

# The Southern Methodist Church

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Selected Portions of the  
*2022 Discipline of The Southern  
Methodist Church*

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# The Southern Methodist Church

Orientation Material for Prospective Members

Excerpts from *The Southern Methodist Church Discipline 2022*

9/7/2023

## Membership in the Local Church

We believe that membership in a local church is to be granted only to those who profess to be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have received Christian Baptism and who express an interest in and willingness to worship and fellowship in the local church (Acts 2:38-47; 4:4; 5:14; Eph. 2:8, 9).

The local church, after consultation with the preacher in charge, shall have the exclusive authority to determine who shall be a member of said church whether or not the applicant comes by profession of faith, Certificate of Transfer, or Certificate of Membership ¶176.

## History of the Southern Methodist Church

In the latter part of the year 1739, eight or ten persons, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption, came to John Wesley in London. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That they might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

Methodism was introduced in America by George Whitefield, Robert Strawbridge, Philip Embury and others, the former having come to America prior to 1744. The first conference was held in 1773. The Articles of Religion as abridged by Wesley, the Standards of Doctrines, and the General Rules were adopted by the Christmas Conference of 1784.

In spite of many difficulties and differences of opinion as to the law and usages of the church and many disaffections and secessions, the Methodist Episcopal Church made steady progress.

By the time the General Conference met in 1844, sectional differences had become so acute that many days were spent in debate on these questions. When it became apparent that no compromise could be made, the Plan of Separation was adopted. By a vote of 135 to 18 this general conference agreed that the delegates representing slave-holding states might set up a separate general conference. By a vote of 139 to 17 it was agreed that any minister might choose whether he would remain in The Methodist Episcopal Church or align himself with the southern delegates. By a vote of 148 to 10, it was agreed that there should be an equitable division of all property belonging to the Church.

By agreement of the delegates from the southern states, the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South met in Louisville, Kentucky, on May 1, 1845. From that time until the meeting of the General Conference in Birmingham, Alabama, in May of 1938, this church made wonderful progress and numbered its members by the millions.

The Birmingham General Conference in 1938 decided to enter into a union with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church. When the three were formally united in 1939, there were many in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South who refused to enter into the union because of the modernistic tendencies found in the United Church.

A layman's organization for the preservation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was formed and culminated in a convocation in Columbia, South Carolina, on January 14, 1940, at which four hundred (400) representatives of the Church set up a provisional plan for preserving the Church. The courts granted to the United Church all properties and the control of the name, Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The dauntless few, maintaining their earnest convictions to perpetuate true Methodism and fundamental doctrines, organized the South Carolina Conference. The first Annual Session of the South Carolina Conference (now the Eastern Conference) was held at Turbeville, South Carolina, in June, 1940.

Some seven hundred (700) persons attended the first conference session with Mr. B. W. Crouch presiding and Miss Mildred Huggins as secretary. From that time The Southern Methodist Church has maintained a steady growth. In 1942 The Mid-South Annual Conference was organized in Atlanta, Georgia, and in 1970 the Conference was divided, forming two (2) more annual conferences; The Alabama-Florida-Georgia Conference and The South-Western Conference, composed of Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. The Mid-South Conference is composed of Tennessee, Mississippi and Kentucky. The Eastern Conference is composed of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland.

## Purpose Statement

The Bible reveals that the purpose of the Church is to enable individuals to know God as Saviour and Lord through faith in Jesus Christ and to glorify Him through evangelism, edification, education, and through equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. The Southern Methodist Church seeks to carry out this Biblically revealed purpose through adherence to the Biblical



beliefs and historic traditions of Methodism. This Church shall have a Biblical ministry that will depend upon the power of God to meet the spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of mankind.

## Articles of Religion

### Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Deut. 4:39, 6:4; Jn. 4:24; Mt. 28: 19; II Cor. 13:14; I Pet. 1:2.

### Article II - Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, Who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, Who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men. Jn. 1:14; Col. 2:6, 9; I Jn. 4:9,10; Gal. 4:4, 5; I Cor. 15:3, 4.

### Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again His body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until He returns to judge all men on the last day. Mt. 28:5, 6; I Cor. 15:3, 4; Rev. 1:18; Jn. 11:25; Rev. 22:13, 20.

### Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God. Acts 5:3, 4; II Cor. 3:17; Jn. 14:26, 27;15:26; Joel 2:28.

### Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the church.

Of the names of the canonical books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,

Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Song of Solomon. \*Four Prophets the greater, Twelve Prophets the less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical. II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:21; Heb. 1:1, 2; Psm. 119:89; Isa. 40:8.

\*Lamentations of ancient times was a part of the Book of Jeremiah. When this Article of Religion was adopted, Lamentations was included in Jeremiah and we accept this Article of Faith with this understanding and interpretation. Our interpretation is that the book of Lamentations is therefore included in "Four Prophets the greater."

## Article VI - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, Who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, not ought the civil precepts thereof necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral. Mt. 5:17, 18; Josh. 1:8; 23:6; Deut. 8:3; Jer. 15:16.

## Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually. Rom. 5:12; Psm. 51:5; Mt. 15:18, 19; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9-12.

## Article VIII - Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will. Jn. 6:44; Tit. 2:11; Eph, 2:8, 9; I Tim. 2:3, 4.

## Article IX - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort. Rom. 5:1,18; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:24; Gen. 15:6.

## Article X - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgement, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be so evidently known, as a tree discerned by its fruit. Eph. 2:10; Ja. 2:20; Heb. 10:24; Mt. 5:16.

## Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works besides, over and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as they are bound to do, but that they do more for His sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants. Lk. 17:10; Phil. 3:12; Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 12:3.

## Article XII - Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin, willingly committed after justification, is the sin against the Holy Ghost and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification: After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God rise again, and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent. I Jn. 1:9; Mt. 6:12; Heb. 12:1, 6; Rev. 3:15-20.

## Article XIII - Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, and all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. Eph 5:25-27; Acts 2:41, 42, 47; 20:28; Mt. 28:19, 20.

## Article XIV - Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping, and adoration as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

## Article XV - \*Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the primitive church to have public prayer in the church or to minister the sacraments in a tongue not understood by the people. I Cor. 14:2, 19, 23, 28, 40.

\*As Methodists we stand upon the Articles of Religion and Doctrines of The Southern Methodist Church which are of ancient origin and firmly

founded on God's Word; that said Articles and Doctrines have historically never been construed by this Church to embrace the idea of speaking in unknown tongues or any other charismatic idea contrary to said Articles and Doctrines.

## Article XVI - Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly in us and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

There are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel: that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments-that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction-are not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily received the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith. Mt. 28:19; 26:26-28; I Cor. 11:24-26.

## Article XVII - Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth.

The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church. Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27.

## Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ: and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance

reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped. Mt. 26:26-28; I Cor. 10:16; 11:23-30; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:19, 20.

## Article XIX - Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people: for both parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

## Article XX - Of the one Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit. Rom. 3:23-25; I Jn. 2:2; Heb. 9:27, 28; 10:10; I Pet. 3:18.

## Article XXI - Of Marriage

God instituted marriage before human government, and marriage is the base of the family and society. God ordained and Jesus reaffirmed that marriage is a lifelong, monogamous commitment between a natural male and a natural female. The marriage covenant is binding so long as both shall live, and the marriage relationship is the only context in which human sexuality may be expressed in sexual union. The marriage union is pure, and all other sexual unions are sinful and defiling.

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single, or to abstain from marriage; therefore, it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

The Bible states unequivocally that marriage between a husband and a wife is parallel to the relationship of Christ and the Church; it is clearly contrary to God's principles to place any other earthly relationship in equal standing as that of marriage. We recognize neither concubinage, nor cohabitation between heterosexuals or homosexuals as a legitimate covenant. Civil unions or marriages between homosexuals, or incestuous unions are not legitimate or equal to marriage. Gen. 2:18, 21-25; Mt. 19:4-9; I Tim. 3:2, 4, 5; Tit. 1:5-7; Eph. 5:22-33

## Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike, for they have been always different, and may be

changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongeth, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

## Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people are the rulers of the United States of America according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdictions. \* Rom. 13:1-7; Mt. 22:21; Tit. 3:1; I Pet. 2:13,14.

\*The Twenty-Third Article of Religion in The Discipline of all our churches in foreign lands shall read: Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority "It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects, or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be."

## Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor according to his ability. Deut. 15:7; Lk. 6:38; 11:41; Psm. 41:1; Pro. 14:21.

## Article XXV - Of A Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James, His apostle; so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth. Mt. 5:31-37.

## Other Beliefs

### Article I - Of Prevenient (Preceding) Grace

We believe that God must take the initiative if man is to be saved. We believe that since the race fell in Adam and lost all claims to consideration before God, along with the ability in its own strength to return to God, we have in the blessings of life, health, friends, fruitful seasons, prosperity, the delay of punishment, the presence and influence of the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the church, manifestations of the prevenient grace of God.

Prevenient grace is not sufficient for salvation, yet it reveals the goodness of God to all sinful creatures. We believe that the prevenient grace of God constitutes the medium through which the Holy Spirit can operate upon the sinner, and that which makes the soul susceptible to the saving grace of Christ. In other words, we hold that God, in His grace, makes it possible for all men to be saved.

Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Gen. 3:8-9; Isa. 59:16; Rom. 2:4; Pro. 1:23; Isa. 31:6; Eze. 14:6; 18:32; Joel 2:13-14; Mt. 18:3; Acts 3:19; I Kings 8:47; Mt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30; II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 43:10; Jn. 1:9; 6:29; 14:1; Acts 16:31; I Jn. 3:23.

### Article II - Of Repentance

We believe that salvation comes to the individual soul as the free, undeserved gift of God through faith in Christ as a personal Saviour. We do not believe that the sinner is in a proper attitude for the reception of salvation until there is first a change of mind, will, and emotions concerning sin, and this results in a godly sorrow for sin in the heart of the individual.

These changes concerning one's sins constitute the grace of repentance, which grace is wrought in the sinner by the Holy Spirit, and which leads the sinner to forsake his sins and to seek the justifying mercy of God in Christ.

Acts 17:30, "God . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Rom. 3:20; cf. 1:32; Psm. 51:3, 7; Job 42:6; Psm. 51:1, 2; II Cor. 7:9, 10; Mt. 3:8, 11; Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; Acts 2:38; Rev. 2:5; Acts 11:18; 5:31, II Tim. 2:25; Mt. 11:20, 21; Lk. 16:30, 31; Rev. 3:19; Jn. 3:5; Acts 20:21.

### Article III - Of Faith

We believe that after the Spirit of God has implanted within the human soul the grace of repentance, there remains a condition, on the part of the sinner, namely, belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.

This belief is infinitely more than a mere mental assent to any doctrine concerning either the person of Christ or of any of His miraculous or atoning works.

Rom. 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom.

5:1; cf. 9:30, 32; Gal. 3:5, 14; I Pet. 1:5; Rom. 11:20; II Cor. 1:24; I Jn. 5:4; II Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6; Jn.16:8-9; Jn. 7:38; Acts 27:24, 25; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:14; Psm. 9:10; Jn. 2:23; Rom. 10:17; Psm. 106:12; Mt. 11:28, 29; Jn. 1:12; 4:14; 6:53, 54; Rev. 3:20; II Pet. 1:1; Jn. 5:47; Acts 4:4; Heb. 12:1, 2; II Thess. 3:1, 2.

## Article IV - Of Regeneration

When the penitent, believing soul is justified through the atoning merits of the blood of Christ, simultaneously there takes place within that soul the washing of regeneration, which work is the act of the Holy Ghost, and which results in the new creation of the whole spiritual being.

This definite change in the sinner is referred to in the Word of God as “the new birth” or “being born again.” Although the believer is truly born of God and is definitely His child at the time of regeneration, he is but a babe in Christ, and God desires that His babes reach maturity. If there is to be maturity, the seed of holiness that has been sown in the heart in regeneration must be permitted to germinate and spring up, and with a prayerful cultivation and studying of God’s Word, under the bountiful showers of God’s grace, produce a full harvest of the fruit of the Spirit.

II Cor. 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Jn. 3:3; James 1:18; Jn. 3:14-16; I Pet. 1:3; Tit. 3:5; I Jn. 3:9; 5:1, 4, 18; Rom. 8:16, 17.

## Article V - Of the Witness of the Spirit

We believe that a penitent sinner is saved the moment he believes upon Christ as his personal Saviour, however; he cannot have full assurance that he has passed from death unto life until the Holy Spirit, Himself, gives him this assurance. Our souls must hear a more authoritative voice and have a more compelling evidence than that which came from our own feeble human senses.

Rom. 8:16, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Jn. 3:5, 6; Tit. 3:5; I Jn. 1:3; I Cor. 1:9; Gal. 4:6; Jn. 16:12,13; I Cor. 2:12.

## Article VI - Of Christian Perfection or Sanctification or Consecration or Dedication or Perfect Love or Total Yieldedness

Christian perfection is that work of the Holy Spirit which is subsequent to regeneration, and is wrought when the believer presents himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and is thus enabled through grace to love God with all his heart. Methodists have always been very clear and positive in their teachings that this is not angelic, adamic, faultless perfection, but rather that Christian perfection where the soul is filled with the love of God and all its faculties are spiritualized through the fullness of God’s presence within. While in this state, God is loved with every faculty of one’s being, and



one's neighbors are loved as one's self.

I Jn. 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Gen. 17:1; Ezek. 36:25-29; Mt. 5:48; Lk. 1:74, 75; Jn 17:15-23; Rom. 8:3; 4:11, 26; I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 4:13, 24; 5:25-27; Phil. 2:5-7; Col. 4:12; I Thes. 5:23; II Thes. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16,17; Tit. 2:11,12; Heb. 9:13, 14; 10:14; James 1:27; 4:8; II Pet. 1:4-10; I Jn. 1:7; 3:8, 9; 4:17, 18; Jude 24.

## Article VII - Of the Universality of the Atonement

We believe that God is a mighty God, and that He is unlimited in greatness, grandeur, and power; that He is loving and benevolent and is seeking wholeheartedly and continuously for the highest well-being and the eternal happiness of all His moral creatures. We believe that in keeping with His benevolent nature, God has given His only begotten Son, not for a few favored ones, but for the whole world, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John 3:16.

We believe that in order to enable His moral creatures to avail themselves of this salvation in His Son, God has given to everyone a power of choice – the ability to choose or reject salvation and spiritual life in Christ. This power being given to Adam, it will be possessed by each one of his sons and daughters throughout all time.

We believe that even though God foreknows all things, His foreknowledge in no way affects the destiny of any soul. Even though the Holy Spirit works upon the will, mind, and emotions of man, He does not work to the point of absolute compulsion. Man's will, mind, and emotions, being aroused and fully awakened by the Holy Spirit, must cooperate with Him. There must be a full and mutual agreement between the two before the human party can become the beneficiary of salvation. God works, while the believing heart of man responds. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13.

Thus, we do not believe in unconditional predestination, but we do believe that when the conditions of salvation are fully met by the sinner, that sinner is then elected to be saved.

I Tim. 4:10; Jn. 1:29; I Tim. 2:5, 6; Tit. 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; Heb. 2:9; I Jn. 2:2; II Cor. 5:18-20.

## Article VIII - Of Perseverance

We believe that every true child of God being a free moral agent, may, and will be saved eternally, if he meets the divine conditions of repentance and faith until the last. Habitual and final failure to meet these basic conditions will bring eternal loss. We believe also that although a Christian is now in a state of salvation, and would be saved eternally if called before God in his present state, he must be kept under the saving power of the Holy Ghost until the last, if he would be saved eternally hereafter. All who in their obedience to the Holy Spirit faithfully meet these conditions until death will inherit everlasting life.

Heb. 6:4-6, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance . . ." I Chron. 28:9; Ezek. 18:24, 32; Lk. 9:62; Jn. 15:1-6; Rom. 11:20-22; I Cor. 9:27; 10:12; I Tim. 1:19, 20; 5:12, 15; II Tim. 1:14,15; Heb. 4:1, 11; 10:26-29, 38, 39; II Pet. 1:8-10; 2:18-22; Rev. 2:4, 5.

## Article IX - Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

By the invisible church is understood all those who are known of Christ as belonging to Him, whether they have joined the visible church or not.

I Cor. 12:27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." II Tim. 2:19; Eph. 4:12,13; 5:25-27; Heb. 12:22-24; I Jn. 3:2, 3; Rev. 19:7, 8; I Tim. 3:15; Col. 2:16-19; Mt. 18:20; Mt. 16:18, 19.

## Article X - Of Inspiration

We believe in the original manuscripts of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, verbally inspired; by this we mean that inexplicable power which the divine Spirit put forth of old on the authors of Holy Scripture, in order to guide them even in the employment of the words they used, and to preserve them alike from all error and from all omission.

I Pet. 1:23, "Being born again . . . by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Deut. 27:26; II Kings 17:13; Psm. 19:7; 33:4; 119:89; Isa. 8:20; Gal. 3:10; II Pet. 3:15,16; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:20, 21; Jn. 10:34, 35; Lk. 24:44; Mt. 5:17; I Cor. 14:21; James 4:5; I Jn. 3:24; I Cor. 2:13;14:37; Gal. 1:12; I Thes. 2:13; 4:2, 8; Rev. 21:5; 22:6,18,19.

## Article XI - Of Evangelization of the World

We believe in the evangelization of the world, placing emphasis upon the task of reaching the individual with the gospel and its implications, and that no humanitarian and philanthropic schemes may be substituted for the preaching of the Cross.

Mk. 16:15, ". . . go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mt. 28:19, 20; Lk. 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Mt. 9:38; Rom. 10:14,15; Mt. 5:13-16; Eph. 4:11-16; Rev. 22:17.

## Article XII - Of Creation

We believe in the Genesis account of creation, which teaches that all things found their origin in God, Who created by His own fiat instantaneously every living thing after its kind.

Gen. 1 :1, 2, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void . . ." Neh. 9:6; Col. 1:16,17; Job 38:4-7; Psm. 102:25; 139:13-16; Isa. 43:1, 7; Ezek. 21:30; Jn. 1:3; Acts 17:24;

Rom. 11:36; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11; Psm. 100:3; 148:4, 5.

### **Article XIII - Of the Second Coming of Christ**

We believe, according to Scripture, in the sure return of the Lord Jesus Christ; that his second coming will be a literal, bodily, personal, imminent, and premillennial return; that His coming for His bride, the church, constitutes the “blessed hope” set before us, for which we should be constantly looking.

Acts 1:11, “. . . this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Jn. 14:1-3; Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:1-4; Psm. 17:15; Isa. 11:1-12; Zech. 14:1-11; Mt. 24:1-51; 26:64; Mk. 13:26-37; Lk. 17:26-37; 21:23-36; Acts 1:9-11; I Cor. 1:7, 8; I Thes. 4:13-18; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 9:27, 28; James 5:7, 8; II Pet. 3:1-14; I Jn. 3:2, 3; Jude 14; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16; 22:6, 7, 12, 20.

### **Article XIV - Of Satan, Angels, and Demons**

We believe in the reality of the person of good angels, bad angels, demons, and of Satan, “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

Rev. 12:9; Ezek. 28:12-17; Isa. 14:12-15; I Jn. 3:8; Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12; I Pet. 5:8.

### **Article XV - Of Tithing**

We subscribe heartily to the scriptural command to give the tithe of all our increases to the Lord and the ongoing of His work on earth. Of course, we acknowledge that this law does not bind one saved by grace, but we hasten to say that this would be a poor excuse to do less for One whom we profess to love and One who gave His all for our salvation. We wish to state further that we believe that we are not giving until we have first tithed. We should also remember that God challenges us to try Him and see that He will pour upon those who do more than they can receive. So we conclude that a professed Christian who does not tithe is falling far short of the goal set for us, and thus misses the fulness of the abundant life in Christ.

Gen. 14:20; 28:22; Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-10; II Cor. 9:6, 7.

### **Article XVI - Of Church Membership**

We believe that membership in a local church is to be granted only to those who profess to be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have received Christian Baptism and who express an interest in and willingness to worship and fellowship in the local church (Acts 2:38-47; 4:4; 5:14; Eph. 2:8, 9).

The local church, after consultation with the preacher in charge, shall have the exclusive authority to determine who shall be a member of said church whether or not the applicant comes by profession of faith, Certificate of Transfer, or Certificate of Membership.

## Article XVII - Of Separation

We believe, that in these days of apostasy, the church should be separated from compromising situations in the world.

## The General Rules

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, a "desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

**First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced:** such as,

- The taking of the name of God in vain;
- The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling;
- Drunkenness, or drinking spirituous liquors unless in cases of necessity;
- Fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling;
- The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty;
- The giving or taking things on usury, i.e., unlawful interest;
- Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers;
- Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us;
- Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as,
- The putting on of gold and costly apparel;
- The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus;
- The singing those songs or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God;
- Softness or needless self-indulgence;
- Laying up treasures upon earth;

- Borrowing without a probability of paying, or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

**Secondly: By being good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:**

- To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;
- To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to do it."
- By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
- By all the possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.
- By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

**It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,**

**Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God:** such are,

- The public worship of God;
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;
- The Supper of the Lord;
- Family and private prayer;
- Searching the Scriptures;
- Fasting and abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are

taught of God to observe, even in His written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season; but if he repent not, he hath no more place among us; we have delivered our own souls.

## The General Rules - Supplemental

The Southern Methodist Church recognizes the historic value of The General Rules written by John Wesley in 1743, adopted by Methodism in its infancy, published in thirty-nine editions in Wesley's life, and preserved by Methodism to the present time. The purpose of The General Rules is that each individual embrace a life of holiness. The original rules are preserved for Methodists of today.

John Wesley made specific applications of these three rules to the culture of his day. The applications Wesley made were a matter of the heart for him and his fellow Methodists as they strove to understand the Scriptures and live a life of holiness. Methodists today are called upon to make similar applications according to Scripture and Scriptural principles. In applications considered disputable, because they are not expressly taught in Scripture, let each believer hold his convictions in love and faith before the Lord and refuse to judge fellow believers. In areas clearly taught by Scripture, let each believer order his or her life accordingly. Let each believer remember the inspired words of Scripture, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

## Policy Statements

### Statement on Marriage and Civil Unions

God instituted marriage before human government, and marriage is the base of the family and society. God ordained and Jesus reaffirmed that marriage is a lifelong, monogamous commitment between a biological man and a biological woman. The marriage covenant is binding so long as both shall live, and the marriage relationship is the only context in which human sexuality may be expressed in sexual union. The marriage union is pure, and all other sexual unions are sinful and defiling.

The Bible states unequivocally that marriage between a husband and a wife is parallel to the relationship of Christ and the Church; it is clearly contrary to God's principles to place any other earthly relationship in equal standing as that of marriage. We recognize neither concubinage, nor cohabitation between heterosexuals or homosexuals as a legitimate covenant. Civil unions or marriages between homosexuals, or incestuous unions are not legitimate or

equal to marriage.

## Statement on Abortion

The Southern Methodist Church recognizes and seeks to preserve the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, and therefore is opposed to the use of induced or surgical abortion.

The Creator gives and sanctifies human life by creating humanity in His image and after His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27); therefore, we recognize the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. We also recognize that human life begins at conception when a genetically distinct individual begins development, and biological life continues until the brain and heart cease to function.

Since life is a gift of God and humans are created in the image and after the likeness of God, the life of every individual is precious and considered holy. The lives of the preborn, the mother, the old, the infirm, and the disabled are equal with those who are strong and healthy.

The Scriptures teach that an unborn child is a person and has value. The Old Testament says that an individual's life begins at conception and proceeds through birth (Genesis 4:1; Psalm 91:5) into this world. Divine blessing is even conferred upon an unborn infant (Luke 1:42).

It is neither moral, right, nor proper to terminate a pregnancy on the basis of personal convenience, psychological considerations, or sociological considerations. Such abortions are acts of murder.

We do believe that grace and forgiveness from God are available for those who have committed abortion. The Bible states that confession of sin brings such forgiveness (I John 1:9), not because it is deserved, but because of the loving nature of our God and the atonement of our Lord. We would lovingly embrace these even as God does.

The Southern Methodist Church encourages its members to be aware of any movement outside or inside of the church that promotes abortion and take action to oppose such movements.

## Statement on the Great Commission

The Southern Methodist Church calls all Southern Methodists to fulfill the Great Commission in their communities. God calls all people of every language, nationality, ethnicity, and tribe to faith in Christ to become children of God. We look forward to the new heavens and new earth where people from the whole human race will stand before the throne of God the Father in fellowship with the Lamb. Every Southern Methodist church must seek to fulfill this vision of the Father to see all His children fellowshiping together.

The Southern Methodist Church must not only share with all people regardless of their language, nationality, ethnicity, or social status, but we must

also extend to every believer the hand of Christian fellowship and to willingly include them as members of The Southern Methodist Church family.

We also confess that this has not always been the position of The Southern Methodist Church. There was a time when The Southern Methodist Church was a segregated denomination and did not allow certain individuals to become members based on their language, nationality, ethnicity, or social status (1966 Discipline, ¶51, removed in 1977). Our past sins are grievous unto us; and therefore, we humbly ask God and our brethren to forgive us; and we petition the Holy Spirit to cleanse this unrighteousness from The Southern Methodist Church. Forgive us, not because we are worthy, but for the sake of Your Church, by the atonement of Your Son, and to fulfill Your righteous and just promise (I John 1:9).

## Statement on Sex and Gender

The Southern Methodist Church desires to honor God in all facets of our existence. Our love for the Gospel and urgency for the Great Commission includes declaring the whole counsel of God. We believe that God and the Bible have much to say concerning the confusion in today's world on the subjects of sex and gender. We hereby proclaim what Scripture teaches about God's design for us as male and female persons created in His image and for His glory (Isaiah 45:7; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 20:27; Romans 11:36).

God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in His own image, equal before Him as persons and yet each sexually distinct as male and female (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6); The divine image renders them equal in dignity and worth in the eyes of God. The sexual differences between male and female are part of God's original design which are meant for human good and flourishing (Genesis 2: 21-24) and result in complementary reproductive functions, familial relationships, and gender roles.

Reproductive structures are also God's design for self-conception as male or female and is defined by God's purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture. These structures have been the acknowledged perception of man throughout history (Ephesians 5: 22-33; I Timothy 2:12-14).

The "sex" of a person refers to their biology as determined by their genes at conception, designating them as either male or female. Gender is a linguistic category used to identify how a language or a culture associates things and roles with a particular sex. Varying cultures have made different gender association for specific things and roles. The most fundamental gender roles are based upon sexual biology and result in the complementary familial relationships between husband and wife, father and mother, brother and sister, and so forth. The mixing or confusing of sexual identities is expressly forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 22:5).

The Southern Methodist Church supports gender identity as determined by biological sex and not by oneself. There are only four possible gender associations: male, female, neuter, and common as shown by the historical English pronunciations of he, she, it, and we/they, and that all other gender associations are contrived and artificial.



The Southern Methodist Church opposes the idea of “transgenderism,” or any term used to imply that a person can change one’s biological identity. We believe that the mixing or confusing of gender associations is contrary to God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption. We also oppose steadfastly all efforts by any governing official or body and all cultural efforts to validate the use of gender to designate contrived and artificial genders, such as transgenderism (Isaiah 5:20).

The Southern Methodist Church acknowledges that the fall of man not only affected humanity spiritually but also physically and mentally. The physical results of the fall include genetic entropy, where genetic content in human genes is progressively declining which results in various physical deformities and illnesses, one of which is the biological condition of intersexuality, a lack of clear sexuality in one's sexual organs. The psychological and mental results of the fall include various mental and emotional disconnects, including gender dysphoria or sexual dissatisfaction.

The Southern Methodist Church resolves to extend love and kindness to those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity (Galatians 5:14). We compassionately invite all persons dealing with these issues to trust Christ and to experience renewal in the Gospel (II Corinthians 5:18-20; I Timothy 1:15-16).

The Southern Methodist Church emphatically declares that no Southern Methodist lay minister, licentiate, ordained minister, or supply pastor who accepts transgenderism as moral or acceptable shall continue to be a member of or approved by a Southern Methodist Annual Conference.

## Statement concerning Bible Translations for Use in the Southern Methodist Church

Since we believe in the original manuscripts of the Bible as the inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God, we recommend that pastors, when reading from the pulpit, take care in choosing a translation of the Bible that is trustworthy and faithful to the original text, such as the King James Version.

The scholars who translated the Old and New Testaments into the English King James Bible followed a Formal Equivalence method. Formal Equivalence or Word-for-Word translations are recommended for the Public Reading of the Word of God because such translations reflect the meaning and composition of the original text in a “trustworthy and faithful” manner.

A phrase for phrase, Dynamic or Functional Equivalence translation may be acknowledged as acceptable for devotional and private Bible Study as they may be easier to read and often help with grasping the central message of a chapter or a book of the Bible. New converts and those with lower Biblical literacy can benefit from these versions. However, they are not recommended for the Public Reading of the Word of God since they are often interpretative and are not formal translations.

Paraphrases of the Bible are not recognized as translations of Scrip-

ture but as commentary on Scripture. These cannot carry the same authority as a true translation since they also contain the ideas of uninspired men communicating their understanding of what a passage means. As such some may be good commentary and some not so good; either way, commentary on the Word of God is not the same as the Word of God. Interpretation is not translation.

Some versions regardless of being a Word-for-Word or a Phrase-for-Phrase translation are not to be used, not because of methodology, but because of theological liberal or heretical bias.

Updated lists of translation that match these criteria will be made available by the Committee on Christian Education of the General Conference Board of Administration and will be published every four years as part of its duties listed in para. 462.

## Membership

### Reception of Members

When persons offer themselves for church membership let the preacher in charge inquire into their spiritual condition and receive them when they have given satisfactory assurance of their desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins, and of the genuineness of their faith, and of their willingness to keep the rules of the church. Only after they have been instructed in these rules and in baptismal vows and church vows and have agreed to accept and observe them, may they be received into the church.

When satisfied on these points, and the requirements of ¶176 have been met, let the minister bring the candidates before the congregation, whenever practicable, and receive them according to the prescribed form (¶¶911-913).

If a member in good standing in another church desires to unite with us, such applicant, by giving satisfactory answers to the usual inquiries, may be received without these formalities.

### Affiliated Members

When young people who are church members are absent from home attending school, they may, with their consent, be enrolled as affiliated members of our church where the school is located, and by such membership they shall be entitled to the regular privileges of that church and its pastoral oversight, to engage in its active services, and to hold office therein, but they shall be counted and reported only in the membership of their home churches. They shall exercise voting rights only in their home churches.

### Inactive Members

An inactive member is defined as one who has not shown an interest in the local church for a period of two consecutive quarters of one year except

for illnesses, military service, employment, college attendance or other extenuating circumstances. Interest may be shown by attendance or financial support. It is the responsibility of the Board of Stewards or a local membership committee to review and finalize the membership roll annually during the month of March to determine active or inactive status of all members. These members placed on an inactive status must be notified in writing. A copy of ¶¶219-221 shall be made available to each active and inactive member during the first quarter of each conference year.

Reinstatement as an active member takes place when the above requirements are met for a period of three consecutive months as determined by the Board of Stewards or a local membership committee. Any member placed on an inactive status may appeal such action to the local church conference whose decision would be final.

Inactive members have no voting privileges in the Local Church, Annual, or General Conference.

## Membership Vows

The minister shall cause the candidates to be placed conveniently before the congregation, and after baptizing any who may not have been previously baptized, he shall say:

1. Do you with your whole heart believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord, to love and trust and obey Him all the days of your life? If so answer: **I do.**
2. Do you believe the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God, the message of salvation only in and only through Jesus Christ, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct? If so, answer: **I do.**
3. Will you promise faithfully to keep the rules of the *Discipline*, which are the rules of the Church, and to be loyal to the doctrine and government of The Southern Methodist Church? If so, answer: **I will.**
4. Will you attend the services of this local church, and as God shall enable you, support this church with your prayers, your time and talents, and with your tithes and offerings? If so, answer: **I will.**

## Church Conference

Let the Church Conference be opened, conducted, and closed in a devout and prayerful manner.

The active members of a local church, duly called and assembled to do business, constitute the Local Church Conference. It is the highest governing body of a local Southern Methodist Church. Active members eighteen years of age and older shall be entitled to vote. No

absentee or proxy ballots are allowed.

The Local Church Conference shall meet at least quarterly. Special sessions may be called by the Chairman, pastor, the majority of the Board of Stewards, or by the General Conference President. Upon the written request of twenty percent of the active members, the Chairman shall call a special session. The Chairman, President or his representative, or pastor in charge, may preside over the conference as long as the matter under consideration does not deal with this person. If a session is held on the Lord's Day, it shall not interfere with the morning public worship.

The Local Church Conference shall elect its Chairman annually at the last regular session preceding the session of the Annual Conference.

A Secretary shall be elected annually at the last regular session preceding the Annual Conference. He shall keep a record of the proceedings in a book. He shall send the proper reports to the General Conference office quarterly and to the Annual Conference annually and all he statistics which the *Discipline* requires to be reported to the Annual Conference. He shall enter in chronological order in a permanent register the full names of all who join the church, with the time and manner of reception, and disposal of each. He shall make a permanent record of all baptisms and marriages within the congregation. He shall furnish the pastor with an alphabetical roll of the church. He shall make a written report quarterly to the General Conference.

The following shall be the general order of business:

1. Receiving Reports:

- a. From all ministers in the Church of their labors since the last meeting.
- b. From the Church Board of Christian Education.
- c. From the Board of Stewards.
- d. From the Woman's Missionary Society.
- e. From the Cartwright Men's Fellowship.
- f. From the Missionary Committee.
- g. From the Epworth League.
- h. From the Church Treasurer.

2. The Local Church Conference shall also:

- a. Receive and try appeals and hear complaints.
- b. Recommend to the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations persons for lay ministers license who show gifts, graces, spiritual and personal qualifications for such ministry (§§615-620).
- c. Recommend the renewal of lay ministers licenses annually.
- d. Recommend to the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners persons for license to preach when in its judgment their gifts, grace, and usefulness will warrant (§626).

3. Election of officers of the Church and Sunday School, stewards, and trustees shall be held at the session preceding the convening of the Annual Conference. Election of Annual Conference delegates, and General Conference delegates in the years when such are needed, shall be held at the first regular church conference following the session of the Annual Conference.

If the observance of this order of business is likely to protract the session beyond a reasonable time, the Chairman may select the most important matters and bring them forward.

## Pastor

### Pastoral Selection

The pastor shall be selected in keeping with the following regulations:

1. **Initial Call of the Pastor:** In calling a new pastor, a church may invite ministers approved by the Southern Methodist Church to be considered as possible pastoral candidates. The invitation may include personal contacts, preaching opportunities, or informal discussions. Southern-Methodist ministers are afforded the same opportunities.

The formal process for calling a new pastor is as follows:

- a. The church conference Chairman shall call a church conference (see §231) with two weeks notice to consider one candidate chosen by the majority of the Board of Stewards.
- b. The Board of Stewards will interview the candidate and negotiate a

proposed pastoral contract in advance of the church conference, which may include a recommendation to the church conference concerning the length of tenure.

c. The church conference shall not be held prior to the first Sunday of May; however, a church without a pastor may consider, at anytime during the church year, a candidate not presently serving a church.

d. The candidate must give permission for his name to be submitted to the church conference and may give permission to only one church at a time.

e. The church conference shall elect a candidate as their new pastor by a simple majority affirmative vote and shall notify the candidate the same day of the result of the vote.

f. If a candidate fails to receive a simple majority affirmative vote, other candidates may be considered one at a time, at a time designated by that church conference.

g. A candidate receiving a simple majority affirmative vote must notify the church of his intention within seventy-two hours after being notified of the result of the vote. In no case shall a minister consider a second church prior to informing the church of his decision.

**2. Voting Procedure:** All voting on the pastor's relationship shall be by secret ballot without debate, except for tenure, which may be debated.

(see ¶1231)

**3. Tenure:** In the same conference in which the vote is taken on a pastor in which an affirmative vote has been received to call a new pastor or to continue the relationship with the present pastor, the church conference shall vote on the length of tenure. The length of tenure shall be a specific number of years. The tenure of the initial call of the pastor shall not exceed four years.

**4. Continued Pastor Relationship/End of Tenure:** On the fourth Sunday in April in the year of the end of his tenure, a church conference shall be held for the purpose of voting on its continued relationship with the present pastor.

a. The Board of Stewards will present a proposed contract approved by the church conference to the pastor for discussion prior to the church conference.

b. The pastor must receive a simple majority affirmative vote in order to

continue to serve as pastor of that church.

c. The church must notify the pastor of the result of the vote immediately following the conference.

d. A pastor receiving an affirmative vote must notify the church of his intention within seventy-two hours after being notified of the result of the vote. Failure to do so shall be considered by the church as a response not to return. In no case shall a minister consider another church prior to informing the church of his decision. After the pastor agrees to continue the relationship, he may not change his decision for the next pastoral year unless elected to a General Conference office.

**5. Continued Pastor Relationship /Unexpired Tenure:** A pastor whose tenure has not expired must be offered a contract proposal approved by the church conference for the next pastoral year no later than the third Sunday in April. After being offered a contract proposal, a pastor must announce his decision within seven days either to accept or to reject the contract. If a contract cannot be agreed to within seven days, the pastor and/or church may consider other options. After a pastor agrees to a contract, he may not change his decision for the next pastoral year unless elected to a General Conference office.

**6. Special Called Vote:** To call for a vote on a pastor whose tenure has not expired, the church conference Chairman must, in the month of March, receive a written petition by twenty percent of the active membership calling for a vote on the church-pastor relationship. If twenty percent so petitions, the church conference Chairman shall call for a church conference to vote on continuing the relationship with two weeks notice given. In case of an affirmative simple majority vote, tenure shall continue as previously established.

**7. Pastor's Desire To Terminate Tenure:** On the fourth Sunday in April, but not before, the pastor, if he has decided not to continue his present church-pastor relationship, shall notify the church of his desire to terminate at the close of the current pastoral year.

The duly elected Annual Conference delegates and pastor shall notify the Annual Board of Administration by means of the Church-Pastor Agreement the expressed will of the church and the pastor. The Board will be bound by the agreement of the church and the pastor.

Where no agreement has been reached, the Annual Conference Board of Administration will endeavor to effect an assignment agreeable to both church and pastor.

All assignments in pastoral relationships must be made at Annual Conference. The church-pastor relationship shall end with the last day of the month in which the Annual Conference is held and begin with the first day of the succeeding month. Moving dates shall be between the last Sunday of the month in which the Annual Conference is held and the first Sunday of the succeeding month. In the event a pulpit becomes vacant because of extenuating circumstances, the President shall have the authority to fill the pulpit.

### Pastoral Responsibilities and Authority

The duties of a pastor who has charge of a mission, station, or circuit are as follows:

1. To preach the gospel; to celebrate the rite of matrimony, provided it does not conflict with civil laws; to administer baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with the understanding that no permanent powers of ordination are conferred until granted by the laying on of hands after he shall have met the disciplinary requirements; to control the appointment of all services held in the churches of his charge. Unordained pastors in charge shall have authority to celebrate the rite of matrimony only within their own pastoral charges, provided it does not conflict with civil laws.
2. To receive, try, and expel members, according to the provisions of the *Discipline* (§§726-744).
3. To appoint a day and on that day install publicly all elected officers of the church. The officers to be installed (Sunday School superintendents, stewards, etc.) may be brought before the chancel, briefly addressed by the pastor in charge, or by someone appointed by him for that purpose, touching the dignity and usefulness of an officer in the church of God, and commended to the church for sympathy and cooperation. In token of such willingness to help, the church members present may engage in covenant prayer to this end, the pastor leading.
4. To see that in every congregation all the ordinances and regulations of the church are duly observed, and that the General Rules are read at least once a year (§§116-120).
5. To serve as an *ex officio* member of all local church boards and committees.
6. To report to each Quarterly Local Conference the names of all who have been received into the church, and of all who have died, removed,



withdrawn, or been excluded from it during the preceding quarter, and to give a statement of the general condition of his station, circuit or mission.

7. To meet with the leaders and stewards of his charge.

8. To keep a register for his charge in which shall be noted with the time and manner of reception and disposal of every person belonging to the church in his station, circuit or mission, and to report to the Annual Conference the number of lay ministers that may be under his charge at the time of its session. In charges containing more than one organized congregation, the names of the members shall be arranged under the name of the church or appointment to which they belong.

9. To keep a directory in which the residence of all the members shall be noted to facilitate pastoral visiting.

10. To furnish everyone removing from his charge a proper membership letter in keeping with the *Discipline* of The Southern Methodist Church (§247).

11. To see that a permanent record of all the baptisms and marriages within the bounds of his charge is kept.

12. To leave his successor a particular account of his charge, including an account of the subscribers to our periodicals.

13. To give an account of his charge every quarter to the President.

14. To promote all the general interests of our church as the *Discipline* or the Annual Conference may designate and to report to the Conference the amount raised within the bounds of his charge for those interests during the year.

15. To see that all the people within the bounds of his charge are duly supplied with our books and periodicals.

16. To be, as elsewhere in all the work of the pastoral charge, the pastor in charge, and to be responsible for the educational program of the church.

17. To see that there is a church Board of Education and that it functions according to its duties listed in the *Discipline* (§276).

18. To report to each session of the Annual Conference the number and state of Sunday Schools, including Sunday meetings, weekday meetings of children, Epworth League meetings, fellowship meetings, and Vacation Bible Schools.

19. To preach upon the subject of Christian Education, to urge upon parents the importance of educating their children, advising them to patronize, as far as practicable, those institutions under the care of our church. To preach upon the call to the ministry. To seek out young men who feel called to the ministry, and assign them such work as will develop their ability and test their fitness for this service. To report the names and addresses of all such candidates for the ministry to the Quarterly Church Conference and to The Annual Conference Board of Administration.

20. To see that College Day is observed at some appropriate time during the year, during which Southern Methodist College shall be suitably presented.

21. To preach once a year on the subject of the Bible and its circulation.

22. To preach frequently on missions and to see that a Missionary Committee is appointed (§ 235.1f). He shall see that Missionary Day is observed in the church and Sunday School and that offerings are taken for the cause of missions, and that said offerings are designated, forwarded and reported. He shall conduct annually an intensive missionary cultivation for the development of the missionary spirit among the people.

23. To hold weekly prayer meetings where it is practicable, and when he cannot attend himself, let him engage others to hold them, and to provide for prayer meetings at other places where there is a probability of doing good.

24. To solemnize the rites of matrimony between one man and one woman; To keep the rule of our Church that prohibits such solemnizing between divorced persons, except in the case of innocent parties who have been divorced for Scriptural cause. We believe that marriage is clearly defined in the Word of God as a covenant between one man and one woman. Because the Bible states unequivocally that marriage between husband and wife is a parallel to the relationship of Christ and the Church, it is clearly contrary to God's principles to place any other earthly relationship in equal standing as that of marriage. We do not recognize cohabitation between heterosexuals or homosexuals as a legitimate covenant equal to marriage, nor do we recognize civil unions or marriages between homosexuals. Ceremonies of civil union or marriage between homosexuals shall not take place in a Southern Methodist Church, and Southern Methodist pastors or laypersons shall not participate in or attend any such ceremony, regardless of geographic location. Gen. 2:18-25, Eph. 5:21-33, Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:18-32

25. To consult with the Board of Stewards or other appropriate committee before inviting persons who are not Southern Methodist to speak in the church.

¶247. In carrying out his responsibility with reference to the transfers of church membership as set forth in ¶246.10, the pastor may use the following:

1. A letter of transfer to the church requesting such should include the following information:

\_\_\_\_\_ has been an acceptable member of the Southern Methodist Church in \_\_\_\_\_ station, (circuit or mission), \_\_\_\_\_ Conference.

Void after one year from this date.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_, Pastor

*When this letter is presented to another church an attached notice of acceptance similar to the following one should be made available for return. The person to whom this letter is issued shall remain a member of this church until such notice is dismissed.*

The letter of membership of \_\_\_\_\_ from the Southern Methodist Church in \_\_\_\_\_ is hereby acknowledged. He (or she) has been duly received as a member of this church, and hereby ceases to be a member of the church issuing said letter.

•(signed by) Pastor

•(name of) Church

•(current) Date

2. A complete record of each transfer shall be kept with the following information:

•Name

•Date Issued

•Date of acknowledgment of letter and actual transfer of membership

•Name of pastor issuing letter

•Name of pastor acknowledging letter

Assistant Pastor and Staff

The duties of an assistant pastor or staff member are to assist in the work of the station or circuit subject to the direction of the pastor.

## MINISTERS

### Qualifications and Regulations

Let the following questions be asked:

1. Do you know God as a pardoning God? Do you have the love of God abiding in you? Do you desire nothing but God? Are you holy in all manner of conversations?
2. Have you gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have you (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in things of God; and a just conception of salvation by faith? Do you speak justly, readily, and clearly?
3. Have you fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin and converted to God by your preaching? As long as these three marks concur in anyone, we believe he is called to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is moved by the Holy Ghost.

The General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners shall require all applicants for admission on trial to agree to abstain from the use of tobacco and all alcoholic beverages and from using drugs for other than proper medical purposes.

No applicant will be accepted into the ministry of The Southern Methodist Church as a lay minister, licensed minister, ordained minister, or nonclergy missionary, if either spouse is divorced, or has been divorced, except in the case of innocent parties who have been divorced for scriptural cause. The General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners shall investigate to determine if the applicant meets the aforesaid exception. After investigating and recommendation by the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners and concurrence by the Annual Conference, the applicant may be received, provided the applicant meets all other requirements.

In the case of a member of the clergy of The Southern Methodist Church, as described in ¶602, who hereafter becomes divorced or marries a divorcee, the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations shall investigate to determine if he meets the aforesaid exception. If he fails to meet the exception, he may be discontinued by the Annual Conference.

If any minister now serving in The Southern Methodist Church has deliberately concealed the fact that he or his wife have been divorced, this shall be reason for discharge from The Southern Methodist Church.

The Southern Methodist Church does not recognize women as preachers with authority to occupy the pulpit or to preach as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor does it authorize a preacher in charge to invite a woman claiming to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ to occupy its pulpits to expound the scriptures as a preacher. Such invitations and services are against the authority and order of the church. Such invitations do not apply to a woman missionary or missionary candidate.

The Southern Methodist Church does not recognize or approve the practice of its ministers setting up independent congregations who do not subscribe to the doctrine, faith, practices, teachings, and government of The Southern Methodist Church. Southern Methodist ministers who are retired, unassigned, or on leave of absence may serve on Special Assignment as supply pastors for churches which are not affiliated with The Southern Methodist Church, if they receive prior approval of the Annual Conference or its Board of Ministerial Relations. The request for approval must be made to the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations and renewed annually. A minister who does not request approval or continues to serve an unaffiliated church after approval is denied by the Annual Conference will be discontinued by the Conference. The following conditions are required to maintain the minister's good standing:

1. That he answer his annual ministerial questionnaire so as to indicate that he has not changed doctrinally or in his commitment to Christ or in his commitment to support the Southern Methodist Church.
2. That he and, if possible, his family attend Annual Conference each year (expenses paid by the church).
3. That he and, if possible, his family attend Pastor's School/General Conference in their respective years (expenses paid by the church).
4. That his church contributes to the Southern Methodist retirement program in accordance with the program's requirements.
5. That he request renewal of his status annually.
6. That he not join any other church or denomination. The minister is a member of an Annual Conference of the Southern Methodist Church;

any other membership would nullify that membership. This is the reason for the use of the terms “supply pastor” above. The minister can fully serve and support all the ministries of the church he serves. If the church is a member of another denomination, the minister may also participate in as many organizations and ministries as that denomination will permit without membership or ordination. The members of the minister’s family may join the church being served without jeopardizing the minister’s status.

## Status

### Lay Minister

A lay minister is a lay member of a Southern Methodist Church whom the Local Church Conference has recommended to the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations and the Board, in turn, has recommended him to the Annual Conference which has licensed him as a lay minister, authorized him to preach and serve under the pastor’s direction and as opportunity affords, thus providing for the employment and development of his gifts and usefulness (§235.2b, c).

To qualify for a license as a lay minister, the applicant must have a high school diploma or have obtained a general equivalency diploma. He must be recommended initially and annually thereafter by his Local Church Conference to the Board of Ministerial Relations. He must complete a course of preliminary studies which includes reading through the Bible, a study of the *Discipline*, and a study of the preparation and delivery of sermons. The Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations is to examine the applicant concerning these studies (§1358). If satisfied, it may recommend to the Annual Conference that he be licensed as a lay minister. After being licensed, he must also complete the Conference course of study prescribed by the General Conference Board of Administration, which will be known as the “Conference Course of Study for Lay Ministers”.

A lay minister is a layman and cannot be a member of the Annual Conference or serve on an Annual Conference committee except when elected as a layman.

Whenever a lay minister moves his membership from one church to another, the pastor shall, with his certificate of transfer, indicate his official standing. If a lay minister fails to present his certificate of official standing to the new church into which he moves within a peri-

od of six months, his credentials will become null and void, unless he can show that his failure to do so was unavoidable.

The local church may recommend a layman to the Board of Ministerial Examiners for the pastoral ministry. If the Board of Ministerial Examiners recommends him and if an Annual Conference grants him a Permit to Preach or license to preach, he ceases being a member of the local church.

### Applying For Conference Membership

A lay applicant for Conference membership and for a License to Preach must be recommended for such license by his Local Church Conference (§235.2d), examined and recommended by the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners (§477) relative to his graces and gifts, and be approved by the Annual Conference (§358).

To qualify for full ministerial conference membership in an Annual Conference, the applicant must have earned a college degree, either Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, and must have a minimum of 36 Continuing Education Units in Biblical Studies.

If he has not met the Bible requirement, he may be granted a Permit to Preach, provided that he meets the requirements for lay minister (§616). Once he has a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree and has completed 36 hours of Bible or ministry credits, College or Continuing Education Credits prescribed by the General Conference Board of Administration, he may be considered for a License to Preach.

An applicant who is at least thirty years of age may be approved for a License to Preach without a bachelor's degree by the Annual Conference upon recommendation of the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations, provided he meets the 36 Continuing Education Units in Biblical Studies (§616), with the requirement that he enters the "Conference Course of Study for Licentiates" as prescribed by the General Conference Board of Administration. After completion of this course of study (36 Continuing Education Bible Units), he may be considered for full connection and taken off trial. If he does not have the 36 hours of Bible or ministry credits, he may be considered for a Permit to Preach. Once he has completed the 36 hours of Bible or ministry credits as prescribed by the General Conference Board of Administration, he may be considered for a License to Preach.

A minister from another church, whether he be a Licentiate or

ordained as a Deacon or an Elder or the equivalent thereof, wishing to transfer to The Southern Methodist Church, shall be received on trial for a minimum of two years. Such an applicant must be examined by the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners not only as to his beliefs but as to the requirements of his license or ordination to determine if he has met an equivalent standard (§358), including the same educational standards that are required of every Southern Methodist minister.

### On Probationers and Trial Period

A probationer is a minister who joins the Annual Conference with a minimum of two years on trial. He is one whom the General Conference Board of Examiners has recommended to the Annual Conference and whom the Annual Conference has granted a Permit to Preach or whom it has received as a Licentiate or ministerial member on trial for stationing as a pastor or special ministries.

The President may assign an individual with a Permit to Preach as a supply pastor.

A college ministerial student or seminarian may be granted a Permit to Preach provided a Southern Methodist Church or the President of The Southern Methodist Church recommends him to the Board of Ministerial Examiners, and he has met the minimum educational requirements of §616.

An ordained minister who is transferring ministerial credentials into The Southern Methodist Church must be placed on trial for two years before being granted full membership and can be assigned by the President as a supply pastor.

The President shall assign to each individual with a Permit to Preach and to each Licentiate, who is on trial, an Elder or a Deacon as a mentor and advisor. The President shall assign an Elder to any minister transferring into The Southern Methodist Church to advise and guide him while he is on trial.

The Board of Ministerial Relations will annually evaluate the ministry of each individual with a permit and will recommend to the Annual Conference whether the permit be discontinued or continued for another year. The Board of Ministerial Relations will annually evaluate the ministry of each Licentiate and minister who is on trial. At the end of the two-year trial period, the Board will make recommendations



to the Annual Conference on whether the Licentiate or minister shall remain on trial or probation, be discontinued, or the minister be accepted into full connection, provided that all the applicable educational requirements were completed. If the individual remains on trial after the second year, the board will annually review his ministry and make recommendations regarding his advancement or membership in the Annual Conference.

### Full Connection as Relating to Licentiate

A minister on trial who has successfully completed two years of service may be recommended by the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations and if approved by the Annual Conference may be received into full connection after complying with ¶ 616, ¶621, and ¶631.

### As Relating to Others Seeking Full Connection

A minister of another church, accredited as minister, or Elder, who desires to unite with us as a preacher, may be admitted as a Deacon or Elder into full connection by the Annual Conference after two years on trial, provided that the Annual Conference is satisfied with his gifts, grace and usefulness, and with his agreement with us in doctrine and discipline, on condition that he take upon himself our ordination vows with or without the reimposition of hands (¶358.6).

No minister shall be received into full connection until he has attended an orientation session provided by the General Board of Administration and met the Continuing Education Unit requirements as outlined in the *Discipline* (Licentiates - 36 Continuing Education Units, Deacons - 60 Continuing Education Units, Elders - 72 Continuing Education Units).

### Deacon

To become a Deacon, a Licentiate must have met the educational requirements (60 Continuing Education Units), be recommended by the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations, elected by the Annual Conference, take the vows of ordination and the laying on of hands of three Elders (¶358.6).

The Licentiate must be in full connection before he can be ordained Deacon.

A licensed probationer must serve a minimum of two (2) years

in a ministerial appointment after receiving his license to preach before being eligible to be ordained Deacon.

The duties of a Deacon are to administer baptism and solemnize the rite of matrimony in the absence of an Elder, to assist an Elder in administering the Lord's Supper and to perform all the duties of a preacher.

## Elder

An Elder is constituted by the election of a majority of the Annual Conference and the laying on of the hands of three or more Elders after approval by the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations (§358.6).

To advance to Elder, a Deacon must have earned a Master of Divinity degree or completed graduate work in a course of study approved by the General Board of Administration, and must have served as a Deacon for a minimum of two years. This course of study may include Continuing Education Units for attendance at seminars, workshops and Pastors' School as approved by the Administrative Committee of the "Conference Course of Study". For Elders, a minimum of 72 Continuing Education Units, according to the Southern Methodist Church Ministerial Advancement Program, are required.

Deacon shall exercise that office for a minimum of two years before he is eligible for the office of Elder, provided, however, that if a Deacon failed his ordination because of events beyond his control, his time shall be counted from the time of his election to Deacon's orders.

The duties of an Elder are to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, to solemnize the rite of matrimony only between a man and woman after prayerful consideration of the spiritual standing of the individuals, to perform all parts of divine worship, and to perform all duties of a preacher.

## Special Situations

### Special Assignment

A minister, at his request, may be granted a leave of absence by the Annual Conference for reasons of illness, furthering an education, or personal reasons. This leave of absence is not to exceed two years without recommendation of the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations and the approval of the Annual Conference (§352.6). During the leave of absence, or extension thereof, he shall retain his active sta-

tus and Conference privileges. Failure to request an extension of said leave or disapproval of the request by the Annual Conference shall automatically place him in an inactive status without Conference privileges. After two years in an inactive status, a minister may be discontinued by action of the Annual Conference. Reinstatement may be made by the action of the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners (§477) and the Annual Conference (§358.1).

A minister, upon the approval of his request to the Annual Conference Board of Administration and the concurrence of the Annual Conference, may be assigned to special Christian ministries other than the pastorate (§352.6).

A minister must request a special assignment or a leave of absence if he is not available to be assigned to pastor a church for the upcoming pastoral year.

### Disabled Preacher

A disabled preacher is one who is so disabled by affliction as to be unable to preach constantly, but who is willing to do any work in the ministry which the President may direct and he may be able to perform.

A disabled relation shall be granted by an Annual Conference on the recommendation of the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations (§358.2). Nor shall this board, in its decision, consider anything other than the personal disability of the applicant. Provided, however, that should the Board report adversely, the Annual Conference may grant the relation by a vote of not less than three-fourths of the members present. The Annual Conference may refer to the Board the application for this relation with or without the consent of the person concerned.

A disabled preacher who refuses to attend to the work assigned to him, except in the case of sickness or other unavoidable cause, shall not be allowed to exercise the function of his office nor even to preach among us; nevertheless, the final determination of the case shall be with the Annual Conference of which he is a member, which shall have power to acquit, suspend, or expel him; provided that he shall not be denied trial by committee.

### Retired Preacher

A retired minister is a credentialed Southern Methodist minister who is 62 years of age or older and requests retirement status ¶358.2).

A retired status shall be granted, upon request of a minister, by an Annual Conference on the recommendation of the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations.

A retired preacher shall be responsible to the Annual Conference within whose bounds he resides, which Conference shall have power to try, acquit, suspend, or expel him.

A retired Southern Methodist minister who is not serving as a pastor, assistant pastor or approved supply shall be granted the privilege of membership, including voice and vote, and the privilege of holding office in the Local Church Conference of the Southern Methodist Church which he attends, with the exception that he may not serve as a local church delegate to Annual or General Conference.

### Supply Pastor

A supply pastor is one appointed under temporary or unusual circumstances when a person qualified for regular appointment is not available or suitable. The following persons may serve as a supply pastor:

1. An Elder, Deacon, or Licentiate serving under some other appointment.
2. An Elder or Deacon on loan from one Annual Conference to another.
3. A pastor who belongs to another denomination.
4. A lay pastor who is in the class of the second year.
5. A retired pastor.

A person who has been approved by the General Conference Board of Ministerial Examiners for service as a supply is an approved supply. When such a person has been assigned a charge by the President, he is an assigned supply.

A supply pastor shall have the right to carry out all the duties and functions of a pastor on the charge to which he is assigned. He may not carry out the function of a preacher elsewhere, nor does he have a vote in the Annual Conference or General Conference unless these rights are his on some other basis.

## Suspended Preacher

If a preacher, whether Licentiate, Deacon, or Elder, in the annual examination of the preachers be found delinquent, unacceptable, inefficient, indifferent, or inactive in the work of his ministry, the Annual Conference may suspend him. For the Licentiate, Deacon or Elder, this would mean that he would no longer be stationed or approved for ministerial assignment.

## Educational Requirements

The Southern Methodist Church requires all candidates for the licensed ministry to present a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree; it strongly urges that this be theologically oriented and that such undergraduate work be taken at Southern Methodist College. Degrees earned at other colleges are generally acceptable but the General Board of Administration reserves the right of final approval. Specific educational requirements for the different classes of ministers are given elsewhere: Lay Minister ¶616; Licentiate ¶626; Deacon ¶638; Elder ¶643. Ministers satisfying their educational requirement through the “Conference Course of Study” must meet the following minimum standards: Licentiates, 36 Continuing Education Units; Deacons, 60 Continuing Education Units; Elders, 72 Continuing Education Units.

Failure to make education advancement for two years in succession shall be cause for discontinuance or suspension without injury to applicants’ or candidates’ character, unless the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations deemed otherwise. A recommendation by the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations to suspend a person for the above reason must be sustained by a three-fourths vote of the Annual Conference.

Each candidate for admission to any of the ministerial classifications of The Southern Methodist Church shall complete the application for admission and accompanying questionnaire and submit them along with transcripts of all academic work to the office of the President of The Southern Methodist Church.

A minister meeting the educational requirements of The Southern Methodist Church must be approved and recommended by the Annual Conference Board of Ministerial Relations to the Annual Conference for its approval before being received or advanced in any classification. Education or time of service does not mean an automatic advancement of classification.

## Reception And Recognition of Members

### Receiving Children

*After the minister previously shall have formed the children in a class (baptizing any whose baptism may have been delayed or neglected), and shall have instructed them in the things necessary for them to know as to the doctrines and rules of the Church, he shall cause, them to be conveniently placed before the congregation, and, after inviting their parents and teachers to stand with them on either hand, he shall say:*

Brethren of the household of faith, let our hearts be lifted up in thanksgiving to Almighty God, who by the Holy Spirit has inclined these children to desire and ask for membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. Having arrived at years of discretion, and now of their own accord appearing before this congregation to take upon themselves the vows and enter upon the privileges and duties of the Church, let us with one mind and heart most earnestly ask in their behalf the blessings of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*Then shall the minister say: Let us pray.*

Almighty and everlasting God, Giver of every good and perfect gift, accept our hearty thanks for the children whom You have committed to our love and care. As You did bring them into this world, and from the beginning did appoint them a place in Your kingdom by grace of the atonement of Your Son Jesus Christ; and after receiving them by baptism into Your holy catholic Church; grant to your servants, their parents, pastors, and teachers, wisdom to train them in the way they should go; so now by the Holy Spirit move them to seek this place of honor and service among Your saints. Wherefore, O God, the Father and Saviour of children, grant unto these, the tender lambs of Your fold, that from this day forth they shall grow in grace and wisdom and in favor with God and man, to the end that, after lives of holy obedience and faithful service to Your Church below, they may be ministered an abundant entrance into Your kingdom above, for Jesus' sake. **AMEN.**

*Then the minister shall say to the parents:*

Dear fathers and mothers, let this be to you a day of peculiar joy and thanksgiving, in that these who are of your flesh and blood have also entered into a holier spiritual kinship with you in Jesus Christ. While the church henceforth will share with you the duty and privilege of bringing up these children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it renews its injunction to you as parents, by God's help, faithfully to continue both to teach and train them, by example and precept, in the way

of the Lord. Will you accept this duty, in the fear and by the favor of God, and here and now, in the presence of Almighty God and his congregation, renew the vows made by you as fathers and mothers in the baptism of these children?

**Answer: With God's help, I will.**

*Then shall the minister address the children who are candidates, and say:*

Beloved children, our Lord Jesus, by his holy word, has given you a place in his kingdom and Church which must not be taken away. But lest you should remain within the Church, or be admitted to its communion, without assuming its vows and obligations, it becomes my duty to inquire of you as to your purpose of mind and heart.

Do you with your whole heart believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord, to love and trust and obey Him all the days of your life?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Do you believe the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God, the message of salvation only in and only through Jesus Christ, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Will you promise faithfully to keep the rules of the *Discipline*, which are the rules of the Church, and to be loyal to the doctrine and government of The Southern Methodist Church?

If so, answer: **I will.**

Will you attend the services of this local church, and as God shall enable you, support this church with your prayers, your time and talents, and with your tithes and offerings?

If so, answer: **I will.**

*Then shall the people stand up and led by the minister, join in the responsive reading of the twenty-third Psalm as followeth:*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

*Then the minister shall read the Epistle as followeth (II Timothy 1:5, 6):*

I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

*Then the minister shall say: Hear the words of the holy Gospel as written by St. Luke (2:40, 42, 46, 51, 52):*

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

*Then shall the minister say to the candidates:*

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the church of Christ in The Southern Methodist Church and we bid you welcome to all its rights and privileges; and in token of our brotherly love, we give you the right hand of fellowship, and pray that you may be numbered with his people here and with his saints in glory everlasting. **AMEN.**

## Receiving Adults

*The minister and congregation together shall close by saying:*

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

**AMEN.**

*NOTE: Each child-candidate should be given beforehand a printed copy of this ritual, which should*



*be made plain to his understanding by pastor and parents.*

*The minister shall cause the candidates to be placed conveniently before the congregation, and after baptizing any who may not have been previously baptized, he shall say:*

Brethren, the Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the promotion of his worship and the due administration of his Word and ordinances, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. All, of every age and station, stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies; and it invites all alike to become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. But as none who have arrived at years of discretion can remain within its bounds or be admitted to its communion, without assuming obligations, it is my duty to demand of these persons present whether they are resolved to assume the same.

*Then shall the minister address the candidates, as follows:*

Dearly beloved, you profess to have a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from your sins, and to become a faithful servant in the kingdom of God; you seek the fellowship of the people of God in this Church, to assist you in working out your salvation; I therefore demand of you:

Do you with your whole heart believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord, to love and trust and obey Him all the days of your life?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Do you believe the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God, the message of salvation only in and only through Jesus Christ, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Will you promise faithfully to keep the rules of the *Discipline*, which are the rules of the Church, and to be loyal to the doctrine and government of The Southern Methodist Church?

If so, answer: **I will.**

Will you attend the services of this local church, and as God shall enable you, support this church with your prayers, your time and talents, and with your tithes and offerings?

If so, answer: **I will.**

*The minister shall then say to the candidates:*

We rejoice to recognize you as members of the church of Christ, and bid you welcome to all its privileges; and in token of our brotherly love, we give you the right hand of fellowship, and pray that you may be numbered with his people here, and with his saints in glory everlasting.

*The minister shall then say to the congregation:*

Brethren, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day recognize as members of this Church. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

*Then may follow a suitable hymn, and the minister shall say: Let us pray.*

Almighty God, we thank You for establishing Your Church, and promising that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. We bless You for calling us to the fellowship of Your people, and for numbering us with the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. We especially praise Your name for enabling these Your servants to declare the Lord to be their God. Help them to perform the promise and vow which they have made, to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh; to believe the record which You have given of Your Son; and to walk in all Your commandments and ordinances blameless, to the end of their lives. May their communion with Your people be sanctified to their growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being nourished and knit together, increasing with the increase of God. May Your people do them good, and may they prove a blessing to Your people. And grant, O Lord, that all who are here members of Your militant Church through Your mercy, the merit of Your Son, and the grace of Your Spirit, may finally be made members of Your triumphant Church in heaven. **AMEN.**

Almighty and everlasting God, Heavenly Father we give You humble thanks, for that You have called us to the knowledge of Your grace, and faith in You; increase this knowledge and confirm this faith in us evermore. Give Your Holy Spirit to these persons, that they, being born again, may be made heirs of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **AMEN.**

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from

evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

## Alternate Service Invocation

In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### *Address to Candidates*

Fellow Christian: we rejoice with you that through the grace of God you have been brought to a knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord and, by faith, have been made partakers of His great salvation. We rejoice likewise, that you are seeking admission into the Church, which is the organized body of believers in Christ. We trust that through this fellowship you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, and that you may become qualified for larger and better service in the interest of His cause and kingdom.

In order that this congregation here assembled may know your purpose and be assured that you are a proper person to be received into the membership of The Southern Methodist Church, we ask you the following questions:

Do you with your whole heart believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord, to love and trust and obey Him all the days of your life?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Do you believe the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God, the message of salvation only in and only through Jesus Christ, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct?

If so, answer: **I do.**

Will you promise faithfully to keep the rules of the *Discipline*, which are the rules of the Church, and to be loyal to the doctrine and government of The Southern Methodist Church?

If so, answer: **I will.**

Will you attend the services of this local church, and as God shall enable you, support this church with your prayers, your time and talents, and with your tithes and offerings?

If so, answer: **I will.**

### *Welcome into Fellowship*

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome you into the fellowship of the \_\_\_\_\_ Southern Methodist Church, and pray that God may unite us into the bonds of Christian faith and love and make us strong and useful in His service. In token of our love and confidence I now extend to you the right hand of Christian fellowship.

*Charge to the Congregation*

Members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Southern Methodist Church of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference, I commend to your love and care this person whom we this day receive into the fellowship of our Church. Will you enter into a covenant with him\* to cherish him in Christian love and kindness as one with us in the Lord? If so, stand to your feet and remain standing for the prayer of consecration.

*Prayer of Consecration*

O Lord, bestow upon this Your servant Your heavenly blessing, and grant that he\* may ever be faithful to You and Your Church. Help him to keep the vows which he has made. Enable him, we pray, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Fill him with Your Holy Spirit. Make him fruitful in every good work. Keep him unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

*\*Wherever the singular masculine pronoun appears related to the candidate, substitute the feminine pronoun for a woman and a plural pronoun for more than one candidate.*







*For a full presentation of Southern Methodist doctrine and practice, please consult the 2022 Discipline of The Southern Methodist Church.*

*Copies may be obtained by contacting:*



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