Word of God, from which and on the basis of which they speak, gives them the authority to enter the homes of God's people to ask questions concerning their lives and to discuss the issues of faith and love with them. The elders' task is to encourage, comfort and warn as may be required, but to do so only with the Word of God as the power and authority by which we are called to holy, righteous and wise living before the Lord. Hence, the elders must seek to become more and more familiar with the Word of God, and to live by that Word in their own lives in order to reflect by both word and way of life the authority of God's Word that drives believers toward a godly way of life. Elders ought to be able to refer to the Bible during the course of the visit or at its end in such a way that the Word of God speaks directly to the family in their own particular situation and to their needs. Official preaching in a worship service is general: it is addressed to the whole congregation. Family visiting is specific: it is addressed to the individual family in terms of their individual needs and concerns.

At times elders will find that believers will be rather "cool" or even openly hostile, angry or offensive toward them or toward the church. It often happens when you lay the demands of God's Word before those who are living disobediently or indifferently before the Lord. Whenever that happens, remember your SENDER! Whenever you speak to fellow believers in the name of Christ, driven by the Word, then the people to whom you speak will be reacting to your SENDER and not personally toward you. If they



respond in loving faith, we rejoice, because they are responding to the Lord in that way; if they respond with hostility, they do so toward Jesus Christ and we may feel sad and hurt by it but we will feel that way because the name of Jesus Christ is hurt. We as elders must remember that we are only servants and are always in the background; Jesus Christ is the Master and He is always in the foreground!

### **The Mechanics**

Our Reformed heritage has left us with a traditional image of the family visit that makes us think of it as very "official" and "formal" and "tense". Many make remarks about these visits as if they were something that has to be done and endured but are not really worthwhile or meaningful. We do need to work at becoming more informal and flexible in order to make the visits pleasant and helpful. We need to remember that there is room for humor! Nor should the visits all follow the same pattern but there ought to be variety depending on the mood, atmosphere and needs of the family. We should feel free to go off on a tangent that may at the moment seem to be totally irrelevant to the nature of family visiting, providing we make sure that the discussion comes back to the real issues of life before the Lord and our life in relationship to each other and the world.

Elders should know the members of their district well. First-time elders will perhaps feel uncomfortable because they do not know the families in their district. And the families in turn may not be very eager to open to a new and strange elder with whom they are unfamiliar. In such cases, it is highly advisable, almost necessary, that the elders make "social get-acquainted calls". They could invite the families over for coffee or invite themselves to the home for the same purpose for a relaxed, informal, social visit. Then the family visit, to be made later on, will ordinarily be easier, more open and more profitable.

Elders ought to do the most difficult visits first! There is always the tendency to postpone the more difficult visits because they are not expected to be pleasant with the result that we run out of time to make the visits or at least to make repeat visits. That's why there are many of these who complain (rightly so!) that they tend to be forgotten. Doing the more difficult visits first gives room to deal more effectively with such families and more importantly gives time for repeat visits as well as furnish the elders an opportunity to consult as to how to give help and support dealing with the family in the future.

Making appointments can be difficult. We ought to phone well ahead of time and if the first suggested date does not satisfy, then we ought immediately to try to find another suitable date even it is two, three or four weeks in advance. And it is good to remember that the best time to phone seems to be around supper time (5:30-7:00 pm.).

Whether an elder goes alone or with another elder should be left to the discretion of the district elder. There are some visits that can best be made alone and then more visits can be made. However, there is good reason to try to make your visits as a team of two elders (or perhaps with the district deacon). You will then receive greater support (after all, two heads are better than one, they say); there will also be a greater attempt on your part to work harder at making the visit profitable; there will be less likelihood that the discussion remains with the weather and the prices of gasoline and sugar, etc. It just seems that family visiting works better when there are two elders.

Reading the Bible and prayer for the family during or at the end of the visit is of utmost importance obviously. However, we need to be flexible in this respect. To begin a family visit with a selection from

Scripture and prayer gives the impression of formality and stiffness as if a meeting were being conducted for business purposes. It is better to begin the visit in a casual way and to seek to set a relaxing tone first. The elder should seek to maintain control of the discussion, however, and it must be steered in the direction of talking of those matters that concern the family's relationship to the Lord, to each other, to the body of Christ and to other people. During such discussions, the elder should seek to refer to the Bible to enforce whatever the elder may be trying to accomplish with that family. And, the elder should not leave the family, if at all possible, without reading a passage that speaks to the family's needs and asking the family to join with him in prayer for them.

Elders must always be ready to listen! The family visit is not an "investigation". It is a visit to build up, to instruct, to encourage and strengthen in faith, to admonish and warn or rebuke, as the need may be. But the elder needs to LISTEN! This is especially true with young people: the elder may ask questions, but then listen. And we must listen not only to what the people may SAY, but try to ascertain what they MEAN. What makes them say that which they have just said? What lies behind the scenes in this person's life? What's his/her real concern? When the elder begins to sense something of that, then he is ready to begin making a contribution by giving something that is helpful and which will be appreciated.

Whenever the elder encounters serious difficulties that are not expected, and cannot be sufficiently dealt with at the time, it is not wise to prolong the visit to try to deal with the matter to its conclusion. It is better to make another appointment right away and perhaps also, if you were alone, to ask another elder or the Pastor to accompany you the next time so that the difficulty can be pursued. Such a repeat visit should also be made within two or three weeks.

### **The Support**

Elders need support for they will sometimes cry "HELP" -- not audibly perhaps, but at least inwardly. There are resources by which the elder can become better prepared and more effective, which should not be forgotten. The best help really, however, (and this applies especially to first-time elders) is to do as much family visiting as possible as a team with another, more experienced elder.

Each elder should feel free to discuss a family or a problem with any other elder at any time. Be cautious about talking about families or persons in the church with those who are not elders or deacons; however, every elder is available (and the Pastor too) for mutual advice and support.

With such families that may present difficulties, those who live somewhat "on the fringe of the church's life" and those who may soon become discipline cases, you may want the Pastor to accompany you. The Pastor may be visiting with these families too, on his own, but it is of great value that the Pastor be included in some of the regular family visiting, particularly with such who need special consideration.

There are regular meetings of the elders about once a month for the purpose of hearing and discussing the reports each elder makes concerning the family visits he makes. The purpose of these meetings is three-fold:

1. that all the elders may be made aware of the spiritual atmosphere of all the families and consequently come to "know" the congregation;
2. that elders may have the opportunity to discuss their visits in order to receive advice and help from the other elders;

3. to take specific actions regarding disciplinary situations.

### **The Visits to be Made**

Regular family visits are to be made to each family of the congregation AT LEAST once a year as required by the Church Order. More visits can and ought to be made, however. Particular attention should be paid to the young people of our families because frequently they are not present for the ordinary family visit for one reason or another. If they are not present, a separate visit ought to be made to those individuals to maintain contact. (Note: If you hear of a young person who is not married and is living away from home, please notify the Clerk and the youth elder for Pastoral care. This is important because young people so easily drift away from the fellowship of God's people!)

Attention should also be given to the families in your district in connection with times of crisis or times of thanksgiving. You could take your spouse along with you to visit those who are ill, or who experience the death of a close relative, and those who celebrate important anniversaries. Special attention should also be paid to those who are widows/widowers and the elderly. These visits are often pleasant and can be very casual. Your purpose is only to show interest and love.

Get-acquainted calls should be made as soon as possible when a new member is accepted into the congregation. This visit should include making arrangements for a public welcome during one of the worship services. Moreover, you should seek to acquaint the new member somewhat with the history of our congregation and its activities inviting the new member to participate in these activities (societies, evangelism work, etc.). And further, a directory of the church and a set of envelopes with a copy of the current church budget should also be delivered to the new member on this visit.

Socializing evenings ought also to be arranged by the elders. This is not to replace the annual family visit, but it will go a long way toward building the actual experience of the communion of the saints.

### **The Reports**

Elders are expected to report to the elders' meetings concerning the regular family visits they make. The purpose of such meetings is for all the elders to become aware of the spiritual condition of the church, to help each other by seeking and giving advice, to come to understand the situation of each family, and to take action whenever disciplinary measures are called for.

The reports of family visits should include the date of the visit and the general content of the discussion in order to give an indication of the spiritual health of the family.

Notes concerning the family visit should be written by the elder immediately following the visit. Reports to the elders' meetings can be made quickly, efficiently and profitably by simply reading the notes! Elaboration can always be made during the discussion.

Lines of communication between elders, deacons and Pastor need to be kept open. If there is a change of address, make sure to pass the information along to the Clerk. If a young person becomes married outside the church let the Pastor and Clerk know. If there is a need in a family that would require diaconal work, please let the deacons know.

One last point concerns holding confidences. Gossip hurts the church! It may be that we contribute to that gossip and perhaps even generate it if we are not careful about what we say and to whom. All elders and deacons and Pastors need to guard their mouths! It can be, and often is, beautiful when believers talk about each other in the spirit of loving concern in order to seek ways of helping those in trouble. But let us never talk about others merely for the sake of talking!

**Section 9: BY-LAWS**

Approved By-Laws follow this page.