



## Covenant of Spiritual Maturity for Ruling Elders serving on Session

Having been ordained by this congregation, I understand that I have been selected to govern because my fellow members affirm my capacity for mature behavior, wisdom and leadership. I understand that I am expected to vote my conscience in all matters. At times that means that I must stand with the prophets and take unpopular positions. Because I take seriously the ordained office that I hold, in both my personal life and ecclesial office, I am open to being held accountable for how well I model the following spiritual capacities. I covenant to do my best to:

1. Define myself clearly;
2. Take appropriate stands based on my conscience;
3. Base my decisions on well-defined, spiritual principles;
4. Remain calm and non-reactive when others disagree with me;
5. Effectively monitor and manage my anxiety;
6. Commit myself to direct communication with others by using “I statements”;
7. Not engage in “blaming” behaviors;
8. Not participate in gossip and secrets;
9. Demonstrate appropriate spiritual balance so as not to over-function or under-function;
10. Facilitate “person-to-person relationships”;
11. Maintain healthy boundaries;
12. Learn to “de-triangle” — i.e., not get seduced or “hooked” by others’ reactivity;
13. Manage my need to be right;
14. Demonstrate “mutual forbearance” with all who disagree with me;
15. Remain connected to all persons in the system.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If all of our ecclesial leaders would covenant to live these capacities, we would have healthier churches. If the officers in the above church had signed such a covenant, the pastor and board could use the covenant to debrief the last board meeting and the subsequent parking lot meeting to process the degree to which the officers held true to their covenant. Obviously, such accountability is not for the faint of heart — but as best as I can tell, neither is ordination. I have learned that embracing and practicing this covenant never fully solves the perennial problem of parking lot meetings, but it sure helps. I challenge you to try it in your neck of the woods and see what happens — just be sure to hold onto the proverbial wheel!

“A Family systems approach to parking lot meetings”, Presbyterian Outlook, 9/18/18, by David Lee Jones, director of the doctor of ministry program at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Nashotah, Wisconsin.

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