

Constitution and By-Laws of The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches

[Revised October 2011]

[By motion of Council on October 6, 2011, use of the CREC emblem was suspended, pending development of a new emblem. When a new emblem has been adopted, it shall be inserted here in the Constitution.]

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Preamble

The name of this confederation of churches is the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches [CREC]. We use the word *communion* in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. By *reformed*, we call to mind the need to restore the church from many contemporary abuses, as well as testify that we stand in the stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy. As *evangelicals*, we desire to confess the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in both love and doctrinal integrity. The nature of our affiliation is one of *confederation*, that is, we have formed a broad connection between churches which, with respect to polity, is representative, being neither hierarchical nor autonomous. Our gathering of *churches* is not intended as a separation from other orthodox believers who confess the name of Christ, but rather as a gathering *within* that broader church, in order to work together effectively for reformation.

With patterns of church order and confessional standards, one of the fundamental requirements of Scripture is honesty (Ex. 20:16). Consequently, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we charge you, the generations who will follow us in this confederation, to submit to the Scriptures with sincere and honest hearts, and to the standards of this confederation as consistent with the teaching of Scripture. When a portion of our order and confession is found to be out of conformity to Scripture, we charge you to amend it honestly, openly, and constitutionally, as men who must give an account to the God who searches the hearts of men. We charge you in the name of the Lord to abhor all forms of ignoring our intentions in what we have set down through dissembling, reinterpretation, dishonesty, relativism, pretended explanations, presumed spiritual maturity, assumed scholarly sophistication, or outright lying, so that the living God will not strike you and your children with a curse. We charge you to serve Him in all diligence and honesty, so that the blessings of the covenant may extend to your children for a thousand generations.

Our desire is to acknowledge, preserve and manifest unity, preserve purity, and advance Christ's kingdom in an orderly and reasonable way, resulting in mutual edification, accountability, and spiritual discipline. Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, fraternal, and working relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage formal, non-binding, fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries and denominations.

Article I. Authority of Scripture

- A.** The Scriptures are always the ultimate and inerrant court of appeal (Ps. 18:30; 119:89; Matt. 4:4; John 16:12-15; Rom. 3:1-2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Because this is a constitutional document, a certain emphasis must be placed on creeds and confessions in what follows (Acts 15:1-31; 16:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7). However, in no way is it our intention to set such confessions of faith above or alongside the Scriptures. Our expectation is that all our churches will routinely teach and preach the whole counsel of God as expressed in Scripture (Acts 20:27; Matt. 4:4), and in all matters of doctrinal discussion and debate, an appeal to Scripture will always be the first resort. In accordance with our creedal and confessional standards, we acknowledge the pre-eminence of Scripture.
- B.** Our intention is to submit to all those principles regarding church order, which are clearly required by Scripture, or required by deductions from Scripture, which can be understood through good and necessary consequence. For the rest, we desire to operate in terms of a sanctified Christian prudence, with all things done in good order and biblical decency. We make no claim that every detail of our confederated order is found in Scripture. At all times, we seek to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:3, 13).

Article II. The Offices

- A.** The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4 -office view of church minister.
- B.** Within the CREC each elder must be a member of the church, which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.
- C.** Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14), often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session. Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church.
- D.** Each congregation will be served as possible by a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:5-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

- E. The CREC affirms the need for spiritually-disciplined, well-educated pastors, qualified in their households, grounded in rigorous and wise handling of the Scriptures, and exhibiting a thorough understanding of the biblical world and life view (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).
- F. Any candidate for pastor, minister, or teacher regardless of his level of formal education, will be examined before ordination (See Article IV.A.2.g). The candidate will be examined by a local session of elders with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery will also examine him with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery may or may not recommend his ordination to the session of the local congregation. The local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. If a local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may or may not initiate proceedings according to Article IV.D.5.
- G. If a minister or teacher has already been ordained within the CREC, he may not be required by presbytery or council to undergo another presbyterial examination. Such an examination may occur if both the calling church and the candidate agree to it. If a man has been ordained outside the CREC, the local congregation may seek the wisdom of the presbytery in the examination of his ministerial credentials, or the presbytery may also request the examination of the candidate.
- H. Any institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CREC must be under the authority and supervision of a local session of elders in a local CREC church (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

Article III. Local Congregations

- A. We hold the local congregation has primacy in the structure of biblical church government (Heb. 13:7, 17) without denying the important blessings and obligations which come from broader connections and fellowship.
- B. Each church will adopt into its statement of faith the *Apostle's Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon* in the form found in the *Reformed Evangelical Confession* below (1

Tim. 6:12). A CREC local church may use forms of the creeds that differ from the forms found in the CREC Constitution, provided that the alternative forms 1) differ only in being an alternative translation; and 2) the adopted form is approved at the Presbytery level at the stated meeting immediately following the decision by the local church to adopt an alternative form. Forms of the creeds which have been modernized for spelling and usage are acceptable. Forms which have been altered with regard to doctrinal content are not.

C. Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:

1. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)
2. American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788)
3. Three Forms of Unity:
4. Belgic Confession (1561);
5. Heidelberg Catechism;
6. Canons of Dort (1619)
7. The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)
8. The Savoy Declaration (1658)
9. The Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article X)
10. The Second Helvetic Confession
11. The 39 Articles of Christian Religion

D. Criteria for membership

1. Before a congregation can be accepted into CREC membership it must:
 - a) have its own constitution;
 - b) have been in existence for at least two years;

- c) have at least two elders; and
 - d) have enough support from members to meet all regular expenses necessary to sustain the life of that congregation.
- 2. Congregations seeking membership with the CREC which do not meet the criteria set forth in subsection 1 of this section must come under the care of an existing CREC church and will be characterized as mission churches. Mission churches may have non-voting delegations at presbytery and church council meetings.
- 3. Membership of Mission Churches
 - a) When a mission church comes to meet the criteria for a particularized church, it may be accepted into voting membership of the CREC by a two-thirds vote of presbytery.
 - b) Any mission church sponsored in another geographical territory must receive the approval of the presbytery in which it resides.
 - c) Any mission church accepted into the CREC membership must be particularized in the presbytery in which it resides.
- E. Elders of CREC member churches must declare their honest subscription to the confessions adopted by their church. A candidate church must declare any exceptions to its confessional standards prior to becoming a CREC member (Ex. 20:16; Col. 3:9). If a member church modifies its confessional standards in any way, including amendments and exceptions, the church must notify presbytery immediately. If presbytery determines that the modification places the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings according to Article IV.D.5.
- F. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household)

with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

- G.** In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.
- H.** Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).
- I.** The worship and work of each local congregation is ultimately to be governed by the teaching and godly examples supplied throughout all Scripture.
- J.** After sending at least one candidate delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery, churches may be admitted to membership in a presbytery through a two thirds vote of the presbytery at its next stated meeting. The presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CREC authority, and desire to uphold other CREC churches with all peace and love. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CREC, this entire document through Article X must be adopted into that church's constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CREC is finalized at that point, and not before. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CREC. Likewise, current members should pledge to uphold the new church in prayer and love.
- K.** In making a motion to seat a candidate church, a sponsoring church needs to be prepared to answer questions concerning the general health of that church and the likelihood of that church being able to embrace the CREC constitution when considered for full membership. The church which makes the motion to seat

the candidate church must be the church which moves to receive the church into full membership when that issue comes before presbytery. The church which moves to receive the church into membership must be prepared to answer questions related to the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession, and the moral, spiritual, and covenantal health of the families of the officers.

- L. The candidacy of a church will not be allowed to extend beyond the third presbytery meeting from which that church was first seated—that is, two years after their first seating as a candidate church - unless a two-thirds vote by presbytery to override and extend the status beyond two years occurs.
- M. When a church joins the CREC, the existing ordination of all its officers is thereby accepted, and does not necessitate a formal examination as with other candidates. Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning current pastoral and elder qualifications may occur in the discussion of that church's potential admission.

Article IV. The Broader Assemblies

A. General Provisions

1. There are two broader assemblies in the CREC: the Presbytery and the Church Council. A minimum of two local churches is necessary to establish a presbytery (another term in common use is *classis*). Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this presbyteries are urged to remember the law of Christ (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9).
2. The authority of the broader assemblies of the CREC is set forth in various parts of this Constitution. The assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner and hence their authority includes the following powers:
 - a) to hold regular and ad hoc meetings;
 - b) to amend their standards following due process;
 - c) to designate ad hoc committees;

- d)** to address matters referred to them by the session of a member church or by another CREC broader assembly;
 - e)** to formulate plans of action concerning matters common to the churches;
 - f)** to admit new churches into membership;
 - g)** to evaluate men for ordination and recommend or not recommend candidates to the local churches;
 - h)** to inquire into the spiritual health of member churches and to confer with other assemblies to this end;
 - i)** to offer a timely pastoral voice to public issues of common concern;
 - j)** to mediate in situations wherein a local church's session is at an impasse and when a local church's session is a party in a dispute either with one of its own members, with the session of another CREC church, with a CREC broader assembly, or with a non-CREC church;
 - k)** to require mediation and non-binding arbitration, when appropriate, in order to reconcile brothers;
 - l)** to protect its own purity and peace through judicial action following due process;
 - m)** to censure or expel a member church following due process;
 - n)** by two-thirds majority vote and pending judicial process, censure a member church or a CREC officer. A censure under this provision does not affect a member church's voting rights or appeal rights in the broader assemblies.
- 3.** No broader assembly may own property. All property within the CREC will be owned by the local congregations. General costs associated with hosting a broader assembly

will be borne by the host church of the broader assembly. Specific costs (e.g. food and travel) will be borne by the delegates or sending churches.

4. The assemblies may form no standing committees or boards. Every committee must be *ad hoc* and automatically dissolve when it completes its assigned task, or submits its assigned report to the assembly. Assigned tasks may not be open-ended, allowing for *de facto* standing committees.
5. All retirement or pension plans for CREC ministers, teachers, missionaries, etc. will be under the authority, management and oversight of the local churches, and will not be the responsibility of the broader assemblies.
6. The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. The various presbyteries may modify their respective Books of Procedures between meetings of council. Each meeting of council will review these various modifications and harmonize the various Books of Procedures, in accordance with the provisions of the CREC Council Book of Procedures. Presbyteries may then approve further modifications for their own use, to be followed in turn by conciliar review. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the minister.
7. The Book of Procedures maintained by each Presbytery will utilize a standardized format, based upon the CREC Council Book of Procedures, with local practice set out separately by Article. The portion of the Presbytery Books of Procedure that is based upon the CREC Council Book of Procedures will be updated in conformity with the Council Book of Procedures as it is updated.

8. Each Presbytery Minister will ensure that the numbering of the Book of Procedures he is responsible for maintaining is consistent with the Council Book of Procedures, which will require the renumbering of Articles which appear only on a local basis.

B. Representation

1. Each congregation in a presbytery will send up to two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery—ordinarily, one of whom is serving in the capacity of pastor if such exists in the local church. A voting representative of a congregation must be a member of that congregation, unless an exception is granted by presbytery.
2. The various presbyteries will each send an equal number of delegates to council, not including the minister of council among the number sent from his presbytery. Each council shall determine the number of delegates that will represent the presbyteries to the subsequent council; the number will be so determined as to create a council of between ten and eighteen delegates in all, not including the minister of council. If there are more than nine presbyteries, each presbytery will be represented at council with two delegates. Delegates to Council are to be elected at the first meeting of Presbytery following a regular meeting of Council, and at any subsequent stated meeting of presbytery at the discretion of presbytery. Each presbytery minister shall maintain a current roster of Council delegates from that presbytery. Elected Council delegates must also be seated as Presbytery delegates during the same year as the Council meeting.

C. Work and Authority of Minister

1. Broader Assemblies will elect a Minister from their assembled delegates when that office is vacant. In the event that no more than one Council delegate is willing or able to serve or is nominated as Council Minister, the assembled presbytery delegates also shall be eligible for nomination as Council Minister.

2. The Ministers of Presbytery and Council serve three-year terms. They assume authority and responsibilities following adjournment of the assembly meeting at which they are elected, which concludes the term of their predecessor.
3. All nominations for the position of Minister should be pre-posted on the agenda. If no nominations are received prior to the posting of the agenda, nominations may be made from the floor of the assembly. Upon the establishment of a new presbytery, Council shall assign a year to begin the three-year rotation for the election of the Minister of that presbytery. The presbytery shall have the discretion to have its first Minister serve one or two additional years in order to meet this rotation requirement.
4. Term limitation
 - a) No Minister of Presbytery may serve two consecutive terms as Minister unless no qualified candidate is willing to serve (1 Peter 5: 1-4). In such cases a two-thirds vote can extend the term of the current Minister.
 - b) The Minister of Council may be elected to a second consecutive term by a two-thirds vote of Council. A Minister of Council may not be elected to a third consecutive term unless the Council determines by a three-fourths majority that the circumstances are extraordinary.
5. Each Minister must be concurrently serving as a member of the local session. If a Minister ceases to serve in such a local office, then his term as Minister ceases at that time. Before his term is completed, a Minister may resign his position, or may be removed by a three-fourths vote of the assembly.
6. Ministers *pro tempore*
 - a) Assemblies shall also elect a Minister *Pro Tempore*, to serve in cases of the Minister's absence, or to fill out the term of the Minister if the office of Minister becomes vacant.

- b)** When Council elects a Minister *Pro Tempore*, he shall also serve as Assistant to the Minister of Council.
- 7.** Ministers properly act on behalf of the broader assemblies when actions have been declared in writing by the minister and then included in the minister's written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the Minister's report must be received and acted upon by the broader assembly in accordance with the procedure described in the Meeting Protocols.
- 8.** With regard to meetings, the Ministers of Presbytery and Council have the following authority and responsibilities: to prepare agendas, chair the meetings, submit reports of their work, call ad hoc meetings when necessary, and prepare minutes of the meetings to be posted in public. In addition, the Minister of Church Council shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CREC Constitution, reflecting all amendments and additions thereto, and for making the Constitution available by means of electronic publishing.
- 9.** The Minister of Presbytery and Council is also a spokesman and representative, whose authority and responsibilities in that capacity are as follows:
 - a)** First, between meetings of the broader assembly, the Minister represents the broader assembly by initiating and taking prudent steps in furtherance of an action, which he must report to the broader assembly for ratification. In this way, the Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: admitting members; amending confessional or governmental standards; making formal recommendations (whether for or against) ministerial candidates for ordination; removing a member church; requiring arbitration; and adjudicating a trial.
 - b)** Second, as representative of Presbytery or Council, the Minister has the authority to encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his broader assembly, meet with the ministers of

other broader assemblies, both within and without the CREC, to encourage them or to be encouraged, and to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of other broader assemblies as well as the churches within his own assembly.

- c) Third, Ministers are to act according to the authority conferred to them by virtue of their office and all their actions are to be confined and limited to the authority specified by the Constitution of the CREC and they shall report to Presbytery or Council on their work as spokesman and representative. Additionally, prior to a Minister censuring a CREC church or officer he must receive approval from two other Ministers.
- d) Fourth, Ministers have the discretion and authority to appoint assistants, clerks, or, when the Minister *Pro Tempore* is not available, chairmen of assemblies, on a case-by-case basis.

D. Referrals, Appeals and Actions

1. Issues relating to the local congregation which may lawfully be brought before the broader assemblies are specified in this section. All matters not itemized here must be adjudicated and resolved at the level of the local church. Before any appeal is made, a matter must be first addressed at the local church level. Appeal may be made (1) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of participating in or tolerating grievous dishonesty in subscription to the doctrinal or constitutional standards of the local church; or, (2) when the session of elders is accused by two or more of the church members of gross misbehavior. In any case where at least two witnesses are from the same household, three witnesses are required to hear the case. When such accusations of grievous dishonesty or gross misbehavior on the part of the session of a local church are made to elders or pastors from other local churches or to the Minister of Presbytery or Council, the session under accusation must be promptly informed. However, pastors and elders must reject irresponsible accusations and direct the member making the complaint to his own session. The

broader assemblies must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. Appeals to Council do not necessarily have to first be heard by Presbytery. However, Council may choose to remand the case to Presbytery.

2. When an appeal comes to Presbytery, a simple majority at Presbytery is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of Presbytery shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by Council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. The matter may be appealed further to Council by the appellant. Council must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. A simple majority at Council is necessary to decide the issue; the decision of Council shall be considered settled and binding unless and until it is proved by a future Council to be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Constitution of the CREC. Decisions of Council can be appealed to a future Council, though the future Council is not obligated to receive such an appeal.
3. The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are spiritually authoritative, but practically advisory. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the broader church, they may do so without deprivation of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, they may be removed from membership in the CREC, in accordance with constitutional procedure.
4. If a complaint against a member session is brought by someone who is not a member of a CREC church, the CREC, in Presbytery, Church Council, or through its appropriate Minister, can agree to hear the case if all of the following conditions have been met. (1) The Minister has a letter from the accused session in question declining to hear the case, or a letter advising him that the case was heard and rejected. (2) The Minister has a letter from the government of the church where the complainant is a member saying that the church affirms the truth of the Apostles' Creed, and agrees to hold the complainant accountable if the decision goes against him. If the complainant is an independent church, the Minister must have a letter of commitment from that church expressing their willingness to give due weight, respect and

consideration to the decision of the CREC, and agreeing not to pursue the matter beyond the CREC decision. (3) The charges as framed have two or three available and accountable witnesses listed for each specified complaint. (4) The complainant has not overtly discredited himself in his manner of bringing the charges.

5. After a fair and open judicial hearing at Presbytery, a congregation may be removed from membership in the Presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the Presbytery. Upon such occasions, the removed congregation retains the full right of appeal to Council.
6. Assemblies may from time to time address issues not included in the historic creeds and confessions by means of overtures, memorials (see Article IX), or confessional statements.

Article V. Meeting Protocols

- A. The Presbytery will have at least one stated annual meeting. If two-thirds of the churches submit a written request to the Minister, an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting will be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the Presbytery cannot be made at Presbytery.
- B. The Council will have a stated meeting every three years. In the year that Council meets, Presbyteries must have their annual meeting at the same place and time. If two thirds of the Presbyteries submit a written request to the Minister of Council, an *ad hoc* Council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of Council cannot be made at Council. The requirement that Presbyteries convene at the same place and time as Council does not apply to *ad hoc* meetings of Council.
- C. Acts of the Broader Assemblies
 1. Broader assemblies act properly when
 - a) In a duly constituted meeting, the measure is moved, seconded, carried by the appropriate number of votes, entered in the minutes, and approved in the minutes; or

- G.** Full minutes of all the assembly proceedings will be kept. The public minutes and records of the assembly will be published on a public electronic page maintained by the church of the Minister, with the Minister responsible for its contents. The Ministers shall ensure that approved minutes and current versions of the Books of Procedures for all Presbyteries and Council and of the CREC Constitution shall be available on the CREC web page. When revised, these documents shall be posted on or linked to the CREC web page within thirty days of their revision. Whenever new presbyteries are formed, the responsibility for the archives of the predecessor presbyteries remains with the new presbyteries having the same name. Minutes of confidential proceedings will be distributed in hard copy to all the member churches in the Presbytery. The costs associated with this process will be borne by the church of the Minister. Minutes must be posted within two weeks of their approval.
- H.** The minutes of the broader assemblies will be approved after the Minister has circulated a draft following the adjournment of the assembly, and has allowed reasonable opportunity for revision. The minutes require a two-thirds majority to be approved, and lack of response from a delegate will be considered an affirmative vote. The Minister will oversee this process of finalizing assembly minutes within sixty days.
- I.** The quorum for the Church Council will be two thirds of the voting delegates. The quorum for a Presbytery will be representation by two-thirds of the member churches in the Presbytery.
- J.** Setting time limits for floor debate or moving the previous question requires a two-thirds vote.
- K.** The broader assemblies have the authority to call for an executive session at their discretion by a simple majority vote.
- L.** The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can make motions but cannot vote.
- M.** A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and fraternal delegations. Such delegations are encouraged to come as observers and friends, or as prospective members of the

CREC. Such delegations may not vote, although they may address the assembly at the invitation of the Minister. They may not participate in debate without unanimous consent of the assembled delegates.

- N. A visiting delegation of a church, forming church, or interested group may be seated at the discretion of the Minister. Such seating is not part of the process of joining the CREC. Visiting delegations may not participate in the debates of the assembly.

Article VI. Missions

- A. All supported international or domestic CREC missionaries will not be sent by the Presbyteries or Church Council, but rather by the local church. As appropriate, the other churches in the Presbytery can offer encouragement and financial support, but the accountability of the missionaries will only be to the congregation, which is the sending body. As circumstances warrant, missionaries may seek a transfer of the sending authority from one local church to another, with the details to be worked out between the missionary and the elders of the respective congregations involved.
- B. Unless commissioned by, sent by, or ministering under the authority of a member church, individuals or ministries shall not be considered foreign missionaries or missions of the CREC.

Article VII. Confessional Standards and Revision

- A. The CREC holds as its foundational confession of faith the *Apostles Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon*. These confessions are included in Article X of this document.
- B. The CREC holds generally to the system of doctrine reflected in the great creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Reformation, and consequently requires all confederated churches to hold to at least one of the particular statements listed in Article III.C.
- C. Revisions to any portion of these confessions of faith must have a first reading at a stated meeting of the Church Council, and may then be brought to a vote at the subsequent stated meeting. Three quarters of the Presbyteries are required to

propose revisions to the confession of faith. Such proposed revisions will be placed on a list of potential revisions maintained by the Minister, to await consideration at the appointed time.

- D.** Three quarters of the Presbyteries may remove proposed revisions to the confession of faith at any time prior to the Council when they are to be voted on. A proposed change in the confession requires a three quarters majority in order to pass. This process of revision applies only to the confessional statements, and not to other portions of this constitution.
- E.** If a church's standing in the CREC is potentially affected by the process of confessional revision, that church has five years within which to make its first appeal to Presbytery.

Article VIII. Amendments

- A.** This Constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Church Council.

Article IX. Memorials

- A.** Memorials state the position of the CREC on issues on which a confessional statement has not yet been made. Memorials are contained in the Book of Memorials and are incorporated by reference into this Constitution.
- B.** A candidate or mission church must declare any exceptions or reservations to the memorials prior to its becoming a CREC member. Member churches must immediately notify the broader assembly of any changes to their position on the memorials. If Presbytery determines that the exceptions or reservations place the church at odds with CREC standards, it may initiate proceedings according to Article IV. D. 5.
- C.** The process for adopting a memorial must involve a careful striving for like-mindedness. This deliberate process will help us guard against various fads and winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). Any new memorial must be approved as a draft at a stated Council and adopted at a subsequent stated Council.

Article X. Reformed Evangelical Confessions

CREEDAL STATEMENTS (THE REFORMED EVANGELICAL CONFESSION)

A. The Apostles' Creed (2nd century)

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

B. Nicene Creed; Constantinople (381 AD)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church; acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

C. Definition of Chalcedon (451 AD)

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanity; truly God and truly man,

with a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father according to His deity, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before the ages He was begotten of the Father, according to the deity, and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, He was born of Mary the virgin, who is Godbearer according to His humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledge in two natures; without confusing them, without interchanging them, without dividing them, and without separating them; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but the properties of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence; not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as from the beginning the prophets have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

(1) A Westminster Creed

(A modern selection from the 17th century Shorter Catechism)

I believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever;
I believe God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth;
I believe there is but one true and living God; that there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory;

I believe God has foreordained whatever comes to pass; that God made all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good; and that God preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.

I believe our first parents, though created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sinned against God, by eating the forbidden fruit; and that their fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery;

I believe God determined, out of His mere good pleasure, to deliver His elect out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer;

I believe the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever;

I believe Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king.

I believe Christ as our Redeemer underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, and burial; He rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended up into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and is coming to judge the world at the last day.

I believe we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit;

I believe God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin;

I believe by His free grace we are effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and gathered into the visible church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation;

I believe that we also are given in this life such accompanying benefits as assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; that at death, we are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; and our bodies, being still united in Christ, rest in their graves, till the

resurrection; and at the resurrection, we shall be raised up in glory, we shall openly be acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

(2) An Evangelical Statement

(Adapted from the National Association of Evangelicals)

We *believe* the Bible to be the only inerrant Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice.

We *believe* that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present throughout all Creation but not limited by it. He is omniscient, that is, nothing is hidden from His sight. In all things He is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character.

We *believe* the God we serve is holy, righteous, good, severe, loving and full of mercy. He created the heavens and earth, and everything in them, in the space of six ordinary days, and all very good. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of everything that has been made.

We *believe* in the true deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return in power and glory.

We *believe* in the full deity of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging Him together with the Father and the Son in the works of creation and redemption.

We *believe* that because of Adam's sin all mankind is in rebellion against God. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary.

We *believe* that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that faith without works is dead.

We *believe* in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We *believe* in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.