

## Constitution

I. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Rule of Christian Faith and Duty under the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. That it is the inalienable right of every Christian to search these records of Divine Truth for his own instruction and guidance, to form his own opinions with regard to what they teach, and to worship God in sincerity, agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience, without privation, penalty, or inconvenience inflicted by his fellow-men.

III. That the imposition of Human Tests and Confessions of Faith, and the vain efforts of men to produce an unattainable uniformity of belief, have tended to restrict the sacred right of private judgement, and to prevent that free enquiry and discussion which are essential to the extension of religious knowledge.

IV. That forasmuch as our Master, Christ, has described the true disciple in these words, saying, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"*: and further, has emphasised the two great commandments, saying, *"Hear, O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself There is none other commandment greater than these"*: and forasmuch as Christ himself has said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"*:

We, therefore, refuse to impose conditions upon the Church which He himself has not sanctioned, and we solemnly declare our allegiance to the principle, as the real bond of union among Christians, that the teaching of Christ himself must take precedence of the doctrines of a later time, and that unity is to be sought, not in uniformity of creed, but in a common standard of righteousness and obedience to the commandments which Christ himself has laid down.

V. That we now, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and earnestly imploring the blessing of Almighty God, solemnly associate ourselves as the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

VI. That the Constitution and Government of the Church be Presbyterian.

VII. That we solemnly guarantee to the Congregations which are under our care, and to those which may hereafter form a portion of our Church, the full, free, unrestricted exercise of their unquestionable right to elect, in all cases of vacancy, Ministers entertaining such views of Divine Truth as the Congregations may themselves approve.

VIII. That the accredited Ministers of other Christian Churches may, at all times, be invited to sit

and deliberate with us in the Church Courts, and to join with us in the affectionate intercourse of Ministerial Services and Christian Communion.

Provided that nothing contained in the said scheme for the Constitution of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland shall be construed or taken as in any way affecting the name, property, funds, or endowments of any kind or description whatever of the existing Synods, Presbyteries, or Congregations respectively, or of the use, distribution, or application of such property, funds, or endowments.

## The Code of Discipline

Approved by Pro re Nata Meetings of Synod of February 17th, March 2nd and April 28th 1996, and confirmed by a Pro re Nata Synod of May 10th 1997

### CHAPTER 1 The Church

1. The VISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST consists of all persons who acknowledge his Divine mission, and who profess to be his disciples and followers.

#### Section 1 A Particular Church

2. A PARTICULAR CHURCH consists of a number of persons voluntarily associated, and assembling for the worship of God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Section 2 Head of the Church

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole King and Head of the Church.

#### Section 3 Teachers and Rulers in the Church

4. Every association must be regulated by certain laws, and its affairs must be conducted by certain officers.

5. The ordinary and perpetual officers in the early church appear to have been named Elders, Bishops, Pastors, Teachers, Ministers and Deacons.

6. The names Presbyter, Elder, Bishop, Pastor, Teacher and Minister are evidently descriptive of the different duties of the same office, and are, in the New Testament, indiscriminately applied to the same office-bearers, without marking any distinction or superiority of rank.

7. Ruling or Lay Elders are appointed in our Churches for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with Ministers.

8. Deacons were recognised as distinct office-bearers in the Primitive Church where their business was to take care of the poor, and to distribute among them the collections raised in the congregation for their use. By extension this work has come to include the wider secular and financial affairs of the congregation; and while Deacons as a distinct order are no longer appointed within this church, this sphere of work is entrusted to lay committees, elected from among the members of each congregation for the purpose.

#### Section 4 **Powers of the Teachers and Rulers of the Church in Spiritual Matters**

9. The Word of God, contained in Holy Scripture, directs Christians to know and respect those who work amongst them 'in the Lord' and to obey those who are set in authority over them in the Church (*1 Thessalonians 5 v12, Hebrews 13 v17*). But this power in teachers, and this submission from the people, does not authorise the teachers or rulers to teach any particular doctrines or beliefs or to enforce any ceremony upon their own authority, except in so far as those doctrines or ceremonies are consistent with the doctrines and laws of Christ as contained in the Scriptures.

10. The power possessed by the teachers of the Church amounts to no more than this:- to search the mind of the Spirit speaking in the Scriptures; to produce Scriptural authority for the truth of what they teach; and to observe those rites and ceremonies, which Christ has prescribed by his authority, and sanctioned by his example, and which are recorded in His Word contained in Holy Scripture.

11. Nevertheless while the teachers and rulers of the Church are not permitted to teach anything more than is set forth in Holy Scripture, they are at the same time bound to declare the whole counsel of God, and, in ruling, to have respect to all the laws which Christ as 'King and Head' has instituted for the preservation of purity and order in his Church. They are therefore empowered, and it becomes their duty, to caution, rebuke or suspend from the fellowship or communion of the church, those members who lead lives that are unbecoming or unseemly in Christian people, or who renounce the Christian Religion.

#### Section 5 **Right of Private Judgement in Members of the Church**

12. It is the duty, the privilege, and the right of every person to examine the Scriptures for their own instruction and guidance. In the exercise of this right it is the duty of every Christian to read the Scriptures daily, employing, in cases of difficulty the aid of pious and learned men and women who have diligently inquired into the meaning of the Word of God. It is also their duty to meet and converse with learned teachers and other experienced Christians, and regularly to attend upon public worship and preaching. In exercising this inalienable right of private judgement the Christian does not refuse to admit light from other quarters, but applies his reason to ascertain the Divine Will as revealed in Scripture, all the while devoutly praying for the light and Guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead him into all truth.

## CHAPTER 2 Church Courts

### Section 1 Their Nature and Constitution

13. The government of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland is exercised by Kirk Sessions, by Presbyteries, and by the whole Church in meeting assembled and hereinafter called the General Synod.

14. A Kirk Session consists of the Minister (or Ministers) and the Elders of a particular congregation.

15. A Presbytery consists of the Ministers of a convenient district, together with a Representative Elder from each congregation, appointed by the congregation as the representative of the people, to protect their rights, and to exercise a co-ordinate authority with the Ministers in all matters brought before the court.

16. The General Synod consists of the Presbyteries thus constituted.

### Section 2 Their Authority

17. Each congregation, and each member of a congregation, is, in all matters of discipline, worship and order, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Session of the congregation. Each congregation is, in these matters, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Presbytery to which such congregation belongs. Each Presbytery is similarly under the jurisdiction of the General Synod. Every inferior court is bound to yield submission to a court superior to it.

18. A Superior court may direct any court which is subordinate to it to investigate a case properly falling within the jurisdiction of such inferior court; it may remove a case from before such a court and may itself investigate and adjudicate upon it; and it may amend or set aside any decision of the inferior court, and may call for and endorse the records of any such court, and pronounce such judgement on its action and give it such directions as it deems right and good.

19. No inferior court has a right to review the decisions or proceedings of a superior or equal court. There shall be right of appeal to the next superior court in respect of all decisions or proceedings. An individual may lodge such appeal only when the matter at issue concerns him personally and individually.

### Section 3 Rules for the Management of Business in Church Courts

20. Each church court shall be opened with prayer and closed with the benediction.

21. The following Standing Orders shall be observed at all meetings of the General synod, and

also, in as far as they may be applicable, in all the courts of the church.

- a. The Moderator, when presiding, shall be fully robed.
- b. Only Ministers and Representative Elders shall speak upon any matter, save by the express permission of the court.
- c. A member, in addressing the court, shall do so standing, and shall address his remarks to the Moderator.
- d. No member shall speak more than once on any motion under discussion, without the consent of the court.
- e. any member speaking shall, when the Moderator rises, at once resume his seat.
- f. No person shall leave the court before the end of its session without first obtaining the consent of the Moderator.

22. Each court shall be under the chairmanship of a Minister as Moderator. The Moderator shall see that proper order is maintained during proceedings; shall verify the minutes of previous meetings, as approved, by his signature; shall declare the decisions and pronounce the sentences of the court; and shall, when necessary, sign official documents.

23. If the Moderator of a court is not present at the time appointed for commencement of its proceedings, the last preceding Moderator of the court, if present and willing to act, shall preside; failing him, the court shall select a Moderator pro tem.

24. Each church court shall have, in addition to a Moderator, a Clerk or secretary whose duties shall include:

- a. The recording of the proceedings of the court in a substantially bound minute book, which shall be provided for the purpose, in the course of which minutes the decisions of the court must be clearly stated.
- b. The reading of such minutes at subsequent meetings of the court.
- c. The provision of extracts from the minutes, upon proper request and with the authority of the court having been given.
- d. The preparation of the agenda for each meeting.
- e. The preparation and keeping of a current roll of the members of the court and of their attendance.
- f. The endorsement and preservation of all official documents.
- g. The conduct of all correspondence as shall be directed by the court.

25. Each court shall have in addition to Moderator and Clerk a Treasurer, if considered necessary. The duties of the Treasurer shall include:

- a. Responsibility for the control and application of funds as may be directed by the court.
- b. The keeping of such books and records as may be directed by the court.
- c. The preparation and submission to the court once a year of an audited statement of income and expenditure.

26. On taking up office every Clerk or Treasurer shall make the following solemn declaration:

*"I, 'A B', being chosen Clerk (or Treasurer) of..... do hereby publicly and solemnly promise that I will, to the best of my ability and powers, faithfully discharge the duties of the Office to which I have been appointed; that I will carefully preserve the books, records, and other documents now or at any time entrusted to my keeping; and that I will, on relinquishing office, restore the same to the court now appointing me."*

to which shall be affixed an exact list of the documents so entrusted. This signed declaration to be forwarded immediately to the Clerk of the next Superior court; and in the case of the Clerk of the General Synod the declaration shall be made in open Synod.

27, Voting in church courts may be:

- a. By a majority of voices, "Aye" or "No"
- b. By a show of hands
- c. By calling of the roll
- d. By ballot should the court so desire

It shall be open to any member of a court to challenge the result of the voting as announced by its Moderator upon any question; in such a case the Moderator shall appoint two or more tellers to assist him in the counting of a further vote.

28. The Moderator shall himself have no deliberative vote in church courts, but where the votes are equal, he shall have a determining or casting vote. Should he desire not to exercise this, the question at issue shall lapse, and shall not be re-opened at that same meeting of the court.

### CHAPTER 3 The Congregation

#### Section 1 Meetings of the Congregation

29. Every meeting of a congregation shall be announced from the pulpit, during public worship, by authority of the Session. Except in cases of exceptional emergency, at least two clear weeks notice shall be given of every congregational meeting.

30. The congregation shall meet once a year to receive reports from Session and Committee, including an audited statement of income and expenditure; to elect members to the Committee, to appoint a congregational Secretary and Treasurer, to appoint a Representative Elder to Presbytery and to Synod, and to transact such other business as may be lawfully and regularly brought before it.

31. Presbytery or Synod have the authority at all times to require a special meeting of the congregation to be held.

32. A Special Meeting of the congregation may be called on the direction of the Session. In every such case the notice convening the meeting shall specify the business to be transacted, and no business except that specified shall be brought before the meeting.

33. At every meeting of the congregation the Moderator of the Session shall preside; but, at his request, or in his absence, any other Minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery may occupy the chair.

34. Congregational meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the 'Rules for the Management of Business in church Courts'

*(Paragraphs 20-28).*

## Section 2 Rules for the Conduct of Elections in Church Meetings

35. The right to vote in meetings of the congregation, or to stand for election to any office, shall be limited to those members who are sixteen years of age and upwards, who paid Stipend or Freewill Offering in the previous year, and who are deemed by the Session of the congregation to be members in good standing.

36. In any meeting of the congregation the quorum necessary to conduct business shall be 10 persons, or one tenth of the eligible membership, whichever shall be the smaller number.

37. Voting may be:

a. By a majority of voices - "Aye" or "No"

b. By a show of hands

c. By a secret ballot of those present - should the meeting so desire.

d. By a postal ballot of members. This means may be used for the election of committee members, or an exceptional item of business, but on no account may be applied to the generality of church business, nor to the choice or election of Ministers.

38. In the election of church officers their appointment shall be "for the ensuing year", that is until the next Annual General Meeting of the congregation.

39. In the election of committee members their appointment may be:

a. "For the ensuing year"

b. For a term of years (Not to exceed three)

By making appointments for such a term, and having one third of the members retire in consecutive years, it is possible to obtain a rotation of membership which is to be desired, especially in larger congregations.

40. While, under normal circumstances committee members standing down at the Annual General Meeting of a congregation shall be eligible for immediate re-election, it would be permissible, if a congregation so desired, that such persons would be ineligible for re-election for the space of one year, in order to promote greater variation of membership.

41. Church Officers - Secretary, Treasurer and any Assistant Secretary or Treasurer - shall sit ex-officio as members of Committee.

42. Church Committees shall be representative of the range and extent of congregational activities and of organisations connected with the congregation.

43. Church Committees should be proportionate in number to the size and extent of each congregation. In no case should there be less than four elected members and in no case should that number exceed 15% of the church membership.

44. Members of Committee to be chosen at the Annual General Meeting of the congregation shall be nominated and seconded individually. Where there are more nominations than the number of places to be filled a ballot shall be held in which members shall have a number of votes equal to the number of places, and persons shall be declared elected in descending order of the number of votes received. Church Committees shall not be elected "en bloc".

45. No person shall be nominated for office unless they are present and assent to their nomination, or, if absent, have signified such assent in writing beforehand.

46. In the event that the Annual General Meeting of the congregation shall be unable to fill the desired number of places in a Church Committee, the members of the committee may, at a later meeting, co-opt an eligible person or persons to fill such vacancy or vacancies until the next Annual General Meeting of the congregation.

47. While it shall be in the power of congregations to make By-laws for the government of such individual congregations, such By-laws shall only have effect inasmuch as they are supplementary to the provisions of this Code, and shall in no case supersede or set aside those provisions.

### Section 3 **Trustees of the Property of a Congregation**

48. Every Congregation shall have trustees for all its property, and such property shall be defined



legally by a declaration of trust.

49. No purchase, lease or sale of any church property, or selection of site of church, manse or hall, or erection of new buildings on congregational property, shall be made or sanctioned by trustees, without the approval of the congregation and the approval of Presbytery in consultation with its law agent.

50. Trustees of congregational property of every kind shall be members of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. They should not be fewer than three in number. Should the number of trustees be reduced to three, the congregation shall at once proceed to choose and appoint an additional trustee or trustees, and is urged to consider the desirability of appointing "The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland Trustees" as an additional co-trustee.

51. When a trustee of the property of the congregation ceases to be a member of that congregation, he shall ipso facto cease to be a trustee of such property and shall tender his resignation; and shall sign a declaration to that effect in the minute book of the congregation on taking up office.

52. No resignation of a trustee from his trusteeship of congregational property shall be accepted, and no choice or appointment of a new trustee or trustees shall be made, except by the congregation in congregational meeting assembled. Notice of the time and place of every such meeting and the object for which it is to be held, shall be given from the pulpit during public worship on at least two Sundays preceding.

53. At any meeting of a congregation held to receive a trustee's resignation from office, or to choose and appoint a new trustee or trustees, a memorandum of such resignation or appoint shall be drawn up, shall be signed by the chairman of the meeting in the present of the whole meeting, shall be attested by two or more witnesses, and shall be preserved among the records of the congregation.

54. The congregation shall take steps, through its law agent, to have a memorial of any such deed entered in the Registry of Deeds.

55. Each congregation shall have a safe or similar secure receptacle for the custody of its minute books, records, documents and the like. It is recommended that trust deeds, leases and investment securities should be placed in the custody of the congregation's bankers or law agent, and that a statement to the effect that documents have been so lodged shall be entered in the minute book of the congregation.

## CHAPTER 4

### **The Committee of a Congregation**

#### Section 1

### **The Appointment of a Committee**

56. The temporal affairs of a congregation shall be under the care of a Committee, known as the Church Committee.

57. The Committee shall be appointed by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting in the manner described in Chapter 3 Section 2.

58. Committee members shall in all cases be members in good standing in the congregation in which they are appointed, attendant upon its services, and contributors to its support.

59. It is highly desirable that the Sunday School Superintendent and a representative of the Women's Organisation should be elected to the Church Committee.

60. The Committee shall appoint its own Chairman. It is expedient that the Minister should be appointed to preside.

61. Members of the Session are ex-officio members of the Church Committee.

## Section 2

### **Powers and Duties of the Committee**

62. The Committee shall have charge of the temporal affairs of a congregation, including all matters connected with its income and expenditure; the purchase, care and sale of church property; the management of the graveyard; and the erection, repair and renewal of the buildings belonging to the congregation. A congregation may, by decision in general meeting, require that certain of such matters must be brought before the whole congregation for decision, and, where such regulation exists, the power of the Committee shall be limited thereby.

63. The Church Committee shall have the power to appoint Sub-Committees which may investigate or advise on specific areas of concern. The report of any such Sub-Committee shall, in every case, be approved by a meeting of the whole Church Committee before recommendations contained therein shall be implemented.

64. The Church Committee shall have the power to appoint Sub-Committees solely for the purpose of implementing specific decisions of the Church Committee.

65. No lease, deed of sale or trust deed of church property, of any description, shall be executed, without first being submitted to Presbytery and its consent obtained.

66. No major structural alterations or changes in the architecture of Church property, shall be made until the consent of both congregation and Presbytery has been secured.

67. It is the duty of the Committee to ensure that the Meeting House, manse, hall, and all other property of a congregation is regularly inspected and maintained in a good state of repair.

68. All matters relating to the graveyard shall be under the immediate jurisdiction of the Church Committee, or a SubCommittee appointed for the purpose.

69. The appointment or dismissal of the Choirmaster, Organist or Sexton rests with the Church Committee.

70. The Church Committee shall submit once a year to the congregation an audited statement of congregational income and expenditure, and shall send a certified copy of this account to Presbytery, together with such return forms as may be specified.

71. Any member of the Church Committee, or any member of the congregation, dissatisfied with a decision of the Church Committee may, after notice in writing to the Church Committee and also to the Kirk Session, petition the Presbytery against it.

Section 3  
**Meetings of the Committee**

72. It is the duty of the Church Committee to meet at regular intervals, not less than quarterly, and at such other times as necessity may require.

73. Only in cases of exceptional necessity may Committee meetings be held at the conclusion of public worship.

74. The Chairman of the Church Committee may at any time convene the Committee on his own authority. He shall convene it at the request of the Minister (when the Minister be not Chairman), or at the request in writing of any three of its members. The Church Committee shall also meet when requested to do so by Presbytery or Synod.

75. The Church Committee may be convened by announcement from the pulpit during public worship, or by notice sent to every member by authority of the Chairman.

76. One third of the voting membership of the Committee shall be a quorum, and shall be competent to transact the business of the Committee.

CHAPTER 5  
**The Kirk Session or Eldership of a Congregation**

Section 1  
**The Appointment of a Session**

77. In each congregation there shall be a Session, having the charge of the spiritual needs and welfare of the congregation.

78. Where a Session is to be chosen for the first time in a congregation, the appointment rests with the congregation, in the manner described in paragraph 80a below, except that the nominations shall be given to the minister or minister-in-charge, who shall report them to Presbytery.

79. Where new Elders are to be added to an existing Session, the decision on when an election is to take place and the number of ruling elders to be chosen devolves normally upon the Kirk Session, but any member of the congregation may petition the Session upon the subject.

80. Such new Elders shall be nominated and appointed by one or other of the following methods:

- a. Selection by the congregation
  - i. On two successive Sundays the congregation shall be informed of the number of new Ruling Elders being sought and voting members invited to look out among themselves qualified persons suitable for the office, and to give to the Kirk Session on the following

Sunday signed lists of the person or persons they propose, not exceeding the number required. The Session may, if they see fit, provide for this by the circulation of poll lists to be marked with the names proposed, signed and returned.

ii. The Session shall examine the lists received, and the names which occur most frequently, if the Session approves, and if those so proposed shall consent, shall form a list up to the number of Ruling Elders required. Should any decline to act their places may be filled by those who come nearest in the proposals recorded, up to the said number. No name shall be listed which has not received a minimum of one third of the votes cast.

b. Selection by the Kirk Session

i. On two successive Sundays the congregation shall be informed that an election of Ruling Elders is to take place and voting members invited to propose, in writing, for the consideration of the Session, any member or members qualified for the office.

ii. The Session, having considered the proposals received and having obtained the consent of those approved, shall list the names of those to be presented to the congregation. Such list shall be read to the congregation on two successive Sundays.

iii. Should any voter desire to make an objection to any of them, he shall lodge his objections, with his reasons, in writing, with the Moderator of the Kirk Session within a week from the second announcement.

iv. Should such objection not be sustained by the Kirk Session, or should there be no objection, then on a subsequent Sunday, fixed by the Session and not earlier than three weeks after the first reading of the list, the congregation shall be informed that the persons named have been chosen and appointed as Ruling Elders.

81. The name of every Ruling Elder elect shall be reported to Presbytery. Presbytery shall be satisfied that all Ruling Elders elect shall undertake to attend an appropriate course of instruction. Being so satisfied that all is in order Presbytery shall authorise a service of Ordination to take place in accordance with Appendix 5 of this Code.

82. The co-option to the Session of a Ruling Elder, certified as such, from one congregation to another, or of a minister not in active duty, may be decided upon by the Kirk Session with the approval of the congregation and the sanction of Presbytery.

83. Ruling Elders shall in all cases be communicant members of the congregation in which they are appointed, attendant upon its services, and contributors to its support. They should be exemplary in their conduct and held in such esteem as to possess influence among the people.

84. The number of Ruling Elders in a congregation should be proportionate to its extent. It is highly desirable that, if possible, there should be an Elder resident in each district, so that he may be enabled readily and effectively to discharge his duties.

85. The duty of Ruling Elders as members of Kirk Session is to work together with the Minister in the oversight and government of the congregation.

86. Ruling Elders, by their calling, share equally with Ministers in responsibility for practical

witness both within the congregation and in the wider world.

87. It is recommended that each Elder shall exercise a special superintendence over his own particular district of the congregation.

## Section 2

### **Meetings and Jurisdiction of Sessions**

88. It is the duty of the Session to hold regular and stated meetings for consultation on the religious concerns and spiritual well-being of the congregation. The Session shall have no jurisdiction over the temporal affairs of the congregation, and no authority over the Church Committee as such.

89. The Session may be convened by announcement from the pulpit during public worship, or by notice sent to every member by authority of the minister.

90. The Minister may of his own choice, and shall, at the request of two Ruling Elders, convene the Session at any time.

91. Three Ruling Elders, together with the Minister, shall constitute a quorum.

92. The Minister is ex-officio Moderator of the Session. In the case of a Collegiate Charge, the Ministers shall hold the office of Moderator alternately.

93. In the case of a vacant congregation, in the prolonged absence of the Minister, or where the Minister is suspended from office, the Presbytery shall appoint a Minister in Charge, who shall act as Moderator of the Session.

94. The Session may grant Certificates to members going abroad, or passing from one congregation to another. Such certificates shall be issued on the signature of the Minister and Clerk of Session.

95. Any member of a congregation has the right to petition the Session, to lay his grievances before it for redress, and to appeal against its decision to a higher court.

## CHAPTER 6

### **The Presbytery**

#### Section 1

#### **Meetings of Presbytery**

96. Presbyteries shall hold at least four stated meetings in each year. Such meetings shall be announced from the pulpit on the two Sundays preceding.

97. Presbyteries may, in addition, hold special meetings as circumstances may require. These may be called by the resolution of the Presbytery, or by the Moderator of the Presbytery at his discretion. The Moderator of Presbytery shall, at the written request of any three members of

Presbytery, convene a meeting, and shall state in the notice summoning the meeting the specific cause and business thereof.

98. At least seven days notice shall be sent by post to all members of Presbytery for each special meeting, and such meeting shall be announced from the pulpit on the preceding Sunday. At special meetings of Presbytery only such business may be transacted as is stated in the notice summoning such a meeting.

99. The Presbytery has the right to choose its own Moderator. When a new Presbytery is formed and meets for the first time, the member thereof present who has been longest in the ministry shall act as Moderator in constituting it, unless the Synod shall otherwise appoint.

100. Any four members of Presbytery, of whom two at least must be ministers, met at the appointed time and place, shall be competent to transact Presbyterial business.

101. It is the solemn obligation and duty of all members of Presbytery, both lay and ministerial, to be faithful and regular in attendance at meetings of Presbytery, in order that the wellbeing of the Church may be safeguarded and the rights and interests of the respective congregations duly preserved.

102. In all meetings of Presbytery regard shall be had to Chapter 2, Section 3 of this Code: Rules for the Management of Business in Church Courts.

103. A minister or ruling elder who is a member of another Presbytery within the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, or a presbyter of a church holding fraternal relations with this church, may, by invitation of Presbytery, sit and deliberate in meetings of Presbytery. But he shall not be permitted to do so when a judicial matter is before the court, and in no case shall he be allowed a vote.

## **Section 2**

### **Powers and Duties of Presbytery**

104. It belongs to the Presbytery:

- a. To deal with memorials or petitions addressed to it from Sessions, Committees, Congregations, Ministers, or members of congregations.
- b. To receive and deal with references for advice or for adjudication, from Sessions or Committees, and appeals against decisions of Sessions or Committees.
- c. To call for and review records of Sessions and Committees, and, if in error, to direct that they be endorsed.
- d. To receive under its care students for the ministry, to prescribe their course of training, to examine them as to their diligence, suitability, and academic achievement, and, when they are qualified, to license them to preach the Gospel.
- e. To receive, sustain or reject Calls.
- f. To Ordain or Install Licentiates or Ministers called to a congregation.

- g. To receive from Ministers requests to be relieved from their charges and to loose them from their charges.
- h. To inquire into and deal with reports affecting the character or efficiency of Ministers of the Presbytery, or of Licentiates under its care.
- i. To receive charges or complaints against Ministers or Licentiates, to call witnesses, to take evidence, and to pronounce and publish judgement.
- j. To hold visitations of congregations; to superintend generally their spiritual and temporal affairs; and to interpose in any matter which, in the judgement of Presbytery, affects their welfare.
- k. To make an assessment on each congregation under its care in order to meet the incidental expenses of the Presbytery. An audited statement of account of the Presbytery Incidental Fund shall be submitted annually to a stated meeting of Presbytery.

105. Each Presbytery shall submit annually to Synod a report stating:

- a. The name of its Moderator and Clerk.
- b. The names of Ministers who, since its last annual report, have died, resigned their charges, been Ordained or Installed, with the dates of death, resignation, Ordination or Installation as the case may be.
- c. The names of candidates for the ministry licensed, and of students under its care, during the year.
- d. The name of the minister whom it nominates as Moderator of Synod.
- e. The number of visitations held during the year, and the names of the congregations visited.
- f. The names of the vacant congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery and the names of those ministers acting as Ministers-in-Charge.
- g. The names of those ministers and elders appointed by the Presbytery to serve on the Judicial Commission of the General Synod.
- h. The view of Presbytery as to the state of religion in the congregations under its care.

The report of each Presbytery shall be signed by the Moderator and Clerk of Presbytery and shall be sent to the Clerk of Synod.

106. When a Presbytery desires to bring before Synod any matter other than those covered by its report, as described in the previous paragraph, such other matter or matters shall be presented in the form of an overture or petition.

Section 3  
**Jurisdiction of Presbytery over Ministers**

107. Presbyteries have the superintendence of their own members. It is the duty of Presbytery to see that Ministers perform faithfully the duties of their office.

108. As a Minister is appointed for the instruction and example of the people, so it is required that he be apt to teach, blameless in his conduct, and faithful in his office. Should he come short of this character, it is the duty of Presbytery to examine his conduct, lovingly to admonish and counsel him, and to deal with any accusation or alleged offence as the case may require.

109. It is the duty of Presbytery to ensure that the provisions of Chapter 6, Section 8, sub-Section F of this Code are duly observed and carried out.

Section 4  
**Jurisdiction of Presbytery over Students and Licentiates**

110. To the Presbytery belongs the right of receiving under its care students for the ministry, and of superintending and directing their education, judging of their qualifications and fitness, putting them on trial, and of licensing them to preach the Gospel.

111. It is to be expected that any person desiring to be received as a student for the ministry will make application to the Presbytery with which the congregation, of which they are a member, is connected. Should such person desire to apply to another Presbytery they must state clearly the reason for such application.

112. Every Presbytery, receiving an application from a person to be received as a student for the ministry shall obtain a recommendation from his minister, the record of his academic achievements, and such other information as shall satisfy the Presbytery as to his competence, prudence, piety and moral character.

113. All students shall be required to proceed to an approved degree at an approved university, unless expressly exempted therefrom by Presbytery, before proceeding to their theological course at such college or colleges as the Presbytery shall approve.

114. All applications for grants from the Students' and Ministers' Auxiliary Fund must be accompanied by a recommendation from the Presbytery.

115. Presbyteries shall require all students under their care to engage in preaching and such other exercises as they may deem appropriate, during the time of their college courses.

116. Students may not exercise any of the ministerial functions other than preaching; nor may they sit as Elders in Presbytery or Synod. Nevertheless they shall attend the Presbytery, under which they are students, as and when they are requested to do so, but without power of vote in any such meeting.

117. Students shall not pass from one Presbytery to another without credentials. Such credentials must be authorised at a meeting of the Presbytery duly constituted, and must be signed by the Moderator of Presbytery.



118. Presbyteries shall require of students under their care such examples of their learning, progress and fitness for the work, as may seem appropriate, over and beyond such evidence as may be supplied by the Principal of the theological college or other teaching body attended by the student.

119. Every student shall, each half year, make a report to the Presbytery having oversight of him, in the form prescribed in Appendix No 2.

## **Section 5**

### **Licensing of Candidates for the Ministry**

120. When a Presbytery expect to license any candidate at a succeeding meeting, they shall especially appoint a minister, usually being the Moderator, to deliver such license either in the presence of the Presbytery or, if desired, in a public service of worship, in order that so important an act may be conducted in a solemn and effective manner.

121. Any Presbytery, before proceeding to license a candidate to preach the Gospel, shall satisfy itself that the academic studies and training of the candidate have been completed in a satisfactory manner; and shall further satisfy itself that the confidence placed by it in the candidate at the time of their first being accepted as a student, with regard to their faith, morals, diligence and fitness for the work, shall have been fully justified and maintained.

122. Before proceeding to declare the candidate duly licensed the minister appointed shall put to them the following questions:

*a. "Do you acknowledge your obligation faithfully to endeavour to understand yourself, and to expound to others, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?"*

*b. "Do you promise to study, and endeavour to promote, the peace, unity and prosperity of the Christian Church?"*

*c. "Do you promise submission to the authority of this Presbytery, or that of any other Presbytery of this body, with which you may become connected, according to the laws framed for the discipline and government of our churches?"*

123. These questions having been answered in the affirmative the minister appointed shall address the candidate in the following terms:

*"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole king and Head of the Church, and by virtue of that authority which we exercise as a Presbytery, we do hereby license you A B to preach the Gospel; and may the Spirit of the Lord rest upon you, and make you sufficient for the work to which you are appointed."*

The minister presiding shall then offer prayer as appropriate.

124. The Presbytery shall then cause to be entered in their minute book a record of the license.

## **Section 6**

### **Jurisdiction of Presbytery over Committees**

125. The Presbytery has the right to call for and review the records of Committees, in order to ascertain that they are properly kept.

126. Presbytery shall hear appeals, properly submitted, against decisions of Church Committees, shall investigate, adjudicate and publish its decision as it deems appropriate.

127. Presbytery shall at all times, upon request, and may of its own volition offer advice and guidance to all church Committees within its bounds.

128. Presbytery shall ensure that the provisions of Chapter 4, Paragraph 70 of this Code requiring submission of an annual audited statement of account to Presbytery are carried out.

#### Section 7

### **Jurisdiction of Presbytery over Sessions**

129. Presbytery has the right to examine the records of Sessions, and to sustain, modify or reverse their decisions.

130. Presbytery shall hear appeals, properly submitted, against decisions of Sessions and shall investigate, adjudicate and publish its decision as it deems appropriate.

131. Presbytery shall at all times, upon request, and may of its own volition, offer advice and guidance to all Sessions within its bounds.

#### Section 8

### **Jurisdiction of Presbytery over Congregations**

#### **(A) General Oversight of Congregations**

132. To the Presbytery belongs the superintendence of all matters connected with the order, prosperity, and religious well-being of the several congregations under its care.

133. To the Presbytery belongs also the duty of preaching, administering ordinances, and Ordaining or Installing Ministers in vacant pulpits.

134. The constitution or establishment of new congregations rests with the Presbytery.

135. Where two or more congregations, in connection with a Presbytery, adjoin, and a vacancy occurs in one or more of them the Presbytery may unite the vacant congregation with an adjoining one, or may unite two vacant congregations. But such union shall be agreed to by each of the congregations concerned by a majority vote of not less than two-thirds of the voting members of each congregation. Voting on such a matter shall take place at a duly constituted meeting of the congregation, summoned expressly for the purpose, and announced from the pulpit during public worship on the two Sundays immediately preceding.

136. Where the congregations to be united are in more than one Presbytery, there shall be required, in addition to the agreement of the congregations and the approval of the Presbyteries, the sanction of Synod. Synod shall also rule as to which Presbytery the united congregation shall be joined to.

137. When adjoining congregations are united, the Presbytery or Presbyteries concerned shall take such measures as may be necessary to ensure that the property of the congregations so united shall be retained for the benefit of the united congregation.

138. When the conditions described in paragraph 135 above obtain, the Presbytery or Presbyteries concerned may, as an alternative measure to amalgamation, appoint a Minister to a Joint Pastorate over two or more congregations. Such a step shall be agreed to by the congregations concerned in the manner provided in paragraph 135 above. The terms of remuneration of the Minister of such Joint Charge, and the application of the property of the respective congregations shall be dealt with in a manner expressly determined by Presbytery, and specified in the Call or Calls, and such other documents of agreement as may be deemed appropriate.

139. When a congregation is dissolved or ceases to exist, it shall be the duty of Presbytery to secure and take possession of the buildings, furniture and fittings, Communion Plate, records and other property of the said congregation; and to ensure that these and all other assets shall be applied in keeping with the trusts upon which they are held, in such manner as the civil courts shall expressly determine.

#### **(B) Visitation of Congregations**

140. For the promotion of zeal, order and discipline in the congregations under its care, as regards the duties of both Minister and people, Presbytery shall hold stated visitations of congregations. It is required that each Presbytery shall visit at least one congregation under its care in each calendar year. Presbytery may hold special visitations at other times whenever circumstances in any congregation may seem to Presbytery to require it.

141. When any congregation is to be visited, Presbytery shall direct the Minister (or some other Minister appointed by Presbytery) to give notice to the congregation concerned. Such notice shall be given from the pulpit during public worship on two Sundays immediately preceding the beginning of the visitation process, and shall state the date of the formal visitation, and the nature and object of the visitation.

142. When a congregation is to be visited Presbytery shall appoint commissions, consisting of Ministers and Lay Persons of other congregations of the Presbytery, to meet with the Minister and officers of the congregation together with members of Session, members of Committee and members of the congregation as appropriate.

Four commissions shall be appointed, each to consider one of the following subject areas:

- a. Records
- b. Finance
- c. Property
- d. Work and Witness

In the case of a Special Visitation Presbytery may appoint only such commission or commissions as it deems appropriate to the circumstances.

143. It shall be the duty of commissions appointed to consider Records, Finance, Property or Work and Witness, to have discussions with the minister and officers of the congregation together with members of Session, Committee and congregation, having full and thorough regard to the subject headings as set forth in Appendix No 1, and also to any other matters which Presbytery may direct. Commissions shall compile written reports containing such factual information as shall have come to light during discussions, and such comments, observations or recommendations as they shall see fit to make on the basis of such factual information.

144. Presbytery shall ensure that the written reports of the several commissions shall be supplied to members of Presbytery, and made available to the congregation, prior to the formal visitation. At that formal visitation, during the course of a service of praise, prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures, the reports of the several commissions shall be publicly read, and comments sought from members of Presbytery and members of the congregation. Upon discussion being ended Presbytery may adopt, amend or reject such reports. If they shall be adopted, the reports, together with any recommendations shall become the findings of Presbytery upon the visitation and shall be referred to Session, Committee and congregation for consideration and implementation, upon which a report shall be sought at the next Quarterly Meeting of Presbytery.

145. In its annual report to Synod, each Presbytery shall state the number of visitations held during the preceding year, together with the names of the congregations visited and any remarks or recommendations in connection therewith that the Presbytery may consider desirable.

### **(C) Vacant Pulpits**

146. When a Minister dies, or receives permission of Presbytery to resign his charge, or is deposed, the Presbytery shall appoint one of its number, being a Minister, to declare the pulpit vacant, and to consult with the duly appointed representatives of the congregation concerning pulpit supplies. Declaration of vacancy shall be made from the pulpit during public worship. Presbytery shall also proceed to appoint a Minister in Charge, who shall act as Moderator of the Session.

147. When a Minister shall receive permission from his Presbytery for his congregation to choose a Successor, he shall continue as Minister, with full authority, until such time as his successor is appointed. The retirement of such senior minister shall have effect on the day of the Ordination or Installation of his successor.

148. It shall be the duty of Presbytery, when a Minister dies, or resigns his charge, or is suspended, to take care that the people are supplied with preaching and administration of Gospel ordinances.

For this purpose congregations may be supplied by Ministers or Students under the care of Presbytery, or (with the consent of the Presbytery and of the Session of the congregation vacant, or about to become vacant) by Ministers or Students from other Presbyteries, or (with the consent of Presbytery and of the Session of the congregation) by recognised Lay Preachers.

149. The fee for a supplier shall be fixed by Presbytery in accordance with the rules of the General Synod, and shall be made known to the congregation. The amount of such fee shall in all cases be intimated to the supplier when he is appointed to officiate.

150. When there occurs a vacancy in a congregation, the Presbytery shall appoint one or more of its members to be assessors with the Session in preparing a list of qualified voters of the congregation; in having such a list published in the congregation, and where necessary corrected; and in lodging a copy of it with the Moderator of Presbytery. Notice of the publication of such list of voters shall be given at least one week previously to the congregation, by announcement from the pulpit during public worship. None but members of twelve months standing and entered in the accounts as stipend or freewill offering contributors shall be entitled and qualified to vote, or to be entered upon the list of voters.

151. A poll list having been lodged with the Moderator of Presbytery shall not be altered during the vacancy in the pastorate, unless such vacancy shall extend beyond twelve months, in which case the Presbytery shall have a new list of voters prepared in the manner indicated in paragraph 150 above.

#### **(D) The Hearing of Candidates and Issuing of Calls**

152. No person shall preach as a candidate in a vacant pulpit without the consent of Presbytery being first obtained. In cases of special urgency such consent may be given by the Moderator of Presbytery alone.

153. Any voting member of a congregation who desires the congregation to hear a particular Minister or Student, shall intimate their desire to the Session. Should the Session not approve such Minister or Student as a candidate, the voting member shall have the right of appeal to Presbytery. Where the Session approve such candidature, the consent of Presbytery shall be further obtained before such candidate is heard.

154. When a congregation desires to call a Minister or Licentiate, it shall communicate its wish to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall then appoint one of its own number, being a Minister, to preside over a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of taking a vote. Notice of such congregational meeting, and the purpose for which it is to be held, shall be given from the pulpit during public worship on the two Sundays immediately prior to the date fixed for such meeting.

155. On the day and at the time specified, the presiding Minister shall ascertain by a vote of those present and qualified to vote whether the congregation desires to issue a Call in favour of any particular candidate. If there be not a sufficient number of votes to sustain such a Call, the congregation may ask for a re-hearing of one or more candidates, or for the hearing of new candidates. In such a case the presiding Minister shall make a record of the voting at the meeting for the purpose of report to Presbytery.

156. Should the congregation unanimously desire to call a candidate, or should two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote be in favour of such candidate, the Call shall be drawn up and signed by as many qualified members as desire to sign it, and certified by the presiding Minister. All Calls shall be in the form set forth in Appendix No 3.

157. The Call, duly signed and authenticated, shall then be forwarded to Presbytery to be sustained or otherwise. Should Presbytery sustain the Call, and if there be no appeal, they shall present it to the candidate elected, if under their own care; or forward it to the Presbytery to which the candidate belongs requesting that it be recommended to his consideration and that he

be furnished with credentials. If the candidate accepts the Call, the Presbytery shall proceed, in consultation with the congregation, to appoint a day for his Ordination or Installation as the case may be.

158. When a Call is presented, it may be retained by the Minister or Licentiate called, for consideration. But, if not accepted or declined within fourteen days thereafter, it shall be held to have been declined.

159. Should Presbytery not sustain a Call, the matter shall be referred back to the congregation concerned for reconsideration.

160. No Ordination shall be appointed without the consent of two-thirds of the Presbytery, regularly assembled. In the event of failure to obtain such a majority the matter shall be referred to Synod.

161. A Minister's salary from a congregation shall be calculated as from the date of his Ordination or Installation in that congregation, and shall be reviewed annually.

#### **(E) Ordination and Installation of Ministers**

162. Before proceeding to Ordination the Presbytery shall take care that all debts due by the congregation to its former Minister or his executors, and to suppliers of the congregation, have been duly settled; and that all congregational books, records and other property, properly in the control of the Minister, are to hand and in good order.

163. The requirements of paragraphs 157 and 162 having been fulfilled, the Presbytery shall ensure that the agreed date for the Ordination or Installation shall be made known to the congregation by notice given from the pulpit during public worship on the two Sundays preceding.

164. The form and order of Ordination or Installation shall be as set forth in Appendix No 4.

165. No person shall exercise the function of the ministry in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland unless they have been Ordained. A Minister having been once Ordained shall, on change of pastorate, be Installed.

166. The Ordination or Installation of Ministers shall be conducted by the Presbytery, which shall allot to its members the various duties involved in the conduct of the Ordination or Installation service. The proceedings at Ordinations or Installations shall be carefully recorded in the minute book of the Presbytery.

#### **(F) Minister and Congregation**

167. A Minister, when Ordained or Installed, receives a particular charge of his congregation. It is expected that he will diligently, faithfully, and zealously perform to the utmost of his ability the duties of his calling.

168. When a Minister is Ordained or Installed, a Presbytery may not translate him without his

consent. But he may be occasionally appointed to act as Minister in Charge of vacant congregations, or to exchange services, unless he can satisfy Presbytery that there exist weighty reasons why he should not be appointed to such duty or duties.

169. A Minister may not leave the pastoral care of his congregation, or absent himself from his charge, for more than two consecutive months, without previous notification to the Session and congregation and Presbytery, nor without the consent of the Session and the Presbytery.

170. In the event of his temporary absence, or where other valid reason causes him to engage others to officiate on his behalf, it is required that a Minister shall give careful attention to the character and qualifications of those engaged by him for such a purpose. A Minister shall not engage any person to officiate for him contrary to the expressed wish of his Session.

171. A Minister shall have the right of occupation of any manse owned by his congregation so long as he shall remain in charge of the congregation. Upon relinquishing his charge he shall vacate such manse within three months. When a Minister dies, his widow (if any) shall have the right of occupation of the manse for a period of three months from the date of his decease. When a Successor is appointed, the senior Minister shall relinquish to him the use and occupation of the manse within three months of the appointment of such incoming minister.

172. A Minister may not enter into any private arrangement with a congregation or its representatives as to stipend, manse or other benefit of his office, either before or after his settlement in a congregation.

173. Ministers shall study and carry out the provisions of the civil legislation in respect of marriages.

174. Ministers shall keep a register of the children baptised by them, stating the dates of their birth and baptism, the Father's name, residence and occupation, and the Mother's maiden name.

175. Ministers shall keep a register of the deaths of members of their congregation. Where there is a graveyard in possession of the congregation, they shall also keep a register of interments.

176. All such records shall be the property of the congregation, which shall provide suitable books for keeping them. When a change of ministry occurs, Presbytery shall ensure that all such registers, and records of every kind, as may have been entrusted to the keeping of the Minister, shall be given into the charge of the Minister in Charge, who shall account for the same.

## **CHAPTER 7 The Synod**

### **Section 1 Meetings of Synod**

177. The Synod shall meet each year, for its ordinary general meeting, on the second Tuesday of June. Special meetings of Synod may be held at such other times as may be decided by the Moderator with the concurrence of the General Purposes Committee of Synod.

178. Every meeting of Synod shall be made known to each congregation by notice from the pulpit

during public worship on the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting.

179. At a special meeting of Synod only such business as is named in the notice announcing the meeting may be brought forward for discussion.

180. A special meeting of Synod shall be held whenever two or more Presbyteries present written requests for such a meeting.

181. The General Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland shall consist of:

- a. The Ministers of the Presbyteries which constitute the General Synod.
- b. A Ruling Elder appointed by each congregation within the bounds of the General Synod.

Members of congregations within the Synod, having business before the Synod may sit and deliberate in meetings of Synod, with the permission of the Moderator, but shall have no vote.

182. The Synod shall require that a Certificate of Appointment for each Representative Elder shall be forwarded to the Clerk of Synod so as to reach him by the date fixed for the ordinary general meeting of Synod. This Certificate shall be in the following form:

*"It is hereby certified that 'A B' is an Elder of the congregation of..... and that at a stated meeting of the Session, Committee or Congregation of..... the said A B was appointed to attend a meeting of Synod to be held At..... Upon..... and during the year to sit, deliberate and vote.*

.....*Minister*

.....*Secretary of Congregation"*

183. Twelve members of Synod, of whom at least one half must be Ministers, shall, along with the Moderator, constitute a quorum.

184. At each ordinary general meeting of Synod the proceedings shall be conducted in the following manner:

- a. The Moderator shall celebrate the sacrament of Communion. Then, in the course of a service of worship he shall deliver an address, and shall constitute the Synod meeting with prayer.
- b. The Moderator shall then request Synod to appoint his successor. The name submitted to Synod for election as Moderator shall be that of the candidate nominated by the majority of Presbyteries; but where Presbyterial nominations are equal, the names of two candidates shall be brought before Synod and a vote taken thereon. The member appointed Moderator shall then assume the chair,



and he may, at his discretion, address the Synod.

c. The Synod shall next proceed to the election of a Clerk and a Treasurer.

d. The Synod shall receive the report of its General Purposes Committee, and of its several Presbyteries.

e. The Synod shall deal with the various other matters coming before it in the order arranged by the General Purposes Committee or by such other committee as may be appointed by Synod for the purpose, and as set forth in the printed agenda. But there shall lie a discretion with the Moderator to vary the order of items and to transfer any particular item of business to a place other than that appearing on the agenda. Also any member of Synod may propose that any particular item be next taken, and effect shall be given to this if carried by a majority in the Synod.

185. It shall be in order for any member of Synod to introduce, at an ordinary general meeting of Synod, a matter which does not appear on the agenda, but he may do so only having first obtained the consent of Synod.

186. A Minister or Elder of a church holding fraternal relations with the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, being present, may be invited to sit and deliberate with Synod. But he shall not have a vote nor, save by express invitation of Synod, shall he be allowed to address the Synod.

## Section 2

### **Powers and Duties of the Synod**

187. The Synod, consisting of all the Presbyteries and being the common council of the Church, is empowered to exercise final jurisdiction in all matters connected with the regulation and wellbeing of its constituent congregations. Since Synod is the supreme court of the Church it has final disposal of all matters brought before it.

188. The Synod alone can exercise the following powers:

a. To regulate the number and extent of the several Presbyteries under its care.

b. To remove congregations from one Presbytery to another. But Synod shall not so remove any congregation without the consent of the congregation concerned and its Minister, or of the congregation only if the pulpit is vacant.

c. To enquire as to any act or omission of any inferior court or of a church committee, including the reviewing of the conduct or sentences of Presbyteries, whether by reference, appeal, or inspection of their records.

d. To deal with cases referred to it by Presbyteries.

e. When it shall appear to Synod that a Presbytery has been unduly slow in deciding any case, to remove it from

before the Presbytery and itself proceed to deal with the case. In such an event the Synod may postpone consideration of the case until a further meeting of Synod; may determine it forthwith; or may deliver it over to a commission for investigation and report to Synod, or to a commission with Synodical powers.

f. To put congregations under the care of a commission. In each case where a congregation lodges with Synod an appeal against a decision of Presbytery, the Synod shall place such congregation under the care of a commission until such time as Synod has determined the case. Such a commission shall supersede Presbytery for the time being, so far as that congregation is concerned, and shall have all the powers of Presbytery in relation to that congregation, or such lesser powers as Synod may expressly determine; it shall conduct its business according to the same forms and subject to the same rules as a Presbytery.

g. To appoint committees, whether standing or occasional, for such purpose and to transact such business as shall be determined by Synod. In particular the Synod shall appoint annually a standing committee, known as the General Purposes Committee, whose powers and duties shall be as laid down in Chapter 7, Section 3 of this Code. The Moderator and Clerk of Synod shall, ex-officio, be members of all committees appointed by Synod. The quorum of any committee appointed by Synod shall be one fourth of the number constituting the committee, or such other number as may be laid down expressly by Synod; but in no case shall a quorum be less than three.

h. To reconsider, alter, or rescind its own sentences, decisions, and resolutions. But, except in case of sentences against Ministers or Students, it shall not do so unless notice has been given and accepted by Synod at its preceding ordinary general meeting.

i. To enact, change, or abrogate a law of the Church, that is, to alter its Code of Discipline. Every such enactment, change, or abrogation shall be made in the manner prescribed in Chapter 7, Section 4 of this present Code.

### Section 3

#### **General Purposes Committee of Synod**

189. The General Purposes Committee shall be elected annually at the ordinary general meeting of Synod. The membership of the General Purposes Committee shall consist of Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer (ex-officio), together with such representatives of the church, Convenors of Synod committees, and persons having special contributions to make to the work of the committee, as the Synod shall deem appropriate to choose.

190. The quorum shall be one third of voting members, and in no case shall be less than seven, of whom four shall be Ministers.

191. The Committee shall meet quarterly, and at such times as the Moderator in his discretion shall consider desirable.

192. Any member of the Committee who shall fail to attend at least one third of the meetings held during the year, save for good and sufficient reason accepted by Synod, shall not be eligible for re-election at the next ensuing ordinary general meeting of Synod.

193. The Committee shall have power to make interim appointments to its membership to fill vacancies caused by resignation or death between ordinary general meetings of Synod. But such appointments shall last only until the next ensuing ordinary general meeting of Synod, and in every case a Minister shall be replaced by a Minister and a Lay Elder by a Lay Elder.

194. The functions and powers of the Committee shall be as follows:

- a. Administrative: To deal with the current, business of the Church in the period between Synods, and to authorise payments chargeable to the Synod's Incidental Expenses Fund.
- b. Executive: To deal with matters referred to it by Synod, and to take action thereon when such reference expressly provides for it.
- c. To report back to Synod upon matters which it has been instructed by Synod to enquire into, and to make recommendations thereon; to consider proposals for alterations or amendments of the Code of Discipline as provided in paragraph 195 of this Code; and to review resolutions passed at previous meetings of Synod which have not been carried into effect, to explore the reasons for their non-fulfilment, and to recommend to Synod appropriate action thereon.
- d. To watch for anything affecting the rights and interests of the Church; to take action when immediate action is necessary; otherwise to report its recommendations to the next meeting of Synod.
- e. In an emergency, and in response to request by any Church Committee, Session, Presbytery, or Minister, to proffer advice; but such advice shall not override the rights and duties of the courts of the Church.
- f. To make an annual report to Synod concerning its activities during the year, and to make any recommendations to Synod which it may consider desirable.

The General Purposes Committee shall possess no legislative powers, these belonging to Synod; it may not make any financial levy upon constituent congregations without express consent of Synod; nor shall it have authority over other committees appointed by Synod, unless such authority shall be expressly, and in each particular case, conferred by Synod.

#### Section 4

#### **Alterations in or Amendments to the Code of Discipline**

195. No Change or alteration shall be made in this present Code save under the following conditions.

- a. Changes or alterations may be proposed by any Session, Presbytery, Minister or Lay Elder who is a member of Synod.
- b. Any such proposed change or alteration shall in the first place be submitted in writing to the Clerk of Synod.

- c. It shall then be examined by the General Purposes Committee of Synod, which may institute any investigation thereon which it may consider desirable.
- d. The suggested change or alteration shall then be submitted to the next ensuing ordinary general meeting of Synod, together with the report of the General Purposes Committee thereon.
- e. If, at such ordinary general meeting of Synod, such proposed change or alteration shall be approved by three-quarters of those present and entitled to vote, it shall as soon as possible thereafter be circulated by the Clerk of Synod to all Presbyteries for their consideration.
- f. If such change or alteration be itself amended or modified by Synod and sustained by a three-quarters majority as prescribed above, it shall be in this revised form that it shall be circulated to Presbyteries.
- g. At the next ordinary general meeting of Synod the proposed change or alteration, as circulated to Presbyteries, shall be placed upon the agenda, and if then carried by a three-quarters majority of those present and entitled to vote, it shall become the law of the Church. Failing such approval, it shall lapse, and may not be revived save under the procedure laid down in sub-sections (a) to (f) above.
- h. If, on preliminary investigation, the General Purposes Committee of Synod consider and report to Synod that the proposed change or alteration is of a minor character, not calculated to effect any substantial change of principle, it shall be permissible for the Synod, by a three-quarters majority, to declare it an urgent and interim change. If then carried by a three-quarters majority of those present and entitled to vote, it shall become forthwith the law of the Church, and shall not require confirmation at the next ensuing ordinary general meeting of Synod as laid down in sub-section (g) above.

The complete Code, as revised, shall be the law of the Church, and shall be held as such in every case, any other law, regulation, or Code of Discipline, to the contrary notwithstanding.

## CHAPTER 8

### **Form of Proceeding in cases of Alleged Misconduct and in the Infliction or Removal of Church Censures**

#### Section 1

#### **General Principles**

196. There are three courts before which the alleged misconduct of Church officers may be investigated: namely the Session, the Presbytery and the Synod.

197. Where the alleged misconduct is of a moral or criminal nature the Moderator and Clerk of the appropriate court may suspend, pending investigation, the accused from office, without financial penalty, until the court has made its decision. During the period of suspension the court is responsible for ensuring that the duties of the office in question are carried out adequately.

198. Courts may hear cases either by full assembly, or by a commission appointed for the purpose. Such a commission shall in no case be less than six in number.

199. To the Session belongs, in the first instance, the power of inquiring into reports or charges against any one of its own lay members; and, in the event of proof being given of conduct unworthy of his office, they may admonish, rebuke, suspend, or remove him from the eldership. Should either the accuser, or the accused, feel dissatisfied by the decision of the Session, he shall have the right of appeal to the first meeting of the Presbytery to be held thereafter.

200. To the Presbytery belongs the power of investigating the grounds of all appeals from Session; and likewise all reports and charges, in relation to the alleged neglects or misconduct of Ministers. In case of appeal, the Presbytery may confirm, modify, or reverse the decision of the Session; and in relation to the alleged misconduct of Ministers, they may acquit, admonish, rebuke, suspend, or depose, according to the nature of the charges preferred, and the evidence presented in support of them. An appeal to Synod may be brought against the decision of a Presbytery by the accused or the accuser, but in the case of an appeal by the accuser it must be sanctioned by two Ministers, or one Minister and an Elder, before it can be proceeded with.

201. To the Synod belongs the power of investigating all appeals from Presbyteries, and all reports and charges against Ministers, which Presbyteries may have refused to entertain, or have deemed appropriate to refer to Synod. Synod shall refer cases coming before it to a Judicial Commission, which shall be composed as follows:

- a. The Moderator and Clerk of the General Synod.
- b. Two Ministers and Two Elders nominated by the Presbytery of Antrim.
- c. Two Ministers and two Elders nominated by the Presbytery of Bangor.
- d. One Minister and one Elder nominated by the Synod of Munster.

Such Ministers and Elders to be nominated by the Presbyteries in their annual reports to Synod. This commission shall in no case sit with less than seven members, of whom four shall be Ministers.

202. Against proceeding there may arise valid objections from jurisdiction, as when a matter is brought before a Session that should come under the cognizance of the Presbytery, or when a matter is brought at first to the Presbytery, that should previously have been tried before the Session.

203. Objections may arise from irregularity of proceeding, as when due notice has not been afforded to the accused, of the charge, of the time and place of trial, or of the witnesses; or when, in case of appeal, sufficient notice has not been given.

204. Sufficient objection against proceeding may arise from manifest want of evidence to prove the truth of any charge, inasmuch as no one should be subjected to the odium of being publicly accused and tried, without strong grounds for believing that misconduct may be proved against him.

205. Though irregularity of proceeding form a sufficient bar against any immediate steps in charges of misconduct, it is by no means to be considered as for ever shutting the door against investigation. In such cases, it is the duty of church courts to instruct the complainant in the proper mode of proceeding to trial.

## Section 2 Complaints

206. To prevent, as far as may be, the bringing forward of unfounded charges, complainants are to be clearly informed that, should the accusation prove false, and the accuser appear to have acted from mere levity, or from malicious motives, the accuser shall be liable, as far as the case will admit, the same degree of censure to which the charge, if proved, would have subjected the accused.

207. As a Minister is an important officer in the Church, and as much of the success of his ministry depends upon his character, accusations against him are not lightly to be taken up, carelessly inquired into, nor, if substantiated, to be lightly censured or punished.

208. A Presbytery should therefore not receive an accusation against a Minister, nor commence any process against him, until some one or more give in an accusation against him in writing, and also give a distinct pledge to support it by evidence. Should such pledge not be fulfilled, the accuser shall be subjected to adequate censure.

209. The withdrawal of an accuser, or of an accusation, in case of alleged misconduct, will not necessarily warrant the church court in desisting from enquiry.

210. The charge of misconduct must, in every case, be reduced to writing and a copy thereof served on the accused, whether the charge be brought before the court by another party, or be made by the court itself.

211. The charge must:

- a. Set forth the nature of the alleged offence.
- b. Narrate the facts alleged to constitute the commission of the offence by the accused, specifying as far as possible, the time, place and circumstances in which it is alleged to have been committed.
- c. Give the names of the witnesses, known and available, who are to be cited in support of the charge together with a list of any documents to be cited in its support.

212. Before a copy of the charge is served on the accused it shall be signed by each complainant in the presence of the Clerk of the appropriate church court, who shall attest such signature or signatures, and cause it to be served on the accused.

213. Such service shall be effected not less than fourteen days before the sitting of the court at which the charge is to be considered.

214. When a charge or complaint warranting investigation has been duly lodged before any court, it may be immediately investigated by consent of all parties; but if either party object to such summary proceeding a date shall be set for the formal hearing of the charge, which shall allow sufficient time to ensure that the accused, the accuser, and such witnesses as may be cited, shall each received fourteen days notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing.

215. A written citation shall be duly served upon a party or witness when delivered to him

personally by the hand of someone authorised by the court, or by a registered or recorded delivery letter addressed to him at his last known place of residence.

### Section 3 Procedure in Hearing of Cases

216. The court shall be constituted in the normal way with prayer, and the charge or charges read by the Clerk.

217. Should the accused person fail to attend the meeting appointed for the hearing of the charge preferred against him, he shall be cited a second time; and in the event of again failing to attend, the hearing shall proceed as though he were present, and the accused shall be liable to be subjected to the same penalty which would have been awarded against him if the charge were established in his presence.

218. As befits a church court a barrister or solicitor shall not be permitted to prosecute or defend the accused, but if the accused feels unable to state his case with advantage, he may seek leave from the court for any member of the Church, whether Minister or layman, not qualified as a lawyer, to act with him and assist him in the case. If that member of the Church is a member of the court concerned he shall not have any vote on the case. If that member of the Church is not, as such, already under the jurisdiction of the court, he becomes so for all purposes connected with the case.

219. If the facts of the charge or accusation are not admitted the court shall be satisfied that all is in order as to its jurisdiction in the matter, the order and regularity of the proceedings and the due service of citations; and may then proceed to take evidence in the matter.

220. Each witness shall make the following solemn affirmation before proceeding to give evidence:

*"I, 'A B' do solemnly declare, as I shall answer to God, that I shall speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that in doing so I am free from malice."*

Witnesses shall be first examined by the party calling them, then cross-examined by the opposite party. Re-examination shall be at the discretion of the court.

221. It shall then be open to any member of the court to put questions to a witness, but a member, having ceased to interrogate a witness, shall not be permitted to put any new question, without the permission of the court.

222. The complainant and the accused may, if either of them choose, give evidence, on condition that they submit like other witnesses to cross-examination.

223. All questions to witnesses shall be put with the sanction of the Moderator.

224. No person, under pain of immediate censure, shall comment upon evidence, till the examination of witnesses shall have closed.

225. A witness having been examined, the Moderator shall then ask him *"Is that your evidence ?  
Have you anything to add?"*

226. Note shall be taken of the evidence of each witness and a certified copy preserved among the records of the court.

227. The accused shall have the right to request an adjournment in the case of the unavoidable absence of a witness. The court may accept or reject such request, but on no account shall delay proceedings for longer than fourteen days.

228. Examination of all witnesses being ended, the accuser and the accused shall be asked if they wish to make final statements. If they choose to speak, the accuser shall be heard first, then the accused in reply. The members of the court shall then withdraw and the court shall proceed judicially to consider the case.

229. In all cases where it is possible, Session and Presbyteries shall come to a decision. When this is not possible the case may be referred to the higher court.

230. Whether the court decides to acquit, or to pass sentence, or determines to refer the case to a higher court, the members of the court shall reassemble in open court, and the decision of the court shall be announced.

231. In case of sentence having been pronounced by a Session or Presbytery, the Moderator shall explain to the party affected the right and rules of appeal.

232. Every trial shall be in open court; but in the case of evidence coming forward that might be indecent, or injurious to public decorum, such portion of the trial may be held in private as the court may determine, the witnesses, the accuser, and the accused only being admitted.

#### Section 4 **Reference**

233. If a Session decline coming to a decision on account of the grave nature of the charge, or the difficulty of the investigation, and refer the matter to their Presbytery, the Minister and Elder of the referring Session shall have the right of voting.

234. When a Presbytery decline coming to a decision, and therefore refer the case to Synod, they shall be heard in explanation, and their members individually shall have a right to join in deliberating and passing sentence.

235. In case of reference, the court referring shall produce before the court referred to an authenticated copy of their proceedings in the matter, together with the reason for reference.

#### Section 5 **Appeals**

236. Appeals are from a Session to a Presbytery, or from Presbytery to the Synod.

237. When the right and rules of appeal are explained to someone having been found guilty by a Session or Presbytery, he is to be informed that he must give to the Moderator a written notice of appeal within ten days of the time of passing of the sentence of which he complains; but if within the said ten days the appeal be not lodged, the sentence shall stand.

238. When notice of appeal is given at the time of passing sentence it becomes the duty of the



Moderator, upon receiving in due time the notice of appeal, to authenticate it by his signature, and to direct the appellant to have it delivered to the opposite party ten clear days before the time appointed for the consideration of the said appeal.

239. When notice of appeal is regularly given, execution of the sentence shall be stayed till the appeal be decided upon by the higher court, except in case of suspension from the ministerial office.

240. There are three grounds upon which an appeal may be substantiated:

- a. Informality in the proceedings of the lower court.
- b. Inadequacy of the sentence pronounced to the charge proved.
- c. Injustice to the appellant.
- d. Additional evidence which was not available to the lower court when it made its decision.

241. Provided the appeal be judged to possess one or more of these grounds, the case may be proceeded with immediately, or referred to a commission of the superior court.

242. In case of appeal, the members of the inferior court may attend and explain or defend their conduct, but no member of the court appealed against shall be allowed to join in passing sentence.

243. If the case be referred to a commission, the inferior court may attend and explain its conduct. A commission may pass final sentence, or report, according to the powers conferred upon it.

## Section 6 Sentences

244. When a person has been found guilty, he shall, according to the degree of his offence, and the nature of his office, be admonished, rebuked, suspended or deposed.

245. Sentence having been passed the same charge shall not be re-investigated by the same court which pronounced the sentence.

246. Should the sentence have been indefinite suspension, the person suspended shall not be restored without satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance, and strong grounds of hope that the amendment will be permanent.

247. A Minister found guilty of any gross offence shall be liable to be deposed or suspended indefinitely.

248. In suspending a Minister the sentence shall run thus:

*"Whereas 'A B', Minister of..... , has been found guilty of..... we the Presbytery of....., in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, do hereby suspend him herewith from exercising the office of the ministry or any part thereof indefinitely / until....."*

249. In deposing a Minister the sentence shall run thus:

*"Whereas 'A B', Minister of....., has been proved before the Presbytery of..... to be guilty of Now we the said Presbytery of....., adjudge him disqualified for the office of the ministry, and do therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the office of the ministry the said..... and do hereby prohibit him from exercising the functions of the ministry, or any part thereof"*

250. When a Minister has been suspended indefinitely, the congregation, if sanctioned by his Presbytery, and no appeal be lodged to Synod, is at liberty to choose a successor.

251. Indefinite suspension shall be considered as a suspension from office and stipend or salary; but during a limited suspension the person suspended shall pay the supplies of the congregation.

252. When a Session find it necessary to inflict the sentence of suspension upon a member of their own body it becomes their duty to summon the offender before them, and, if he appear, the Moderator shall address the guilty party to the following effect:

*"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of....., having found you 'A B' to be guilty of....., do here declare our judgement that you be suspended from the office of the eldership, until you give satisfaction of your repentance for the fault of which you have been guilty."*

Should the offender decline to appear, the cause of censure is to be declared by the Moderator, and the sentence passed as if he were present.

## ***APPENDICES***

### 1. VISITATION OF CONGREGATIONS

Except on such occasions as shall be deemed to require special or urgent visitation Presbytery shall give notice of visitation of at least two months to the congregation concerned. Presbytery shall then appoint four commissions which shall consult with the members and officers of the congregation, and shall inquire into

the state of the congregation under the following headings:

- a. Records
- b. Finance
- c. Property
- d. Work and Witness

It shall be the duty of such commissions to make full and thorough inquiries with regard to the following matters and other such related points as they may consider significant:

**a. Records:**

- Marriage Notice Books; Marriage Registers; Baptismal Registers; Funeral Registers.
- Session Books; Committee Minute Books; Annual General Meeting Minute Books; Graveyard Registers
- Memorandum of Choice and Appointment of Trustees; Trust Deeds; Title deeds to church property; Other legal papers.
- Available literature concerning the history, theology and traditions of the church; the condition and use of any congregational library, and any significant disposal of books.

**b. Finance:**

- The past three years financial statements showing: Records and trends in yearly income; The Covenant Scheme; Recovery of Income Tax where it has been deducted at source.
- All Investment Documents: Script etc shall be sighted.
- Original Insurance Policies with latest schedules covering Church, Hall, Manse, etc: Public and Employer's Liability.

**c. Property:**

- Church External: Roof, guttering, downpipes and drainage, rendering, doors and windows, decoration and general appearance, general security and fire precautions.
- Church Internal: Walls and plasterwork, condition of woodwork, lighting and electrical installation, heating, decoration and general appearance.
- Church Furnishings: Organ, Communion Plate, Communion Table, Reading Desk, Font, etc, Carpets, etc. Any other moveable furnishings, Monuments and Memorials.
- Hall: Repair and general conditions as for church external and internal above, assessment of facilities.
- Other Church Property: Description, Nature of church responsibility, general appearance of church grounds, notice board.
- Progress of work - future plans.

**d. Work and Witness:**

**i Minister and Elders**

- Conduct of Worship: times of services, attendances, Communion, special services.
- Organisation of Church Life: Session - membership and meetings, Committee - membership and meetings, subcommittees, working parties.

- Visiting - minister, elders

Potential for Growth: Membership, geographical spread,

age structure, prospects.

- Ecumenical contact
- Other relevant information

#### ii Sunday School and Youth Work

- Sunday School - numbers of children and teachers, times of meeting, work and activity.
- Youth work: groups or organisations, numbers, activities.
- Youth involvement in life of congregation
- Involvement at denominational level
- Other relevant information.

#### iii Role of Women's Groups

- Activities - What groups exist? What do they do?
- Involvement in life of congregation
- Ecumenical Contacts
- Social witness

#### iv Congregational clubs and societies.

#### v Role of congregation in the Community • Publicity • Outreach • Witness.

#### vi Any matter about which the congregation wishes to ask Presbytery.

The four commissions shall produce written reports on the matters outlined above. These shall be forwarded to members of Presbytery and to the congregation in sufficient time to allow study before the formal visitation.

On the day appointed for the formal visitation the Moderator shall conduct a brief act of worship and shall then explain the nature of the visitation process.

Then the reports of the commissions shall be read aloud. When each report has been read the Moderator shall ask for questions or comment from members of Presbytery. The Moderator shall then ask for questions or comment from members of the congregation. When all such questions or comments shall have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the Moderator he shall invite Presbytery to receive the report.

When each of the reports have been dealt with in this manner the Moderator shall invite Presbytery to adopt the several reports as its findings upon the visitation.

This being done, the Moderator shall conclude the service and lead the Presbytery from the meeting house.

## **2. HALF-YEARLY REPORT FROM STUDENT TO PRESBYTERY**

Report for six months ended .....

Name .....

Home Address .....

College at which now studying .....

- a. Have you made full attendance during the last half year? If not, state the reasons for not doing so.
- b. What subjects have you studied during the last half year.
- c. What examinations have you taken since the date of your last report. State the results of same.
- d. How many times have you preached during the last six months.
- e. What other services have you given to the church during this period. State what and how often.
- f. State details of grants and financial support which you have received during the past six months.
- g. What has been the state of your health since last report.
- h. Is there any matter you wish to bring to the notice of Presbytery? if so, please provide details.

Signature .....

Date .....

### 3. FORM OF CALL

We, the members of the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ in connection with the Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ within the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, having heard a good report of you, and being fully satisfied of your fitness to be our minister and spiritual teacher, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry among us.

Should you settle among us we for our part do hereby make and extend to you the following promises:-

- a. That we will respect you for your work's sake, will attend to your instruction in the Gospel, and will submit to the discipline of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.
- b. That we will pay, for your support and encouragement, the annual sum of \_\_\_\_\_ payable monthly, and commencing from the date of your Installation and to be reviewed annually.
- c. That we will allow you the right of residence in the manse, free of all rates and taxes, and the use of the glebe (if any) during the period of your ministry among us, you on your part to release these to us within three months of your relinquishing your charge, or within three months of the appointment of a successor, in accordance with paragraph 171 of the Code of Discipline of the church.
- d. That we will pay, in respect of yourself, National Insurance Employer's Contributions at the rate set by law.
- e. That we will pay a sum equal to 5% of your gross salary to an approved pension scheme in respect of yourself, and shall make these payments monthly or at such other intervals as shall be agreed.
- f. That we shall contribute to the Sustentation Fund of The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, in accordance with the regulations governing that Fund.

Dated and signed in our Meeting-house this \_\_\_\_\_ day

of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year

Signatures

**Presiding Minister's Certificate**

I certify that I attended in the congregation of  
this            day of            in the year            by  
appointment of the Presbytery of            as its  
commission, and that I was present at the signing of the Call.

Signed

#### **4. FORM OF ORDINATION (OR INSTALLATION) OF MINISTER**

a. A Service of praise, prayer, and the **reading of** the Scriptures.

b. A minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery **shall**  
give an exposition of Presbyterian Church Order.

c. A minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery shall  
then ask the Ordinand the following questions:

*i. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New  
Testament to contain the Word of God and the rule of your  
Faith and practice ?*

*ii. Do you acknowledge your obligation faithfully to  
endeavour to understand, and to expound to others the  
principles of the Christian faith ?*

*iii. Do you approve of Presbyterian government and discipline as it is recognised in the  
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland; and do you promise faithfully to submit  
yourself thereto, and to support it to the best of your ability, so long as you shall remain  
in connection with that Body?*

*iv. Do you promise, so far as in you lies, faithfully to  
discharge all your duties as a member of this Presbytery,  
and to perform all your offices as minister of this  
congregation ?*

d. The Ordinand having replied to the above questions in the affirmative is then invited to  
make a statement of his principles **and** of the objects that have led him to undertake the work of  
the Christian ministry.

e. The Moderator shall then address the Ordinand (who shall  
rise from his seat and remain standing) in the following terms:

*"You have now made profession before many witnesses of the faith  
that is in you, and of the objects that have led you to undertake the  
work of the Christian ministry. It is now my duty to inquire of you*



*whether you solemnly engage that you will give yourself, with all the ability with which God shall bless you, and with all the diligence and zeal which so important an office demands, to the work of ministering among this people; that you will honestly endeavour to understand, and faithfully labour to expound to others, the principles of our Christian faith; that you will duly administer the ordinances of the Gospel; that you will regularly visit your people from house to house, and will duly instruct the young; that you will administer consolation to the house of mourning," and that you will carefully endeavour to perform any other duties that may fall to you with faithfulness, integrity, and zeal?"*

f. When the Ordinand has answered "I will" to the foregoing questions, the Moderator shall then address the assembled congregation, putting to them the following questions:

*i. "Members of this congregation, forasmuch as this service of Ordination (Installation) involves solemn obligations on your part, I now ask of you: "Do you adhere to the Call which has been given and accepted?"*

(To which question a representative or representatives appointed for that purpose by the congregation shall rise and say "We do")

*ii. "Do you, the members and adherents of this congregation, receive 'A B', whom you called to be your minister, promising him all due honour and support; do you undertake that you will give heed to his ministrations, be faithful in your attendance at public worship, and will give of your means as the Lord shall prosper you for the maintenance of the Christian ministry and the furtherance of the Gospel? Will you signify your assent by rising and standing in your places ?*

g. Whilst the congregation remains standing, the Ordinand shall reverently kneel. The Moderator, together with the ministers of the Presbytery (and any other ministers if such be present), shall lay their hands on him (save that at an Installation there shall be no laying on of hands) whilst a minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery shall offer prayer.

h. The newly Ordained (or Installed) minister shall then rise (the congregation still remaining standing), and the Moderator shall address him in the following terms:

*"By virtue of the authority vested in me as Moderator of this Presbytery, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of the Church, I do declare you Ordained (Installed) to the ministry of this congregation of people, with authority to administer the Sacraments, to preach the Word, and to be a Pastor to the flock. May the*

*Lord bless you and keep you; give you counsel, understanding and utterance, that you may boldly proclaim His word and will; make you a light to them that sit in darkness, a watchful and loving guardian over the fold,*

*and faithful follower of your Master, Jesus Christ; and*

*enable you in all things to fulfil this ministry without*

*reproach, so that you may abide steadfast to the end, and*

*be found acceptable in God's great sight."*

i. When all have resumed their seats, a charge shall then be delivered to the minister and people, setting forth their respective duties, and exhorting them to discharge those duties with fidelity, diligence and charity; such charge to be delivered by a minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery.

j. The solemn services of the day shall then be concluded by the singing of a hymn, and by the offering of a short prayer by the newly Ordained (Installed) minister, after which the Moderator shall pronounce the Benediction.

## **5. FORM OF ORDINATION OF ELDERS**

a. A Service of praise, prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures.

b. A minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery shall give an exposition of Presbyterian Church Order.

c. The Moderator shall then address all present in the following terms:

*"My Friends, from earliest times it has been the custom to set apart certain earnest and godly men and women to have oversight of the church in each place, to the intent that they should, both by their word and by their example, set forth a manner of life according to the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that by their labour and their prayer they should build up and edify the Church which is the body of Christ. For the appointing of such Elders or Presbyters we are come together this day. Let us invoke the blessing of Almighty God upon that which we shall do, that those who are chosen to be overseers of the church in this place may be endued with His Holy Spirit, and that the church to which they are appointed shall give heed to their counsel and emulate their manner of life. Let us draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may find grace to help in time of need, and commit ourselves unto God as unto a faithful Creator."*

d. A minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery shall then offer prayer, the Elders-elect (occupying the front pew) reverently bowing, and the Moderator, along with all the ministers of the Presbytery, standing to face the congregation.

e. Prayer being ended, all shall rise to their feet, upon which the Moderator shall say:

*"By virtue of the authority vested in us, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of the Church, we, the Presbytery of*                      *do declare you*

*'A B', 'C D', etc. ordained and installed to the office of*

*Elder, and do appoint you to the oversight of the Church in*

*this place."*

f. A minister appointed for that purpose by Presbytery shall then deliver a charge, both to Elders and to people, setting forth their respective duties and obligations, and exhorting all alike to be faithful in discharge of their Christian witness and zealous for the Church of God.

g. The service shall conclude with a hymn of praise, after which the moderator shall pronounce the Benediction.

## 6. LIST OF FUNDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHURCH

### 1. Funds connected with the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland

**Benevolent Fund**                      Established by the General Synod in 1960. It exists to provide 'emergency' or 'one off' grants in cases of financial need. It is open to members of all congregations regardless of age or sex.

**Bodel-Mackenzie Benevolent Fund** Established by Miss Rebecca Bodel, Purdysburn, Belfast for the assistance of ladies of fifty-five years and upwards, who are in financial need, and who have been for not less than five years a member of a congregation of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

**Bright Fund**                      Established in 1972 under the will of Mrs Ellen Bright of Templepatrick in memory of her son, the late Squadron Leader John Alexander Bright, The Fund is administered by the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland Trustees on behalf of the General Synod, and income is applied to major denominational projects and to make interest free loans to congregations engaged in substantial capital projects.

**Joint Incidental and Moderatorial Fund** Established by the General Synod and raised by levy on all constituent congregations. This fund exists to meet the central and administrative costs of the denomination and the necessary expenses of the Moderator.

**Ministers' Widows' Fund** Established by the General Synod in 1962 to provide support for the widows of such ministers of the

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland as have died while still in pastoral charge, or, have died, having retired directly from the charge of a congregation of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

**Montgomery Bequest** Established in 1867 under the will of the Rev John Montgomery of Banbridge. It exists to provide prizes for students for the ministry, upon recommendation from their respective Presbyteries.

**Orphan Society** Established in 1887, this fund is administered by Governors appointed by the General Synod. Its income is applied to aid in the support and education of orphans whose parents were connected with a congregation of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

**Porter Benevolent Fund** Established in 1962 under the wills of Miss Rosanna Charlotte Porter and Miss Matilda Jane Porter, for the assistance of widows and spinsters of sixty years and upwards, who are in financial need, and who have been for not less than five years a member of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

**Students' and Ministers' Auxiliary Fund** This fund had its origin in the Theological Professorships Compensation Fund, established in 1870. It is now augmented by congregational contributions, and is applied to provide bursaries for students preparing for the ministry of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland; and to provide grants for ministers undertaking appropriate courses of further study. All such bursaries and grants require the recommendation of the Presbytery with which the student or minister is connected.

**Sustentation Fund** This fund was established under the auspices of the General Synod in 1911, and is administered by a committee elected by Synod. Investment income, together with congregational contributions at the fixed rate of 5% of gross ministerial income, is applied in augmenting the salaries of ministers.

**The Stewart Bequest Fund** is also administered by the Sustentation Fund Committee. It was established by order of the High Court in 1983, and its income is applied in augmenting the salaries of those ministers whose congregations comply with the terms of the fund.

**Warnock Fund** Established in 1969 under the terms of the will of Mr Christopher Warnock of Newry. Its income is applied towards the support of congregations undertaking capital expenditure upon church property. In the application of funds the needs of the congregations of Newry and Warrenpoint are to be given priority.

**William McRobert Memorial Fund** Established by the General Synod in 1965 in memory of Mr William McRobert of Rademon congregation. The income is made available to ministers of the Presbytery of Antrim or Remonstrant Synod of Ulster on entering their ministry to pay, in whole or in part, the qualifying premium of the Presbyterian Widows' Fund.

## **2. Funds Connected with the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster**

**Ballymoney and Limavady Fund** Derived from the sale of Church properties at Ballymena and Limavady. The income is distributed annually to ministers of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster in equal proportions, by the trustees of the Remonstrant Synod Sustentation Fund, as directed by Orders of Court.

**Sustentation Fund** Established in 1872. The income is distributed equally between the congregations which have complied with the terms governing the fund.

### **3. Funds Connected with the Presbytery of Antrim**

**Carrickfergus Fund** Derived from the sale of the church property at Carrickfergus. The fund is administered by the Presbytery of Antrim and income is divided equally amongst ministers of the Presbytery, currently in pastoral charge.

**Dublin Fund** Established in 1732 by ministers and lay people in Dublin, sympathetic to the cause of the Non-Subscribing Presbytery of Antrim. The fund is administered by the Presbytery of Antrim, and income applied equally amongst ministers of the Presbytery, currently in pastoral charge.

**Galt Smith Fund** Created by the legacy of Mr John Galt Smith. The income is administered by the Presbytery of Antrim and is applied to assist with the expenses of the Moderator of Presbytery.

### **4. Funds Connected with the Synod of Munster**

**Clerkship Fund** This fund is administered by the Synod of Munster and is applied to the administrative expenses of the Synod and to the travelling and other authorised expenses of the Clerk and members of the Synod.

**Clonmel Fund** This fund is administered by the Commissioners for Charitable Donations and Bequests in terms of the court order winding up the affairs of the Clonmel congregation. The income is received by the Synod of Munster and is currently applied to the purposes of the Clerkship Fund.

**Widows' and Orphans' Fund** The income of this fund is applied exclusively to the support of Widows and Orphans of ministers who have died while serving congregations of the Synod of Munster, or who have died, having retired directly from the charge of a congregation of the Synod of Munster.

### **5. Miscellaneous Funds**

**Presbyterian Widows' Fund Association** Membership of this Association is open to ministers of the Presbytery of Antrim and Remonstrant Synod of Ulster. The fund is administered by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the income is applied towards the support of the widows and orphans of such ministers as have been members of the fund.

**Rights of Conscience Fund**                      Established in 1831 to assist and protect ministers and congregations in maintaining the rights of private judgement and the rejection of human authority in matters of faith. Administered by an Association established under the terms of the trust deed.

The names and addresses of office bearers of these various funds can be found in the denominational 'Aide Memoire'. These individuals can supply the full details of the terms and conditions of each fund, and any necessary application forms.

Information regarding the Presbyterian Widows' Fund Association may be obtained by writing to the Secretary of the Association, Church House, Fisherwick Place, Belfast BT1 6DW.

## 7. HISTORICAL NOTE

### 1.        **Presbytery of Antrim**

The Presbytery of Antrim was one of the constituent Presbyteries of the General Synod of Ulster. In the year 1725 it was rearranged so as to consist solely of those Presbyterian ministers and congregations in Ulster who objected to compulsory subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. In the following year, 1726, it was excluded on that account from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the General Synod of Ulster.

### 2.        **Remonstrant Synod of Ulster**

The Remonstrant Synod of Ulster was formed in 1830 to embrace the seventeen ministers and congregations that, for reasons of conscience, had seceded in the previous year from the General Synod of Ulster.

### 3.        **Synod of Munster**

The Synod of Munster was formed in 1809 by the Union of the Presbytery of Munster and the Southern Presbytery of Dublin. In 1835 it joined with the Presbytery of Antrim and the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster to form the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians. In 1935 it became a constituent part of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, functioning as a Presbytery within that body.

**4. Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians** In 1835 the Presbytery of Antrim, the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster and the Synod of Munster came together to found the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians for mutual support and co-operation. In 1871 the Association became, by resolution, the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians and Other Free Christians. It was dissolved in 1941.

**5. Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland** In 1907 it was decided that the congregations constituting the Association (see Note 4 above) should be asked to unite in one Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church for more efficient cooperation. After detailed discussions the recommended terms were accepted by all congregations except those of the Synod of Munster, and in 1910 the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland came into being.

In 1913 the Presbytery of Armagh was united with that of Bangor.

In 1935 the congregations of the Synod of Munster decided to enter the united church.

In 1941, the Association, having no further role was dissolved as its remaining administrative functions had passed to the united church.

In 1957 the Presbytery of Templepatrick was united with that of Antrim.

The church at the present time (1997) comprises the following congregations:-

- a. Presbytery of Antrim:**
- |                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Antrim                       | Downpatrick   |
| Ballycarry                   | Dunmurry      |
| Ballyclare                   | Glenarm       |
| Ballymoney                   | Greyabbey     |
| Belfast First                | Hollywood     |
| ~ Belfast Second (All Souls) | Larne         |
| Belfast York Street          | Newtownards   |
| Cairncastle                  | Raloo         |
| ~ Crumlin                    | Templepatrick |
- b. Presbytery of Bangor:**
- |                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Ballee                 | Killinchy   |
| Ballyhemlin            | Moira       |
| Banbridge              | Moneyreagh  |
| Belfast Mountpottinger | Newry       |
| Clough                 | Rademon     |
| Comber                 | Ravara      |
| Dromore                | Warrenpoint |
- c. Synod of Munster:**
- |      |        |
|------|--------|
| Cork | Dublin |
|------|--------|