

INTRODUCTION TO BYLAWS ZION REFORMED CHURCH¹

The following Bylaws are designed to help our church operate in a biblically faithful manner. Like most church bylaws, they cover basic issues related to membership, congregational meetings, the responsibilities of church officers, and the use of church property. They also cover issues that are often overlooked in standard bylaws, such as biblical counseling, confidentiality, and conflict resolution. These, and other special provisions, are incorporated by reference into our church's "Relational Commitments," so that the full benefit of such provisions may also be extended to people who are not yet members of our church but worshipping with us as part of our community.

At first glance, you may wonder why we have gone into such detail and addressed issues that churches have traditionally ignored. The primary answer to this question is that we believe there has been a significant change in the moral and legal climate of this country. In years past, most Americans, whether they were Christians or not, held to a common framework of basic moral values. Honesty, fairness, respect for others, self-discipline, and accountability were generally viewed as commendable qualities. In recent years, however, respect for these qualities has been undermined by a growing emphasis on individualism, a diminished respect for authority, the acceptance of relative morality, and the loss of common norms and values.

Because of this change, it is no longer possible to assume that everyone holds to the same standard of common sense, fairness, and justice, even within the same church. Therefore, what seems appropriate to one member of a church (for example, giving three days' notice of a special congregational meeting or allowing the deacons to spend \$3,000 without congregational approval) might seem outrageous to another member.

This loss of common values even within the church can cause a great deal of confusion and conflict. It can also expose a church to devastating lawsuits. A generation ago, very few people would have dreamed of suing a church. But the legal climate has changed dramatically in recent years, and today lawsuits against churches are commonplace. Part of the reason for this is that people have differing expectations as to how a church should conduct its affairs or treat its members. When these expectations are not met, a lawsuit often follows, which can ruin a church both financially and spiritually.

As Proverbs 22:3 warns, "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it." Realizing that the absence of common norms and values can pose a threat to the unity and well-being of our church, we developed these Bylaws as a means of establishing commonly accepted standards for the way we would treat one another and govern ourselves as a body. In particular, these Bylaws are designed to accomplish the following goals:

They help to prevent surprises and disappointed expectations by providing potential members with a thorough explanation of how the church intends to govern itself and accomplish its mission.

They reduce the likelihood of confusion and conflict within the church by establishing clear operational guidelines.

¹ These Bylaws were adopted by the congregation on October 25, 2015. This introduction is explanatory only and not part of the Bylaws.

They prevent the misuse of authority by church leaders by limiting their powers and establishing procedures that protect members from being disciplined or losing rights without due process.

They give our elders protection from being subpoenaed by a civil court to testify regarding information they receive through pastoral counseling, while at the same time giving them guidelines for reporting actual or suspected harm to others.

They reduce the church's exposure to legal liability by satisfying recently developed legal requirements and requiring that potential lawsuits will be resolved through biblical mediation or arbitration rather than through litigation.

Most people would agree that these are worthwhile goals, but some might still be troubled by the amount of detail found in these Bylaws. They might say, "Why can't we live with just a few general rules?" The answer to that question is quite simple: Because we live in a fallen world, we tend to interpret general rules differently and twist them to serve our own selfish ends. Therefore, it is often necessary to develop detailed rules to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings and mistreatment.

This human need for detailed guidance is clearly reflected in Scripture. Instead of giving us only the two Great Commandments (love God and love your neighbor), God gave us the Ten Commandments. And he didn't stop there. Realizing our weakness and our sinful tendency to ignore or distort his commandments, God instructed Moses to set forth dozens of detailed laws on how his followers should behave (see Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy). All of these laws are summed up in the two great commandments, but even Jesus knew that until the world is renewed, we will still need the helpful guidance of the more detailed moral principles set forth throughout Scripture (see Matthew 5:17-7:6).

One of the places that we sometimes need this kind of detailed guidance is in the church. Scripture does not tell us exactly how to give notice or establish quorums for congregational meetings, what information should remain confidential and what may be shared with others, how long deacons should serve without re-election, or how to dispose of property if a church dissolves. These Bylaws are designed to answer these types of questions, and will hopefully spare us from unnecessary confusion and conflict, help us to act in consistent and respectful ways, and allow us to devote ourselves to the more important matters of God's kingdom.

As you read these Bylaws, we encourage you to look up and study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. If such study does not answer all of your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to approach one of our elders, who will be happy to talk with you about these Bylaws.

BYLAWS OF ZION REFORMED CHURCH

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1. Name

The name by which this organization shall be known in law shall be “Zion Reformed Church,” referred to herein as “the church.”

2. Denomination

The church shall be a member of the Presbyterian Church in America (“PCA”) and of that denomination’s appropriate Presbytery, as long as Scriptural doctrine is upheld.

3. Constitution

The Constitution of the church, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America (“BCO”), comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline, and the Directory for Worship (see BCO Preface III).¹ Whenever possible, these Bylaws shall be interpreted so as to be consistent with the church’s Constitution; should any bylaw be found to contradict a provision of the Constitution, the Constitution shall control (see BCO 11-4; 25-7).²

4. Organization and Incorporation

The church shall be organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Ohio (see BCO 25-7).

¹ While non-binding, we also acknowledge the value, insight and help of other historic statements of faith, such as the Three Forms of Unity.

² These Bylaws are designed to supplement the Constitution of the church, especially our Book of Church Order (BCO). When needed to provide an understandable framework, these Bylaws will actually duplicate or repeat what is stated in the BCO. In some places, these Bylaws cover issues not directly addressed in the BCO. To avoid repeating the entire BCO, however, these Bylaws do not cover every issue addressed in the BCO. Therefore, these Bylaws may not serve as a substitute for the BCO, which should still be consulted when questions arise about church government. To facilitate cross-referencing between these two documents, these Bylaws contain numerous citations to related sections of the BCO up to and including the 42nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America.

5. Purpose and Limitations

The purposes of the church are:

- a. To bring glory and honor to the Triune God by promoting true worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness;
- b. To operate exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the classification of legal charities; and no part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of any private stockholder or individual; and no substantial part of the activities of the organization, or any receipt of its funds, shall be utilized for any other purpose except those purposes mentioned above;
- c. To handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities (see BCO 25-7).
- d. The church shall not have or issue shares of stock, and no dividends shall be paid. No part of the income or assets of the church shall be distributed to any member or officer without full consideration. The church is prohibited from lending money to guarantee the obligation of a member or officer of the church. No member or officer of the church has any vested right, interest, or privilege in or to the assets, property, functions, or activities of the church. The church may contract in due course, for reasonable consideration, with its members or officers without violating this provision.

6. Location of Office

The registered office of the church shall be located within Ohio at the address of the church's registered agent. The Board of Directors or a majority of the members may change the registered agent and the address of the registered office from time to time, upon filing the appropriate statement with the Secretary of State.

7. Membership

- a. The membership shall consist of all communing and non-communing members, all of whom have the privilege of pastoral oversight, instruction, and government by the church (see BCO 6). Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table as provided in Bylaw 7.b³ (see BCO 6-2). Non-communing members are the children of communing members (see BCO 6-1; 28; 57-1).
- b. A person may be received into communing membership by a letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice approved by the Session, by reaffirmation of faith, or by confession of faith. In order to be received into communing membership, a person must be accepted by the Session and verbally assent to the membership vows of the church during a corporate worship service (see BCO 57-5).

³ When the BCO uses the language "admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table" it is talking about something more than merely being allowed to take communion (for example, members of other evangelical churches may also come to the Table; see BCO 58-4). Therefore, this language, combined with Bylaw 7.b, clarifies that "admitted . . . to the . . . Table" means being admitted into communing membership.

- c. All communing members who are at least twelve years old and in good standing in the church shall be voting members (“good standing” means that a member is not presently under censure or deposition; see BCO 25-1; 30). Any voting member in attendance at a duly called meeting shall be entitled to one vote on matters brought before the congregation (see BCO 6-4; 24-3; 25-1). Voting by proxy shall not be permitted.
- d. Members may be removed from membership at their own request by informing the Session of their intention to withdraw and their reasons (see BCO 38-3; 46-1; 46-2). If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or disappointments with the church, the Session shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the Session is unable to resolve those matters, it shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and practice that can respond more effectively to his gifts and needs. If it appears to the Session that a member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded (see Matt. 18:12-20; BCO 38-3).
- e. Members (communing and non-communing) may also be removed from membership by order of the Session when they: persistently, over a period of one year, and without adequate reason absent themselves from the stated services of the church; unite with a church of another denomination; or are removed by excommunication for persistent impenitence (see BCO 6-1,3; 28; 38-4; 36-6).

8. Ruling Elders and Deacons

- a. Ruling elders and deacons must be male voting members (see BCO 7-2; 25-7). In order to be eligible for election, a man shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in Scripture (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; BCO 8-1, 2; 24-1). He shall also have been a member in good standing in the church for at least one year, shall have received appropriate training under the direction or with the approval of the Session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership (see BCO 16; 17).
- b. Ruling elders, individually and jointly with the teaching elders, are to lead the church in the service of Christ. They are to watch diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals. Evils that they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the Session. They should visit the people, especially the sick, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the children of the covenant. They should pray with and for the people. They should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the teaching elders and help them in their labors (see BCO 7; 8-3, 8, 9).
- c. Deacons shall demonstrate the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy toward the saints and strangers on behalf of the church (see BCO 7-2; 9-1, 2, 3). As delegated and directed by the Session, they shall minister to the temporal needs of members and friends, manage the church finances, propose an annual budget to Session for approval and adoption, and see to the care and maintenance of church property.

- d. Any voting member may propose to the Session nominations for the offices of elders and deacons. The Session shall examine those nominees to judge if they possess the necessary qualifications for office. An elder or deacon who had been previously ordained but deposed of office must be re-examined. Notice of a meeting to elect elders or deacons shall be given verbally, in the church bulletin, by written letter, or by electronic means at least two weeks in advance of such meeting. At least one Lord's Day preceding the date appointed for the election, the Session shall announce to the church the names of the eligible candidates. Election shall be from those eligible candidates. Voting on the election of elders and deacons shall be done by secret ballot, and each vote shall be cast either in favor of or against the election of each candidate, and those candidates receiving the vote of a majority in favor of their election shall be deemed elected. Elders and deacons shall be elected for three-year terms of service; however, it is to be recognized that ordination to the office of elder or deacon is perpetual (BCO 24-7). Upon completion of any three-year term, the elder or deacon may be elected for an additional term of service. If an elder or deacon is elected at a meeting other than the annual congregational meeting, his regular term shall expire at the time of the second annual congregational meeting following his election (see BCO 24-1 to 5; also 16 and 17).
- e. An elder or deacon may be divested of his office by deposition for an offense in doctrine or life (see BCO 30-5). He may also be divested without censure by action of the Session, if a majority of the congregation so requests (see BCO 24-7) or if he cannot or does not for a period of one year perform the duties of his office (see BCO 24-9). An elder or deacon also may resign from his office (see BCO 24-7), or he may be relieved of certain responsibilities when he becomes infirm or by reason of age desires to be released from his duties (see BCO 24-10).

9. Teaching Elders

- a. Teaching elders do not hold a different office from ruling elders. Although they have different designations, both share one and the same office of elder (see BCO 7-2; 8-9). Scripture refers to this one office by various titles, such as *elder*, *pastor*, *overseer*, *teacher*, etc. (Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; see also BCO 8-1). In so doing, it is not describing different offices, but different duties of the same office.
- b. In order to help distinguish the duties of teaching and ruling elders, the BCO often refers to teaching elders as "pastors" or "ministers," with the senior or solo teaching elder simply being designated "the pastor" (see BCO 20, 21, 22). For the sake of continuity with the BCO, those designations will be used hereafter. However, neither the BCO nor these Bylaws imply by the use of such designations that only teaching elders have pastoral responsibilities. Indeed, teaching and ruling elders are co-pastors in their joint work of ministering to and shepherding the flock of God, and both share the same authority and rule in the church (see BCO 7-2; 8-9).
- c. Although the responsibilities of pastors (teaching elders) and ruling elders largely overlap (both rule and teach as they shepherd the flock together), there are some differences. A pastor is specially gifted, called and trained by God to preach the Word and administer the sacraments (BCO 7-2; 8-5). As such, he is examined, ordained, and installed by the Presbytery, and his membership resides with that body (see BCO 21, 22). Along with the ruling elders, the pastor is to feed and tend the flock as Christ's minister and to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to conduct the public worship of God; to pray for

and with Christ's flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of people, instructing and counseling individuals, and training them to be faithful servants of Christ; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and to make known the gospel to the lost (see BCO 7-2; 8-4, 5).

- d. If the congregation shall choose to elect an associate pastor (see BCO 22-2), his relationship to the church shall be as determined by the congregation (see BCO 22-4). If the Session calls an assistant pastor, his relationship with the church shall be as determined by the Session (see BCO 22-3).
- e. The pastor and any associate pastor shall be elected by the congregation as is required by the provisions of BCO 20.
- f. A pastor may resign from his position with the permission of his Presbytery, upon due consideration of the needs and counsel of the church. If the church desires to be relieved of its pastor, it may, through a duly called congregational meeting, ask him to resign. If the pastor agrees to do so, the Presbytery shall be requested to dissolve the pastoral relationship as of a mutually agreeable date. If the pastor is not willing to resign, the church may petition the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship and may send representatives to the meeting to support the request. The Presbytery may grant the request, but only after giving the pastor opportunity to present his reasons for not concurring, or it may urge the congregation to reconsider its action. The decision of the Presbytery shall be final and binding, except when that decision is appealed to the General Assembly (see BCO 23-1).⁴

10. Session (Board of Directors)

- a. The Session is the governing body (Board of Directors) of the church and consists of its pastor, associate pastor(s), and ruling elders (see BCO 12-1; 22-2; 25-7). The Session shall have the power and authority to make rules and regulations not inconsistent with the laws of the State of Ohio, the Constitution, and these Bylaws. The Session shall manage the business affairs of the corporation, oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship, and concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation. It shall receive, dismiss, and exercise discipline over the members of the church, supervise the activities of the Board of Deacons and all other organizations of the congregation, to approve and adopt the budget, and have final authority over the use of the church property (see BCO 12-1, 5; 11-1 to 4).

⁴ This provision provides more specific direction than does BCO 23-1 and does not repeat some of the details of that section. It also clarifies the fact that the Presbytery has the final authority to dissolve the pastoral relationship, unless its decision is appealed to the General Assembly.

- b. The pastor shall be the moderator (chairman) of the Session (see BCO 10-3; 12-2 to 4). The Session shall elect its clerk (secretary) annually from among its members (see BCO 10-4). The Session may also choose a vice-moderator from among its members.
- c. The Session shall have final authority for affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by civil law for nonprofit corporations (see BCO 25-7 to 8). The Session may delegate to the Board of Deacons, the Trustees, or to other communing members such of these responsibilities as it deems appropriate (see BCO 9-2, 5).
- d. The church may appoint Trustees who shall be responsible for executing any documents required for the acquisition and disposition of church property (see BCO 25-7). All Trustees shall be members of the Session, and shall be elected by the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting.
- e. The Session shall meet at least quarterly and shall convene at the call of the moderator, the Presbytery, any two members of the Session, or upon its own adjournment (see BCO 12-6; 10-3). Either oral, written, or electronic notice, including the date, time, and place of a meeting, shall be given at least two days before a meeting. If mailed, notice shall be deemed to be effective the day after the letter is postmarked. Notice may be waived either orally or in writing. An elder's or pastor's attendance at a meeting waives his right to object to lack of notice or defective notice of the meeting, unless at the beginning of the meeting (or promptly upon arrival), he objects to holding the meeting or transacting business at the meeting, and does not vote for or assent to action taken at the meeting.
- f. If there are four or more ruling elders, the pastor and two ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. If there are fewer than four ruling elders, the pastor and one ruling elder shall constitute a quorum. When a church has no pastor and there are five or more ruling elders, three shall constitute a quorum; if there are less than five ruling elders, two shall constitute a quorum (see BCO 12-1).
- g. Two elders shall be sufficient for constituting a commission of Session for the purpose of carrying out non-judicial business for Session.
- h. The act of a majority present at a Session meeting at which a quorum is present (when the vote is taken) shall be the act of the Session. A pastor or elder shall be deemed to have approved of an action taken if he is present at a meeting of the Session unless: (1) he objects at the beginning of the meeting (or promptly upon arrival) to holding it or transacting business at the meeting; or (2) his dissent or abstention from the action taken is entered in the minutes of the meeting; or (3) he did not approve the action and he delivers written notice of dissent or abstention to the presiding officer of the meeting before its adjournment or immediately after adjournment of the meeting.
- i. If at any time there are less than three persons on the Session, the congregation may elect from the Board of Deacons and, if necessary, from among the voting members, individuals who will temporarily serve as directors of the church for the purpose of carrying out any required corporate business. The terms of such temporary directors shall expire when sufficient elders have been elected and ordained to bring the number of the Session to three or more. If the Session shall cease to exist or become so small as to prevent it from working effectively, Presbytery shall provide for the election and ordination of elders from within the congregation, or, with the consent of the

congregation, may appoint ruling elders or ministers, or both, normally from within the same Presbytery, to be an acting Session or to augment the existing Session temporarily.

- j. The Session may meet by means of a conference telephone call or similar communications equipment, provided all persons entitled to participate in the meeting received proper notice of the telephone meeting, and provided all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time. A member participating in a conference telephone meeting is deemed present in person at the meeting. The moderator of the meeting may establish reasonable rules as to conducting business at any meeting by phone.
- k. The moderator shall be the chairman of the Board of Directors and the principal executive officer (president) of the corporation. The moderator shall be subject to the control of the Session, and shall in general supervise and control, in good faith, all of the business and affairs of the church. The moderator shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the members and of the Session, and shall conduct such meetings so as to facilitate free and respectful debate and decision-making. The moderator may sign, with the secretary or any other proper officer of the church that the Session has authorized, corporation deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other Session authorized instruments (see BCO 12-2; 10-3; 24-2).
- l. The Session may appoint a vice-moderator (vice-chairman), who may perform, in good faith, the moderator's duties if the moderator is absent or is unable or refuses to act, and if any emergency should arise requiring immediate action (see BCO 12-2). In addition, associate or assistant pastors may substitute for the pastor as moderator of the Session at the discretion of the pastor and Session (see BCO 12-4). A vice-moderator or substitute moderator shall have all of the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the moderator. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, with consent of the Session, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion, or one of its own members elected to preside. In judicial cases, the moderator shall be a minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs (see BCO 12-3).
- m. The clerk of the Session shall be the secretary of the church and shall in good faith: (1) create and maintain one or more books for the minutes of the proceedings of the Session; (2) provide that all notices are served in accordance with these Bylaws or as required by law; (3) be custodian of the church records and corporate records; (4) subscribe the minutes of all meetings of the Session; (5) when requested or required, authenticate any records of the church; (6) keep a current register of the post office address of each member; and (7) in general perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and any other duties that the moderator or the Session may assign to the secretary (see BCO 10-4). As indicated by BCO 25-5, the clerk of the Session and the clerk of the congregation are not necessarily the same person.
- n. The church treasurer shall: (1) have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the church; (2) receive and give receipts for moneys due and payable to the church from any source, and deposit all moneys in the church's name in banks, trust companies, or other depositories that the Session shall select; (3) submit the books and records to a Certified Public Accountant or other accountant as directed by the Session; and (4) in general perform all of the duties incident to the office of treasurer and any other duties that the moderator or Session may assign to the treasurer. If required by the

Session, the treasurer shall give a bond for the faithful performance of the treasurer's duties and as insurance against the misappropriation of funds. If a bond is required, it shall be in a sum and with the surety or sureties that the Session shall determine. The treasurer shall be elected by the Board of Deacons and must be a member in good standing for at least a year.

- o. The Board of Directors may establish such committees as it deems necessary for the work of the church.

11. Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall oversee the ministry of the deacons. The Board of Deacons shall elect a chairman and a secretary from their number and a treasurer to whom shall be entrusted the funds for the current expenses of the church. They may also appoint additional assistants as necessary. It shall meet separately at least once a quarter, and whenever requested by the Session. The Board of Deacons shall determine the number necessary for a quorum (see BCO 9-4).

12. Congregational Meetings

- a. An annual meeting of the church shall be held each year at a date, time, and place to be determined by the Session (see BCO 25-2). The annual meeting shall be held for the purposes of prayer, electing elders and deacons, receiving reports from the Session and Board of Deacons (including a report on the annual budget), and transacting any other business that may come before the meeting.
- b. Special meetings of the church shall be called at a date and location to be determined by the Session whenever the Session deems it to be in the best interests of the church or when requested in writing to do so by more than the number of members required in BCO 25-2.
- c. The date, time, and location of all congregational meetings must be announced by oral, written, or electronic means at least one week prior to the time set for the meeting, or by letter mailed at least eight days prior to the meeting (see BCO 25-2). If the voting members adjourn any congregational meeting to a different date, time, or place, notice of a new date, time, and place need not be given if the new date, time, and place is announced before adjournment. A member entitled to a notice may waive notice of the meeting (or any notice required by the laws of the State of Ohio or these bylaws), by a writing signed by the member. The member must send the notice of waiver to the church (either before or after the date and time stated in the notice) for inclusion in the minutes or filing with the church records.
- d. The purpose of a meeting shall be announced in advance if it involves: a proposed amendment to the bylaws or articles of incorporation; the election or removal of officers; the calling or removal of the pastor; the dissolution of the church; or a question regarding the church's denominational affiliation.
- e. A member's attendance at a meeting: waives the member's right to object to lack of notice or defective notice of the meeting, unless the member at the beginning of the meeting objects to holding the meeting or transacting business at the meeting; and, waives the member's right to object to consideration of a particular matter at the meeting that is not

within the purpose or purposes described in the meeting notice, unless the member objects to considering the matter when it is presented.

- f. The quorum of the congregational meeting shall consist of one-fourth (1/4) of the resident communing members, if the church has not more than one hundred (100) such members, and of one-sixth (1/6) of the resident communing members if a church has more than one hundred (100) such members (see BCO 25-3). Unless provided otherwise in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those in attendance (see 7.c above for voting eligibility), a quorum being present, is sufficient to decide any matter.
- g. The pastor shall be the moderator of congregational meetings by virtue of his office. If it should be impracticable or inexpedient for him to preside, or if there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America, or any male member of that particular church (see BCO 25-4).
- h. A clerk shall be elected by the congregation to serve at that meeting or for a definite period, whose duty shall be to keep correct minutes of the proceedings and of all business transacted and to preserve these minutes in a permanent form, after they have been attested by the moderator and the clerk of the meeting. He shall send a copy of these minutes to the Session of the church (see BCO 25-5).

13. Church Records

- a. The Session shall keep the following records: (1) minutes of its meetings, including a record of the administration of the sacraments and changes in the membership of the congregation; (2) minutes of the meetings of the congregation; (3) rolls of the members in the congregation (communions, non-communions, and voting), with the dates of their reception (see BCO 12-8); (4) resolutions adopted by the Session; (5) appropriate accounting records; (6) its articles or restated articles of incorporation and all amendments to them currently in effect; and (7) its bylaws or restated bylaws and all amendments to them currently in effect (see BCO 12-7).
- b. A member shall be entitled to inspect and copy, at a reasonable time and location specified by the Session, any of the church records described above, provided the Session finds that the member has a proper purpose and is acting in good faith. The Session may limit access to any records that contain confidential information about a particular person or persons.

14. Relational Commitments

- a. Relationships in the church will be guided by the biblical principles set forth in a document titled "Relational Commitments," which is incorporated into these Bylaws by reference as if set forth herein in its entirety. This document establishes our commitments related to such matters as peacemaking and reconciliation, preserving marriages, protecting children, confidentiality, church discipline, *etc.* The document also includes various church policies relating to such matters as weddings, building use, child protection, *etc.* As with everything else in these Bylaws, the "Relational Commitments" shall be interpreted so as to be consistent with the church's Constitution.

Should any part of the “Relational Commitments” be found to contradict a provision of the Constitution, the Constitution shall control (see BCO 11-4; 25-7).

- b. The “Relational Commitments” of the church are further supplemented by the guidance of BCO Appendix I, *Biblical Conflict Resolution*. This appendix, while not a binding part of the Constitution, provides guidance for the practice of Christian Conciliation as a means of resolving any conflicts that may develop within the church and will be the preferred course of response over judicial actions to the extent that circumstances may permit.

15. Ownership and Distribution of Property

- a. The church shall hold, own, and enjoy its own personal and real property, without any right of reversion to another entity, except as provided in these Bylaws (see BCO 25-9 to 11). Should the church decide to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in America as provided in BCO 25-11, the church shall retain ownership of its property. Such withdrawal shall not be considered to be a “dissolution.”
- b. “Dissolution” means the complete disbanding of the church so that it no longer functions as a congregation or as a corporate entity. Upon the dissolution of the church, its property shall be applied and distributed as follows: (1) all liabilities and obligations of the church shall be paid and discharged or adequate provision shall be made for them; (2) assets held by the church upon condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements; (3) assets received and not held upon a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the dissolution, shall be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the responding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and are engaged in activities substantially similar to those of the corporation; this distribution shall be done pursuant to a plan adopted by the Session, provided that no assets are distributed to any organization governed by a member of the Session.
- c. If a church is dissolved by the Presbytery at the request of the congregation and no disposition has been made of its property by those who hold the title to the property within six months after such dissolution, then those who held the title to the property at the time of such dissolution shall deliver, convey and transfer to the Presbytery, all property of the church; and the receipt and acquittance of the Presbytery, or its proper representatives, shall be a full and complete discharge of all liabilities of such persons holding the property of the church. The Presbytery receiving such property shall apply the property or the proceeds thereof at its discretion, and the requirements of Bylaw 15.b. are satisfied (see BCO 25-12).
- d. Any assets not otherwise disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, for such purposes and to such organizations as said court shall determine, provided such organizations are part of the Presbyterian Church in America.

16. Indemnification of Officers

- a. The Session may choose to indemnify and advance church-related expenses of any pastor, elder, deacon, employee, or agent of the church.
- b. The church shall indemnify any pastor, elder or deacon or former pastor, elder or deacon of the church against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the defense of any action, suit or proceeding, civil or criminal, in which he is made a party by reason of being or having been such elder or deacon, except in relation to matters as to which he shall be adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his duty.

17. Rules of Order

All meetings of the church, the Session, and its various boards and committees shall be conducted pursuant to the latest edition of *Roberts Rules of Order*.

18. Amendment of Bylaws

With the exceptions of the Constitution, which is amendable only by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and the "Relational Commitments," which are amendable only by a majority of Session, these Bylaws may be amended or repealed only by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at a duly-called meeting of the church called for such purposes.

RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF ZION REFORMED CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The Church, simply stated, is the gospel in community. Its members are redeemed by the gospel. Its mission is to spread the gospel. Its manner of life is defined by the gospel. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel . . .” (Phil. 1:27).

We know, however, that relating to one another in a manner “worthy of the gospel” isn’t easy. While our diversity of gifts, experiences, and desires usually enhance our ministry to one another and to the world, they can also lead to conflict (see 1 Cor. 12-14; Jam. 4:1-6). At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. Nothing undermines the Church’s display of the gospel like quarreling and unresolved conflict.

The Relational Commitments are intended to help us relate to one another in a way that promotes peace, responds biblically to conflict, and magnifies the gospel in our relationships. Rooted squarely in Scripture, they give us biblical guidance on important relational issues, such as peacemaking, marriage, confidentiality, church discipline, *etc.* They accomplish several important purposes:

- They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love and gospel of Christ.
- They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear track for us to run on when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward reconciliation.
- They establish guidelines for how we will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children from abuse.
- They define and limit the spiritual authority of our elders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.
- They defined various official church policies relating to such matters as weddings, building use, child protection, *etc.*
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.

As you read our Relational Commitments, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. Because we believe they are biblical, we encourage all members and regular attendees to embrace them and relate to one another in light of them. As pastors of this flock, we will do all we can to work together with you for your joy and to help you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

The Elders of Zion Reformed Church

COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

... walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that displays and declares the gospel of peace in all that we do. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of his only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 2:11-18; 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us his wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:¹

Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

¹ Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church elder, we will look to other elders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our elders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our elders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, including their leadership, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our Book of Church Order, supplemented by guidance set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline*.
- If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's command not to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries (www.Peacemaker.net).

Great Commission Peacemaking

- As those who have been reconciled to God through the cross of Christ, we will joyfully embrace our responsibility of spreading His gospel so that others may be reconciled to God through Him (2 Cor. 5:17-21).
- We will commit to praying for our families, our church, our communities, our nation, and our world, that they might enjoy God's peace not only temporally, but also and especially eternally (Ps. 122:1; Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; Col. 4:2-4).
- We will strive to display the gospel of peace in our relationships with all people, so that our Christ-like living will bear witness to the world of the truth and power of God's grace (Matt. 5:16; John 17:20-21; Col. 4:5).
- We will endeavor to declare the gospel of peace to the lost as God gives us opportunity and as we intentionally pursue such opportunities for His sake (John 15:26-27; Col. 4:6, 1 Thess. 1:8-10, 1 Pet. 3:1-16).

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to be reconciled to God through faith in Him.

COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31-32)*

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ’s loving relationship with his bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, he established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life’s joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general, and most of all to display Christ’s love in the gospel.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. All are welcome in our church.

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages, preventing divorce, and strengthening families. In accordance with our wedding policy, we require and provide thorough premarital counseling to ensure that couples enter into marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by participating in regular Christian fellowship in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25). We are committed to helping husbands to spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and wives to encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

Our elders are committed to providing counsel and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

We recognize, however, that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce. We believe divorce is only permissible in cases of unrepentant adultery (Matt. 5:31-32) and abandonment (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Even though divorce may be *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required*. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to him (Ps. 103:8-12; Isa. 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God’s love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph. 5:1-2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Col. 3:12-14; Gal. 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matt. 18:12-20).

Just as church elders are involved in beginning a marriage, they should be involved if it ends. Therefore, when someone is considering divorce, we encourage him or her to bring the situation to our elders and cooperate with them as they determine whether biblical grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who have filed for divorce are still married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus, they should refrain from any activity that would constitute marital infidelity.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible. We will support a decision to pursue a second marriage to a different person only when we have determined that it is biblically valid and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness in the gospel. We recognize that even the best marriage on this earth is but a faint glimmer of the all-satisfying relationship the Church enjoys with Christ. We eagerly await the day when Jesus returns for us, His bride, and redeems all of our brokenness by making all things new.

COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. (Prov. 27:12)

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, however, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. No one can guarantee that such things will never happen within a church, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers), unless he is a pastor of the church, or unless he or she has regularly attended our church for at least six months and is approved by session.
- We require all of our youth workers to complete a detailed application and screening process.
- We require that, whenever practicable, youth workers serve in teams of two or more and be visible to other workers.
- We will follow and enforce our child protection policy.

If a child is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending youth workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also evaluate our practices and procedures, considering changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.

COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (Rom. 15:14)

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships. Whenever believers are unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and when needed from church elders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; James 5:16). Therefore, we encourage our people to seek counsel from each other and our elders.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

God calls our elders to set an example for us “in speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Therefore, we expect them to treat counselees with every respect and courtesy, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety or impurity during counseling (Eph. 5:3). We also expect counselees to promptly report to the Session any conduct that fails to meet this standard.

To prevent our elders from being placed in situations that might compromise their pastoral commitments, we ask members and attenders of this church not to try to compel them to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge any confidential information they receive through pastoral counseling or ministry (Prov. 11:13, 25:9).

COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

*Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets,
but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered. (Prov. 11:13)*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members and attenders are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our elders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when our elders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- when an elder is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other elders in our church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church (Prov. 11:14);
- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);
- when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20); or,
- when elders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE¹

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works . . . (Heb. 10:24)

A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect his character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves his church so much that he sent his Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). His ultimate purpose for his church is to present her as a gift to his Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the "bride" of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "discipline." The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. True discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. "The Lord disciplines those he loves" (Heb. 12:6). "Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law" (Ps. 94:12). "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline" (Rev. 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be proactive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as "formative discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On some occasions God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, he corrects us. One way he does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Pet. 2:12).

¹ This section is intended to summarize our commitment to Scripture's teaching on accountability and church discipline. The church's official process of church discipline is set forth in the "Rules for Discipline" in our Book of Church Order.

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in his Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to helping one another obey God's command to be "self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (Titus 1:8).

The elders of our church recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of the church.

B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks him in prayer, and draws on his grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other Christians to get involved. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of church elders in what is sometimes referred to as "formal discipline."

C. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to "tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church elders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our elders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our elders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).

As the disciplinary process progresses, our elders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, withholding of the Lord's Supper, removal from church office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from our elders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior. This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our elders deem it to be appropriate (Matt. 18:17, 1 Tim. 5:20).²

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our elders may formally remove him or her from membership and normal fellowship. They also may inform the church body of their decision and instruct the congregation to treat the individual as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat him as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to him, remind him of God's holiness and mercy, and call him to repent and put his faith in Christ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20)

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). This is why, upon joining the church, members vow to "submit to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace." Members thereby waive their right to withdraw from membership or accountability if under discipline, and they agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Although they are free to stop attending the church at any time, they agree that a withdrawal while under discipline will not be given effect until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as prescribed by the "Rules of Discipline" in our Book of Church Order.

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our elders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from his sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual repents, and our elders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14).

People who have been excluded from another church will not be allowed to partake of the sacraments in our church, to become members, or to participate in the regular fellowship of our church until they have

² If our elders inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the individual's name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as: how widely known the situation already is; whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the individual to repent; or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm he might cause (see previous footnote). Even if our elders decide it is not necessary to identify an individual specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help to enlist wide prayer support, let the congregation know that our elders are obeying the Lord's command to seek after those who stray, and warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our elders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

If an individual disagrees with the way discipline has been carried out, he or she may appeal the church's decisions according to the process of appeal in our Book of Church Order (see BCO 42).

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:10-11).

MEMBERSHIP VOWS OF ZION REFORMED CHURCH¹

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope, save in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?²

Signature

Date

Print Name

Elder's Signature

Date

¹ These vows are copied directly from BCO 57-5.

² By vowing submission to the government and discipline of the Church, members agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline, and hence waive their right to withdraw from membership or accountability if under discipline (see *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline*; see also BCO 38-3).

ZION REFORMED CHURCH WEDDING POLICY¹

Let marriage be held in honor among all . . . (Heb. 13:4)

This Wedding Policy is intended to be consistent with Holy Scripture and the laws of the State of Ohio. The Session² of Zion Reformed Church is required by God's word, as well as their conscience, to marry only those persons qualified for marriage according to Scripture and civil law. Couples wishing to be married at Zion Reformed Church should ensure they meet and can adhere to the following provisions prior to submitting an application:³

1. Both parties must be members in good standing of Zion Reformed Church or another like-minded evangelical Church approved by our Session.⁴
2. Both parties must be committed to a Christian marriage and must meet the biblical qualifications for marriage as defined by Holy Scripture.⁵ Both parties must also meet the legal qualifications for marriage as defined by the state.⁶
3. Both parties must satisfactorily complete pre-marital biblical counseling with either a pastor from Zion Reformed Church or with another like-minded evangelical pastor approved by our Session.⁷
4. The wedding officiate must be a pastor of Zion Reformed Church or another like-minded evangelical pastor approved by our Session. Guest ministers must submit ordination credentials and all details of the service (order of worship, music, vows, *etc.*) to our Session for approval.
5. Both parties must agree to abide by the *Building Use Policy* of Zion Reformed Church.
6. All aspects of the reception and wedding ceremony are not final until approved by our Session. There are no exceptions to this provision.⁸

¹ This policy was adopted by the Session of Zion Reformed Church on April 2, 2014 and replaces all other existing wedding policies before this date.

² "Session" refers to the pastoral leadership of Zion Reformed Church.

³ Couples who are unsure if they meet these requirements may still submit a wedding request to the Session of Zion Reformed Church for consideration. Exceptions, however, are rare.

⁴ Those coming from another approved Church must have *written* approval from their own pastor.

⁵ Scripture defines marriage as a covenant (a sacred, oath-bound commitment), instituted by and publicly entered into before God, between one man and one woman for life (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:1-12). If either party has been previously married, remarriage *may* be permissible, but only according to the following Biblical provisions:

1. If the applicant's divorced spouse is deceased (Rom. 7:1-3).
2. In some cases, if the divorce occurred as a result of adultery (Matt. 19:9) or abandonment (I Cor. 7:15).

⁶ In some instances, parental consultation may be requested by our Session even for couples legally of age to marry.

⁷ We want to be clear that going through the pre-marital biblical counseling does not guarantee approval of the wedding request. The counseling is designed to prepare couples for marriage, but also to determine that they meet the qualifications and requirements for marriage prior to approval. After the second counseling session, the counselor will submit a recommendation to you and to the Session of Zion Reformed Church for final approval.

⁸ We are delighted to assist in this by providing ceremony guidelines and meeting with you to work out details.

ZION REFORMED CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY¹

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 19:14)

A. Mission and Vision

The children's ministry of Zion Reformed Church exists to spread the Gospel of the Glory of Christ for the joy of our children so that they might know Christ and make Him known to the generations after them (Ps. 78:1-8). We aim to do so by:

- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for discipling their children (Eph. 6:4).
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to our children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deu. 6:6-9; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-8).
- Praying for our children in reliance on the Holy Spirit for their salvation through the Gospel (Jer. 32:38-41; Rom. 10:17).
- Modeling for our children how Christians ought to live faithfully out of gratitude for the Gospel (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:1).
- Providing for our children a safe church environment for them to thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Matt. 18:1-7; 3 John 2).

B. Purpose of Policy

This policy is intended to protect children participating in events sponsored by Zion Reformed Church. This policy applies to compensated church staff or church volunteers who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors ages 18 and below. This policy does not constitute a contract between the church and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guideline which the church will seek to follow. Zion Reformed Church makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. The church is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

C. Definition of Terms

Child abuse shall be defined as any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways, including the following:

- **Physical abuse:** any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, biting.
- **Emotional abuse:** emotional injury occurs when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.

¹ This policy was adopted by the Session of Zion Reformed Church on March 21, 2017 and replaces all other existing child protection policies before this date.

- **Sexual abuse:** any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography. Other forms of sexual abuse can include verbal comments, exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, allowing minors to witness sexual activity.

Employee shall be defined as any individual who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

Church shall be defined as Zion Reformed Church.

Child, children, youth and minor shall be defined as any individual age 18 and under.

Personnel Committee shall be defined as those individuals appointed by the Session who will be responsible for approving all employees and volunteers who serve in a church ministry to minors.

Volunteer shall be defined as any individual who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

D. Selection and Screening Process

The church believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult employees/volunteers and minors of the church foster the community of Christ. The church will seek to prevent the abuse of minors when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures include screening, training and supervision of all employees/volunteers and a commitment to eliminating opportunities for abuse within church programs and church sponsored events. This screening includes the following:

- *Six-Month Rule:* No applicants will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with the church for a minimum of six months. This time of interaction between the church and the applicant allows for better evaluation of the suitability of the applicant for working with minors. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Personnel Committee.
- *Application Process:* All individuals seeking to work with minors must complete a confidential application form; read and be in agreement with the policies and procedures outlined in this document; read and be in agreement with the official teachings of the church outlined in the document titled *What We Believe*; and give written permission for a criminal records check and have references reviewed. In addition, the individual may be interviewed by a member of the Personnel Committee. Approval to work with minors must be granted by the church Personnel Committee and the Session. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the church Personnel Committee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with minors. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

Employees and volunteers must report to the Personnel Committee and to the Session if they commit a disqualifying offense while serving, or if they at any time find themselves out of accord with either this child protection policy or the official teachings of the church.

E. Employees/Volunteers Who Are Minors

Employees/volunteers, who are themselves under age 18, are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our covenant children. The following guidelines apply to this employee/volunteer.

- Volunteers must at least 12 years old; employees must be at least 16 years of age.
- Minor employees/volunteers shall be screened and trained as specified above with the exception of a required criminal records check.
- Applications submitted by a minor employee/volunteer must be signed by their parent/legal guardian where indicated.

F. Supervisory Requirements

The church has zero tolerance for abuse in its programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every employee/volunteer in children and youth ministries to act in the best interest of all minors in every program. The following requirements shall be applicable to all employees/volunteers who have contact with minors participating in any program at the church or a church-sponsored event.

- *Safety of children:* It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to promote the emotional and physical safety of minors giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If, in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, they shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all minors.
- *Two-deep leadership:* A reasonable effort shall be made to have at least two non-related employees/volunteers present in the room (or nearby) with minors during church activities.

One-on-one contact between minors and employees/volunteers should be avoided. The church recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or with a single minor. In those circumstances (such as Sunday School or counseling), doors to the room shall remain open and windows shall remain uncovered or the activity shall be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or minors.

- *Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors:* When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.
- *Overnight procedures:* Overnight activities will require a signed permission statement from the parent/legal guardian of the minor(s) participating, must have a minimum of two employees/volunteers participating and must maintain a ratio of one employee/volunteer per nine minors. An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed as a minor. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all co-ed overnights and at least two

same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnights. On campouts, no employee/volunteer may ever be in or sleep in a tent with minors.

- *No confidentiality*: Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to an elder if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.
- *Digital privacy*: Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants, especially minors. Posting ANY images on the internet is not allowed unless permission has been granted by the parents/legal guardians.
- *Hazing and bullying*: Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber-bullying are prohibited.
- *Controlled substances*: The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind-altering substances with minors is prohibited.

G. Physical/Non-Physical Contact

Permissible Contact:

- Limited physical contact with minors, such as a pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake, is permissible. Brief hugs are permissible within sight of others. Employees/volunteers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon request of the minor. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms, placing an arm around the shoulders, sitting beside minors, holding hands during prayer, high fives and hand slapping are all appropriate.
- Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors is permissible when appropriate (such as Christmas or birthdays) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to an elder any gifts you receive that seem inappropriately given.
- Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex.

Prohibited Contact:

- Any physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification.
- Physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor such as giving massages, kissing, prolonged embracing, and the like.
- Striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, or other violent behaviors towards a minor.
- Showing minors images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of minors should be reported to an elder immediately. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of child pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to an elder.

- Language that is humiliating, degrading, threatening, sexual, personally-intimate, related to body development or physique, or crude—regardless of how the communication was conveyed (e.g., text messages, email, phone calls, social networking sites, etc.).
- At no time shall any employee/volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a minor and should be sensitive to minors with “crushes.”

Reporting

All employee/volunteers are responsible for immediately discussing with an elder any signs of possible violations of the above and/or concerns they may have about possible victimization.

H. Restroom Guidelines

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class. If a child requires assistance, the worker will prop open the bathroom door as he/she assists the child. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the worker should prop the bathroom door partially open, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child. Every effort should be made to protect the child's privacy while still providing an environment of accountability for the worker.

For the protection of all, employees/volunteers should never be alone with a child in the bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

I. Sick Child Guidelines

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at the church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

J. Medication Guidelines

It is the policy of the church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with a youth leader or elder to develop a plan of action.

K. Discipline Procedures

No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group when necessary.

L. Check-In/Check-Out Procedures

For children below third grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," a member the Personnel Committee or Session will be contacted. He or she will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

M. Transportation Procedures

All drivers should be licensed and have proof of insurance with limits that meet or exceed requirements of the state in which the vehicle is registered and primarily used.

N. Consequences of Violation of Child Protection Policy

Any employee/volunteer accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a minor, may be immediately suspended from participation in any church ministry for minors until the matter is addressed and resolved by Session. Any employee/volunteer found in violation of the church Child Protection Policy may be prohibited from future participation as an employee/volunteer in all church ministries for minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from the church.

O. Reporting Alleged Child Abuse

Reporting obligation: Any and all suspected child abuse must be reported in accordance with Ohio state law.

To whom to report: Nothing in this policy shall negate the right or responsibility of church employees/volunteers to report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency/department as required by Ohio state law.

How to report: An employee/volunteer is required to report an incident to an elder as soon as possible after the incident. The reporter will be asked to fill out a church *Report of Child Abuse* form which is available from the Session and attached to this policy. The reporter may, and-when legally required to do so-should, also directly contact the appropriate state/local agency which deals with the investigation of incidents of alleged child abuse.

P. Response Plan

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of the church or during a church-sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented by the (assigned staff person) unless he/she is alleged to be involved.

1. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the minor shall be notified.
2. The employee/volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with church minors pending an investigation.
3. The church will comply with Ohio state law regarding mandatory reporting of abuse.
4. The church's attorney and insurance company will be notified.
5. If the alleged abuse involves a member of Session or an ordained employee of the church, the North East Ohio Presbytery will be notified and made aware of the situation.
6. The church will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
7. Session will select one person to act as the official spokesperson for the church. They will be available to the media to answer questions and to interpret the Child Protection Policy.
8. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be treated with the utmost discretion and held in absolute confidence, to the extent that such is possible. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary a) to comply with the church's Child Protection Policy and/or the law or b) to cooperate with an official investigation of the alleged incident. Any breach of this confidentiality by a church employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal.

A member of Session, after consultation with those conducting the official investigation of the incident, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified.

But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged child abuse or misconduct will be removed from their church employment/volunteer position with minors.

ZION REFORMED CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY APPLICATION

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Name of employee/volunteer	Date of application
Address/city/state/zip	Phone (home)
Email	Phone (mobile)
If applicable, list previous experience working in children's ministry (church/organization) (phone) (contact person) (position/ dates of service)	

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed to help us promote a safe, secure, and loving environment for the children who participate in our programs. This information will be kept confidential, viewed only by the Personnel Committee and Session. Answering "yes" to any of these questions will not necessarily disqualify an application from participating in children's ministry at Zion Reformed Church. If you would like to discuss any of these matters further, simply indicate that below.

1. Have you ever been a victim of abuse? If so, how might that affect your ministry with children?

(Many people have experienced abuse at the hands of others. Most victims of abuse abhor such behavior and are especially alert and sensitive to the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children. At the same time, residual effects may remain in some people's lives, including a hesitancy to report suspected child abuse, which is why we ask this question.)

- Yes
- No
- I would like to discuss.

Comments:

2. Have you ever been accused of, participated in, pled guilty to, or been convicted of child abuse, child neglect, or any other crime against a minor?

- Yes
- No
- I would like to discuss.

Comments:

3. Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime (other than minor traffic violations)?

- Yes
- No
- I would like to discuss.

Comments:

4. Do you have any ongoing sin struggles that would keep you from ministry to children?

(Examples include uncontrolled anger, alcohol or substance abuse, habitual use of pornography, etc.)

- Yes
- No
- I would like to discuss.

Comments:

5. Do you have any physical or medical conditions that would keep you from ministry to children?

- Yes
- No
- I would like to discuss.

Comments:

CONSENT FOR A CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECK

Zion Reformed Church has contracted the service of Ministry Safe to perform criminal background checks on all children's ministry applicants. Reports are confidential and viewed only by the Personnel Committee and Session. Any reported misdemeanor or felony will be discussed with you and a member of the Personnel Committee or Session and may be grounds for denial of application to work with children. A national criminal records search is performed. The following information is required. Personal information is protected under the Privacy Act. Reports obtained from Ministry Safe will be guarded accordingly.

Legal name (first, middle, last)	Date of birth
Driver's license number/state	Social Security number

PERSONAL REFERENCES

Every application for participation in children’s ministry at Zion Reformed Church must provide two personal references: (1) a church leader at Zion or your previous church, or (2) another person with whom you have served in children’s ministry (if this is your first time serving in children’s ministry, please list another Christian who knows you well and can attest to your suitability to work with children). The application waives the right to view reference statements.

Name of reference #1	Relationship
Address/city/state/zip	How long has the person known you?
Email	Phone (home/mobile)

Name of reference #2	Relationship
Address/city/state/zip	How long has the person known you?
Email	Phone (home/mobile)

VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

The information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Zion Reformed Church to contact any references or organizations listed in this application.

Furthermore, I authorize such references and organizations to provide Zion Reformed Church with any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with minors. I release Zion Reformed Church, its agents, and all such references and organizations from any and all liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you, and I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know and understand the contents thereof. I sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement that I have read and understand.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

ZION REFORMED CHURCH REPORT OF SUSPECTED OR OBSERVED CHILD ABUSE

Name of minor	Date of report
Address/city/state/zip	Date of birth of minor or approximation
Name of parent/guardian of minor	Phone (home/mobile)

INCIDENT INFORMATION

Date and time of incident	Parties involved
Name of alleged perpetrator including name, address, phone, and date of birth	
Where did the incident occur?	
What is the physical evidence of abuse? If possible, this evidence should be preserved and turned in with this report.	
Additional witnesses with contact information	
Describe the incident	

REPORTER INFORMATION

Reporter's name	Reporter's position (employee, volunteer, or neither)
Reporter's signature	
Name/position of individual receiving this report	