

2019 ANNUAL MEETING

OF

KNOX PRESBYTERY



COMMUNION OF REFORMED
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

MINUTES

Moscow, Idaho
October 7-9, 2019

TUESDAY OCTOBER 8, 2019

Preliminary Matters

- The 2019 annual meeting of Knox Presbytery was called to order at 8:09 a.m. by Presiding Minister (“PM”) Pastor Stuart Bryan.
- An invocation was offered by Elder Chris Schlect.
- Singing was led by PM Bryan.
- Meditation was delivered by Pastor Kenton Spratt (I Timothy 1:15).
- Roll was called by PM Bryan and a quorum was established at 8:26 a.m.
- Visitors were introduced and welcomed.

Motion (10/08/19:01) was made by Pastor Alan Burrow to amend and accept the Presbytery agenda to include seating Trinity Church Denver as a candidate church. The motion was seconded by Pastor Terry Tollefson. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Ordination Examination for Ben Zornes

Oral examination commenced at 8:31 a.m. and concluded at 10:38 a.m. Examination led by ordination committee consisting of Elder Chris Schlect (chair) and Pastors Jonah Barnes, Kenton Spratt, Francis Foucachon, and Ed Iverson. In executive session, Presbytery gave feedback to the committee on Mr. Zornes’ oral examination with Mr. Zornes present. Committee to present a motion to Presbytery on 10/9/19.

Church Reports

- Christ Church (Missoula, MT); Elder Don Running present.
- Christ Church (Moscow, ID); Pastor Douglas Wilson and Pastor Toby Sumpter present.
- Christ Church (Spokane, WA); Pastor Kenton Spratt and Elder Andre Fowlkes present.
- Holy Trinity Church (Colville, WA) (mission church of Christ Church, Spokane); Pastor Ed Iverson and Elder Luke McGuire present.
- Christ Covenant Church (Enterprise, OR); Pastor Terry Tollefson and Elder David Hurley present.

- Christ Covenant Reformed Church (Billings, MT); Pastor Christopher Schrock and Elder Ryan Yeager present.
- Emmanuel Church (Helena, MT); Pastor Jonah Barnes and Elder Jay Heslep present.
- King's Cross Church (Wenatchee, WA); Pastor Gene Helsel present.
- The King's Congregation (Meridian, ID); Pastor Alan Burrow and Elder George Turner present.
- Trinity Church (Coeur d'Alene, ID); Elder Ed MacBurnie present.
- Trinity Covenant Church (Fort St. John, BC); Elder Desmond Jones present.
- Trinity Reformed Church (Moscow, ID); Pastor Joshua Appel and Elder Chris Schlect present.
- Valley Covenant Church (Lewiston, ID); Elder Rusty Olps and Elder Daniel Schrempp present.

Standard Business

Dr. Timothy Edwards delivered a report on the ministry of New St. Andrews College at 11:48 a.m. No action was required.

Motion (10/08/19:02) was made by Pastor Kenton Spratt that Holy Trinity Church in Colville, a mission church of Christ Church Spokane, become a particularized church in Knox Presbytery. The motion was seconded by Elder Chris Schlect. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

At 1:39 p.m. PM Stuart Bryan administered the vows of full membership to Pastor Ed Iverson and Elder Luke McGuire.

Motion (10/08/19:03) was made by Pastor Douglas Wilson that Knox Presbytery recognize Trinity Church Denver as a candidate church in Knox Presbytery, with Christ Church, Moscow, serving as the sponsoring church. The motion was seconded by Elder Chris Schlect. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Ordination Examination for Adam Harris

Oral examination commenced at 1:48 p.m. and concluded at 3:41 p.m. Examination led by ordination committee consisting of Elder Desmond Jones (chair) and Pastors Kenton Spratt, Gene Helsel, Christopher Schrock, and Terry Tollefson. In executive session, Presbytery gave feedback to the committee on Mr. Harris' oral examination with Mr. Harris present. Committee to present a motion to presbytery on 10/9/19.

Standard Business

Motion (10/08/19:04) was made by Pastor Toby Sumpter that Knox Presbytery grant that Pastor Francis Foucachon be granted exception to serve as a ruling elder at Christ Church, Moscow, ID, while still a member of the PCA. The motion was seconded by Alan Burrow. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0)

It was recognized by Knox Presbytery that Tom Brainerd's ministerial credentials are being retained by Valley Covenant Church, Lewiston, ID, though he is not serving as an elder in accordance with BOP XII.4.a.ii.1.

Presiding Ministers' Reports

The report of Council PM Virgil Hurt (attached) was received. There were two action items for Presbytery.

- **Motion** (10/08/19:05) was made by Pastor Kenton Spratt for Knox Presbytery to ratify PM Hurt's combining of the Constitutional Review Committee and the Court Guidelines Committee. The motion was seconded by Pastor Gene Helsel. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).
- **Motion** (10/08/19:06) was made by Pastor Kenton Spratt that Knox Presbytery ratify PM Hurt's action of sending a delegation to Pakistan to make inquiries on behalf of the CREC. The motion was seconded by Pastor Terry Tollefson. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

The report of Knox Presbytery PM Stuart Bryan (attached) was received. It was determined via discussion that PM Bryan's actions to establish ordination committees did not need to be ratified by presbytery since such actions are part of his constitutional responsibilities. So, the following motion was made by Presbytery.

- **Motion** (10/08/19:07) was made by Elder Chris Schlect that Knox Presbytery:
 - Ratify PM Bryan's decision to establish the Committee to revise and improve the Officer Qualification Amendment;
 - Receive PM Bryan's summary of feedback on the council committee reports dated November 12, 2018;
 - Ratify PM Bryan's decision to send a delegation to Christ Church (Missoula, MT) in response to their request;The motion was seconded by Pastor Kenton Spratt. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Presbytery was recessed at 4:29 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

- Presbytery was reconvened at 8:34 a.m. by PM Pastor Stuart Bryan.
- An invocation was offered by Pastor Douglas Wilson.
- Singing was led by Pastor Gene Helsel.

Reports from Ordination Committees

Motion (10/09/19:01) was made by the ordination committee for Ben Zornes that Knox Presbytery determines that Mr. Zornes has passed his presbyterial examination and recommends him to Christ Church for ordination to the Gospel ministry. Presbytery further recommends that Christ Church ensure that Mr. Zornes continue to shore up his competency by seeing to it that he completes supervised coursework in the Hebrew and Greek languages, and a supervised course in exegesis for which languages are a prerequisite. Presbytery asks Christ Church to report annually to Presbytery on Mr. Zornes' progress until such coursework is completed. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Motion (10/09/19:02) was made by the ordination committee for Adam Harris that Knox Presbytery recommend Mr. Harris without reservation to Trinity Covenant Church in Fort St. John, BC, for ordination to the Gospel ministry. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Standard Business

Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie

Pastor Terry Tollefson reported on his efforts to reconcile the differing parties associated with Christ Covenant Church in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. It was made clear that at this point Terry is acting in his sole capacity as pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Enterprise, Oregon and not as a delegate from Knox Presbytery. His ability to reconcile the differing parties is a precondition of the Session of Christ Covenant Church (Enterprise) entertaining the possibility of serving as a sponsoring church on behalf of Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie).

Founders' Fest

Motion (10/09/19:03) was made by Elder Ed MacBurnie of Trinity Church, Coeur d'Alene, that Knox Presbytery commission Knox PM Bryan to request Council PM Virgil Hurt to solicit some of the founding members of the CREC to engage in reflective story telling at Council 2020 in order to preserve the ideals and solidify the continued faithfulness of the CREC. Knox Presbytery suggests men such as Douglas Wilson, Chris Schlect, Patch Blakey, Gene Helsel, Dave Hatcher, Brett Baker, Randy Booth and Steve Wilkins. The motion was seconded by Pastor Ed Iverson. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

Proposed Memorial on Abortion

The Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion was read by Pastor Gene Helsel. PM Bryan read the following clarification from the 2018 minutes of Knox Presbytery:

Other presbyteries asked the question whether the document prohibits the termination of ectopic pregnancies with these words: *"Even in those rare circumstances when a pregnancy causes an immediate threat to the life of a mother, the calling of fathers, mothers, and doctors is to do all they can to preserve life not take it."* The delegates of Knox Presbytery were not in agreement as to the lawfulness of terminating such pregnancies. Consequently, these words reflect a compromise. Our understanding is that our document permits local sessions to make the judgment on this matter. We simply affirm the general principle that at all times best efforts should be made to preserve life.

Knox Proposals and Committee Reports

- Pastor Douglas Wilson introduced the latest edition of his paper, "On Authority, Order and Equality within the Godhead: Affirmation and Denials."

Motion (10/09/19:04) was made by Pastor Toby Sumpter that Knox Presbytery endorse the statement "On Authority, Order, and Equality within the Godhead Affirmation and Denials" with stylistic edits and commend it to CREC Council 2020 for endorsement by Council. The motion was seconded by Pastor Ed Iverson. **Motion carried** (20-1-1). Pastor Christopher Schrock voted negative and Elder Rusty Olps abstained. [Final Version of statement attached.]

- Pastor Christopher Schrock introduced, "Proposal Regarding Use of the 39 Articles in the CREC."

Motion (10/09/19:05) was made by Pastor Douglas Wilson that Knox Presbytery task PM Bryan to appoint a committee to recommend to Knox Presbytery mandatory exceptions or additions to the accepted Confessional Statements recognized by our Constitution where necessary to harmonize with CREC polity or Constitutional provisions. Seconded by Pastor Christopher Schrock. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0). (*Pastors Joshua Appel and Christopher Schrock expressed willingness to serve on the committee.*)

- Proposed Memorial on Abuse from Knox PM Committee on Abuse was received. Pastor Kenton Spratt presented, and discussion ensued.

Motion (10/09/19:06) was made by the Knox PM Committee on Abuse that Knox Presbytery approve the document on Abuse for presentation to Council in 2020 for the purpose of gaining Council's approval for the draft so it can ultimately be adopted as a memorial at a subsequent Council.

Motion (10/09/19:07) was made by Pastor Ed Iverson to table the above motion to approve the document on Abuse and refer it back to the Committee on Abuse for revision to be later reviewed by Presbytery at its Spring Retreat. The motion was seconded by Pastor Gene Helsel. **Motion carried** unanimously (22-0-0).

- Proposal from Knox PM Committee on Officer Qualifications Amendment received. Pastor Toby Sumpter presented, and discussion ensued. [Proposal attached.]

Motion (10/09/19:08) was made by the Knox PM Committee on Officer Qualifications that Knox Presbytery overture Council to amend the CREC Constitution, inserting the following paragraph in the Constitution under Article II which addresses “The Offices” creating a new final paragraph labeled “J.”

“J. The CREC affirms the need for all officers to be qualified for office through faithfulness in their households. Ordinarily, an officer who is separated from his wife or whose child is excommunicated will offer his resignation, and it will be accepted by his session (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6). When an officer remains in office after one of these events (or similar public scandal that implicates the reputation of the broader assembly), his local session will report the decision to presbytery with a brief description of the reasons. If the presbytery recommends the officer’s resignation and the local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may initiate proceedings according to Article IV.D.5.”

Motion carried unanimously (22-0-0).

CREC Committee Reports

- CREC Council Committee on Ordination Procedures. Discussion ensued.

Motion (10/09/19:09) was made by Pastor Toby Sumpter that Knox Presbytery approve the principles expressed in the first five main bullet points from the one-page summary provided by the CREC Council Committee on Ordination Procedures dated 8/30/2019. The motion was seconded by Elder Chris Schlect. **Motion carried** (15-4-1).

- CREC Memorial on Terrorism Revision Committee: “Memorial E. Terrorism & Just War (2019 Suggested Revision).” Pastor Stuart Bryan presented proposed changes. Discussion ensued.
- CREC Social Media Committee: “Statement on Social Media.” Pastor Toby Sumpter presented proposed changes. Discussion ensued. **Straw vote:** (7-7-4).
- CREC Same-Sex Marriage Committee: “Proposed Amendments to the CREC Constitution Re Sex, Gender, and Marriage.” Alan Burrow presented proposed changes. Discussion ensued. **Straw vote:** (22-0-0)
- Wycliffe Presbytery Proposal for Compensation for Presiding Minister of Council. Discussion ensued. Unanimous opposition to the proposal expressed given the fundamental change of polity it would represent in the CREC – increasing centralization of authority.

2020 Council Items from PM Virgil Hurt for 2019 Presbytery Consideration

PMofC Virgil Hurt's three proposed motions were read and discussed by Knox Presbytery. The first and third motions were strongly opposed as reflecting major changes of polity within the CREC. The second motion was accepted in principle.

Motion (10/09/19:10) was made by Pastor Toby Sumpter to adjourn the 2019 Knox Presbytery stated meeting. The motion was seconded by Pastor Alan Burrow. **Motion carried** unanimously (19-0-0).

Presbytery adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Christ Covenant Reformed Church of Billings, Montana offered to host the 2021 Knox Presbytery Stated Meeting.



**Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches
Presiding Minister of Council Virgil Hurt
2019 Report**

General Report

I suffered a massive heart attack and cardiac arrest on September 21, 2018. I also had a bleed that required a transfusion of 6 units of blood. I spent a week in the intensive care unit.

Presiding Minister of Council, Pro Tempore, Garrett Crow, took over as acting PM of Council and served in that capacity until December 31, 2018. I appreciate the work and leadership that Pastor Crow exhibited during that time.

I want to again express my gratitude for being able to serve Christ in the CREC and for the tremendous outpouring of love and prayers that were expressed towards me and my family during this time of trial.

On January 1, 2019, I resumed my duties as PM of Council. 2019 has been a year of recovery. Due to my illness and recovery, I did not travel in the latter half of 2018 and very little throughout all of 2019. I did visit Moscow, Idaho but postponed several other planned trips.

As I write this on September 17, 2019, I am four days from the one-year anniversary of my heart attack. I am mostly recovered physically and do not face any immediate problems with my heart. However, the year has been a challenge and I have not been up to full speed. Lord willing, I will be able to fulfill all of my duties as PM of Council this year, including a few needed trips and all the upcoming preparations for Council 2020. I would appreciate your prayers for health, strength and wisdom to navigate the new norms.

PMoC Actions.

Actions 1 and 2 have motions for Presbyteries to approve PMoC actions.

1. Combined the Court Guidelines Committee and the Constitutional Review Committee

Received and approved a request from Chairman Jack Phelps to combine the Constitutional Review Committee and the Court Guidelines Committee.

Rationale: Jack Phelps was the chairman of both of these committees and much of the work that was required overlapped.

Motion: Approve the combining of the Constitutional Review Committee and the Court Guidelines Committee.

2. Commissioned Joost Nixon and Garrett Crow to visit Pakistan to develop a relationship with Sulej Reformed Church and her representatives.

Pastor Arslan Ul-haq will be attending presbytery in Bulgaria in 2019 to further this relationship. Pray for wisdom as we determine our next steps.

Motion: Approve the action of sending a delegation to Pakistan to make inquiries on behalf of the CREC.

3. Commissioned Joost Nixon to inquire about a group of churches in the Philippines that are interested in a relationship with the CREC.

We are in the initial stages of these discussions. We plan to video conference monthly with the Philippine pastors and are likely to send a delegation to visit them in the winter of 2020. Pray for wisdom as we develop this relationship.

Other PMoC Work

PM Summit

On February 25-26, 2019, I called a meeting of the Presiding Ministers of Presbytery. We met in Atlanta, Georgia for two days and discussed where we are as a denomination, what strengths we possess and what challenges we face. It proved to be a fruitful meeting and we plan to conduct these meetings annually. In the future, we would be glad to consider any discussion items that you might have for us.

This meeting is not a judicial body. We discuss items that need work and suggest work for the PMs but we are not acting as a Presbytery or Council, and thus do not make motions or vote on any items.

Various Travels

April 4-10 of 2019, my wife, Katie, and I attended the Grace Agenda Conference in Moscow, Idaho.

PMoC Expenses

To date, the office of PMoC has expenses totaling about \$15,250, and we have received a total of \$17,035.

I anticipate additional expenses of \$15,000 for 2020, not including the 2020 Council Meeting expenses. Some of these expenses may be defrayed by special fundraising. However, our church will be expected to cover them.

I have requested that unless you are a struggling church, please budget \$250 annually for the work of Presiding Minister of Council. Can you please contact your treasurer to see if you have sent us PMoC support for 2019? You can also contact me and I can let you know if your church has contributed. Our church has to cover all of these expenses and we do very much appreciate your help.

For 2019, we have received \$9,360 from 29 churches. Thank you!

Anselm Presbytery	4 churches, \$1500
Athanasius Presbytery	7 churches, \$1900
Augustine Presbytery	5 churches, \$1350
Knox Presbytery	7 churches, \$2250
Tyndale Presbytery	5 churches, \$1860
Wycliffe Presbytery	1 church, \$500



August 31, 2019

Dear Brothers,

This is now my second report while serving as Presiding Minister of Knox Presbytery. It is an honor to serve among you and to learn from you. I am thankful for your friendship and camaraderie.

Officer Qualifications Amendment

In accordance with the wishes of Knox Presbytery expressed at the 2018 stated meeting, I formed a Committee on November 6, 2018 to revise and improve the Officer Qualifications Amendment. This committee consisted of Pastors Toby Sumpter (Christ Church, Moscow, ID), Terry Tollefson (Christ Covenant Church, Enterprise, OR) and Matt Carpenter (Valley Covenant Church, Lewiston, ID).

- ❖ **Action Item: I ask that Knox Presbytery ratify my decision to establish the Committee to revise and improve the Officer Qualifications Amendment.**

Ordination Examination Committees

On October 25, 2018, Pastor Douglas Wilson of Christ Church (Moscow, ID) requested that I establish ordination committees for Ty Knight and Ben Zornes. I solicited volunteers to serve on those committees and on November 21, 2018 provided those men with their charges. Subsequently, Ty Knight reconsidered pursuing ordination at this juncture and so that committee terminated. The committee for Mr. Zornes conducted its preliminary interview and issued a report to me dated January 28, 2019 recommending that Mr. Zornes continue preparing for oral examination.

- ❖ **Action Item: I ask that Knox Presbytery ratify my decision to establish Ordination Examination Committees for Ty Knight and Ben Zornes in response to said request from Christ Church (Moscow, ID).**

Feedback from Knox Presbytery to Council Committees

Following our 2018 stated meeting I set about summarizing Knox Presbytery's response to the various council committees. I issued that summary on November 12, 2018 and sent it to PMofC Virgil Hurt.

- ❖ **Action Item: I ask that Knox Presbytery receive my summary of feedback on the council committee reports dated November 12, 2018.**

PM Summit in Atlanta, GA

February 25-26, 2019 I traveled to Atlanta, GA to participate in the Presiding Minister Summit called by Council PM Virgil Hurt. It was a profitable time praying for the future of the CREC and hearing reports

from the other Presiding Ministers. We left praying particularly for growth among our churches many of which are too small to sustain themselves.

Mid-Year Retreat in Moscow, ID

As you will recall, on April 4, 2019 Trinity Reformed Church kindly hosted our mid-year presbytery gathering. We shared stories from our churches, prayed for one another, received some instruction from Chris Schlect on disciplinary trials, as well as discussed some differences of perspective regarding the ministry of Theopolis and the future of the CREC. I also stayed for portions of the Grace Agenda Conference and was blessed by the Friday talks on the history and theology of paedobaptism.

Challenges at Christ Church (Missoula, MT)

On April 26, 2019 I received a request from Taylor Crawford, an elder at Christ Church (Missoula, MT) that I send a delegation to their congregation to help them assess their viability as a congregation. On May 8, 2019 I appointed Pastors Christopher Schrock of Christ Covenant Reformed Church (Billings, MT), Jonah Barnes of Emmanuel Church (Helena, MT), and Francis Foucachon of Christ Church (Moscow, ID) to serve on this delegation. On June 12, 2019 they issued their report, encouraging the elders and the flock to press on in ministry to Missoula.

- ❖ **Action Item: I ask that Knox Presbytery ratify my decision to send a delegation to Christ Church (Missoula, MT) in response to their request.**

Ordination Examination Committee for Adam Harris

On May 11, 2019 I was notified by Desmond Jones, an elder at Trinity Covenant Church in Ft. St. John, British Columbia, that the church was interviewing Adam Harris in hopes of calling him to serve as pastor of the congregation there. Following Adam's visit to Ft. St. John on June 1-2 with his wife Joy, Desmond requested on June 10th that I assist them in evaluating the suitability of Adam to serve in the CREC. Accordingly, I asked Pastors Kenton Spratt and Terry Tollefson to join me in conference call with Adam. We interviewed him on June 19th and concluded that Adam would be an excellent fit in the CREC and encouraged Trinity Covenant Church to proceed with a call. The church requested that Adam pursue ordination through the CREC as part of their call.

Accordingly, I appointed an examination committee on July 19, 2019 to assist in the ordination of Mr. Adam Harris. In doing so, I self-consciously took certain liberties with the process outlined in the BOP. The BOP stipulates that "a local church informs the PM of Presbytery that it has a candidate for ordination... no later than four months before the meeting of Presbytery" (XI.2.c.i.). I reckoned the June 10th contact by Desmond as fulfilling this requirement. The preliminary interview by the Committee is supposed to take place "no later than three months prior to the Presbytery meeting" (XI.2.c.iv.). I reckoned the June 19th interview with myself and Pastors Spratt and Tollefson as fulfilling this requirement since Pastors Spratt and Tollefson have served on the ordination committee.

- ❖ **Action Item: I ask that Knox Presbytery ratify my decision to establish an Ordination Examination Committee for Adam Harris in response to said request from Trinity Covenant Church (Fort St. John, BC, Canada).**

Permit me to close by expressing, once again, my thankfulness for the trust you have placed in me by selecting me to serve as PM of Knox Presbytery. May the Lord grant us continued faithfulness.

For the Glory of Christ,

Stuart W. Bryan
Pastor, Trinity Church (Coeur d'Alene, Idaho)
Presiding Minister of Knox Presbytery

On Authority, Order, and Equality within the Godhead Affirmations and Denials

Endorsed by Knox Presbytery CREC
October 9, 2019
Commended to Council

Preamble: Statement of Intent

In light of the recurring debate over the “eternal subordination of the Son,” it was our desire to make a statement that all *orthodox* believers on both sides of this discussion could affirm. While acknowledging that great care must be taken when it comes to our choices of words in all discussions of the Trinity, we do not want unnecessary division on the basis of *mere* terminological differences. This calls for a delicate balance, which Michael Ward describes quite well: “Lewis accepted the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds with their insistence on the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, but believed that the essential equality of divine being among the Persons of the Trinity was not incompatible with an ordering, even a kind of hierarchy, therein. Obviously, Christ was subject to the Father as man; but Lewis also thought he was to the Father as God. This position is distinguishable from the heresy of subordinationism; its *locus classicus* is 1 Cor. 15:27-28”¹; We submit the statement below to the candid evaluation of all those who love the truth of orthodoxy, the purity of the faith, and the peace of the church.

A Digest of Our Statement

1

We affirm, without qualification, the truths we have inherited from our Fathers in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, and as confirmed and reaffirmed in the Reformed standards.

We deny that the high mystery of the Trinity means that we cannot discuss it in edifying ways, conducive to true worship and as an encouragement to righteous living.

2

We affirm the utter simplicity of God.

We deny that God is in any way a composite Being. He is not an aggregation of His attributes, and He is not the sum total of three beings.

3

We affirm that the Father is the ultimate and infinite Speaker (Gen. 1:3), that the Son is the ultimate and infinite Word (John 1:1-2), and the Holy Spirit is the ultimate and infinite Interpreter (1 Cor. 2:10).

We deny that the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, are in any way an indication of inferiority in the one begotten or in the one proceeding.

4

We affirm that, even as Scripture reveals to us the names of *Father* and *Son*, so God has placed real meaning in those words, and our mortal relations, such as earthly fathers and sons, are analogical but real reflections of the eternal Father and Son.

We deny that creaturely realities of finitude, mortality, or sin invalidate the archetypal nature of the Trinity with respect to man, or the capacity and responsibility for us to learn fatherhood and sonship from their immutable archetypes in the Holy Trinity.

5

We affirm that even as God is the Father of the Son, and the Author of all being, so there is real authority (*auctoritas*) within the Godhead.

We deny that the authority of the Father and the “responses” of the Son and Spirit are according to essence, divinity, rank, or station, but rather that they are according to eternal origin, generation, procession, operation, and order.

6

We affirm that in His incarnate state, the Son in His humanity submitted to the will of His Father in Heaven.

We deny that scriptural statements concerning the submission of Christ in His humanity can be transferred without qualification to the relations of the persons internally within the Godhead.

7

We affirm that the Son and Spirit in their respective missions reveal the authority and order of God the Father from all eternity.

We deny that within the Godhead this authority and obedience contained any tension, distance, conflict, friction, or resistance whatsoever.

8

We affirm that when God speaks a command, the Son *is* Himself the very Command that is spoken.

We deny that the asymmetry affirmed in this statement in any way contradicts or threatens the doctrine of divine simplicity or the Godhead's single will.

We *affirm* that the unified will of God is in no way in contradiction with the dispositions of the persons toward the Father, or with their distinct yet inseparable operations in the cosmos.

We *deny* that this is in any way a contradiction, while confessing that it is a high mystery.

All statements regarding the eternal God, and above all those truths regarding His triune nature, are a mere knife's edge away from heresy. Yet we speak, not that we may try to explain the unfathomable, but lest we be completely silent, as Augustine said, remembering that while the secret things belong to the Lord, those things that are revealed belong to us and to our children (Deut. 29:29).

Our Statement in Full

We *affirm* that God's wisdom is unsearchable (Rom. 11:33), and that He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). His ways are not ours, and His thoughts are not ours (Is. 55:8). The doctrine of the Trinity should therefore be handled by us with all due humility, and this is particularly the case when reasoning by extension to or from that doctrine. Such humility should check us from any rash speculations, as well as from hasty accusations. We *affirm*, without qualification, the truths we have inherited from our Fathers in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, and as confirmed and reaffirmed in the Reformed standards.

We *deny* that the high mystery of the Trinity means that we cannot discuss it in edifying ways, conducive to true worship and as an encouragement to righteous living. We therefore insist that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an irrelevant doctrine when it comes to a practical Christian life—we worship the *eternal* Father, after all, from whom lesser and temporal fatherhoods derive their name (Eph. 3:15). The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to all rightly-ordered Christian living, and particularly to our worship. In our Christian discipleship, we are called to imitate things that we cannot really duplicate (John 17:21; Eph. 5:25), and we accept our responsibility to do so.

We *affirm* the utter simplicity of God. The fact of His triune majesty does not negate the truth that our God is in fact one God (Dt. 6:4). The one true God is infinite, omnipotent, utterly and inexhaustibly sovereign, without shadow of turning, variation, or change, without body, parts or passions, all-sufficient, all-knowing, and without any contingency whatever.

We deny that God is in any way a composite Being. He is not an aggregation of His attributes, and He is not the sum total of three beings. He is not a large version of anything we might conceive or experience. What we know about God is what He reveals to us, not what we project into His place. Every earthly illustration or analogy of the Trinity taken from human experience is, if pressed inappropriately, simply the illustration of some heresy or other. But because our knowledge of God *is* analogical, it is necessary to use such illustrations, and possible to do so responsibly.

3

We affirm that the Father is the ultimate and infinite Speaker (Gen. 1:3), that the Son is the ultimate and infinite Word (John 1:1-2), and the Holy Spirit is the ultimate and infinite Interpreter (1 Cor. 2:10). And the Speaker, the Spoken, and the Interpreter are all one truth, the one true God. And so there is only one will within the Godhead, not three competing wills or three agreeing wills. As Father, Son, and Spirit mutually indwell each other, so also each glorifies the other in accordance with the love they share for each other.

We deny that the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, are in any way an indication of inferiority in the one begotten or in the one proceeding. All that is begotten by God in this way *is* God, and all that proceeds in this way from God is God. At the same time, the revealed names of *Father* and *Son* bring with them some indication of authority and order within the Godhead, as addressed below.

4

We affirm that, even as Scripture reveals to us the names of *Father* and *Son*, so God has placed real meaning in those words, and our mortal relations, such as earthly fathers and sons, are analogical but real reflections of the eternal Father and Son. In God the Father Almighty resides all authority, dignity, dominion, might, majesty, and honor. He is the Origin of all that is, including the Son and Spirit. He is the Monarch of all Being, and the First Principle without Principle. Solely His is the property of Fatherhood within the Trinity, so that in God, the name Father signifies not only relation, but indeed His very Person. As Father, He is the Origin or *Auctor* of the Son and Spirit, and so it is necessary for Him to be the Teacher and Sender of the Son and Spirit.

We deny that creaturely realities of finitude, mortality, or sin invalidate the archetypal nature of the Trinity with respect to man, or the capacity and responsibility for us to learn fatherhood and sonship from their immutable archetypes in the Trinity. In descending from His loftiness to communicate with men, God speaks as with a lisp, as Calvin says, accommodating His eternal realities to our weakness, yet revealing through His Word such truths as are necessary and edifying for us. That we cannot understand or map all aspects of the Trinity onto those of human experience is sure; yet to use this to deny the truths that *are revealed* is impudence and an affront to the Father's gracious condescending revelation.

5

We *affirm* that even as God is the Father of the Son, and the author of all being, so there is real authority (*auctoritas*) within the Godhead. This authority is the pattern for all authority delegated by the Father to men, yet intra-Trinitarian authority differs from this insofar as the Son and Spirit are uncreated, and share with the Father all power, might, divinity, and equality. This authority is therefore the asymmetrical authority of the Father with respect to the unique paternity He possesses: it is the dignity of authorship, the preeminence of principle, the distinction of generation, and His own, peculiar, and unshared honor of Fatherhood.

We *deny* that the authority of the Father and the “responses” of the Son and Spirit are according to essence, divinity, rank, or station, but affirm rather that they are according to eternal origin, generation, procession, operation, and order. Even as the Son and Spirit are of one substance with the Father, there are no gradations of divinity, rank, or dignity among them; yet as they are “of the Father,” so they are not *of themselves*, but Son is *of the Father*, very God of very God, and the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son. By affirming this we in no way deny the equality of the Son and Spirit, but rather join them in magnifying the original sovereignty of the Father.

6

We *affirm* that in His incarnate state, the Son in His humanity submitted to the will of His Father in Heaven. The Incarnate Christ learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb. 5:8), and was obedient even to the point of death on the cross (Phil. 2:8). For example, Christ in His humanity has God for His head in some way analogous to how a man has Christ for his head, and woman has man for her head (1 Cor. 11:3).

We *deny* that scriptural statements concerning the submission of Christ in His humanity can be transferred without qualification to the relations of the persons internally within the Godhead. Texts that display the obedience of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be simply applied to the eternal Son as though they were talking about the same thing, or addressing the same issue. For example, the Incarnate Son, Christ in His humanity, was sent to Jerusalem to die (Matt. 26:39; Phil. 2:8), and He obeyed His Father as He went. This is not the same thing as the eternal Son being sent into the world, but is still analogous to it.

7

We *affirm* that the Son and Spirit in their respective missions reveal the authority and order of God the Father from all eternity. The Son has nothing but what is begotten and received from the Father; even as the Son has received all honor and glory from the Father (John 8:54), so all that the Son receives is to the honor of Him who begat Him before all worlds. So also the Spirit speaks nothing but what He has heard from the Father and the Son, and so all honor given to Him redounds first to the glory of the Father from whom He principally proceeds, and then to the Son, who for us men and our salvation sent Him as the Lord and Giver of Life.

We further *affirm* that prior to the Incarnation, and independent of it, the eternal Son was sent into the world (John 3:17; 10:36; 17:18) which He created. Even as it would be unfitting and

impious for the Father to be sent, and as the Son always does what pleases the Father, so the eternal Son received and carried out the will of His Father.

We deny that within the Godhead this authority and obedience contained any tension, distance, conflict, friction, or resistance whatsoever. The relations of the persons within the Godhead are always and *necessarily* harmonious.

8

We *affirm* that authority as it exists within the Godhead cannot be fully imagined by us, and must not be understood as though the Father were barking orders, and the Son were obeying them as a subordinate. Rather, in fear and trembling we remember (as Augustine reminded us) that when God speaks a command, the Son *is* Himself the very Command that is spoken. Insofar as His will is indissolubly one with the Father's, the Father's command is also the Son's command, yet insofar as the Father is the Origin, it is first, principally, and authoritatively the Father's command.

We *deny* that the asymmetry affirmed in this statement in any way contradicts or threatens the doctrine of divine simplicity or the Godhead's single will. We acknowledge it is impossible to fully conceive of one unified will issuing in the economic works, order, or subordination of the distinct persons of the Trinity, but since this is how Scripture speaks, we must be content with the revealed mystery. We also cannot comprehend how the reciprocity of the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's love for the Father, can be a function of one will. And yet our salvation depends upon this being so.

9

We *affirm* that the unified will of God is in no way in contradiction with the dispositions of the persons toward the Father, or with their distinct yet inseparable operations in the cosmos. God the Father as Sender and God the Son as Sent and God the Spirit as Enabler act as one, so that when the Son came into the world and obeyed the Father, He was acting in a way absolutely fitting to the eternal relation between Him and the Father. In obeying the Father and always doing what He sees His Father do (John 5:19), Jesus acts in a way consonant with the eternal relation between them, in which the Son's will is also the Father's, even as He received it from the Father.

We deny that this is in any way a contradiction, while confessing that it is a high mystery. The will of the Father and the will of the Son are the same will, and so the authority of the Father results necessarily in a relation wherein the Son and Spirit delight to magnify the Father's authorship, regency, dignity, and prerogative. Such authority is unseen by men in its perfection, yet is the archetype and pattern for the authority, power, and dominion the Father has distributed among men, even in this world wherein we see "through a glass, darkly."

10

All statements regarding the eternal God, and above all those truths regarding His triune nature, are a mere knife's edge away from heresy. Yet we speak, not that we may try to explain the unfathomable, but lest we be completely silent, as Augustine said, remembering that while the secret things belong to the Lord, those things that are revealed belong to us and to our children (Deut. 29:29). With firm reliance on Holy Scripture, then, and in accord with the holy fathers of our faith, we magnify and exalt the Holy Trinity: the Father in His authority, the Son in His nativity, and the Spirit in His communion—authority and response, order and equality, in perfect and ultimate harmony. “Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).

i Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 135.

Constitutional Amendment on Officer Qualifications
Presented to Knox Presbytery 2019

Motion from Committee

Overture Council to amend the CREC Constitution, inserting the following paragraph in the Constitution under Article II which addresses “The Offices” creating a new final paragraph labeled “J.” [the language in bold is new]

“J. The CREC affirms the need for all officers to be qualified for office through faithfulness in their households. Ordinarily, an officer who is separated from his wife or whose child is excommunicated will offer his resignation, and it will be accepted by his session (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Tit. 1:6). When an officer remains in office after one of these events (or similar public scandal that implicates the reputation of the broader assembly), his local session will report the decision to presbytery with a brief description of the reasons. If the presbytery recommends the officer’s resignation and the local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may initiate proceedings according to Article IV.D.5.”

History

Motion (10/10/18:1) was made by Elder Chris Schlect for the Knox Presbytery PM to form a committee per PM Hurt’s suggestion to revise the Officer Qualifications Amendment Request (Appendix E) and pass it at the next Presbytery meeting. Motion was seconded by Pastor Toby Sumpter. Motion carried unanimously (17-0-0).

PM Stuart Bryan appointed: The members of this committee include the following pastors from Knox Presbytery: Toby Sumpter (Christ Church, Moscow, ID), Terry Tollefson (Christ Covenant Church, Enterprise, OR) and Matt Carpenter (Valley Covenant Church, Lewiston, ID).

Rationale for the Proposed Amendment

Knox Presbytery treasures the emphasis within the CREC upon generational faithfulness and believes that this can best be preserved, by the grace of God, through officers who are models of faithfulness in their marriages and families. At the same time, we are concerned that this is an area where expectations are growing increasingly ambiguous in the CREC. Therefore, we believe that a vigorous discussion of the content of this amendment would be very healthy for the CREC.

The CREC constitution already affirms the necessity of “pastors” being “qualified in their households” (Art. II.E). However, it does not explicitly affirm this need among all officers. Neither does it give any mechanism for presbytery to check on situations where the delegates may have questions or concerns. The constitution already allows for local churches to refer matters that may implicate the “reputation of the broader assembly” (Art. IV.D.2), but we believe the CREC should agree that an officer with an excommunicated child or whose marriage is publicly in disarray always implicates the reputation of the broader assembly.

We believe that the proposed amendment would address these deficiencies and that it has some distinct advantages:

- First, it states the need for *all* officers to “be qualified for office through faithfulness in their households.”

- Second, it establishes a minimal norm for family faithfulness: officers whose marriages are so strained as to result in separation or whose children are excommunicated should normally resign from office.
- Third, it helps sessions and presbyteries avoid speculation on what constitutes “faithfulness” by tying the required actions to formal events.
- Fourth, it permits local sessions and presbyteries to recognize exceptional circumstances.
- Fifth, it would help eliminate uncharitable judgments regarding the continued ministry of a faithful officer who has truly faced exceptional circumstances. It would enable fellow officers in the CREC to speak up for our brothers knowing that due diligence has been performed within their presbytery.