



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TASMANIA

**CODE of PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE**

July 2003

**CODE of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TASMANIA**

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# CODE of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TASMANIA

## Chapter 1

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TASMANIA

### Definition

- 1.1 The Presbyterian Church of Tasmania is part of the Universal Christian Church.
- 1.1.1 It is a constituent part of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, formed on the 24th July, 1901, by the union of the Presbyterian Churches of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.
- 1.1.2 It is in historic continuity with the Church of Scotland, reformed in 1560.
- 1.1.3 It was founded in 1835. In 1896 the section of the Presbyterian denomination in Tasmania called up to then "The Free Church of Scotland in Tasmania" was admitted into union with the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania.

### Supreme Standard

- 1.2 The supreme standard of the Church is the Word of God, that is, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which the Church regards as the only rule of faith and practice.

### Subordinate Standard

- 1.2.1 The subordinate standard of the Church is the Westminster Confession of Faith, as amended by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and read in the light of the Declaratory Statement contained in the Basis of Union 1901.
- 1.2.2 The Church also holds as its standards and formularies the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the form of Presbyterian Church Government, the Directory of Public Worship and the Second Book of Discipline.

### Powers

- 1.3 As a constituent part of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania has and exercises such powers, discharges such duties and enjoys such rights and privileges as are provided for in the Basis of Union and the Articles of Agreement of the Deed of Union of the 24th July, 1901, and in subsequent amendments thereto.
- 1.3.1 The Presbyterian Church of Tasmania has full autonomy in all matters except those which have been assigned to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia under the Basis of Union and the Articles of the Deed of Union.
- 1.3.2 In the following matters, the powers of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania are modified in larger or smaller degree by the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
  - (a) doctrine, worship and discipline of the Church; (b) missions to non-Christians;
  - (c) home missions;
  - (d) Christian education;
  - (e) training of students for the ministry; and
  - (f) reception of ministers from other denominations.
- 1.3.3 Power in respect to other matters may be assigned to the Presbyterian Church of Australia by the State Churches by the amendment of the Articles of Agreement of 1901.

### Head of Church

- 1.4 The only King and Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1.4.1 All powers and prerogatives of the church are derived from Him and delegated by Him.
- 1.4.2 All functions of the Church are to exercised in His name, under the guidance of His word and Spirit and in subjection to His authority alone.

### Government

- 1.4.3 In accordance with the Presbyterian forms of government as set out in the Second Book of Discipline and the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania is governed by duly elected and ordained teaching and ruling presbyters.
- 1.4.4 Those presbyters act in orderly association to maintain the living unity of the Church and sit in representative courts, which in ascending order are the Session, the Presbytery and the General Assembly.
- 1.4.5 The courts declare what Christ has revealed and apply His law according to His direction.
- 1.4.6 The will of Christ for His Church finds expression in the formal standards, customs, laws, declarations, directions and resolutions of the Church courts.
- 1.4.7 The following explicit formulations of the Church law are binding on the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania and its members:
  - (a) The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Australia;
  - (b) The rules, regulations, declarations and directions lawfully made or given by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, as far as they are applicable to the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania;
  - (c) The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, as modified by the Basis of Union and the Articles of Agreement of the Deed of Union of 24th July, 1901;
  - (d) The rules, regulations, declarations and directions lawfully made or given by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania.
- 1.4.8 The rules of the Church may be amended, repealed or added to only under the Barrier Act procedure.

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## Chapter 2 THE CONGREGATION

### PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Definition

**2.1** A Congregation is a body of men, women and children who come together for worship, fellowship, instruction, witness and service.

#### Formation

**2.2** To be recognised as a Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, such a body requires the sanction and supervision of the Presbytery within the bounds of which it normally meets.

#### Classification

**2.3** A congregation or a group of congregations shall be classified by the Presbytery as either a Charge or a Special Charge.

#### Charge

**2.4** A Charge is an area of pastoral responsibility to which a minister or licentiate is called by a congregation or congregations and duly inducted by the Presbytery.

#### Special Charge

**2.4.1** Where a Charge is unable to meet and sustain the terms of settlement, or is regarded by the Presbytery to be in an unsatisfactory condition, the presbytery may classify it as a Special Charge for the purpose of providing either financial assistance or an appointment.

#### Session

**2.5** The affairs of every Charge or Special Charge are under the supervision of a Session, either its own or one appointed by the presbytery.

#### Board of Management

**2.6** The financial affairs and the care of the property of every congregation are under the supervision of a Board of Management the membership of which consists of the Session together with managers elected by the congregation.

**2.6.1** In the discharge of its duties, the Board of Management is responsible to the congregation.

### MEMBERSHIP

#### Definition - Communicant

**2.7** A communicant is a person who has been admitted to the fellowship of the Lord's Table and has had his/her name added by the Session to the roll of communicants as a result of

- having made a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord; or
- having presented a certificate of transfer from another congregation of the Presbyterian Church; or
- having been accepted by resolution of Session.

#### Definition - Adherent

**2.8** An adherent is a person who associates regularly with a congregation in worship, contributes financially to its mission, and has had his/her name added to the roll of adherents by resolution of the Session.

#### Names on one roll only

**2.9** The names of communicants and adherents may appear on the rolls of one congregation only.

#### Duties of communicants and adherents

**2.10** Communicants and adherents will seek to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever by using the gifts of grace, which include the following:

- regular attendance at public congregational worship (Hebrews 10:24,25);
- personal and corporate study of the Bible for growth in discipleship (Hebrews 6, 2 Peter 3:18);
- due respect, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to their ministers (Hebrews 13:17);
- submission to the authority of the Session which is appointed by God to care for the Church;
- devotion to one another in Christian love (Romans 12:10);
- commitment and sharing of material prosperity for the growth of the Church and its ministry (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7-14; Malachi 3:10); and
- witness for Jesus in every area of life (Matt. 5:13-16).

#### Communicants' rights

**2.11** Communicants have the right:

- to vote at all meetings of the congregation;
- to sign a call to a minister or licentiate;
- to take part in elections for members of Session and Board of Management;
- to approach the appropriate courts of the Church by petition or overture.

#### Adherents' rights

**2.12** Adherents have the right:

- to add their names to a supplementary list to a call to a minister or licentiate;
- take part in elections for members of the Board of Management;
- approach the appropriate courts of the Church by petition or overture.

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### Congregational meeting

- 2.13** A congregational meeting is called from the pulpit, with an indication of its purpose, by the authority of the Session or a higher court, normally with eight days' notice.
- 2.13.1** When matters of urgency arise, the Session may call a meeting at shorter notice, always ensuring that communicants and adherents have due notice of such a meeting.
- 2.13.2** No congregational meeting may be held during the sitting of the Presbytery or a higher court except with the permission of the court concerned.
- 2.13.3** The minister presides at all congregational meetings except those to which he or a higher court appoints a chairman.

### Quorum

- 2.14** The quorum of a congregational meeting is one tenth of the members of the communicants' roll, but in no case less than five.

### Annual congregational meeting

- 2.15** The Session shall convene an annual business meeting of all congregations within the Charge or Special Charge for the following purposes:
- (a) to receive, consider and adopt the annual report submitted by the Board of Management;
  - (b) to receive, consider and adopt the audited financial statement submitted by the Board of Management; and
  - (c) to appoint auditors for the ensuing year.
- 2.16** The Session may present a written review of the life and work of the Charge for information only.
- 2.17** Reports and audited financial statements of other congregational organisations may be presented for information only.

### Minutes

- 2.18** Minutes of all congregational meetings of a Charge or Special Charge are recorded by the Session Clerk in a separate minute book kept for this purpose in his safekeeping.

### Dissatisfaction

- 2.19** Any communicant or adherent of the Charge or Special Charge, dissatisfied with a decision or resolution of a congregational meeting, may petition the Presbytery to review such decision or resolution, provided that:
- (a) he/she attended the meeting, voted and entered his/her dissent; and
  - (b) his/her petition is lodged with the Clerk of Presbytery before the next meeting of the Presbytery and a copy given to the Session Clerk of the Charge or Special Charge at the same time.
- 2.19.1** On request the Session Clerk must furnish the dissenting member with an extract minute of the matter from which he/she dissented.

### Property vesting in Trustees

- 2.20** The real property of every Charge or Special Charge, unless held under an Act of Parliament containing any specific contrary provision, is vested in The Trustees of the Property of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania or in other Trustees approved by the Assembly, under specific terms of trust and subject to the provisions of 'An Act to regulate the affairs of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania 1896", as amended, and of rules made by the General Assembly pursuant thereto.

### Use of buildings

- 2.21** The minister has the right to the keys of the church and other congregational buildings. He may grant or refuse the use of the church and/or buildings for any purpose of a religious nature.
- 2.21.1** For use of the buildings for purposes other than those of a religious nature the sanction of the Session must first be obtained.

### Erection or alteration of buildings

- 2.22** Before a congregation proceeds to erect any building or to make major or visible structural alterations or additions to any existing building, it must first obtain the approval of the Presbytery.
- 2.22.1** For projects estimated to cost more than 15% of the Congregation's normal annual income (excluding bequests) the approval of Presbytery is required, and such approval shall be given only when the Presbytery is satisfied that the congregation is able satisfactorily to finance the project.

### Sale, mortgage or purchase

- 2.23** Before a congregation proceeds to sell, mortgage or purchase any real property it must obtain the approval of the Presbytery and the Board of Investment and Finance of the Assembly.
- 2.23.1** All documents for the sale, purchase or mortgage shall be in the name of the Trustees of the Property of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania and shall be signed either by the Trustees or for and on behalf of the Trustees.

### Lease

- 2.24** Before a congregation proceeds to lease any real property it must obtain the approval of the Presbytery and the Board of Investment and Finance of the Assembly.
- 2.24.1** Such lease shall be taken in the name of the Trustees of the Property of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, and shall be signed either by the Trustees or for and on behalf of the Trustees.
- 2.24.2** A copy of the lease shall be forwarded to the Board of Investment and Finance of the Assembly for its inspection and record.

### Manse: mortgage or purchase

- 2.25** Congregations, before proceeding to erect or purchase a manse, are required to ensure that the proposed dwelling complies with the following minimum standards:
- (a) 4 bedrooms, 1 dining room, 1 lounge room, 1 study, all carpeted;
  - (b) A kitchen, bathroom, toilet, laundry and garage;
  - (c) Furnishings must include window coverings, stove, fully automatic washing machine and refrigerator;
  - (d) Adequate heating in lounge and dining rooms;

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- (e) Adequate letter box;
- (f) Adequate shelving in the study.

### CONGREGATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- 2.26** A congregational organisation is any club, society or group of person associated for the purpose of carrying on some specified activity within the life of the congregation.
- 2.26.1** A congregational organisation may be formed only with approval of the Session and may neither begin nor continue its activities without such approval.
- 2.26.2** The proposed constitution of every congregational organisation must be submitted to the Session for its approval and becomes operative and may be amended only with the approval of the Session.
- 2.26.3** The office-bearers of every congregational organisation ideally should be communicants of the Charge or Special Charge, and must be approved by the Session.
- 2.26.4** By virtue of his office, the minister is chairman of all congregational organisations, but may delegate this responsibility to others.
- 2.26.5** The minister or his nominee shall preside at the annual meeting of all congregational organisations, and for the election of office-bearers.
- 2.26.6** Prior to the annual congregational meeting, each congregational organisation shall submit to the Session an annual report of its activities, together with a properly audited financial statement.
- 2.26.7** All congregational organisations must submit to the Board of Management for approval all matters of finance likely to affect the general revenue of the Charge or Special Charge.
- 2.26.8** All organisations seeking to raise funds by special efforts shall seek from the Board of Management approval of the purposes for which such funds are to be raised.

### Gambling

- 2.27** All forms of gambling in relation to fund raising are expressly forbidden.

### Amusements for money-raising

- 2.28** While the Church recognises the liberty of Christian people in matters not expressly forbidden by the Word of God, ministers, office bearers and people are exhorted to discourage all forms of conduct which are detrimental to the well-being and witness of the Church. This includes the use of questionable forms of amusement as means of raising funds for Church purposes.

### Alcohol

- 2.29** The consumption of alcohol in Church halls is expressly forbidden.

### Organisations that cease to function

- 2.30** When a congregational organisation ceases to function, all its property is passed into the safekeeping of the Board of Management which holds it in trust until the Session directs its disposal.

### Diaconal ministry

- 2.31** Sessions may establish diaconal ministries in the congregations under their care by the formulation of Deacons' Courts.

### Duties of Deacons

- 2.31.1** Deacons shall be responsible to care for the material well-being of believers in the local community, believers further afield, and people in the community at large. In fulfilling this duty, deacons shall perform a ministry distinct from that of the Session or the board of management.

### Qualifications

- 2.31.2** Deacons shall be communicant members of the congregation which they are to serve, have attained the age of 21 years, have a good reputation and uphold the worship of God according to the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

### Supervision

- 2.31.3** In the exercise of their duties, deacons shall be subject to the supervision and direction of the Session. The Session shall fix the number of deacons to be appointed, determine the manner of their election, the criteria for assessing suitability and the suitability of those elected, receive any resignation of a deacon or remove a deacon from office should that deacon renounce the responsibilities of the office, become mentally unsound, or breach the qualifications of a deacon.

### Induction of Deacons

- 2.31.4** Deacons are inducted to their office by prayer during corporate worship.

### Tenure of Office

- 2.31.5** The term of office shall be determined by Session, but shall not exceed three years. Deacons shall be eligible for re-election. On joining another congregation, a deacon is not entitled to recognition as a deacon until admitted to the office in the usual way.

### Organisation

- 2.31.6** Deacons shall be formed into a Deacons' Court of which the minister shall be Chairman, but he may delegate this responsibility to others.

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## Chapter 3: BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

### Election of managers

- 3.1** Members of the Board of Management should ideally be communicants of the Charge or Special Charge not less than eighteen years of age. An adherent, not less than eighteen years of age, whose name appears on the adherents' roll, may be elected.
- 3.1.1** The Session shall decide the number of members of the Board of Management, and shall conduct the annual election.
- 3.1.2** One half of the members of the Board of Management shall retire each year, but shall be eligible for re-election.
- 3.1.3** At the discretion of the Session, the election of managers may take place at the annual congregational meeting.
- 3.1.4** Casual vacancies are filled by the Board of Management with the approval of the Session.
- 3.1.5** Any manager who ceases to be either a communicant or an adherent of the Charge or Special Charge shall cease to be a member of the Board of Management.

### Calling of meetings

- 3.2** The Board of Management shall meet at least once every quarter, intimation of such meetings being given from the pulpit or by notice duly given to the individual members.
- 3.2.1** The chairman is bound to convene a special meeting whenever he/she receives a written request from at least one third of the members of the Board of Management to do so. He/she must detail the business of the meeting.

### Joint meetings

- 3.3** If in any Charge or Special Charge there is more than one congregation, each congregation may elect a Board of Management to deal with local matters, but a joint meeting of all Boards shall be held at least once each year to deal with matters affecting the Charge or Special Charge as a whole. Alternatively, a Charge or Special Charge may decide to have a single Board of Management to administer its temporal affairs, in which case separate financial records shall be maintained for each congregation.

### Quorum

- 3.4** Three members of the Board form a quorum.

### Secretary

- 3.5** The Board of Management shall elect annually a secretary who shall:
- record for confirmation minutes of proceedings of the Board;
  - take charge of all documents and papers except those entrusted by the Board to the treasurer; and
  - attend to all correspondence.

### Treasurer

- 3.6** The Board of Management shall elect annually a treasurer who shall:
- receive, disburse and account for all moneys under the care of the Board of Management; and
  - prepare a financial statement to be submitted to each meeting of the Board of Management.

### Duties of managers

- 3.7** The Board of Management shall manage the funds belonging to the Charge or Special Charge and apply the same to the purposes for which they have been contributed.
- 3.7.1** The Board of Management shall manage, insure, repair and maintain all property.
- 3.7.2** The Board of Management shall make the financial arrangements in connection with the service of worship, appoint the caretaker and any other similar employees, fix their salaries and conditions of service, and, in general, exercise an oversight in the administration of the temporal affairs of the Charge or Special Charge.

### Records

- 3.8** The Board of Management is responsible to the Presbytery for the regular and faithful keeping of its records which, when called for, must be produced to the Presbytery and the Assembly.

### Extract report

- 3.9** The Board of Management shall submit to the annual meeting of the congregation a report on its administration for the year together with an audited statement of receipts and payments.

### Banking

- 3.10** All money received by the treasurer for the Board of Management must be kept in a banking account identified as belonging to the Charge or Special Charge. It must not be placed in any private banking account.
- 3.10.1** Cheques shall be signed by the treasurer and another member of the Board of Management duly appointed to do so, or by any two members of the Board of Management so appointed.
- 3.10.2** The bank statement or pass book should be exhibited at each ordinary meeting of the Board of Management.
- 3.10.3** These rules apply to all organisations of a Charge or Special Charge.

### Remittance of money

- 3.11** It is the duty of the treasurer to remit promptly to the proper authority all regular Presbytery and Assembly assessments and other contributions and payments due from the Charge of Special Charge.

### Vacancy finance

- 3.12** When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the Board of Management shall prepare a financial statement for the guidance of the congregation in determining the terms of settlement which must be submitted to the Presbytery for approval.

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### Terms of Settlement

**3.12.1** Terms for the settlement of a minister or licentiate must include:

- (a) stipend not less than the minimum laid down by the Assembly;
- (b) travelling allowance as laid down by the Assembly;
- (c) a manse or manse allowance;
- (d) payment of telephone rental plus Church calls;
- (e) payment of a stamps and stationery allowance;
- (f) payment of the Church's contribution towards the minister's superannuation, as fixed by the Assembly;
- (g) six Sundays' pulpit supply annually;
- (h) payment of removal expenses.

### Manse allowance

**3.12.2** In the event of the Board of Management and minister agreeing that a manse allowance be paid in lieu of the minister living in the Church manse, he shall ordinarily receive an allowance equivalent to the average rental value of a four-bedroom home in the parish.

### Pulpit supply

**3.13** Charges or Special Charges receiving pulpit supply are required to pay for each Sunday's services at a minimum of the rate fixed by the Assembly.

### Alteration to stipend

**3.14** The Board of Management, when it has not been authorised by the congregation to vary the stipend, must submit any proposed variation to the congregation. When adjustments recommended by the Assembly are not met, the Presbytery must be advised.

### Arrears

**3.15** As soon as the Presbytery has reason to believe that a Charge or Special Charge is failing into arrears with stipend or other financial obligations it shall, of its own accord, institute inquiries and take such action as the case may require.

### Erection of or alteration to buildings

**3.16** Before a congregation proceeds to erect any building or to make major or visible structural alterations or additions to any existing building, it must first obtain the approval of the Presbytery.

**3.16.1** For projects estimated to cost more than 15% of the Congregation's normal annual income (excluding bequests) the approval of Presbytery is required, and such approval shall be given only when the Presbytery is satisfied that the congregation is able satisfactorily to finance the project.

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## Chapter 4: THE SESSION

### Definition

**4.1** A Session is a court of the Church existing within a Charge or Special Charge and consisting normally of the inducted minister(s) and at least two ruling elders of that Charge or Special Charge.

### Jurisdiction and Powers

**4.2** Subject to relevant civil and Church laws and the authority and lawful directions of higher courts, the Session has authority and power in matters of government, discipline and oversight within the bounds assigned it by the Presbytery.

**4.2.1** This authority and power are exerted over all communicants and adherents of the Charge or Special Charge, and over all other persons who associate themselves with its congregational groups, clubs, associations and societies.

**4.2.2** The Session is required to watch over all the interests of the congregations under its authority in such manner as seen best to promote their welfare. It may make rules in matters for which no specific provision is made by higher courts, but such rules must be in accordance with the laws of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

### Elders.

**4.3** Elders are communicants of a Charge or Special Charge, called by the other communicants, of that Charge or Special Charge to exercise rule over them, and ordained to the eldership and inducted into their office in the Session according to the forms prescribed

### Qualifications of elders

**4.4** An elder must be a communicant of a congregation, at least twenty-one years of age, regularly attending its services of worship and contributing to its funds. So far as is possible, an elder should meet the Biblical qualifications for that office.

### Election of elders

**4.4.1** For the election of elders, the following procedure shall be followed:

(a) The Session shall decide if additional elders are required and shall inform the congregation accordingly. The minister shall preach on the subject of the Biblical qualifications for the office before the Session calls for nominations from the congregation.

(b) The Session shall prepare a list of those nominees who possess the Biblical qualities of eldership and who, after due encouragement, are able to speak of a calling to the office. If elected, they must be able to sign the Formula in good conscience.

(c) The Session shall then, prepare a ballot paper of those listed in paragraph (b) hereof who are to be voted upon by the congregation, together with whatever instructions are deemed necessary and, after two consecutive Sundays' notice, conduct the ballot.

(d) The session shall declare the result of the election, after ensuring that such persons have received a sufficient number of votes -as to, indicate the confidence of the congregation. Confidentiality as to the numbers of votes is to be maintained.

(e) The edict of ordination 1 induction shall be read.

(f) If no objections to the life or doctrine of the elder(s)-elect, are received and sustained, they shall be ordained to the eldership and / or inducted into office at a service of worship held at a time and place determined by the Session.

(g) The ordination 1 induction shall be reported to the Presbytery.

**4.4.2** At the service of ordination and/or induction, elders shall:

(a) answer in an appropriate manner the questions prescribed by the General Assembly of the\* Presbyterian Church of Australia;

(b) sign the Formula.

### Duties of elders

**4.5** Elders must co-operate with the minister in the oversight and government of the Charge or Special Charge. They shall visit the aged and the sick, care for the young, guide and encourage enquirers, help and strengthen the believers and generally promote the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

**4.5.1** The Session has the power of discipline over its own members and power without the process of discipline to remove a member from the roll of Session when, after careful inquiry and due notice given, it decides, subject to appeal, complaint or petition, that the member's usefulness as an elder in the congregation has been seriously impaired.

**4.5.2** Resignation or removal of an elder from the Session shall be reported to the Presbytery.

### Elder emeritus

**4.6** Elders who, for reasons of age or infirmity, are not readily able to perform fully their duties and who have in the past given faithful service to the Church may, with their agreement, be granted the status of Elder Emeritus, with such privileges as shall be determined by the Session and reported to the next meeting of the presbytery for its approval.

### Moderator

**4.7** As the executive member of the Presbytery, the minister of the Charge or Special Charge is the Moderator of its Session. In a collegiate Ministry ministers preside alternately \*or as otherwise agreed between the ministers, the other inducted minister(s) sitting as ordinary members of the Session.

**4.7.1** The moderator normally presides at all meetings of the Session. If he is unable to preside, he may appoint another minister or one of the elders in his stead for that particular meeting but such action must be reported to the next meeting of the Presbytery.

### Vacancy

**4.8** When a Charge or Special Charge becomes vacant, and for other specified reasons, the Presbytery shall appoint an Interim-Moderator who, subject to the appropriate laws of the Church, has the powers and performs the duties of a moderator.

### Session Clerk

**4.9** With the moderator's agreement, the Session shall appoint a Clerk who shall hold office at the will of the court and whose position shall be reviewed by Session every three years.

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### Session Clerk's duties

**4.10** The Session Clerk shall keep accurate minutes of the proceedings of the Session and of congregational meetings, provide extract minutes where required, and have custody of all records as required by the Session.

### Meetings

**4.11** The Session shall meet when convened by appointment of the previous meeting or by the authority of the moderator or a higher court.

**4.11.1** Sufficient notice, normally seven days, must be given to each member.

**4.11.2** The moderator is bound to convene a meeting within ten days of receiving a written request from two members of Session together with a reason for such meeting.

### Private

**4.11.3** All meetings of the Session are held in private unless in any particular case the Session determines otherwise.

### Quorum

**4.11.4** The moderator and two elders constitute a quorum.

### Worship

**4.12** With the agreement of the moderator, the Session shall fix days and times for regular and special services of public worship..

**4.12.1** After consultation with its moderator and members of the congregation(s) the Session shall determine which book of praise is to be used in public worship and ensure an adequate supply of the same for all concerned.

### Minister's rights

**4.13** The minister of the Charge or Special Charge has the sole right to the conduct of public worship and to the administration of the sacraments.

### Responsibility to Presbytery

**4.13.1** The minister of the Charge or Special Charge is responsible to the Presbytery for the way in which he carries out these functions.

**4.13.2** The minister of the Charge or Special Charge is also responsible to the Presbytery for other persons who conduct public worship, or who by his arrangement or with his permission, preach in his pulpit.

**4.13.3** In the conduct of public worship and the administration of the sacraments, the organist, choir master, church officer and other persons involved are under the sole direction of the minister.

### Authority of Presbytery

**4.14** The minister and all other persons concerned in public worship are under the authority of the Presbytery and must obey and abide by current rules pertaining to public worship.

**4.14.1** Higher courts of the Church may, for special reasons, determine who shall conduct public worship or preach in a particular minister's Charge or Special Charge.

### Baptism

**4.15** The Session shall arrange, through the minister, for the sacrament of baptism to be administered to:

(a) the children of believing parents, one or both of whom are communicants of his congregation, or who make before the congregation such credible profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as would entitle them to become communicant members;

(b) adults who before the congregation make a credible profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and promise of obedience to Him as members of that congregation.

**4.15.1** The sacrament shall be normally administered during public worship and before the congregation of which those making their profession of faith are members.

**4.15.2** No minister shall administer the sacrament of baptism to children whose parents are members of another Charge or Special Charge without the consent of the minister of that Charge or Special Charge.

**4.15.3** The Session shall encourage believing parents to have their children baptised without unnecessary delay.

**4.15.4** Names and other particulars of those baptised shall be entered in the baptismal register, and baptised adults and parents of baptised children shall be given a certificate of baptism.

### Lord's Supper

**4.16** The Session is responsible for making all necessary provisions for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

**4.16.1** The Session shall admit to the fellowship of the Lord's Table all communicants whose names are on the communicants' roll and who are not under disciplinary suspension, and all others who, earnestly desiring to participate, can come in a manner that is not unworthy. Such intimation is to be given according to 1 Corinthians 11:27-28.

### Roll of Communicants

**4.17** The Session shall keep a roll of communicants

### Removal from the roll

**4.17.1** The Session shall remove from the roll of communicants the names of those who:

(a) are deceased;

(b) have been granted a certificate of transfer;

(c) are under disciplinary suspension.

### Roll of adherents

**4.18** The Session shall keep a roll of adherents.

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### Annual revision of rolls

- 4.19** The Session shall revise annually the rolls of communicants and adherents, and, in doing so, may remove from the rolls names of persons who show their indifference by continued absence from the life and work of the Church.
- 4.19.1** Before removing the names of such persons from the rolls, the Session should take all steps possible to return the persons to a full share in the life and work of the Church.
- 4.19.2** Every person whose name is about to be removed from the rolls must be given every opportunity to be heard in the matter.
- 4.19.3** Names removed from the roll of communicants may be restored only by the process applying to the usual admission to communicant membership.

### Certificate of transfer

- 4.19.4** The Session shall issue a certificate of transfer to any communicant not under process of discipline who applies for the same in order to join a congregation in another Charge or Special Charge, and, upon receipt of acknowledgment from that Charge, shall remove the communicant's name from the roll.

### Letter of introduction

- 4.19.5** The Session may, for any specified purpose, either of itself or through the minister, issue to any communicant, adherent, or other person associated with the Charge or Special Charge, a letter of introduction.

### Elders' districts

- 4.20** The Session shall assign to each elder an area, or pastoral care group, within the Charge or Special Charge, to be known as an elder's district.
- 4.20.1** The Session shall provide the elder with the names of communicants, adherents and nominal Presbyterians in his district and charge him with the spiritual oversight of such persons under its direction and control.
- 4.20.2** It is the elder's duty to cultivate friendship and Christian fellowship with those on his elder's roll by visiting them especially in difficulty and by providing them with Biblical advice and encouragement in every good work.

### Discipline

- 4.21** The Session has the power of discipline over the communicants and adherents of each congregation and over those associated with congregational organisations. It shall exercise this power as necessary in accordance with the laws of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

## GENERAL DUTIES OF THE SESSION

### Christian Education

- 4.22** The Session has the oversight of Christian education of all persons associated with congregations in the Charge or Special Charge.
- 4.22.1** In exercising this oversight, the Session should:
- encourage prayer, Bible study and Christian education in the home;
  - establish Sunday Schools, Bible classes and other similar activities;
  - appoint superintendents, staff, study and youth leaders, and other persons involved with running of such activities.
- 4.22.2** The Session shall make provision for training and for suitable equipment for those taking part in the Christian education programme of the church.

### Reports

- 4.22.3** The Session shall receive regular reports on all activities of Sunday School, Bible study groups, youth groups and all other organisations of the Church.

### Convene meetings

- 4.23** The Session shall convene the annual business meeting of the congregation(s) of the Charge or Special Charge, and any other congregational meetings which it deems necessary.

### Conduct elections

- 4.24** The Session shall conduct elections for new elders as required, and for members of the Board of Management annually.

### Appointments

- 4.24.1** The Session shall appoint the organist, choirmaster, church officer, and any other appropriate persons after agreement with the minister and consultation with the Board of Management regarding financial arrangements.

### Resignations and removals

- 4.24.2** The Session has the authority to deal with the resignation or removal of any such persons in case of inefficiency, improper conduct, unbecoming character or loss or lack of qualifications.

### Use of property

- 4.25** Subject to the direction of higher courts and the requirements of the minister in the conduct of his duties the Session shall:
- decide to what uses other than public worship and activities of a similar nature the property of the Charge or Special Charge may be put;
  - ensure that the proper work of the Charge or Special Charge is not impaired thereby and that the Christian standard and the laws of the Church are not compromised; and
  - refer to the Board of Management any financial arrangements connected with the above.

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### DUTIES TO HIGHER COURTS

#### Responsibility to Presbytery

**4.26** In all its actions the Session is directly responsible to the Presbytery.

**4.26.1** When required, but not less than every second year, the Session shall provide for the inspection of the Presbytery the following:

- (a) Minute books of the Session, Board of Management and congregation(s);
- (b) the book of certificates of transfer;
- (c) a copy of the audited financial statement;
- (d) the baptismal and funeral registers;
- (e) any other documents, reports or statistics required by the Presbytery.

**4.26.2** It is the duty of the Session to seek the advice of the Presbytery in matters of doubt and to report irregularities in any matter for which it is responsible.

#### Representative elder

**4.27** The Session of every Charge or Special Charge is represented in the higher courts of the Church by an elder who is commissioned by it for this purpose.

#### Appeals, complaints

**4.28** Session will send to the Presbytery, with or without comment as it sees fit, all appeals and complaints presented to it, first making sure of the propriety and proper form of all documents.

**4.28.1** The Session may not receive or discuss complaints against its moderator, but elders, communicants or adherents of a Charge or Special Charge who desire to make complaints formally may do so by presenting a petition to the Presbytery.

**4.28.2** Any person in a Charge or Special Charge may appeal to the Presbytery against any decision of the Session relevant to him/her.

#### No authority over another Session

**4.29** A Session has not authority to intervene in the affairs of another Session.

**4.29.1** Session may, by a petition or by direct motion following a formal notice brought before the Presbytery having authority, draw attention to any alleged irregularity or interference and request that appropriate action be taken.

#### Assessors

**4.30** Upon the request of a Session or on its own initiative, a Presbytery may at any time appoint an assessor or assessors to strengthen or assist that Session for any specified reason.

**4.30.1** Such assessors shall have all the rights and duties of elders of that Session.