



Equipping the Presbyters:

**Godly Decision-Making
Nineteen Votes @ Spring Presbytery**

Facilitated by Elder Art Ritter,
Past Moderator, Nevada Presbytery

Grace and Peace to you from the Presbytery of Nevada, Equipping the Saints Committee – and WELCOME!

I am Art Ritter and I will facilitate this workshop on our responsibilities as presbyters for Godly Decision-making – especially as it relates to the proposed Amendments to the Constitution's Parts 1 and 2: the *Book of Confessions* and *Book of Order*.

The 220th General Assembly of our denomination met this last summer and referred these proposed amendments in two study guides: Part 1 of 2 (a complete replacement of the Heidelberg Catechism in our *Book of Confessions*) and Part 2 of 2 (paragraph-level changes to the *Book of Order*) to the 173 Presbyteries that compose our denomination for their affirmation – or rejection.

What is this about?

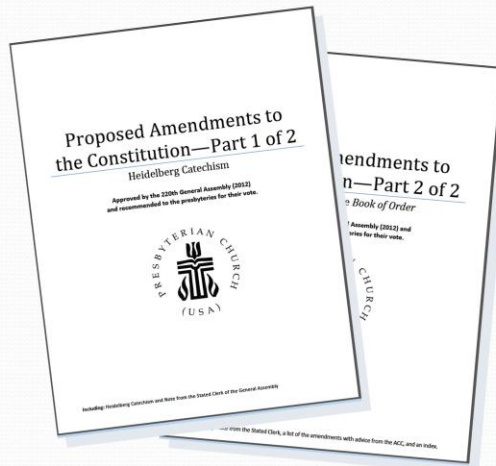
19 Amendments!

We are all about:

- Teaching
- Informing
- Preparing
- Encouraging

But not about:

- Debating



There are actually 19 amendments in these two parts this year. That is more than the 219th GA sent us two years ago, only 17 -- with one being newFOG and another being the Belhar Confession!

This workshop is produced for the purposes of:

- *teaching* you about our polity and how we change its formal structure,
- *informing* you about these three major Amendments to our Constitution,
- and for *preparing and encouraging* your personal and our corporate study,
- ***so that*** we can vote God's will on these proposed amendments in our Spring Presbytery meeting, decently and in order.

It is not produced to argue, persuade, advise, or tell you how to vote on any of these -- just how to get ready to vote on them in our Spring Presbytery meeting, March 4 and 5 at Mt View PC, here in Las Vegas.



Introductions ...

- **Arthur Ritter**, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
 - Elder and Deacon, Clerk of Session, Treasurer of the Board of Deacons
 - Past FPC, LV Commissioner to the **Nevada Presbytery** and
 - Member, Committee on Preparation for Ministry
 - Member, Equipping Ministries
 - Vice Moderator, Moderator, and now, Past Moderator,
 - NV Presbytery former Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific.
 - Member, Synod's Mission Personnel and Nominating Committees.
 - NV Presbytery delegate to and Board Member of the Religious Alliance In Nevada – a consortium of five mainline denominations advocating God's will to the state government for social justice in Nevada.
 - Polity (business model) wonk – in real life, too.

And you? ...

Here is who I am and my association with the subject of church polity.

A life-long Presbyterian, I have experience in two different Presbyterian polities – and at several levels in each.

But, what about you?

Equipping the Presbyters

Invited: Nevada Presbyters

how long a Christian?

how long a Presbyterian?

how long / where in an
ordered ministry?

Can we take a few minutes to see what experience there is in the room with us today?

(HEY, READER! -- Please “join the group” and introduce yourself to me – by email

– Art@AGRitter.com and note:

how long you have been a Christian,

how long you have been a Presbyterian,

– and how long you have served the greater church – and in which governance
positions.

-- And don't forget to tell me which church you attend.)

Well, we see that there is a bit of attachment to polity in this room, too!

As you will soon see, we have a great amount of mature and broad polity experience across our presbytery! Two years ago, I asked the workshop participants about their association with denominational polity. Here is what they shared (as best as I remember) about the experience they have had - and then, generously shared in these workshops ...

Equipping the Presbyters

Invited: Nevada Presbyters

Christian: less than 10 years to lifelong

Presbyterian: less than 10 years to lifelong

In ordered ministry: new to 60+ years
Session, Deaconate, presbytery, synod, GA, PJs

Last time we prepared for voting on changes to our polity ...

In the **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS** workshop audience, November 6, 2010:

- All were elders (session experience) or ministers (session and presbytery experience) – no Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPs).
- Two had extensive presbytery / committee experience.
- One had (synod) judicial commission experience.
- One had been to 9 General Assembly meetings, including 2010 – as an observer / allied ministry member.

In the **HAWTHORNE** workshop, January 10th, (to which the Presbyters from Hawthorne and Tonopah PCs were invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

All were elders (with session experience, of course) or CLPs - plus a couple of spouse-drivers observers. Two of these had been to GA at least once (one in 1983! We'll see how auspicious that was in a bit.) One did 'fessed up that he had been an altar-boy.

Most were life-long or long-time Presbyterians (though one was baptized in 2000 and now serves as Session treasurer).

Between the two Commissioned Lay Pastors (Presbytery experience)... one had been Vice Moderator / Moderator of our Presbytery, and the other had been a commissioner to our Synod (serving on its finance committee) ... and had Synod Permanent Judicial Commission training, as well (but no *experience on that commission – yet!*).

In the **BISHOP** workshop, January 11th, (to which the Presbyters from Lee Vining and Bishop's First and Valley Presbyterian Churches were invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

One was a long-time Elder (with session and presbytery experience) and the other was a Minister (with session and presbytery experience - in 3 presbyteries).

In the **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE** workshop, January 12th (to which the Presbyters from the South Lake Tahoe, Incline Village, and Gardnerville PCs had been invited), this much polity experience was in the room ...

Several were Elders (with session and some with presbytery experience), one was a Deacon (Deaconate experience), several were simply there as observers.

Among these there was extensive Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair, and presbytery committee experience.

In the **RENO** workshop, January 13th (to which the Presbyters from the Truckee, Reno, and Sparks PCs had been invited), we had this polity experience in the room ...

Again, most were Elders (session and some with presbytery experience); but, there were also two Ministers (session and presbytery experience) ... and one observer, who was about 8 and had come with his Dad. He colored a lot and asked few questions.

Among these, there was Vice Moderator, Moderator, Council Chair, and extensive presbytery committee experience, and there was GA commissioner experience, too (two cycles worth).

In the **ELKO** workshop, January 14th (to which the Presbyters from the Wells, Lamoille, and Elko PCs had been invited), there was this polity experience in the room ...

Two churches were represented – both of their ministers (session and presbytery

experience) and one Elder (session experience only).

Among the ministers, one had extensive presbytery committee experience (in 6 presbyteries!), one had recent COM, CPM experience (as an Inquirer, Candidate – this is her first pulpit, but her husband is a retired, career minister!), and one is the personal friend / co-worker with the author of Item 10-A. She shared the huge struggles of writing this item!

In the **LAS VEGAS** workshop, January 15th (to which the Presbyters from all of the Las Vegas PCs had been invited), there was this polity experience in the room ...

One was a Minister (session and presbytery experience across 4 presbyteries) and the rest were Elders (session and some presbytery experience).

And finally, in the **HENDERSON** workshop, January 17th (to which the Presbyters from all of the Henderson PCs had been invited), we had this polity experience in the room ...

Three were Ministers (extensive session and presbytery experience) - one had just been installed in one of our presbytery pulpits – his second time back to a call in this presbytery!

There was one CLP (extensive preparation experience with session, specialized ministries, and presbytery committees (as inquirer and candidate) and, again, most were Elders (session and some presbytery experience).

Among them they shared ministerial experience across 8 presbyteries in all

Many were experienced with several presbytery committees

One had been Vice Moderator, Moderator, Past Moderator – and *Extended* Past Moderator!

So you can see our presbytery is no stranger to our polity!

So, let's dive right in ...

Well then, lets get to it!

Overview:

Concepts

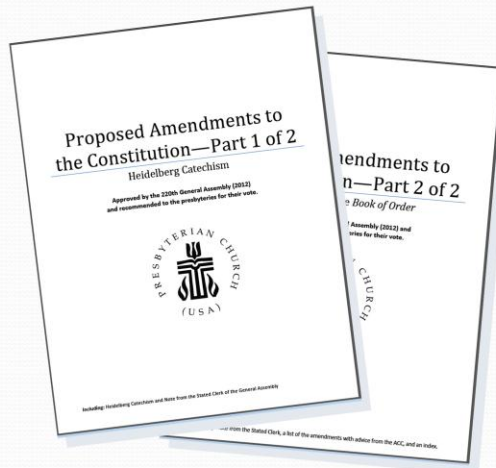
- Polity
- Hallmarks
- Conscience
- Discernment

Processes

- Amending
- Preparation
- Evaluation
- Criteria

Content

- The Amendments



These are the points we will discuss today – they should lead you to your personal preparation for voting the 19 amendments before us at Spring Presbytery.

To start, the underlying reason you are here -- Polity!



POLITY ...

... brings *order out of chaos*

... it is *how we govern what we do*

... lends an *air of dignity* to what otherwise
would be a *disorganized brawl*

First off, what is this ***polity*** thing? -- and -- What is the role of polity in the life of the Church?

Well, here are some working definitions of “polity” ...

Pause to read the slide

The first two are pretty good *conceptual* definitions ... for any organization.

The last is what the US Army thinks of its field artillery!

POLITY ...

... it is how we *organize, order, manage, and lead human effort* to:

- *accomplish the mission* **God gives His Church** and
- *achieve the vision* **God has for His Church.**

“How God works through His people”

These may be more precise definitions of “polity” ... for our church use, today.

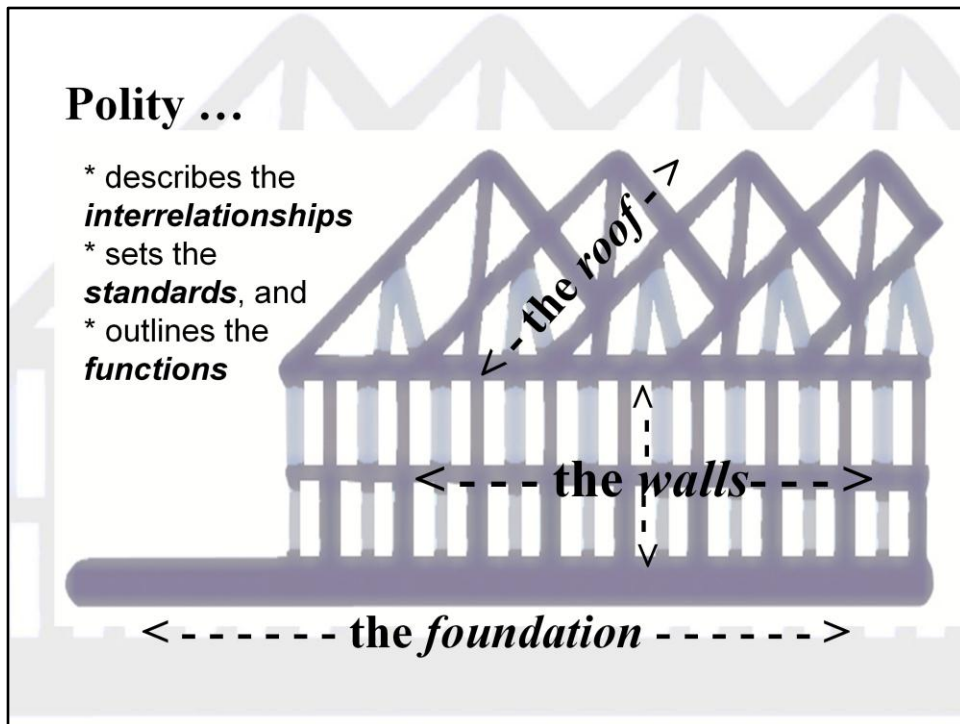
Pause to read the slide – and let these words *sink in*

At least you can see here that ***polity*** is not the work of the Church;

... participating in the mission God has for the church is the work of the Church.

Polity ... is how we *govern* our participation in God’s work.

Here is how people who proposed the “big change” for our polity looked at this term
...



Like any good architecture ... any good blueprint ... ***polity specifies --***

- the *dimensions of the theological foundations* upon which our polity rests,
- the *height and width of our ecclesiastical walls*, and
- the *pitch of our covenantal roof*...

It's the same with the relationship between polity and the practice of the life of the church. ***Polity ...***

- * describes the ***interrelationships*** between the parts of the church,
- * sets out the ***standards*** by which the church measures its ministry,
- * and outlines the ***functions*** necessary to being the church.

But, ***Polity*** should leave to individual councils the decisions about

- what practices best serve those interrelationships,
- what processes best produce ministry outcomes to meet those standards, and
- what structures best perform those functions.



*But - leaves the
interior
design - to the
occupants*

Polity should mandate:

- **roles, not community,**
- **standards, not processes,**
- **functions, not structures**



... in this analogy, **polity** describes the building we live in – but leaves to us the arrangement of the furniture in our own rooms.

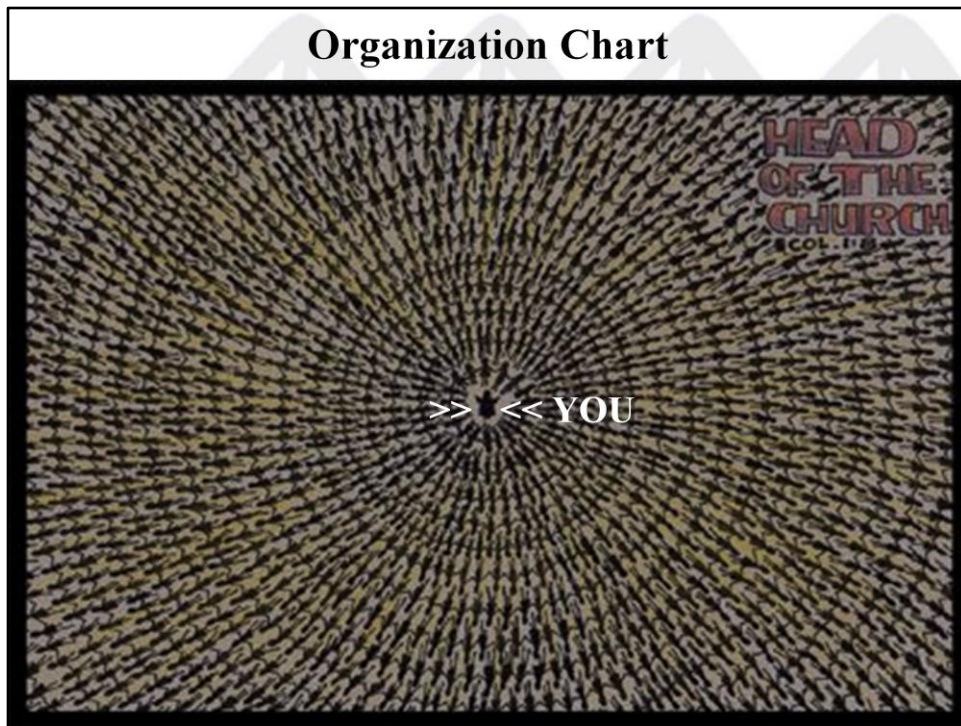
Those decisions are left to the ones who will live in the house – or worship in the sanctuary. **You** making them is what helps turn a house into your home, a church organization into your faith community.

To put it succinctly, polity should mandate –

- The **roles we play** – but, **not** the community of our lives as we fulfill them,
- The **standards** by which we measure our ministries – but, **not** the processes we use locally to do them,
- The **functions** that are necessary to have a church – but, **not** the structures we use locally to make them work.

If all of this analogy stuff is too abstract ...

Let's get personal! – and look at the organizational chart!



This is a three-dimensional, “God’s-eye” view of the organization of His church, as viewed by God – looking straight down, directly to you (that’s you, here in the center).

This is how **Jesus** sees His church – with *each one of us* at the center of His view, simultaneously.

As far as we are concerned ... (see the next slide!)

References:

F-1.02 JESUS CHRIST IS HEAD OF THE CHURCH

[Throughout this document and the Form of Government, the capitalized term “Church” refers to the Church Universal, the Church as it is called to be in Christ; except as part of a title (i.e. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).]

F-1.0201 The Authority of Christ

Almighty God, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, has given to him all power in heaven and on earth, not only in this age but

also in the age to come. **God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body.** The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work.

F-1.0202 Christ Calls and Equips the Church

Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills.

F-1.0203 Christ Gives the Church Its Life

Christ gives to the Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its order and discipline. Scripture teaches us of Christ's will for the Church, which is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

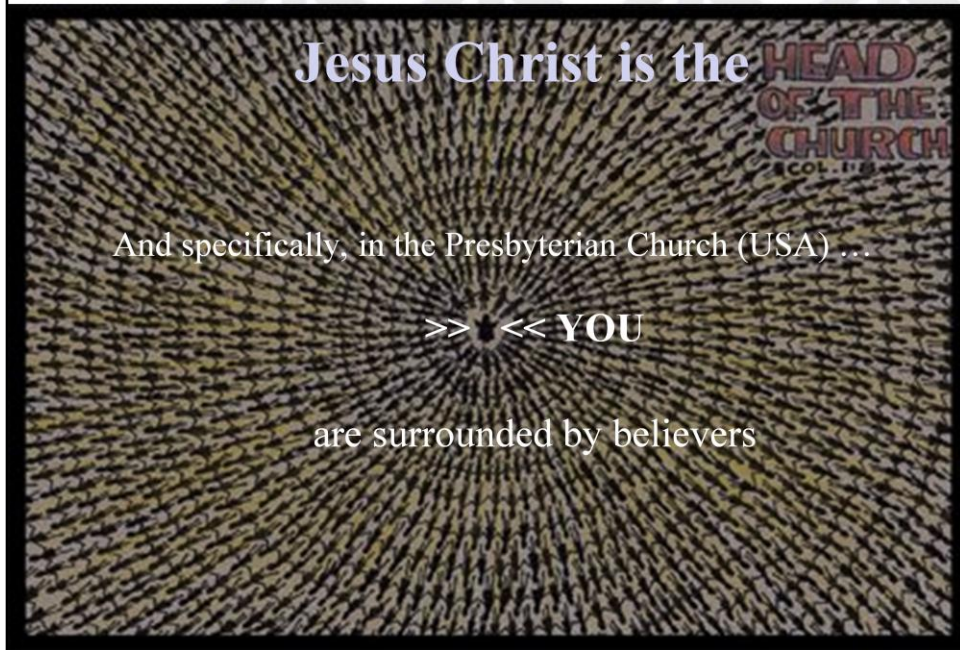
F-1.0204 Christ Is the Church's Hope

In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope, and that the Church, as Christ's body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God.

F-1.0205 Christ Is the Foundation of the Church

In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Christ God reconciles all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:19–20). In Christ's name, therefore, the Church is sent out to bear witness to the good news of reconciliation with God, with others, and with all creation. In Christ the Church receives its truth and appeal, its holiness, and its unity.

We all work directly for the Owner – and CEO!



You and all of the rest of us work directly for the Owner – and CEO!

And so does everyone else in the church – and so do all of its organizations and agencies.

Jesus Christ is the Head of ALL of our church (give me an **Amen?**) – and I hope that you have a direct, vibrant, and personal relationship with Him – that He “fills your heart and life” and that He “holds you in the palm of His hand.”

The church does not stand between you and Jesus.

God gives you a direct connection.

The church does not hold the bucket of Holy Spirit for you to drink from each Sunday.

The Holy Spirit should be dwelling in you – all the time. Like nothing else, it fills that ‘God-shaped hole’ that is part of our created being.

The church does not provide the throne for the Father whom we can address only on Sunday morning during the corporate prayers of confession and intercession.

Our Father can sit any where He wants (frankly, anywhere you need Him to sit) – after all, He made “all!”

We can each crawl directly into His lap at any time and address Him directly as His beloved child, saying: “Abba, Daddy, Father ... forgive me ... give me this day ... may your kingdom come to me ...”

Instead, *the church* is this organization of you and these other believers all around you. The church ...

Helps you build your relationship with the Triune Him –

... and organize collective and individual effort – for your accomplishment of His work –

... with and for others.

References:

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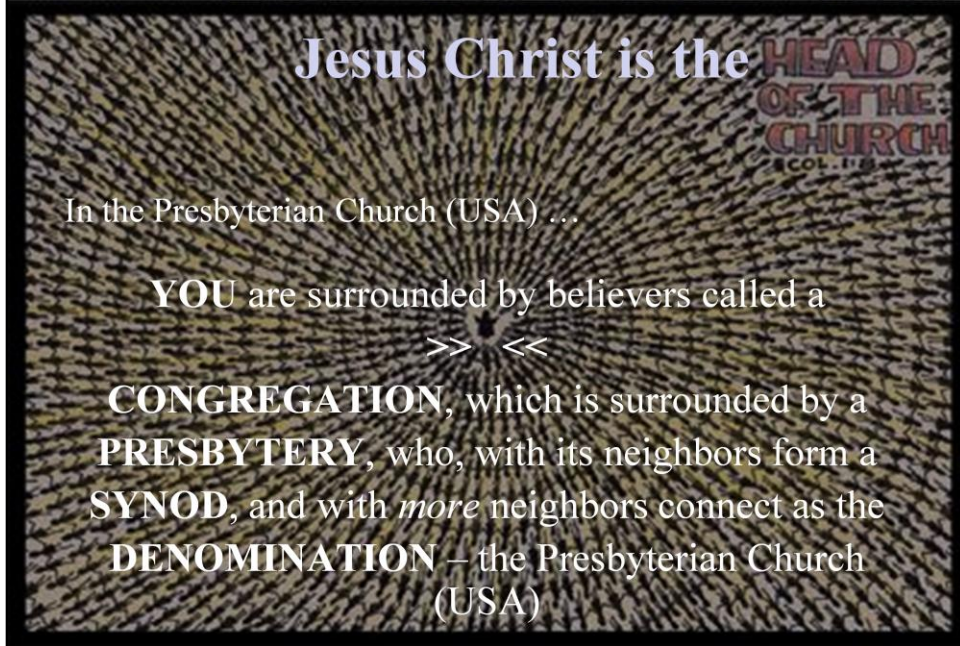
F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH

F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ

The Church is the body of Christ. Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world (1 Cor. 12:27–28):

- The Church is to be a **community of faith**, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.
- The Church is to be a **community of hope**, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning
- for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.
- The Church is to be a **community of love**, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.
- The Church is to be a **community of witness**, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God’s transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.

We all work directly for the Owner – and CEO!



(Read the slide)

Note the relationships between and among these parts of the larger body. Note, too, the last point – this is the fundamental structural organizing and operating power / authority principle in our church polity.

- The **congregation** is a formed body of believers who hold each other up and serve the community they are called to serve.
- The **presbytery** is an association of ten or more neighboring congregations joined for witness and service where called in their collective community area.
- The **synod** is a creature of its constituent presbyteries, linked to serve the needs of congregations in bounds of their presbyteries – and to provide collective service as its presbyteries direct it – in their boundaries and around the world.
- The **denomination** is also a creature of its constituent presbyteries (not of the synods) connected to serve the needs of congregations in the presbyteries – and to provide collective service as these presbyteries direct it – to the nation and around the world.
- The **presbyteries** meet every two years as the **denomination** -- in a representative body called the **General Assembly**.

- All really important policy is decided by the vote of the constituent presbyteries.

References:

...

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

[This provision is derived from and intended to restate the Historic Principles of Church Government, which were adopted in 1797 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the Principles of Presbyterian Government. In this quotation, the word “radical” is used in its primary meaning of “fundamental and basic,” and the word “appeals” is used in a general sense rather than with reference to a case involved in judicial process: “The radical principles of Presbyterian church government and discipline are:

‘That the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church; that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein; that, in like manner, a representation of the whole should govern and determine in regard to every part, and to all the parts united: that is, that a majority shall govern; and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower to higher governing bodies [councils], till they be finally decided by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church. For these principles and this procedure, the example of the apostles and the practice of the primitive Church are considered as authority.’”]

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms, within the context of its commitment to the Church universal, a special commitment to basic principles of Presbyterian polity:

F-3.0201 One Church

The particular congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church, called the church.

F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters

This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders. Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Teaching elders shall be committed in all their work to equipping the people of God for their

ministry and witness.

F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These **councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly**. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller.

F-3.0204 Seek and Represent the Will of Christ

Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.

F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.

F-3.0206 Review and Control

A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal.

F-3.0207 Ordination by Council

Presbyters (ruling elders and teaching elders) and deacons are ordained only by the authority of a council.

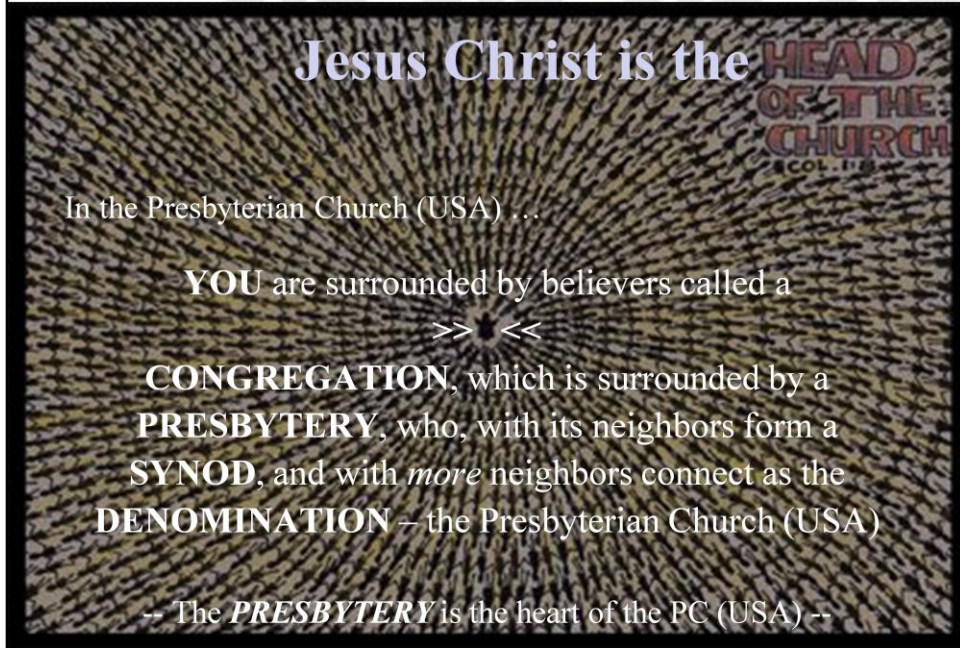
F-3.0208 Shared Power, Exercised Jointly

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.

F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils

Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church.

We all work directly for the Owner – and CEO!



Note the relationships between and among these parts of the larger body. Note, too, the last point – this is the fundamental structural organizing and operating power / authority principle in our church polity.

Note, too, the last point – this is the fundamental structural power / authority principle in our American Presbyterian church polity.

Even though ...

- The **synod** is a creature of its constituent presbyteries,
- The **denomination** is a creature of its constituent presbyteries (not of the synods), and
- The presbyteries meet every two years as the **denomination** -- in a representative body called the **General Assembly**,
- All the really important stuff is *done within the congregations* – and the really important policy *decided by the vote of the presbyteries*.

But, what if a dispute arises that the congregation cannot resolve?

References:

...

F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils

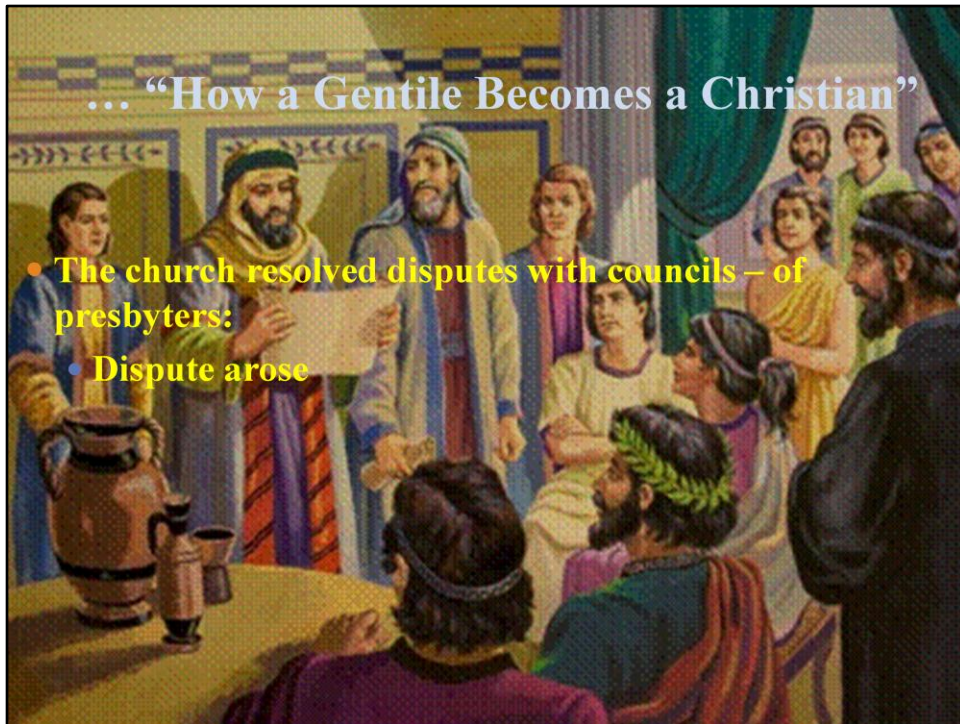
Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. **The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.**

G-1.01 THE CONGREGATION

G-1.0101 The Mission of the Congregation

The congregation is the church engaged in the mission of God in its particular context. The triune God gives to the congregation all the gifts of the gospel necessary to being the Church. The congregation is the basic form of the church, but it is not of itself a sufficient form of the church. Thus congregations are bound together in communion with one another, united in relationships of accountability and responsibility, contributing their strengths to the benefit of the whole, and are called, collectively, the church.

Through the congregation God's people carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, and living in covenant life with God and each other. In the life of the congregation, individual believers are equipped for the ministry of witness to the love and grace of God in and for the world. The congregation reaches out to people, communities, and the world to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to gather for worship, to offer care and nurture to God's children, to speak for social justice and righteousness, to bear witness to the truth and to the reign of God that is coming into the world.



Well, when a controversy arose in Antioch over the “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian” process -- the crucial issue for the church in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles – and it became a stumbling block for his ministry, the Antioch congregation sent Paul and Barnabas to the elders of the larger church – who gathered in Jerusalem to resolve the dispute.

Lets look at the polity of what happened:

Please open your Bible (or on the internet in another window) and read
Acts 15 - The Council at Jerusalem

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp **dispute** and debate with them.

Although we would like to assume (though it is not recorded here) that Paul and Barnabas first went privately to these “Judaizers*” to remonstrate and correct them and, failing at that, brought their disagreement before the elders of the congregation of the church at Antioch where this dispute was not resolved either, Galatians 2 indicates that Paul may have faced these antagonists in public, ‘in the moment,’ as he did in the Galatians account with Peter. People and councils may err – it happens.

Matthew 18:15-20** relates the process that Jesus teaches for resolving disputes (Dealing With Sin in the Church).

* See Galatians 2:14 (Young's Literal Translation) for this singular word-use reference in scripture and its translation as "Judaize." The context of this passage, Galatians 2, gives Paul's account of the broader background for the Acts passage examined here – another aspect of, and the personalities, dynamics, and breadth involved in the original (larger) dispute in Antioch and its underlying theological principle.

**Matthew 18:

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

[*Witnesses*]

Deuteronomy 17:6

On the testimony of **two** or three **witnesses** a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Deuteronomy 19:15

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of **two** or three **witnesses**.



So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ...

[this is the first ‘overture’ and its ‘managers’ sent to the first ‘council’ – to resolve the dispute.]

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, **they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders** [note the way these visiting presbyters were treated],

... to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

As Wikipedia notes: The **Council of Jerusalem** (or **Apostolic Conference**) is a name applied by historians to an Early Christian council that was held in Jerusalem and dated to around the year 50. It is considered by Western (Roman) and Orthodox Catholics to be a prototype and forerunner of the later Ecumenical Councils. ... Descriptions of the council are found in Acts of the Apostles chapter 15 (in two different forms, the Alexandrian and Western versions) and also possibly in Paul's letter to the Galatians chapter 2. Paul was likely an eyewitness and a major person in attendance whereas the writer of Luke-Acts probably wrote second-hand about the meeting he described in Acts 15.



⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question

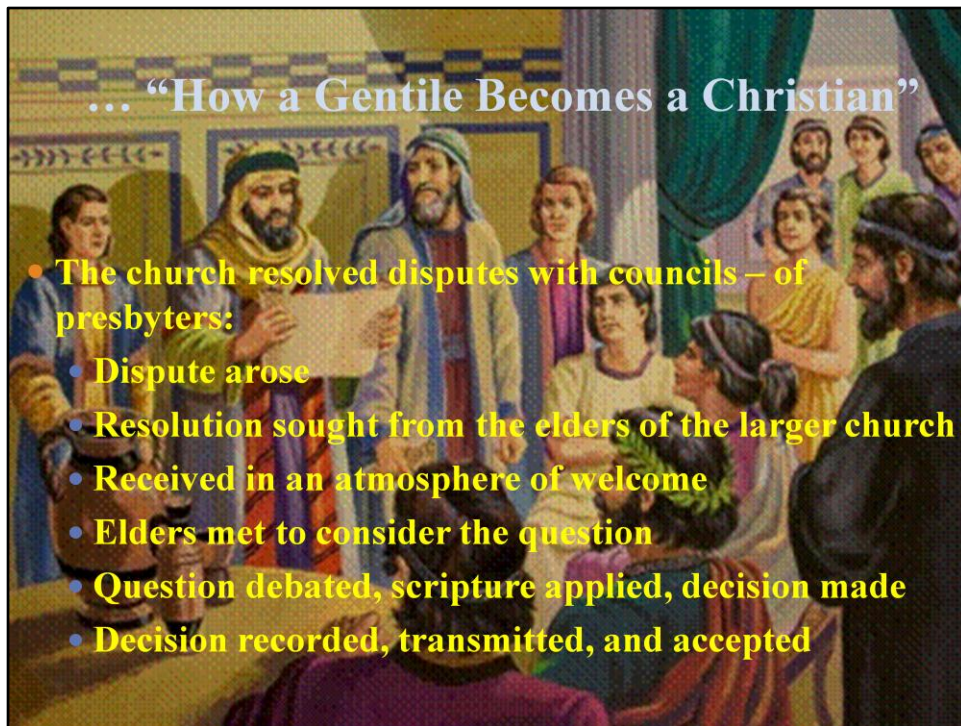
[note who heard the dispute – the assembled presbyters (apostles and elders)].

⁷ After much discussion, ...

[note that the issue was thoroughly aired and examined – and that the apostles apparently acted in parity with the elders and did not unduly assert their uniquely authoritative office in flow of the discussion]

¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened ...

[done ‘decently and in order’]

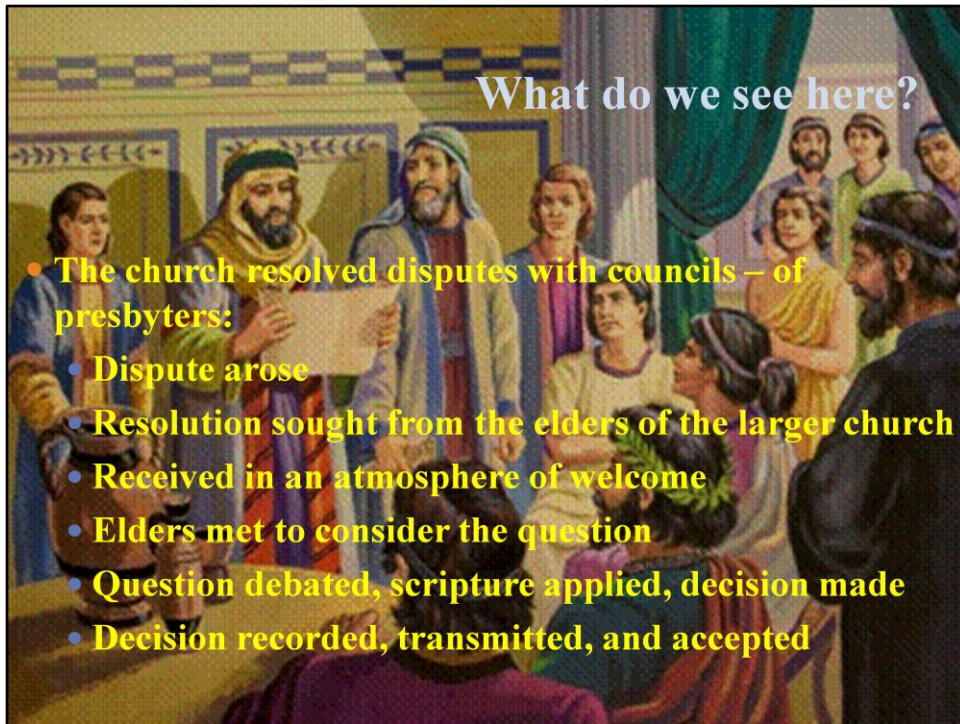


¹³ **When they finished**, ... **James** [the moderator of the assembly] spoke up. ¹⁵ “The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ... ¹⁹ “It is my judgment, therefore [the moderator summarized the consensus of the assembly], ²⁰ ... we should write to them, telling them ... (our decision).” [here we see the ‘Stated Clerk’ role addressed: recording the decision and publishing it to the church]

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, **decided to choose some of their own men** [Judas and Silas] **and send them** [the first administrative commission of the council] ... and ²³ With them they sent the (the letter that recorded the specific decision) ... [Here are the commission activities with the church who had the original dispute:]

³⁰ **So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch**, where they **gathered the church together and delivered the letter**. ³¹ **The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message** [the commission dealt in love with the church so that this was their response].

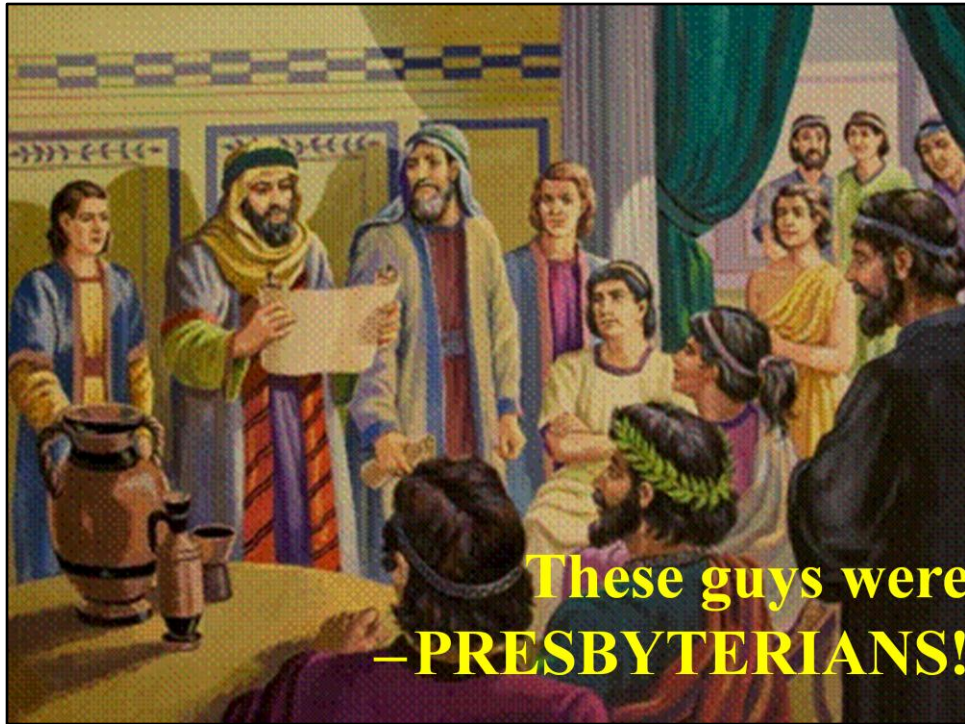
³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, **said much to encourage and strengthen the believers**. ³³ After spending some time there, **they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them**.



What do we see here?

1. A congregation with an issue they cannot resolve within themselves asking for help in its resolution from its neighboring congregations' leaders.
2. The council of these leaders welcoming both the representatives of that congregation and the issue for resolution.
3. The council with certain leaders performing roles that our denomination uses today.
4. A well discussed and biblically based resolution, recorded and published to the whole church.
5. A commission of the larger church going to the congregation with the original issue and counseling them as to the wider body's resolution – *in so loving a manner* that they were received with joy.

So, what can we conclude from this?



**These guys were
—PRESBYTERIANS!**

What else could I say!

So what do we learn, here?

Hallmarks of Presbyterian Decision-making

- ... **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters ... jurisdiction ... **limited** by the express provisions of the Constitution
- **Decisions by vote, ... a majority shall govern ... final decisions by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church**
- ... men of good characters and principles may differ. ... the **duty** of Christians ... **to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other**
- ... **“God alone is Lord of the conscience”**
- ... **Holy Scriptures are the only rule** of faith and manners ... **no Church governing body ... to bind the conscience**

These are the hallmarks of decision making in our polity.

(I know that this looks a lot like your 5th grade civics class – because America borrowed most of its civics from the Christian church – Presbyterians in particular) ...

Absorb the slide

The Presbyterian Church is governed by representatives who exercise a limited authority and who vote their individual consciences, rightfully prepared, discerning the will of God and that the will of God is in the majority (*scripturally prepared and expressed*).

References:

F-3.0105 Mutual Forbearance

That, while under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the **duty** both of private Christians and societies **to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other**.

F-3.0101 God Is Lord of the Conscience

a. That “**God alone is Lord of the conscience**, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”

F-3.0107 Church Power

That **all Church power**, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, **is only ministerial and declarative**; that is to say, that **the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners**; that no Church council ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and **that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God**. ...

F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters

This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders. ...

F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. **These councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly**. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. **The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller**.

F-3.0206 Review and Control

A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have **power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal**.

F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and **a majority shall govern**.

G-9.0101 Definition The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters, both elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. These governing bodies shall be called: session, presbytery, synod, General Assembly.

G-9.0103 Unity of Governing Bodies All governing bodies of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and

powers as provided in this Constitution. The governing bodies are separate and independent, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate governing body. The jurisdiction of each governing body is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, **with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries**, and with the acts of each subject to review by the next higher governing body.

G-1.0301 Right of Judgment

(1) (a) That “**God alone is Lord of the conscience**, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.” (Westminster Confession Ch XX or XXII, par 2)

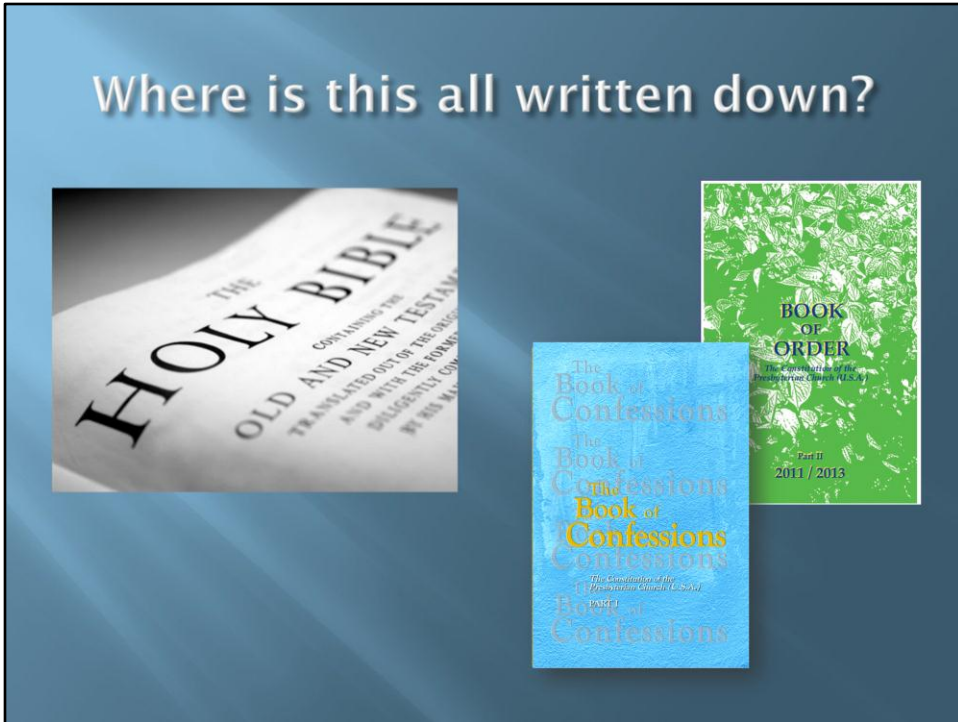
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(7) That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that **the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners**; that **no Church governing body** ought to pretend to make laws **to bind the conscience** in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

G-1.0400 4. The Historic Principles of Church Government The radical principles of Presbyterian church government and discipline are:

That the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church; that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein; that, in like manner, a representation of the whole should govern and determine in regard to every part, and to all the parts united: that is, that a **majority shall govern**; and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower to higher governing bodies, till they be finally decided by the **collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church**. For these principles and this procedure, the example of the apostles and the practice of the primitive Church are considered as authority.

Where is this all written down?



So – where is all this written down?

(Absorb the screen...)

... well – in the Holy Bible, actually. Not very systematically, though.

Being systematic (or “topical”) about what the Bible tells us about God and His relationship to us – and how we should do what He commands us to do - is the work of our Constitution, which is in two books:

- The *Book of Confessions* – “topical” about what scripture says about certain issues of faith and
- The *Book of Order* – “topical” about what scripture says about how we govern ourselves as God’s organization of His believers on earth (‘wise as serpents, gentle as doves’ -- ‘in the world; but, not of the world’).

The PC(USA) Constitution defines / describes our current denominational **polity**. Our denominational Constitution consists of two parts:

Part One is The Book of Confessions, the theological polity part – describing what the church believes on particular and specifically-crucial issues.

Part Two is the Book of Order is the practical polity part – describing the standards (and processes) of ...

how we govern,

how we worship, and

how we enforce our polity.

But we Presbyterians love to write this stuff down, so our Constitution also specifies that *procedural* Manuals of Operation be written for the denomination (the GA and its offices), the Synods (and their offices), the presbyteries (and their offices), and for local congregations and their sessions (and their offices) to further explain how we ‘council’ at these places within the framework of our polity – in these respective locations.

Our GA, Synod, Presbytery, and your local governance documents (the ecclesiastical Manuals of Operation of your Session and perhaps, your Diaconate – and the civil Operating Principles and Established practices of your Congregation and – and the civil Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of your congregation’s non-profit corporation – i.e., your local *polity*) reflect the content of the two Books of our denomination’s Constitution extensively – with paraphrase, direct quotes, and/or by reference.

These two books – *and their practice by our denomination* -- are what may be changed by the vote of the presbyteries over this year of consideration and voting on the 19 proposed amendments -- from the end of the 220th GA to the vote reporting deadline dates:

- Part 1 of 2 *The Book of Confessions* Heidelberg Catechism June 30, 2013
- Part 2 of 2 *The Book of Order* Amendments June 2, 2013

Let’s take a look at how this consideration and voting happens ...

How will the PC(USA) decide these?

Chapter 6 of our *Book of Order* ...

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to be “the church reformed, always to be reformed, according to the Word of God” in the power of the Spirit of God.

In light of this commitment, ... interpretation and amendment ... are understood as a means to faithfulness.

Chapter 6 in the newFOG of our *Book of Order* directs how we amend our Constitution.

It opens with these principles :

G-6.01 REFORM

- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to be “the church reformed, always to be reformed, according to the Word of God” in the power of the Spirit (F-2.02.)
- In light of this commitment, the following interpretation and amendment procedures are understood as a means to faithfulness.

Amendments are not light things and are not cultural things – they are *theological* things, *matters of our faith* -- as our faith matures in the light of God’s Word.

G-6.03 Amendments ... to Confessional Documents

... made only in the following manner:

Step One: The proposal to amend *The Book of Confessions* is approved by GA1 for study in the church.

Step Two: **GA1** appoints a committee which studies and reports its findings to the *next* GA.

Step Three: **GA2** approves the proposed amendment and recommends it to the presbyteries for vote.

Step Four: The Presbyteries vote -- **two thirds** must affirm.

Step Five: Approved and enacted by **GA3!**

Successful amendments to the **Confessional Documents** go all the way through a five step process and are made only in the following manner – at least a 3-GA, or 6-year pipeline:

G-6.03 AMENDING *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*

Amendments to the confessional documents of this church may be made only if all the following steps are completed:

Step One: The proposal to amend *The Book of Confessions* is **approved by the General Assembly for study in the church.**

Step Two: The General Assembly appoints a committee of ruling elders and teaching elders, numbering not fewer than fifteen, of whom not more than two shall be from any one synod, to consider the proposal. This committee shall consult with the committee or council from which the proposal originated. It shall **report its findings to the next General Assembly.**

Step Three: The next ensuing General Assembly considers the report of the study committee and **approves the proposed amendment and recommends it to the presbyteries for vote.**

Step Four: The proposed amendment receives the approval in writing of **two thirds of the presbyteries**.

Step Five: The **proposed amendment is approved and enacted** by the next ensuing General Assembly following the amendment's receipt of the necessary two-thirds approval of the presbyteries.

(Frankly the office of the GA doesn't know what would happen if Step Five doesn't occur – it has never happened before!)

G-6.04 Amendments ... to the *Book of Order*

... made only in the following manner:

Step One: All proposals ...in writing ...120 days before GA1.

Step Two: To ACC for clarity, consistency, and compatibility.

Step Three: **GA1** approves the proposed amendment and recommends it to the presbyteries for vote.

Step Four: The Presbyteries vote -- **majority** must affirm.

Step Five: The Stated Clerk receives the vote.

Becomes effective on anniversary of **GA1**'s last day.

Successful amendments to the *Book of Order*... must survive a ***different*** five step process. They are made only in the following manner – but, this could be a single-GA, or 16 month (Presbyterian speed of light) pipeline:

G-6.04 AMENDING THE *BOOK OF ORDER*

Amendments to the *Book of Order* shall be made only if all the following steps are completed:

Step One: All proposals requesting amendment of the *Book of Order* are communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.

Step Two: The Stated Clerk shall refer all such proposals to amend the *Book of Order* to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-6.02), which shall examine the proposed amendment for clarity and consistency of language and for compatibility with other provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). At least sixty days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly, the advisory committee shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations, which may include an amended version of any proposed constitutional changes as well as advice to accept or decline the proposals referred to the committee. The General Assembly shall not consider any amendment until it has considered the report and any

recommendations from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.

Step Three: The same General Assembly approves the proposal to amend and transmits the proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their vote.

Step Four: The Presbyteries shall transmit their votes to the Stated Clerk no later than one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendments.

Step Five: The Stated Clerk receives written advice that a proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* has received the affirmative votes of a majority of all the presbyteries.

The proposed amendment so approved shall become effective one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendment.

The 19 proposed amendments before the presbyteries this year are in one or the other of these two processes.

How will Nevada Presbytery decide these?

- Past study documents urged a *Communal Discernment*
- Nevada Presbytery's recent history suggests:
 - a time for personal preparation,
 - a time for communal discussion, and
 - a time for corporate decision.

Last time we went through all of this, we found that GA proposed a time of Communal Discernment on the docket in the Presbyteries' consideration of these amendments.

I have proposed to our Moderator and Stated Clerk (and our Presbytery Council has agreed) these same concepts and actions we used last time – a slightly different process for considering the items we will vote - based on the success of the process we used successfully with the last batch of 17 Amendments (including a proposed new confession and the newFOG reorganization of our old *Form of Government*) to our Constitution two years ago and the consideration we used the time before that four years ago -- and for taking apart the Sierra Mission Partnership in 2010.

Spring Presbytery @ Mt View PC

Tuesday morning informational session

- Time devoted to the two parts (all 19 items)
- A moderated, informal communal discussion
- No motions, no decisions.

At our March Presbytery meeting, here is how that will look schedule-wise, *with you all coming to Presbytery having thoroughly studied the amendments and preparing to vote your conscience* - of course!

Equipping Ministries will provide a time – 10 am – noon - of informal; but, orderly, discussion before Presbytery actually begins -- to air the proposed amendments, share information regarding their declared intent and probable effect, and share the attending Presbyters' arguments for and against.

Spring Presbytery @ Mt View PC

Tuesday afternoon plenary -- as an Agenda Item:

- Equipping Ministries brings nine Part 2 of 2 Items (*12D Shared Synod Permanent Judicial Commission*) as consent agenda
 - Items may be removed for separate consideration
- The Moderator allows formal and constrained floor debate and decision (vote by ballot) of the consent agenda -- under Robert's Rules of Order
- The Moderator allows formal and constrained floor debate and decision (vote by ballot) of the removed items -- under Robert's Rules of Order

And in the afternoon, once Presbytery is in session:

- **Equipping Ministries**, will bring as a consent agenda the nine Part 2 of 2 *Book of Order* amendment items related to Shared Synod Permanent Judicial Commissions (12D) - as part of its report. The body may remove any of these nine proposed amendments from the consent agenda for separate consideration by floor motion.
- **Our Moderator**, will enforce a constrained discussion of the consent agenda taken as a whole - alternating Presbyters' speeches "for" and "against", of limited time, and limited in content (e.g., no repeat arguments).
- When the floor's pro and con arguments on the consent agenda are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote the items as a consent agenda by ballot.**
- **Our Moderator**, will then enforce the constrained discussion of each item removed from the consent agenda – in sequence.
- When the floor's pro and con arguments on an item are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote that item by ballot.** This process repeats until the list of items removed from the consent agenda are all brought, considered, and voted.

Spring Presbytery @ Mt View PC

Tuesday afternoon plenary -- as an Agenda Item:

- Equipping Ministries brings the other 10 Part 2 of 2 items, in sequence
- The Moderator allows formal and constrained floor debate and decision (vote by ballot) of each Part 2 of 2 item -- under Robert's Rules of Order
- Other business conducted while Part 2 of 2 votes are counted.

- **Equipping Ministries**, will then bring the remaining ten Part 2 of 2 *Book of Order* amendment items in sequence - as part of its report.
- **Our Moderator**, will again enforce a constrained discussion of each item when brought by the report.
- When the floor's pro and con arguments on the item are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote the item by ballot.**
- This process repeats until all of the remaining ten Part 2 of 2 items are brought, considered, and voted.
- The Part 2 of 2 ballots will be collected and removed from the floor for counting.
- Other Presbytery business may be conducted during the ballot count.

Spring Presbytery @ Mt View PC

Tuesday afternoon plenary -- as an Agenda Item:

- Equipping Ministries returns and brings the Part 1 of 2 item (The new translation Heidelberg Catechism)
- The Moderator allows formal and constrained floor debate and decision (vote by ballot) of the Part 1 of 2 item -- under Robert's Rules of Order
- Other business conducted while Part 1 of 2 votes are counted.

Later in the afternoon, while Presbytery is still in session:

- **Equipping Ministries**, will return to the floor and bring Part 1 of 2 (the Heidelberg Catechism) as part of its report – to be followed by its consideration, leading to its vote.
- Again, **our Moderator** will enforce a constrained discussion - alternating of “for” and “against” speeches, limited in length, and limited in content (i.e., no repeat arguments).
- Again, when the floor's arguments on the Part 1 of 2 are exhausted, **Presbytery will vote the item by ballot.**
- And again, other Presbytery business may be conducted during the ballot count.
- When the ballots are counted on all amendment items, the Stated Clerk will announce the results.

Here are the *BOO* mechanical details of this process ...

... with guidance from
Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised

- **Equipping** brings each item to the floor as a “Main Motion” - no second required.
- Each item is a “perfected motion” – no amendments allowed.
- Each item is debated and voted separately – **simple majority is required for approval.**
- Results are reported to GA by our Stated Clerk.

Meetings of Presbytery are governed by *Robert's Rules*. Lets see how they order the process on the floor of presbytery (at least procedurally) ...

- Equipping Ministries brings each item or Part to the floor of Presbytery as a part of their report - no “second” to any of these items is necessary because it is brought as part of a report.
- These items come as “perfected motions” – that is, **they can neither be amended nor revised** – they must be voted exactly as they have been referred to the presbyteries by the GA.
- Once on the floor, the item or Part may be debated -- if there are opinions on it to be expressed by the members of Presbytery who “have voice” at Presbytery.
- This debate may be constrained in the interests of time and fairness by the Moderator, as discussed above – and the Moderator may speak neither for nor against the motion on the floor while moderating – (but, must yield the gavel or the Moderator’s cross – to the Vice Moderator, who then presides until the Moderator is done advocating).
- When the body is ready (i.e., the roughly equal number of “pro” and “con” non-repetitive speeches is exhausted), it shall vote.

- A **simple majority will prevail on every item** brought before the body – whether the item amends the *Book of Confessions* or the *Book of Order*.
- Without any further direction from the body, the Stated Clerk of Presbytery will record the vote on each of the 19 items and report these votes in writing to the Stated Clerk of General Assembly.

And that is how our Presbytery will decide these parts and their items.

References:

F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.

G-3.0105 Meetings

Meetings of councils shall be opened and closed with prayer. Meetings shall be conducted

in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, except when it is in contradiction to this Constitution. Councils may also make use of processes of discernment in their deliberations prior to a vote as agreed upon by the body.

OK, how does this affect me?

Recall your vows as church officers ...

There are 11 vows of ...

- Sensitivity to the Word of God *in your life* ...
 - Obedience to God *in your life* ...
 - Following Christ *in your life* ...
 - Leading and developing His people, and ...
 - Exhibiting the Kingdom of God to the world *in your life* ...
- ... and *all of these* -- **as you lead God's Church**

So, how does this affect me? Well -- recall your vows as Presbyters of the church ...

Absorb the slide

So ... 'How will I decide how to vote on each of these amendments?' (...you may be asking...)

References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons –

- a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
- c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

d. Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

e. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

h. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

i. (1) (For ruling elder) Will you be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in councils of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(3) (For teaching elder) Will you be a faithful teaching elder, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the councils of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(4) (For ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service) Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

If I am a member or am elected to be a commissioner to Presbytery ...

- **How will I decide my vote on these?**
- **Well ... that is the question of today, isn't it?**

Well, that is the question of today, isn't it?

Hallmarks of Presbyterian Decision-making

- ... **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters ... jurisdiction ... **limited** by the express provisions of the Constitution
- **Decisions by vote, ... a majority shall govern ... final decisions by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church**
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- ... **“God alone is Lord of the conscience”**
- ... **Holy Scriptures are the only rule** of faith and manners ... **no Church governing body ... to bind the conscience**

Here, again, are the hallmarks of decision making in our polity – as they apply to our preparation for Spring Presbytery ...

Absorb the slide

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What's all this about ... my conscience?

Well ...

Whose Church is it anyway?

Whom do I Serve as a Presbyterian?

Do I have to invent my vote?

-- or --

Should I find what to do?

What's all this about ... my conscience?

Note that conscience has come up several times today. What have we learned about it as Presbyters so far?

Discuss

Whom do I Serve as a Presbyterian?

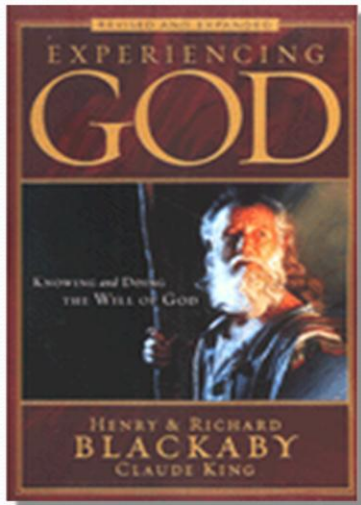
BTW: “**Represent:**” Means let God speak through *your perspective* as it **represents** the *perspective of the others with whom you have shared in common a collective life experience*.

Whose Church is it anyway?

Do I have to invent my answers? Or do I listen to God?

Should I find what to do? It comes down to discerning God's will – not inventing some answer on any other basis.

Tools for ... DISCERNING



- **God** pursues a continuing love relationship with you
- **God** is always at work around you – and He invites you to join Him in what He is doing
- **You** must make adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing ...

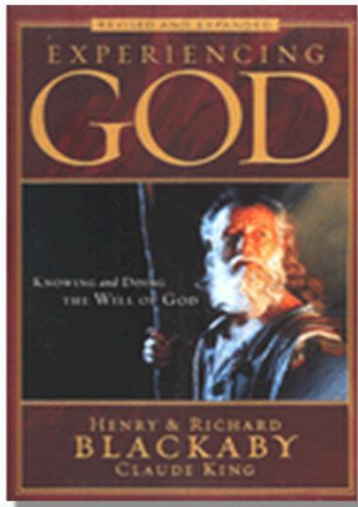
I am not here to sell you on Henry and Richard Blackaby's great study on discerning God's will – and we won't debate its merits here; but, *Experiencing God* is probably the best summary of the many great biblical studies and courses out there on finding God's will in your life.

In it, the Blackabys note that:

- **God** pursues a continuing love relationship with you – not because you are “good,” or have done anything “good,” or because you are even likable (!) – He does it for His own reasons. (Maybe, its just because He made you and He loves you.)
- **God** is always at work around you – and He invites you to join Him in what He is doing even though you are not perfect, or willing, or even “ready.” (He takes care of all of those things, by the way.)
- But **you** must make adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing. You didn't really think that this would be easy, or require *nothing different* in your life, did you? (“Make adjustment” indeed!)

Thankfully, God doesn't just leave it at that! We can know Him, know His direction for each of us, and with that, follow Him and do His work!

Tools for ... DISCERNING



God reveals Himself, His purposes,
His ways – *by the Holy Spirit* --
through:

...prayer
...circumstances
...counsel of mature* Christians
...the Church
and ...**the Bible**

You come to know God through experience



* “mature” -- a dependable pattern of Godly thinking and living

God reveals to you - Himself, His purposes, and His ways (by the Holy Spirit)
through:

... prayer
... circumstances
... counsel of mature* Christians
... the Church
and ... **the Bible**

You will come to know God by experiencing Him -- as you obey Him -- and He
accomplishes His work through ... well, you!

This is real, hard, **WORK**.

No, there is no Easy Button here!

* “Mature Christian” are those who shows in their daily life a long and dependable
pattern of Godly thought, decision making, and life-choices.

How will I decide these?

I recommend:

- Prayerful preparation for personal study
- Prayerful study of the materials – and helps
- Prayerful discussion with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know your conscience – and know the reasons why.

Well, that is the question of today, isn't it?

My strong recommendation to you, our Presbyters, is to be thoroughly prepared for the consideration of these proposed amendments – well before you come to Presbytery in March.

That includes both your personal and communal study between the end of this workshop and our March Presbytery meeting so we are prepared to consider them productively together when we get to Presbytery.

In the rest of the workshop we will explore these study recommendations and their tools:

- Prayerful preparation for personal Study
- Prayerful Study of the materials
- Prayerful Study with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know God's leading for your conscience – and the scriptural reasons why.

Remember: "Mature Christian" are those who shows in their daily life a long and dependable pattern of Godly thought, decision making, and life-choices.

Before you begin study ...

- Attend this workshop! ... (and stay awake)
- Pray for an open mind ... clarity of purpose ... active engagement throughout your study process
- Set aside a comfortable study place and enough un-interrupted study time. You have 119 pages to study.

So, here is what I recommend:

Before you begin your study ...

Attend this workshop! (in person or online – or download and read it)

Pray for an open mind ... clarity of purpose ... active engagement throughout your study process

Set aside a comfortable study place and enough un-interrupted study time. This will probably be a couple of hours for your first study period at least.

Here is what to address in you first study period:

In these two study books on these **19** proposed amendments provided by GA (or downloadable from:), **you have 74 pages of GA-provided material to study.**

Your study of this amendment material affects both:

- the *Book of Confessions* (The entire **25 pages** of the Heidelberg Catechism to study) and
- the *Book of Order* – as the proposed amendments touch three of its four parts :

- eight paragraphs in the Form of Government,
 - one paragraph in the Directory of Worship, and
 - nine paragraphs in the Rules of Discipline).
- another **20 or so pages** to study in the *BOO*.

Get your copy of the BOO (and other PC(USA) references from The Office of the General Assembly, Constitutional Services:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/departments/communication-development-and-technology/constitution/>

- The *Book of Confessions*: You can download
The Book of Confessions in [English](#) (PDF)
Libro de Confesiones en [Español](#) (PDF)
The Book of Confessions in [Korean](#) (PDF)
- The *Book of Order*: You can download:
The Book of Order in [English](#)
The Book of Order en [Español](#) (PDF)
The Book of Order in [Korean](#) (PDF)

Proposed amendments to the Constitution

[220th General Assembly \(2012\) - Part 1 of 2](#), (not available in Korean or Spanish)

NOTE: An omission was made in the print version of Proposed Amendments to the Constitution-Part 1 of 2, Heidelberg Catechism, page 31. Before question 88, the heading, "LORD'S DAY 33" is to be inserted.

[Side by side comparison: Heidelberg](#)

[220th General Assembly \(2012\) - Part 2 of 2](#), (not available in Spanish) [Korean](#)

So ... set aside a couple of hours, brew a pot of tea, and let's get to it!

Get into your study place and ...

- **Pray** for God's guidance as you read the presented material
- **Read the proposed amendments** – and then read their explanatory material - in *and suggested in* their Study Guides
- *I suggest:*
 - Read/Study **Part 2 of 2 (except 12D)** first, comparing each amendment to its context paragraphs in the *BOO*
 - Then Read/Study **Part 2 of 2 12D**, comparing each amendment to the collective purpose of 12D and to its context paragraphs in the *BOO*
 - Finally, Read/Study **Part 1**, comparing it question-by-question to the version in the *BOC*.
- Read the language of each amendment – then read its accompanying background, rationale, and help material – **then stop for the day!**

Pray for God's guidance as you read the presented material.

Read the proposed amendments – and then their explanatory material in -- and suggested in -- their Study Guides

I suggest:

- first Read/Study these **Part 2 of 2 Proposed Amendments to the BOO: 12A, 12B, 12C, 12E, 12F, 12G, 12H, 12I, 12J, and 12K**, then
- Read/Study **Proposed BOO Amendment 12D** (all of its nine proposed amendments), and finally,
- Read/Study **Part 1 of 2, Proposed Amendments to the BOC** - the proposed new translation of **The Heidelberg Catechism**.

This will start you with single amendments at the smallest level of change – the paragraph or even sentence level - and to get you ready to go with a single amendment that addresses several parts of the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline all concerned with a single issue. Finally, you can address the whole confession replacement proposed in Part 1 – clearly the smaller, bigger, then biggest, levels of change.

When you do your initial study of the Part 1 of 2 proposal, I think it is best to start with the Book of Confessions, itself – including the introductory material in it related to the Heidelberg Confession.

When you do your initial study of the Part 2 of 2 proposals:

Read the language of each amendment, read the full context of their target paragraph(s) in the *BOO* – and then read its accompanying explanation and the help material in the Part 1 or 2 pamphlet and in the electronically available material (this is why I recommend the downloadable version of this stuff – and reading it on your computer (but please, not on your smart phone!)).

Read the proposed amendments with a pen in hand – mark the pamphlet or keep notes somewhere else on the questions or objections that arise - as you encounter them.

If you still have questions or objections remaining after you have read the accompanying explanation material **or have even more questions or objections (!)**, you have some more searching to do -- later.

But, stop here, think and sleep on what you have read. Trust me, your brains will be fried.

Today, though, we will review them in the Part 1 of 2 then Part 2 of 2 in order (biggest level to smallest level) and I think that you will see why it is best to get the detail part of your study out of the way first.

... find some more helps

- There are good helps in accompanying material – online versions give click-on references.
- The proposed Amendments Study Guides suggest the committee material for further study.
- The specific committee report URL for each Item is located at the end of the treatment of each Item
- And – there is always Google!

The pamphlet material gives a pretty good list of helps to clarify the amendments and their explanations and recommendations.

In the transmittal letter, the Reverend Grayde Parsons, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, notes:

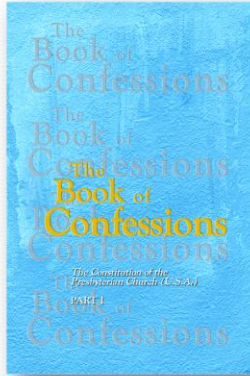
You will note that reference is made to item numbers that indicate the assembly committee reports related to each proposed amendment. These item numbers also indicate where to find background information from various entities that was available electronically to the assembly commissioners prior to the General Assembly. That information may now be accessed at <http://www.pc-biz.org>, then click on Committees.

The “Item Number” references are the same as will be found in the *Minutes of the 220th General Assembly (2012)*, Part I [*Minutes*], (see my previous slide)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) can be found immediately following the item in the *Minutes* for which the advice is given.

Now (finally) lets have a look at the 19 proposed amendments -- in these two parts – beginning with Part 1 of 2 ...

The PC(USA) Constitution



Part One

The Nicene Creed – A.D 325
The Apostles' Creed – A.D. 1st - 8th Cent

The Scots Confession – A.D. 1560
The Heidelberg Catechism – A.D. 1563
The Second Helvetic Confession – A.D. 1566

The Westminster Confession of Faith --
The Larger Catechism 1647 /
The Shorter Catechism 1729

The Theological Declaration of Barmen 1934
The Confession of 1967
A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian
Church (USA) A.D 1983

We start with our Book of Confessions.

In 1967 (within your memory?), we Presbyterians arrived at a pivotal year in our theological history, according to Carmen Fowler LaBerge, writing in The Layman, Feb 16, 2012 (http://www.layman.org/carmensblog/12-02-16/The_PCUSA_2012_How_we_got_here.aspx).

Carmen notes ...

Before 1967 there was a constitutional basis to call the church to reform. With other reformed and Presbyterian denominations, until that year we still had ordination vows that required officers to subscribe to the Bible as the Word of God and to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in Scripture.

But in 1967 a *Book of Confessions* was adopted, and a clear shared confessional standard gave way to a catalogue of confessions including a new one, The Confession of 1967, written in the tenor of the times. (Remember the '60s? -- AWR)

Various Wikipedia articles and the *Book of Confessions*, itself, show that –

Adopted first by the northern thread of mainline Presbyterianism, the UPCUSA (the

old ‘Northern church’), and reaffirmed and retained it in the Constitution of the reunited PC(USA), *The Book of Confessions* (the general “beliefs” part of our constitution) is a collection of eleven creeds, confessions, and statements and their accompanying explanations and notes, which together define our theological heritage as Reformed and Presbyterian Christians.

These confessions stretch from:

The earliest ones, the Nicene Creed of 325 and the Apostles Creed (actually developed beginning in the first century and evolving in its content through the eighth century -- to the form we have today) ...

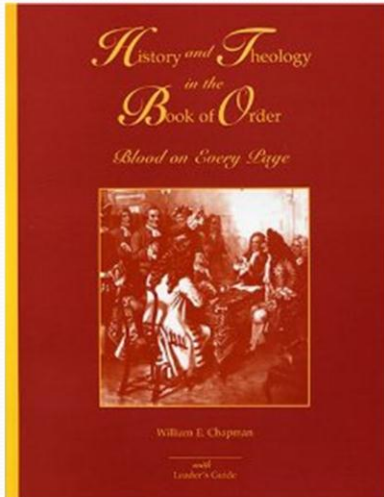
Through the three Reformation-era confessions of the mid-1500s ... and the great Westminster Confession and its companion catechisms of a century later.

To the three confessional statements made within living memory – including the last which marks the creation of our denomination from its “Northern Strand” and “Southern Strand” predecessors in 1983.

By the way, most of these confessions are *named for the place or town* in which they were written – not by or for whom, or in whose interests, they might have been written -- a trivia fact that may greatly disappoint your expectations about the content of the 1934 Declaration, if you haven’t yet read it.

Review the slide

Threats to ... the integrity of witness



- from *internal confusion* about core matters of faith,
- from *the culture's rival accounts of truth and morals*,
- or from *threats to the church's freedom*.

Please appreciate that any view of the Confessions is a view of a battlefield – both in the church and in the world surrounding it.

Those who have studied the confessions have observed that churches typically make confession out of necessity, not simply because they think it would be a fun thing to do. Indeed, one commentary is sub-titled: ***Blood on Every Page.***

Necessity comes in many forms; but most often, the church is compelled to express its faith when it experiences threats to the integrity of its witness coming from:

- *internal confusion* about core matters of faith,
- from *the culture's rival accounts of truth and morals*,
- or from *threats to the church's freedom*.

The shape of the confessions has been determined not only by the historical situation in which they were written; but, also by the uses for which they have been intended (or to which they have been put), including: ***Worship, Defense of orthodoxy, Instruction, Rallying-point in times of danger and persecution, and Church order and discipline.***

Reform of the church – whether in the fourth century, the sixteenth century, or the twenty-first century – grows from response to the gracious action of God. The church is always ready *to be reformed* – by God.

Let's look at the Heidelberg Catechism – one of the three reformation confessions, this one from Germany.

Studying Heidelberg ...

- Note: The Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) are partners in the joint translation effort with PC(USA).
- Study is best done in groups with diverse perspectives.
 - **Participants** - Read the material before meeting to study
 - **Sessions** – Allow significant discussion time in session – with your Worship Commission / Committee - to prepare your commissioners to “vote their conscience” at Presbytery
 - **Presbyteries** - Allow **two docket hours** for study, then vote

Often, multiple motivations are present in churches' declarations of faith, but confessions that endure are more than bland restatements of Christian verities.

Please understand that even though its treatment in this presentation is brief, it is a very important issue – and must be seriously considered. I encourage all participants, sessions, and the presbytery itself to be a rigorous in their preparatory review of this confession as it is with the new FOG. Here are the study recommendations for such an amendment to the *BOC* ...

Absorb slide

The assembly committee report related to the Heidelberg Catechism, and more background information from various entities may now be accessed, as the Stated Clerk, Gradye Parsons, noted above.

Remember:

- At the denominational level ... a *Book of Confessions* amendment requires the affirmative votes of **116** presbyteries (or more) to pass -- a **two-thirds majority** of the 173 presbyteries.
- At the Presbytery level; however, it require only a **simple majority of the**

attending and voting Presbyters to form the Presbytery's vote.

- Abstention at Presbytery does not affect the outcome – the majority of the “Yes” or “no” votes prevails – and determines the Presbytery's vote.
- Abstention or failure to vote on any amendment by a Presbytery; however, is effectively a “no” vote in denominational voting.
- And, if approved by a two-thirds or more majority of the 173 presbyteries, the proposed amendment goes back to the next GA – in 2014 – for approval and enactment.

Evaluating Heidelberg ...

In your study, you might consider ...

- Is there a controversy (*internal confusion, cultural challenge, threat to the church*) that is ripe for this new translation - at this time?
- Does this catechism communicate what God says about the controversy – in clear, accurate, understandable, and unambiguous language?
- Recall your ordination vow: (Do you ... adopt ... the **confessions of our church** as authentic and reliable expositions of ...Scripture ...and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?)
- The Big Questions –

Does this catechism express our faith?

Will we be clearly guided by its content?

Two years ago we addressed adding a new Confession to the *BOC* – the Confession of Belhar.

Those to whom I introduced you at the beginning of this presentation (the attendees at the Equipping the Saints conference and at the eight church gatherings I told you about) reviewed these considerations – and added even more!

The proposed, new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism is so extensive in its expression, that it, too, can be regarded as new for our purposes here.

Here are my evaluation suggestions – as I shared them with the presbyters two years ago ...

Remember specifically, that you do vow:

(W-4.4003c.) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the **confessions of our church** as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

Evaluating Heidelberg ...

To which the Presbyters added ...

- Will changes make it better?
- Is God honored more with this?
- Is this biblical – or is it just political correctness?
- Will the church benefit?
- Is it all worth it?
- Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?
- Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?
- What was the controversy - does it still exist?

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

Is this biblical – or is it just political correctness?

Is God honored more with this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

What was the controversy - does it still exist?

HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS' key evaluation criteria...

Will changes make it better?

Is this biblical – or is it just political correctness?

Is God honored more with this?

Will the church benefit?

Is it all worth it?

Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?

Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects?

What was the controversy - does it still exist?

Evaluating Heidelberg ...

The Presbyters also added ...

- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?
- Is this relevant to the PCUSA?
- Do the other confessions already speak to this issue?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Can we be led by this confession?
- Will this lead to enforcement of hate speech law against the church?

The **BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** again added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?

The **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS'** also again added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Is this a controversy of our church – or an urging of a politically correct culture?
- and this new one --
- Is this relevant to the PCUSA?

The **RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says**?
- Does it honor God?

- Do the other confessions already speak to this issue?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
- Can we be led by this confession?

The **ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria

...

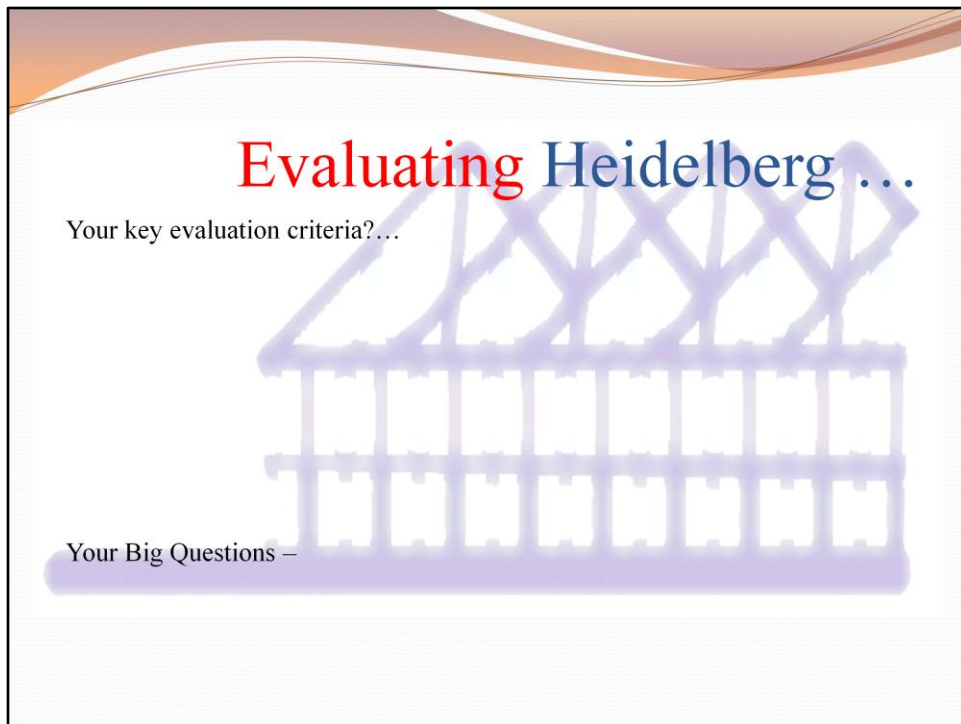
- Is it **biblical**?
 - Does it make it better?
 - Will it divide the church?
 - Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
 - Is there an enduring controversy ready for our witness here?
 - Can we be led by this confession?
- and this interesting one --
- Will this lead to enforcement of hate speech law against the church?

MT VIEW PRESBYTERS' added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria, continued the concern for "biblical"

HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS' added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria, continuing as well the concern for "biblical."



Again, it is now your turn ...

What can you add to the evaluation criteria?

(HEY, READER! -- Please “join the group” and comment to me – by email – Art@AGRitter.com. And don’t forget to tell me which church you attend.)

Lets turn to the third proposal – the 18 content amendments to our *Book of Order*.

Remember, these are where I suggest you begin your personal study.

Remember these characters from vintage
Saturday Night Live?



I can suppose that there may still be some confusion with newFOG ... perhaps as illustrated by these characters from vintage Saturday Night Live?

Here is how Emily Litelli would have reacted with her famous EDITORIAL CONCERN to the news of our new FOG ...



“What’s all this I
hear about this
new smoke?”

Absorb slide

“What’s all this I hear about this new smoke?”

“That’s **FOG**, Emily new **FOG**”

Absorb slide



“What’s all this I hear about this new smoke?”

“That’s **FOG**, Emily ... new **FOG**”

“Oh ... that’s different.
Never mind.”

Absorb slide

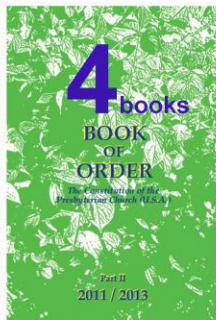
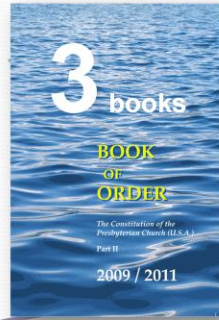
After all -- Why new FOG? – wasn’t the old one foggy enough? Well, let’s see ...

The PC(USA) Constitution

Form of
Government

Directory
for Worship

Rules of
Discipline



Foundations of
Presbyterian
Polity

Form of
Government

Directory
for Worship

Rules of
Discipline

The old < Part Two > The new

So - on the right, our new *Book of Order* now contains:

- A brand new book – an 11 page, three chapter re-statement of the 13 pages that had held the first 4 chapters of our previous FOG -- titled the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** and
- A much-reduced **Form of Government** – containing the principles of the previous FOG's chapters 5-18 (on 126 pages) in only six chapters (on 35 pages). These two books account for the net loss of 78 pages from the *Book of Order*.
- The traditional, **Directory for Worship** – though not re-arranged by newFOG, it was modified by the language update and by some specific, paragraph amendments proposed and referred by the 219th GA and affirmed by the presbyteries,
- And the traditional, **Rules of Discipline** – again, though not re-arranged by newFOG, it, too, was modified by the language update and by some specific, paragraph amendments proposed and referred by the 219th GA and affirmed by the presbyteries.

So, our previous, 495 page *Book of Order* was slimmed down by 78 pages of removed material to a svelte 417 pages.

Ready? Here we go -- first, with the paragraphs that could be affected by the eighteen Part 2 of 2 proposed amendments ...

The *BOO* Content Amendments

Eighteen amendments to *Book of Order* touch:

- **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity.** Not affected.
- **Form of Government:** nine affected paragraphs:
G-1.0503, **G-2.0104a**, G-3.0104 and G-3.0305, *G-3.0109a,
*G-3.0109b(6), G-3.0301, G-3.0302d, G-3.0404
- **Directory for Worship:** one affected paragraph:
W-4.4002
- **Rules of Discipline:** nine affected paragraphs:
D-3.0101b(2), *D-5.0101, *D-5.0106, * D-5.0203 *D-5.0206,
*D-6.0101, *D6.0202a(6), D-10.0106, D-10.-2-2
* ‘Shared-synod’ related

In these 18 proposed amendments, 19 paragraphs of the current *Book of Order* could be affected – across three of the four parts of the *Book of Order*: the FOG, the DFW, and the ROD.

This is a very broad set of changes to the Constitution – actually more than we voted on to date (including two years ago – except for the newFOG reorganization of the oldFOG to create from it the new Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and new Form of Government).

Presbytery will consider each of these proposals as they are individually referred by the 220th GA for our vote ...

One is a two-for-one from this list – touching two paragraphs in the same proposal (shown in blue).

Another is a tightly linked around a central concern – and has nine of these amendments attached thereto (shown in green).

Remember, again:

- At the denominational level ... a *Book of Order* amendment requires the affirmative votes of **87** presbyteries (or more) to pass -- **a simple majority**

of the 173 presbyteries.

- And at the Presbytery level, it require only a **simple majority** of the **attending and voting Presbyters** to form the Presbytery's vote.
- Abstention at Presbytery does not affect the outcome – the majority of the “Yes” or “no” votes prevails – and determines the Presbytery's vote.
- Abstention or failure to vote on any amendment by a Presbytery; however, is effectively a “no” vote in denominational voting.
- And, **if approved** by a simple majority (or more) of the 173 presbyteries, **the proposed amendment to the BOO is effective** one year from the last day of the referring GA's meeting (i.e., on **July 11th 2013**).

Yes, the red one is the hot one – it will be the whole story in the media, another visitation of the G-6.0106b Ordination Standards shuffle referred by the 219th GA two years ago, defeated by our Presbytery; but, passed by a majority of the presbyteries – resulting in a pastoral statement by our presbytery and one of our churches leaving the denomination. This one aims at mending the damage.

Part 2 of 2

Studying The BOO Content Amendments

- Remember: a separate vote is taken on each proposed amendment & others may not pass – so study each one!
- Each amendment is presented for study in this format:
 - **The Question to be voted** [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]
 - **Background and Rationale** is provided including overture history and sponsoring Presbytery (and others' if extant) rationale
 - **Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution** as to their assessment of consistency with the rest of the BOO is provided as well as an Editor's note on its location in the proposed New FOG.

Please remember: a separate vote is taken on each proposed amendment and, when voting, you don't know the outcome of any other vote – so study each one and be prepared to vote on it as though it was the only one being considered!

Each amendment is presented in your study guide for study in this format:

The Question to be voted [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]

Background and Rationale is provided including overture history and sponsoring Presbytery (and others' if extant) rationale

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution as to their assessment of consistency with the rest of the BOO is provided as well as an Editor's note on its location in the proposed New FOG.

... and a Universal Resource Locator (URL) for finding the GA study committee's report on the web.

Studying The *BOO* Content Amendments

As with studying the proposed *BOC* revision, study the proposed *BOO* changes with a broad perspective.

- **Participants:** Read the material before meeting to study
- **Sessions:**
 - Use/borrow **local experts** – past clerks, Worship Committee members, retired pastors, any elders with church disciplinary commission or investigative committee experience
 - Allow significant discussion time in session to prepare your commissioners to “vote their conscience” at Presbytery on each amendment
- **Presbytery:** Allow an **hour and three quarters of docket time** for study, then vote

Similar to two years ago, recommendations to the Parts 1 and 2 are made by here for studying the preparation material ...

If we consider these on the floor as GA recommends, the time shown is my estimate of what just these 18 amendments could take! But with our process two years ago, the 16 paragraph amendments (including G-6.0106b) took less than 30 minutes to dispose in our plenary -- because we had pre-studied!

Evaluating BOO Amendments...

In your study, you might consider ...

- Will this amendment make it easier to do the work of the church?
- Will this amendment sufficiently standardize our practices?
- Does this amendment further the Purity, Unity, and Peace of the PC (USA)?
- The Big Questions –
Does this amendment express the whole counsel of God in our practices?
Will we be clearly guided by its content?

Here are my evaluation suggestions – as I shared them with the presbyters two years ago ...

Evaluating BOO Amendments...

To which the Presbyters added ...

- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive? -- Is it ambiguous?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?
- Are these proposed expressions practically – and judicially – useful?
- Does it hold a hidden agenda?

These criteria / concerns were added by the presbyters ...

These are what the **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS'** added or restated in these evaluation criteria...

- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?
- What is “*love*?”

These are what the **HAWTHORNE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated in these evaluation criteria ...

- **Is it biblical?**
- Concern – will it cause schism?
- Is it inclusive?
- What does it preach about cultural convenience and practice?
- Is it ambiguous?

These are what the **BISHOP PRESBYTERS'** added or restated in these key evaluation criteria...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it preserve the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the church?
- Are these proposed expressions practically – and judicially – useful?

These are what the **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria ...

- Is it **Biblical**?
- Does it preserve our historic distinctives/heritage?
- Does it hold a hidden agenda?

Evaluating BOO Amendments...

... and also added ...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says** about this process/practice?
- Does it honor God?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Will this be used to enforce what it says?
- Will all be led consistently across the denomination by this?
- **Do we trust each other?**
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this force us to be someone whom are not?

... as were these ...

These are what the **RENO-SPARKS PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Does it **reflect what the Bible says** about this process/practice?
- Does it honor God?
- Does this say what it really means?
- Will this be used to enforce what it says?
- Will all be led consistently across the denomination by this?

Do we trust each other?

These are what the **ELKO-LAMOILLE PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

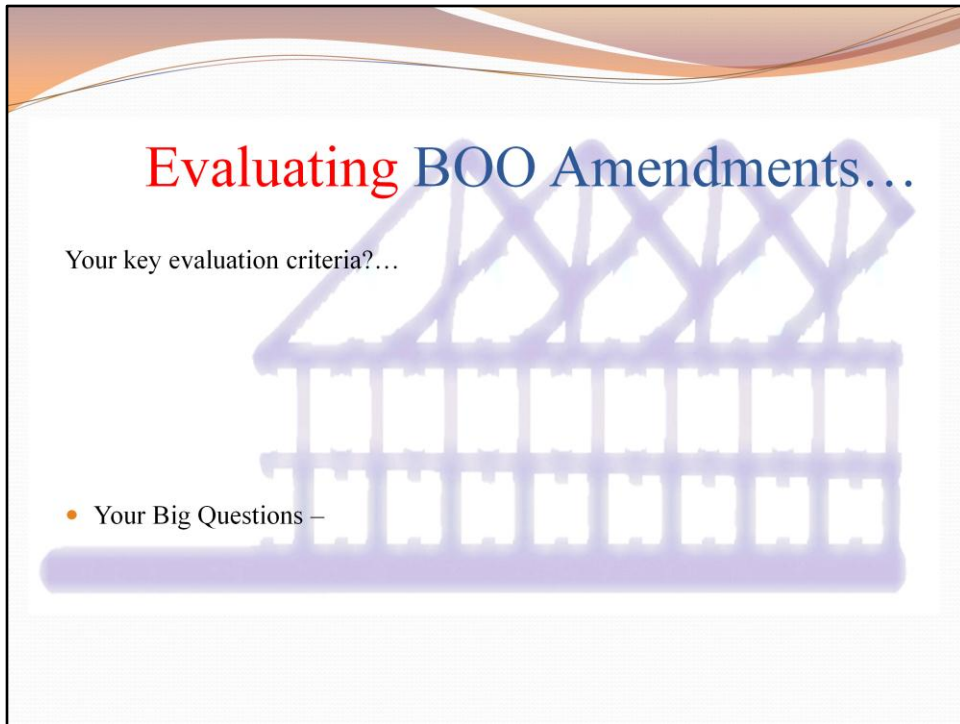
- Is it **biblical**?
- Does this change make it better?
- Is it practical? ... useful?
- Will we still be Presbyterians when this is adopted?
- Will this force us to be someone whom are not?

These are what the **MT VIEW PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

- Same as others' evaluation criteria, again emphasizing "biblical."

The **HENDERSON PC PRESBYTERS'** added or restated these key evaluation criteria...

Affirmed the others' evaluation criteria, also emphasizing "biblical."



And again, it is now your turn – what evaluation criteria would you add?

(**HEY, READER!** -- Please “join the group” and comment to me – by email – Art@AGRitter.com. And don’t forget to tell me which church you attend.)

Now lets turn to the individual proposals ...

The task before us ...

Part 1 of 2

-- Heidelberg Catechism

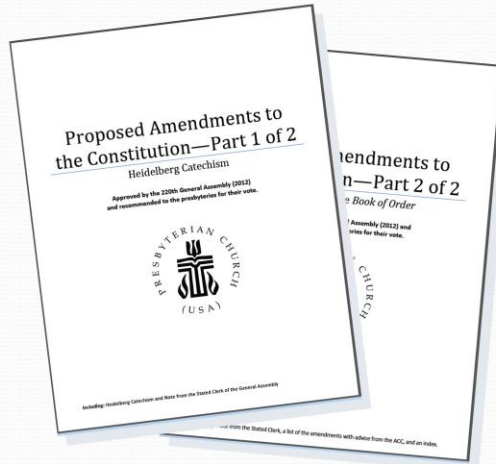
Part 2 of 2

-- 18 Amendments

-- FOG

-- DFW

-- ROD



Here are the Study Guides – which came to your clerk of session in printed form having been picked up for you by someone at the Elko Presbytery meeting – or that you have downloaded from:

Part 1 of 2: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/ga220-proposed-amendments-constitution-part-1-2/>

NOTE: An omission was made in the print version of Proposed Amendments to the Constitution-Part 1 of 2, Heidelberg Catechism, page 31. Before question 88, the heading, “LORD’S DAY 33” is to be inserted.

Part 2 of 2: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/ga220-proposed-amendments-constitution-part-2-2/>

Another document you may find helpful in your personal and session study is the Association of Stated Clerks’ *Analysis of Amendments to the Constitution*. They note:

Our purpose has been to present arguments made in favor of and against each amendment both in meetings of the assembly committee that considered the overture leading to the amendment and on the floor of the General Assembly. It is not the role of the Association to make a recommendation either in support of or against any amendment.

Many presbyteries provide copies of this booklet to their committees

responsible for making a recommendation on presbytery action, and we understand that this has assisted those committees as they have done their work. We are glad that these materials are used in that way.

You can download this resource from:

[http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Analysis%20of%20Amendments%20to%20the%20Constitution%20GA%202012%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Analysis%20of%20Amendments%20to%20the%20Constitution%20GA%202012%20(2).pdf)

And, of course, there are:

- The *Book of Confessions*: You can download
The Book of Confessions in [English](#) (PDF)
Libro de Confesiones en [Español](#) (PDF)
The Book of Confessions in [Korean](#) (PDF)
- The *Book of Order*: You can download:
The Book of Order in [English](#)
The Book of Order en [Español](#) (PDF)
The Book of Order in [Korean](#) (PDF)

and ...

The PCUSA's [Side by side comparison: Heidelberg](#)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) - Part 2 of 2 in [Korean](#)

And, if you really have to you can download the committee reports on Amendments to the Constitution proposed at the 220th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) here --

[Amendment 1. Item 18-03 Heidelberg](#) PDF

[Amendment A Item 06-10 \(G-1.0503\)](#) PDF

[Amendment B Item 07-05 \(G-2.0104a\)](#) PDF

[Amendment C Item 06-19 \(G-3.0104 G-3.0305\)](#) PDF

[Amendment D Item 05-13 \(Synod functions\)](#) PDF

[Amendment E Item 06-04 \(G-3.0301\)](#) PDF

[Amendment F Item 04-01 \(G-3.0302d\)](#) PDF

[Amendment G Item 17-02 \(W-4.4002\)](#) PDF

[Amendment H Item 06-18 \(D-3.0101b\(2\)\)](#) PDF

[Amendment I Item 06-09 \(D-10.0106\)](#) PDF

[Amendment J Item 06-02 \(D-10.0202\)](#) PDF

Amendment 1, of course, was considered by the 219th GA. Here are the committee report to that GA:

[Amendment 1 info. Item 16-11 \(2010 referral\) Heidelberg](#) PDF

OK, what do we have to decide?

220th GA referred nineteen items to the Presbyteries for their vote:

- Part 1 of 2: Replace the existing Heidelberg Catechism with a new translation in the *Book of Confessions*.
- Part 2 of 2: Approve 18 content Amendments to the *Book of Order*

OK, with that as background, what do we have to decide in our next Presbytery meeting?

Well, the 220th GA voted to refer these items to the Presbyteries for our vote (recall those two, five-step pipelines?).

Absorb the slide

OK, how might this affect us?

If passed, these could/would change our **polity**:

- What we Confess our Faith to be, and
- The **standards of our leadership**, the design of synod PJs, and 10 other things of varying impact on local congregations, presbyteries, and synods.

Here is the potential impact of these items -- if they are approved by the presbyteries (and, of course - in the case of Part 1 of 2, if also subsequently approved and enacted by the 221st GA in 2014).

Absorb the slide

So, is it important that we understand them and their implications for our church?

You bet!

Well, then, let's look at these proposed changes to our polity.

The task before us ...

Part 1 of 2

-- Heidelberg Catechism

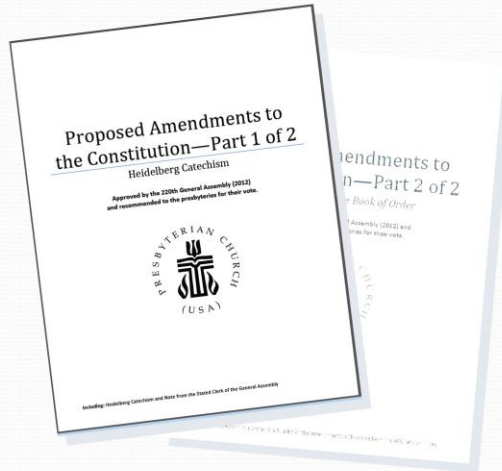
Part 2 of 2

-- 21 Amendments

-- FOG

-- DFW

-- ROD



Let's begin with the big-study demand – the proposed change to Part 1 of 2 of the Constitution of the PC(USA) – by replacing the existing translation of the **Heidelberg Catechism** from the original German and early Latin sources with a new translation from these and other sources.

(Remember, I suggest that you personally study this one last.)

The Association of Stated Clerks note:

Part 1 of 2, the Heidelberg Catechism, is a lengthy document so be sure to take the time to study the proposed new translation prior to voting. The booklet also contains a Note from the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons.

Heidelberg Catechism – A.D. 1563

- Teaches belief

Deals with:

- Our sin and guilt
- God in Jesus Christ frees us
- Express gratitude



1563's edition.

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Reformation was not a singular movement. Soon after Luther posted his ninety-five theses, reform movements sprang up throughout Europe. As Lutheran thought moved down the Neckar River, Reformed thought traveled up the Rhine from Switzerland. They met at Heidelberg, seat of the oldest university in Germany and capital of the province known as the Palatinate. Tension between Lutherans and Reformed Christians was intense. Because the Reformed did not believe in the real, bodily presence of Christ in bread and wine, Lutherans believed that they were desecrating the Lord's Supper.

Acting to end the controversy, **Frederick the Elector**, ruler of the Palatinate, asked two young men of Heidelberg—Zacharias Ursinus, professor of theology, and Kaspar Olevianus, preacher to the city—to prepare a catechism acceptable to both sides. They revised an earlier catechism that Ursinus had written, using its outline and some ninety of its questions and answers. Completed in 1562, the Heidelberg Catechism was published in January of the following year.

For his effort, Frederick the Elector was rewarded by the Church with a charge of heresy. At his trial, he presented another Confession of Faith which proved to be so well received that he was exonerated. This Confession became the Second Helvetic (Swiss) Confession, and it also appears in our *Book of*

Confessions; but, that is another story.

The translation of the Heidelberg Catechism we have in our *BOC* was made in 1963 by two Christian Reformed scholars – from available texts and earlier translations in other languages.

The Heidelberg Catechism opens with two questions concerning our comfort in life and death. The knowledge that our only comfort is Jesus Christ frames the remainder of the catechism. Each of its three parts corresponds to a line of Romans 7:24–25 (NRSV), where Paul cries:

“Wretched man that I am;
Who will rescue me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord;”

Thus,

- questions 3–11 deal with our sin and guilt,
- questions 12–85 with the way in which God in Jesus Christ frees us, and
- questions 86–129 with the manner in which we express gratitude to God for redemption.

Each question of the catechism is personal, addressed to “you.” Each answer draws as much as possible on biblical language. The catechism’s tone is peaceful and conciliatory, showing nothing of the controversy that called it forth. Its theology is both catholic (universal in appeal) and evangelical, setting forth the gospel of Jesus Christ. Providing a basis for peaceful coexistence between Lutheran and Reformed Christians, the catechism denied that the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ but affirmed that “by this visible sign and pledge . . . we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit . . .” (paragraph 4.079).

The influence of the Heidelberg Catechism in the church’s preaching and teaching continues to be felt in Germany, Austria, Holland, Hungary, parts of Eastern Europe, Scotland, Canada, and the United States.

12-1 HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall *The Book of Confessions* be amended to include the proposed new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, with accompanying Scriptural references?**

This is the question that the 220th GA referred for the presbyteries' vote.

Just as a note of caution – the new translation is a complete re-expression of both questions and answers (you latent Lutherans – get ready to re-learn/re-memorize all that you memorized as kids in the catechism class!).

Background and Rationale

The Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism was appointed in response to the action of the 218th General Assembly (2008) to correct specific translation problems in five sections of the Heidelberg Catechism in *The Book of Confessions* (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, p. 1260). In the course of their work, the special committee consulted with members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)/Reformed Church of America (RCA) Joint Translation Committee, working to pursue a more accurate, faithful, and ecumenical translation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The 219th General Assembly (2010) took action to instruct this already constituted special committee to recommend to the 220th General Assembly (2012) a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism in cooperation with the CRCNA and the RCA. The special committee was also instructed to consider inclusion of appropriate Scriptural citations (*Minutes*, 2010, Part I, p. 1209 of the electronic version; p. 387 of the printed version).

The special committee continued to work with representatives of the CRCNA and the RCA in finalizing a common new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism that was in keeping with the original 16th century versions of the catechism (but, not completely. See http://www.crcna.org/pages/beliefs_2011confessions.cfm, below). The special committee unanimously approved the common new translation and recommended this new translation to the 220th General Assembly (2012). The CRCNA and the RCA, in their respective national synods, have approved the new translation.

Regarding inclusion of appropriate Scriptural citations, the special committee decided to restore the Scripture citations that were originally published with the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563. The hope of the Special Committee was to give the catechism back to the church in full as it was first presented, with the Scripture citations that allow the readers to explore the text in conversation with the texts of the Bible that informed the people who wrote it. The action of the 220th General Assembly (2012) also included instruction that the accompanying Scriptural references would immediately follow each question and answer.

The special committee noted in their report to the 220th General Assembly (2012),

What began in 2008 by action of the 218th General Assembly to review proposed corrections to five sections of the catechism has resulted in a monumental and historic project involving three Reformed churches in North America, an ecumenical partnership that bears witness to our common commitment to seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and which appropriately recognizes the Heidelberg Catechism on the eve of its 450th anniversary in 2013 as a chief standard of Reformed confessional documents because of its widespread liturgical, catechetical, and devotional usage in North America and throughout the world.

It is our hope that this new translation and the accompanying Scriptural references, coupled with the worldwide celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism in 2013, will spark renewed interest in studying the Reformed tradition and appreciation of its evangelical message of God's deliverance through our Mediator Jesus Christ.

The vote of the Confessions of the Church Committee (18) on the proposed amendment was 28/1/0. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 18-03 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

From the Christian Reformed Church's website

(http://www.crcna.org/pages/beliefs_2011confessions.cfm):

Introduction to the Reformed Confessions Translation (2011)

The 2011 translation of the Three Reformed Standards is the result of the work of a joint task force formed by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC). In addition, the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) participated in the joint translation of the Heidelberg Catechism. The task force was commissioned to produce a common text for the Reformed confessions, building upon the work of the previous translations from the CRC and RCA denominations. Since a separate introduction will introduce each confession, this general introduction gives a statement of principles used for coming to a common translation.

The task force did not attempt a wholesale retranslation of the confessions but, rather, used the texts of previously approved RCA and CRC translations as a starting point. Where the translations diverged, or where subsequent scholarship called into question both previous translations, the task force returned to the original language documents to resolve textual differences. Sometimes this resolution involved opting for the previous RCA, PCUSA, or CRC translation; at other times, the task force developed a fresh translation from the original text.

Some divergences in previous translations had to do with gender usage for humanity and God. The task force adopted the following approach in these cases: in references to humankind, all references to men or other exclusive terms have been changed to human or to a similar gender-inclusive term. With regard to language about God, the task force sought to reduce the number of male pronouns for God when it could be done with felicity but did not attempt to eliminate them altogether. Several principles guided this process. On the one hand, excessive repetition of the male pronoun for God was avoided. On the other hand, excessive repetition of the word God as a substitute for the pronoun him was also avoided. In addition, when the elimination of a male pronoun for God would obscure the theological point of the passage, the pronoun was retained. These principles echo the protocol used by *Faith Alive Christian Resources*.

For direct quotations from Scripture within the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the task force used the New Revised Standard Version. In the Canons of Dort, because the text of this confession depends on the particular seventeenth-century biblical translations used at the Synod of Dort, the Scripture quotations are translations from the original Latin and do not always correspond to current versions.

This joint translation does not erase all differences remaining between the denominations regarding the confessions. For example, wherever an action of the

general synod of one denomination has made a modification of the confession (as with the Belgic Confession, Article 36), it is noted in the text. The discrepancy is not resolved, but simply preserved. Nevertheless, for both denominations, this translation represents a step forward in cooperation and partnership.

Sample 1 ...

Book of Confessions

- **Q. 3. Where do you learn of your sin and its wretched consequences?**
- A. From the Law of God.

Proposed amendment

- **3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?**
- A. The law of God tells me.¹
- ¹ Rom. 3:20

Here is an example of what I mean when I say “complete re-expression.”

Ask yourself:

What teaching point(s) or understanding is gained with the new translation?

What teaching point(s) or understanding is lost with the new translation?

Considering the catechism as a whole, do these gains / losses in the individual questions matter for the use of this question in capturing and teaching the biblical truths of our faith?

For example, in this case: does this re-expression “**your misery**” really convey the content of “**your sin and its wretched consequences?**” ... in light of scripture?

Note the original authors’ bible references for this question and answer are re-introduced in the proposed amendment.

Use these references accompanying the questions in the proposed translation for your initial scripture study.

Sample 2 ...

Book of Confessions

- **Q. 87. Can those who do not turn to God from their ungrateful, impenitent life be saved?**
- **A.** Certainly not! Scripture says, “Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no **fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers,** will possess the kingdom of God.”

Proposed amendment

- **87 Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and unrepentant ways?**
- **A.** By no means. Scripture tells us that no **unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like** will inherit the kingdom of God.¹
- ¹ 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:5–6; 1 John 3:14

Here is an example of change in actual content.

Compare the two lists. Which are you / can you be guided by?

Sample 2 ...

Book of Confessions

- Q. 87. Can those who do not turn to God from their ungrateful, impenitent life be saved?
- A. Certainly not! Scripture says, “Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no **fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers**, will possess the kingdom of God.”

Proposed amendment

- 87 Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and unrepentant ways?
- A. By no means. Scripture tells us that no **unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like** will inherit the kingdom of God.¹
- ¹ 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:5–6; 1 John 3:14

See the content difference now?

This is one of the confessional statements that guided the historic declarative position of the church – since adoption of the Book of Confessions in 1967 – through the reunion – to the 2006 Authoritative Interpretation issued by the 217th GA that obviated all previous judicial positions of both parent denominations regarding the “sinfulness” of homosexuality.

Not to argue this translation on this point; though – this is just an example of content change from the Book of Confessions’ 1963 translation to new one proposed to replace it.

BTW: The Rev. Jack Rogers, Professor of Theology Emeritus and Vice President at San Francisco Theological Seminary and Moderator of the 213th General Assembly, arguing to re-translate the catechism in his Jun 17, 2008 blog post (<http://www.drjackrogers.com/2008/06/the-importance-of-restoring-the-heidelberg-catechism-to-its-original-text.html>) noted that

the translators, Eugene Osterhaven ... and ... Allen Miller, made the unauthorized insertion (of the homosexuality phrase) because they believed it was needed to combat the sexual revolution of the 1960s -- even though homosexuality was not mentioned in the original text.

Jack goes on to note:

In a phone conversation with Osterhaven, when I asked why they chose to insert the phrase, ‘homosexual perversion,’ even though there is no corresponding word or phrase in the original text he replied, ‘We just thought it would be a good idea.’

... the ‘60s were a different time.

Jack continues:

Since that time, scholars have discovered four other changes to the original catechism that again appear to reflect the theological bias of the 1963 translators rather than the original text. The four additional mistranslations seem to evidence a bias for what is called “federal theology” which developed in the period following the death of John Calvin.

With this get-off-the-stage note at the end of Jack’s blog post, the reader is challenged to find and evaluate the impact of these “other four.” (The Association of Stated Clerks reports this number to be “30 to 40 serious problems with the previous translation in this document ...”)

The PCUSA resource is the **Comparison of Heidelberg Catechism (current to proposed)**

Comparison of Heidelberg Catechism (current to proposed): the current wording of the Heidelberg catechism compared, side by side, with the proposed new translation of the catechism.

Download at: PCUSA’s [Side by side comparison: Heidelberg](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-heidelberg-catechism-current-proposed/)
(<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-heidelberg-catechism-current-proposed/>)

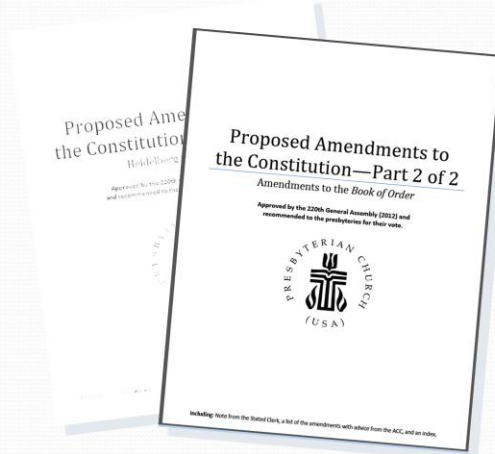
The task before us ...

Part 1 of 2

-- Heidelberg Catechism

Part 2 of 2

- 18 Amendments
- FOG
- DFW
- ROD

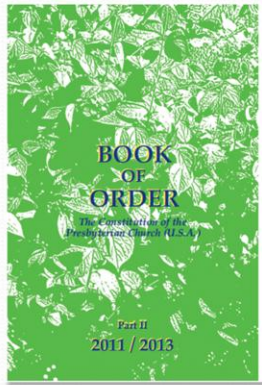


Now to the 18 remaining amendments -- to the *Book of Order*.

The Association of Stated Clerks note:

Part 2 of 2, Amendments to the *Book of Order*, contains a Note from the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, an index of the *Book of Order* sections affected, Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and on the back cover, an index of a list of the proposed amendments in Part 2 of 2. The item numbers by each proposed amendment indicates the Assembly Committee which considered the amendment. Background information on the proposed amendment can be found by going to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

The PC(USA) Constitution



18 Amendments in ...

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity - new

Form of Government - new

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Part Two

With the passage of the new FOG amendment forwarded by the 219th GA to the presbyteries for their affirmation or rejection and approved by a majority of the presbyteries a summer ago, the Form of Government in the *Book of Order* has been significantly reorganized and re-languaged.

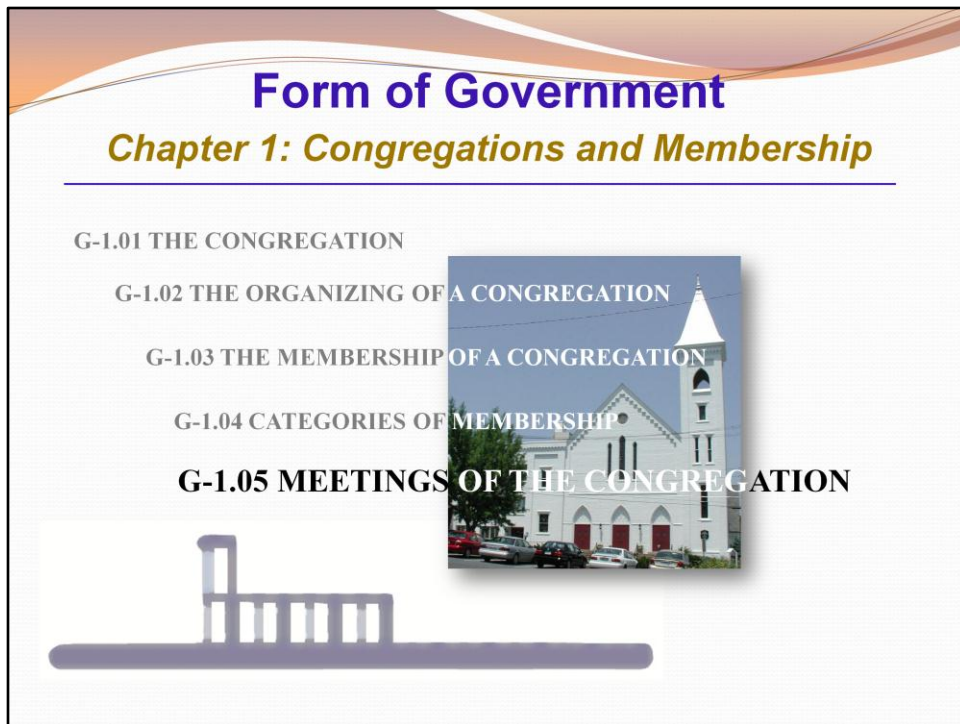
The proposed amendments only (!) affect three of these four parts of the *BOO*.

The Form of Government – whose paragraphs are numbered G-x.xxx,

The Director for Worship – whose paragraphs are numbered W-x.xxx, and

The Rules of Discipline – whose paragraphs are numbered D-x.xxx.

(Paragraphs in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity are numbered F-x.xxx.)



Chapter One of the **Form of Government** now defines the congregation. It covers “oldFOG” material previously found in G-5.0000, The Church and Its Members, and G-7.0000, The Particular Church.

You need to read this chapter because it explains the organization most of you serve.

The chapter affirms our Presbyterian form of connectional government -- the congregation is the basic unit of mission in the church, and that although a congregation possesses all the gifts necessary to be the church; but, a congregation is of itself an insufficient form of the church. We need the relationships with presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly to be the church more fully.

This chapter also includes many practical matters that provide the framework for understanding the life and work of a congregation:

1. How a congregation is organized.
2. The meaning of membership, including a member’s involvement in the church’s ministry.
3. The categories of membership.
4. Matters related to congregational meetings, including business which properly may be conducted.

... which brings us to the first proposed amendment

12-A. Business Proper to Congregational Meetings On Amending G-1.0503

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-1.0503 be amended by adding a new item f.: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

- *“f. Approving a plan for the creation of a joint congregational witness, or amending or dissolving the joint congregational witness (G-5.05).”*

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks (eastern Colorado and western Nebraska) as Item 06-10. The presbytery provided this rationale:

The adoption of the revised Form of Government in 2011 was intended to create greater flexibility in governance to meet the mission needs of congregations. However, in the revision of former G-7.0304, language was removed that had provided congregations the power to conduct business necessary for the governance of the church.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised:

... Section G-5.05b requires a 2/3 vote by the congregation to approve a plan for the creation of a joint witness at a duly called meeting of the congregation.

...

The absence within the list in G-1.0503 concerning joint congregational witness would raise valid questions about a meeting to approve a plan for creating a joint congregational witness can be duly called. While some parts of such a plan might relate to matters listed in current G-1.0503a to e., approving such a plan is not related to any of the existing matters on the list in G-1.0503. The proposed addition of an item on the list in G-1.0503 would be necessary in order to call a meeting of a PC(USA) congregation to approve the plan for the joint witness...

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 06-10 is appropriate with respect to the creation of a joint congregational witness, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the proposed language can be made clearer and more consistent with that intent by being revised to propose only the addition of a new section “f.”, “*approving a plan for the creation of a joint congregational witness, or amending or dissolving the joint congregational witness,*” and eliminating the other proposed insertions.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 34/6/2. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee’s recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-10 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

G-1.0503 Business Proper to Congregational Meetings now reads:

Business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall be limited to matters

related to the following:

- a. electing ruling elders, deacons, and trustees;
- b. calling a pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor;
- c. changing existing pastoral relationships, by such means as reviewing the adequacy of and approving changes to the terms of call of the pastor or pastors, or requesting, consenting to, or declining to consent to dissolution;
- d. buying, mortgaging, or selling real property;
- e. requesting the presbytery to grant an exemption as permitted in this Constitution (G-2.0404).

Whenever permitted by civil law, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting.

This is an exclusive list – missing both congregational action required on Joint Congregational Witness (the subject of this proposed amendment) – and on mergers, dismissals, and maybe more things also required elsewhere in the *BOO* (which are not addressed in this amendment – OOPS! See ya next GA to fix these)!

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: decently and in order – to find scripture references to begin your personal scripture study.



newFOG Chapter Two provides the framework for understanding the call to leadership in the church.

It holds material primarily from three different chapters of the previous book in this new Chapter (G-6.000, The Church and Its Officers, G-11.000, The Presbytery, and G-14.000, Ordination, Certification, and Commissioning – with a smidge from G-15.0202, Recognition Of Ordination).

You need to read this chapter because it explains your call – and the people you serve who are in the leadership positions in the congregation you serve.

Your congregation's Nominating Committee should live in this chapter.

It recognizes that all members of the church are “ministers” of Jesus Christ – but some are set aside to specific ministries.

“Ordered Ministry” is the term that replaces “office” or “officer.” This change is a way of affirming our commitment to two basic notions in Reformed faith about the Church:

1. that all baptized persons are called to ministry, not merely those who are elected as deacons, elders, and ministers; and
2. that the Church sets aside – or “sets into order” - the ministry of some to

equip the whole people of God for the ministry of reconciliation.

The ordered ministries are the ones we are familiar with in the church. Each is described with a phrase summarizing the essence of the specific, ordered ministry:

1. **Deacons**, who exercise the ministry of compassion and service,
2. **Ruling elders**, who exercise the ministry of discernment, measured response, and governance, and
3. **Teaching elders**, who exercise the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

The latter two terms – ruling and teaching elders – are used to lift up the essential parity between these two ordered ministries.

The chapter also contains provisions for preparation for all ordered ministry, as well as two additional areas of service: Commissioned Ruling Elders to a limited pastoral service – (we previously called them “commissioned lay pastors”) – and certified church workers, including Certified Christian Educators, Musicians, and Professional Administrators.

Which brings us to the second proposed amendment, regarding the **gifts and qualifications** of ordered ministries ...

Reference:

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications

a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.

b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

12-B. Gifts and Qualifications

On Amending G-2.0104a

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0104a be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

- **“a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. *This includes repentance of sin and diligent use of the means of grace.* They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.”**

This proposal can be interpreted to be an attempt to limit the damage from the change to the oldFOG’s G-6.0106b voted by the presbyteries last year. It came from a presbytery in our synod. (BTW: OldFOG’s G-6.0106b became newFOG’s G-2.0104b – which immediately follows this paragraph in the newFOG – see the previous slide, where it is quoted in the accompanying text.)

We narrowly avoided a referral from the 220th GA on the definition of marriage in the DFW this time (which, at W-4.9001, is now the only such definition in the *BOO*, having been removed from explicit reference in the FOG’s ordination standards by the presbyteries’ vote on G-6.0106b proposed in 2010 by the 219th GA).

W-4.9000 9. Marriage

W-4.9001 Christian Marriage

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

When the (thankfully defeated) attack on this definition was nearly exhausted on the

floor of the 220th GA, the following was expressed in the *Minutes*:

"The 200 (sic) General Assembly (2012) acknowledges that faithful Presbyterians earnestly seeking to follow Jesus Christ hold different views about what the Scriptures teach concerning the morality of committed, same-gender relationships. Therefore, while holding persons in ordered ministry to high standards of covenant fidelity in the exercise of their sexuality, as in all aspects of life, we acknowledge that the Presbyterian Church (USA) does not have one interpretation of Scripture in this matter. We commit ourselves to continue respectful dialogue with those who hold differing convictions, to welcome one another for God's glory, and not to vilify those whose convictions we believe to be in error. We call on all Presbyterians to join us in this commitment." "Comment: We request that this statement be brought before each presbytery at a stated meeting in which the report from the 200th General Assembly (2012) is given."

Given the time that debate this statement would have touched off in our Fall Presbytery meeting, I decided as the Moderator of Presbytery, (with much prayer and gratefully accepted advice from mature Christians) to not read the statement as requested by GA and instead, asked our Stated Clerk to include this statement with the materials distributed to the presbyters for the Fall Presbytery at Elko:

"As Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada, having prayerfully considered the request of the 220th General Assembly regarding reading Item 07-17; after having sought the counsel of mature Christians, the truth of scripture, and the voice of God in prayer; after having gauged the effect on the good and order of the Presbytery if this item is read as requested; and with knowing that presbytery will consider and vote on this Item (or the item now before us) along with other referred Items after a season of prayerful preparation during its Spring meeting, I have decided not to read this Item on the floor of our Fall stated meeting – even though we will receive our commissioners' reports of their experiences, their good work, and the happenings they observed at the 220th GA."

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of San Jose as Item 07-05 and concurrence was received from one other presbytery. In the overture rationale, the presbytery stated that The Westminster Larger Catechism, 7.305 states:

Q. 195. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition (which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"), acknowledging that the most wise, righteous, and gracious

God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things that we may be assaulted, foiled, and for a time led captive by temptations; that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside and ensnare us; and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations, but also of ourselves unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them; and worthy to be left under the power of them; we pray: that God would so overrule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan, order all things, be-stow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his people may by his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that by his Spirit we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation; or, when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof; that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil forever. (*The Book of Confessions*, The Larger Catechism, 7.305)

When a church member is found guilty of an offense because of acting contrary to the Scriptures and/or the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), that person is censured and the following is part of the public rebuke:

“We urge you to use diligently the means of grace to the end that you may be more obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Book of Order*, D-12.0102).

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The overture would amend G-2.0104a by inserting as the fourth sentence the following: “This includes repentance of sin and diligent use of the means of grace.” The effect of the insertion of this sentence is to define the requirement of the third sentence that those called to the church’s ordered ministry exhibit a manner of life that is “a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world” by requiring repentance and diligent use of the means of grace.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that G-2.0104a bears the title “Gifts and Qualifications.” While the titles are not, of themselves, constitutional, they do provide important clues in the interpretation of the content of the text. In this paragraph, the Constitution affirms that God gives “suitable gifts” for the various duties of ordered ministry. In addition to these gifts, those who undertake these ministries should be persons possessed of certain qualifications. There is, therefore, a relationship between the “suitable gifts” and the qualifications of those who serve in the church’s ordered ministry. This relationship should stand as a caution to the church against quantifying behaviors that demonstrate the qualifications for ordered

ministry, and against devising metrics or arbitrary standards by which the presence or absence of these qualifications should be measured.

The additional qualifications envisioned in this overture bear comment. “Repentance of sin” is a broad phrase that may be open to considerable interpretation, especially when it is seen as a qualification for ordered ministry. Renunciation of evil is a part of the profession of faith made by all active members of the church (*Book of Order*, W-3.3603b). Moreover, since “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.23), the commitment to renounce sin and rely on God’s grace is a continuing one applicable to all believers, candidates included. Neither the language of profession nor that proposed here lifts one sin above others as especially requiring repentance (e.g., sexual behavior), nor does it differentiate between sins as to their magnitude or implication for service in the church’s ordered ministries. Care must be taken not to use the proposed sentence as the basis for establishing minimum standards of sins to be repented. The question is not “Has one repented of a particular sin?” but “Does the life of this individual show evidence of the humility required for repentance?”

The “means of grace” are well-defined in our confessional tradition as the “outward and ordinary means where-by Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption” Those means are “especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer, all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation” (*The Book of Confessions*, 7.088; see also 7.264). A manner of life that demonstrates the Christian gospel in the church and the world would, under this sentence, show evidence of regular participation in the proclamation and hearing of the word, regular participation in the church’s observation of the sacraments, and regular participation in worship (“prayer”). Whether a particular candidate’s participation in the means of grace is sufficiently “diligent” might be a matter for discussion within a congregational nominating committee or presbytery committee charged with care of candidates, and might also be a subject to be addressed in the candidate’s examination. It might also be subject to nuanced consideration in light of the candidate’s physical limitations, family circumstances, or employment requirements.

Although it is not clear from the rationale, the intent of this overture may be to restore in substance, if not in precise wording, the prohibition from ordination and/or installation for those sexually active outside heterosexual marriage. The phrase “repentance of sin” is reminiscent of the phrase, “repent of any self-acknowledged practice the confessions call sin” that was removed from the *Book of Order* by action of the assembly and presbyteries in 2010–2011. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 220th General Assembly (2012) that the insertion of the phrase “repentance of sin” will not have the effect of restoring the recently removed prohibition. Whether a candidate’s manner of life demonstrates the Christian gospel

in the church and the world ultimately remains a matter for the council responsible for the ordination and/or installation to determine, under the provisions of G-2.0104b.

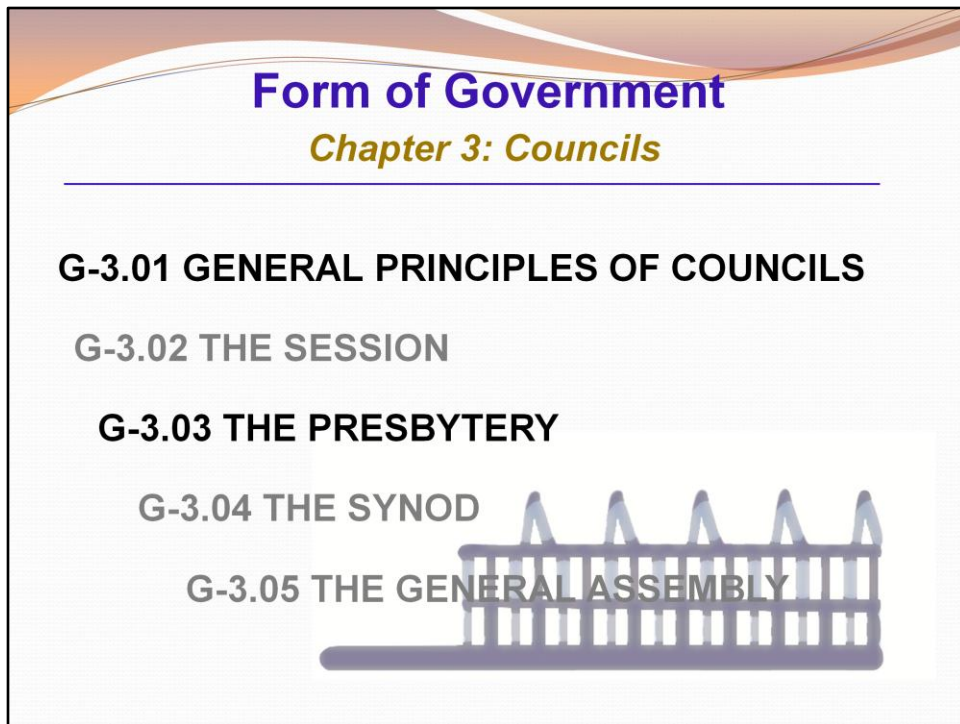
Finally, the advisory committee notes the similarity between the qualifications to be added to this paragraph and the commitments undertaken at profession of faith and/or Baptism (see *Book of Order*, W-4.2003, especially b and c). The committee suggests that any active member of the church, having made or reaffirmed such commitments, might reasonably be deemed to have met the qualifications proposed for addition by this overture. Since active membership in the church is a prerequisite for ordination and/or installation to the church's ordered ministries (*Book of Order*, G-1.0402), the inclusion of these items in G-2.0104a is consistent and appropriate, if perhaps redundant.

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) agrees with the intent of Item 07-05, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the proposed language is consistent with the church's Constitution.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Orders and Ministry (07) on the proposed amendment was 28/20/5. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation 329/275/9.

For the full report of Item 07-05 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: appoint elders and unrepentant sin



A proposed amendment to two paragraphs in the newFOG Chapter 3 is next. NewFOG's Chapter Three deals with the Councils of the Church, and covers oldFOG material previously in G-9.000 through G-13.0000 -- Governing Bodies, The Session, The Presbytery, The Synod, and The General Assembly.

You need to read this whole chapter because it provides the framework for understanding the role of councils in the life of the church and the specific functions of each council of the church, these councils' entities, and their officers.

Your Session should live in the first parts of this chapter – presbytery commissioners in the first and third parts.

“Councils” is the term that replaces “governing body.” ‘Governing’ is only part of what sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly do; more importantly, each is a gathering of the Church’s theological and spiritual leaders for the purpose of discerning the will of Christ and guiding the church in following that will. Throughout its history, the Church has called such gatherings “councils” and with newFOG, we return to that term.

This chapter begins with a section of general principles common to all councils, such as matters of participation and representation, officers, meetings, administration and funding of mission, administrative review, committees and commissions, and other

matters. Then the responsibilities of each council is presented, organized around the *Notes of the Reformed Church* (from the Scots Confession) first presented in F-1.0303 and repeated at the end of G-3.0101:

1. the proclamation of the Word,
2. the administration of the sacraments, and
3. the nurture of a covenant community of disciples through ecclesiastical discipline.

This organization around the *Notes of the Reformed Church* is meant to reinforce that we are engaged in the church's mission given by God in all we do as Councils of the church. Instead of the previous long lists of tasks of governing bodies, the work of each Council is described in terms of how it contributes to the whole.

This brings us to the next proposed amendment – the two-for-one – affecting two paragraphs in this chapter of the FOG.

12-C. Presbytery Registers On Amending G-3.0104 and G-3.0305

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-3.0104 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]

- “G-3.0104 Officers
- “[First three paragraphs remain unchanged.]
- “Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, *maintain any required registers, including the rolls of all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and all Ruling Elders commissioned to particular pastoral service,* preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. [The rest of the text of G-3.0104 remains the same.]”

...

This two-for-one proposes to unwind a predicament the affirmation of the newFOG amendment and another 219th GA-proposed amendment affirmed by the presbyteries put the editors in when faced with harmonizing them into the newFOG.

The changes sent to the presbyteries are shown on this and the next slide.

Background and Rationale

This amendment began as an editorial correction request from the manager of Polity and Guidance in the Office of the General Assembly.

The 219th General Assembly (2010) recommended and presbyteries approved amendment to G-11.0407 as follows:

“The stated clerk shall maintain four rolls, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are active members, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are members-at-large, one listing the names of all of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are inactive members, *and one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in an educational ministry under the*

~~jurisdiction of the presbytery, and a fifth roll listing those who have been deleted from the other rolls. On or before December 31 of each year, the presbytery shall determine the category of membership of each continuing member in accordance with the relevant sections of this chapter and cause appropriate record of such determination to be made. *The stated clerk shall also maintain two registers, one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, and one listing all Commissioned Lay Pastors within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice and vote at all presbytery meetings during the term of service in a church or other validated ministry.*~~

The editorial adaptation of this amendment to the newly adopted Form of Government inserted a version of this amendment into G-3.0104 which currently reads as follows:

Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, maintain any required registers, including the rolls of all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and all Ruling Elders commissioned to particular pastoral service, preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church.

The manager of Polity Guidance and Training recommended editorial changes, including replacing the word “roll” with “registers,” that would more faithfully align with the wording of the originally approved overture.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

In review of the request for editorial correction, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised:

12-C. Presbytery Registers On Amending G-3.0104 and G-3.0305 (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

And shall G-3.0305 be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as *italic*.]

- **“G-3.0305 Minutes and Records**
- **“... Minutes and other official records of the presbytery are the property of the presbytery, and are subject to the review specified in G-3.0108. The stated clerk is responsible for the preservation of the presbytery’s minutes and records. *These records shall include the rolls of the presbytery’s membership and registers of all Certified Christian Educators, Certified Associate Christian Educators, and ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service.*”**

... that the current text of G-3.0104 contains a mixture of elements that would properly be separated into different provisions. Section G-3.0104 pertains to the office of the clerk, clerk of session, and stated clerk of higher councils and is not properly the place for enumerating the rolls and registers a clerk or stated clerk is required to keep. Moreover, the inclusion of the requirement to keep “rolls of all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and all ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service” is improperly placed in a sentence governing the function of all clerks, including clerks of session. These functions are appropriate only to the stated clerk of the presbytery, and not to any other clerk or stated clerk. This material is most appropriate in the section of Chapter Three pertaining to the presbytery (G-3.03) and specifically in G-3.0305, Minutes and Records, where its application is limited to the work of the stated clerk of the presbytery.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution therefore advises the 220th General Assembly (2012) that the in-tent of this editorial correction may best be accomplished by amending both G-3.0104 and G-3.0305 as indicated above.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 42/0/0. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee’s recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-19 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: council and presbyter or similar terms

12-D. Shared Synod Permanent Judicial Commission (Item 05-13)

The **next nine amendments** (Item 05-13) came as response to a referral from the 219th General Assembly (2010) to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly --

... to develop and report constitutional amendments to provide for two or more synods sharing common boundaries to form a **shared permanent judicial commission.**

Here we take a break from the easy, single- and double-paragraph amendment proposals to consider a nine-amendment collection whose individual amendment proposals touch two of the four parts of the *BOO*.

Since these proposals begin in the FOG, this collection is presented here – along with where it touches several paragraphs in the DFW.

Fasten your seatbelts!

12-D. Shared Synod Permanent Judicial Commission (Item 05-13)

Background and Rationale

These nine amendments (Item 05-13) came as response to a referral from the 219th General Assembly (2010) to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly to develop and report constitutional amendments to provide for two or more synods sharing common boundaries to form a shared permanent judicial commission. (*Minutes*, 2010, Part I, pp. 28, 29, 207). The full report of the referral (Item 04-01) can be read at pcusa.org/amendments2012.

The General Assembly Committee on Mid Council Review (05) approved Recommendations 1–7 of the response to referral, and following the advice of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, approved amended wording for Recommendations 8 and 9.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The recommendation upon referral proposes changes to nine different sections of the current Form of Government.

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the recommendation identifies the necessary passages in the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline to amend in order to accomplish the intent of the referral.

Specific ACC Advice regarding Recommendations 1–9 can be found under each corresponding pro-posed amendment.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Mid Councils Review (05) on the proposed amendment was **52/0/0**. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation by **voice vote**.

For the full report of Item 05-13 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

This collection actually had *remarkably little controversy or discussion* at the 220th GA, the Association of Stated Clerks reports.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: council, presbyter, controversy

Form of Government

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.04 THE SYNOD

G-3.05 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Some recent history:

The 219th GA referred to the presbyteries – and by summer, 2011, the presbyteries affirmed – a change to managing the functions required of synods that retreat from the full constitutional list of functions normally and historically expected of synods, and pushing the refused functions to their presbyteries – per the governing paragraph in the *BOO*:

G-3.0404 Reduced Function [the 2011-affirmed amendment language is shown in **bold face type**.]

A synod may decide, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of its presbyteries, to reduce its function. In no case shall synod function be less than the provision of judicial process and administrative review of the work of the presbyteries (G-3.0401c). Such a synod shall meet at least every two years for the purposes of setting budget, electing members to its permanent judicial commission, and admitting to record the actions of its permanent judicial and administrative commissions. Presbyteries of such a synod shall assume for themselves, by mutual agreement, such other synod functions as may be deemed necessary by **the presbyteries and the synod. Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services.**

This proposal extends the sharing of administrative functions to sharing Permanent Judicial Commission functions – in all of the areas of the BOO that have to be changes to make this happen.

Unlike the previous Item 11, which proposes change to two paragraphs in the same proposal, this proposal comes in the form of nine separate amendments. We could vote each of these paragraph changes separately – and independently – or all or many of them together in a consent agenda (the preferred approach).

To achieve their desired outcome, they all have to pass. Eight or fewer out of the nine is a broken outcome – and may cause moderate to severe constitutional difficulty.

So -- evaluate them all together; but, consider each one separately, weighing its individual effect as though the other eight do not pass.

In *BOO* sequence, here are the nine – we start in the FOG with the Synod guidance – and will go then, to two chapters in the ROD to finish off this proposal's implementation.

12.D.1. Judicial Commissions

On Amending G-3.0109a

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0109a be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- **“a. Judicial Commissions**
- **“Judicial commissions shall consider and decide cases of process for the council *or councils* according to the Rules of Discipline. Sessions shall perform the function of a judicial commission for the congregation; each council higher than the session shall elect a permanent judicial commission (see D-5.0000). *Cooperating synods may elect a joint permanent judicial commission pursuant to G-3.0404 and D-5.0101.*”**

The proposal explains itself.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the language of Recommendations 1 through 7 is clear and consistent, and proposes the necessary amendments to accomplish the intent in those sections of the *Book of Order*.

Most of the nine proposed amendments have just this comment, by the way.

12.D.2. Administrative Commissions

On Amending G-3.0109b(6)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0109b(6) be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- **“(6) (by all councils) making pastoral inquiry into persons accused of sexual abuse of another person (D-10.0401c) when jurisdiction in a judicial proceeding against such persons has ended due to death or renunciation of the accused; such inquiries shall not be understood as judicial proceedings but shall seek to reach a determination of truth related to the accusation and to make appropriate recommendations to the designating council.**
...

This is a long paragraph and the change simply inserts “*or councils*” in a few places – on the next two slides.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the language of Recommendations 1 through 7 is clear and consistent, and proposes the necessary amendments to accomplish the intent in those sections of the *Book of Order*.

12.D.2. Administrative Commissions

On Amending G-3.0109b(6) (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0109b(6) be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
...
- “A commission of presbytery, synod, or General Assembly shall be composed of ruling elders and teaching elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible and sufficient to accomplish their work. A quorum of any commission shall be established by the designating council *or councils* but in no case shall be less than a majority of its members (except as limited by D-5.0204).
- “A commission of a session shall be composed of at least two ruling elders, and a teaching elder in an installed or temporary relationship with the congregation governed by that session or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service.
...

Inserting ‘*or councils*’ here ...

12.D.2. Administrative Commissions

On Amending G-3.0109b(6) (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0109b(6) be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
...
- **“A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings and shall submit that record to the council *or councils* for incorporation into its records. Actions of a commission shall be regarded as actions of the council *or councils* that created it. A commission may be assigned additional duties as a committee, which duties shall be reported and handled as the report of a committee. [The last two paragraphs remain unchanged.]”**

... and here.

See what I mean about long?

12-D.3. Reduced Function On Amending G-3.0404

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall G-3.0404 be amended as follows:** [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- **“A synod may decide, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of its presbyteries, to reduce its function. In no case shall synod function be less than the provision of judicial process and administrative review of the work of the presbyteries (G-3.0401c). Such a synod shall meet at least every two years for the purposes of setting budget, electing members to its permanent judicial commission, and admitting to record the actions of its permanent judicial and administrative commissions. Presbyteries of such a synod shall assume for themselves, by mutual agreement, such other synod functions as may be deemed necessary by the presbyteries and the synod.**

...

Here is the necessary change to the “reduced function” paragraph (again a long target paragraph – the change is on the next slide, this part is not changed).

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the language of Recommendations 1 through 7 is clear and consistent, and proposes the necessary amendments to accomplish the intent in those sections of the *Book of Order*.

12-D.3. Reduced Function On Amending G-3.0404 (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0404 be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

- ...

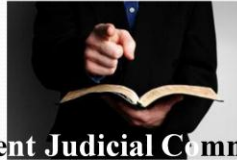
“Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services and form a shared permanent judicial commission, with the membership of the commission being proportional, insofar as possible, to the number of presbyteries within each participating synod. Each synod shall pay the costs for processing a judicial case arising within its bounds.”

Here you see the central notions of parallelism, fairness, and proportionality with the existing administrative function already allowed to be shared. This is the conceptual basis for sharing the judicial function that these nine amendments implement:

Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services and form a shared permanent judicial commission, with the membership of the commission being proportional, insofar as possible, to the number of presbyteries within each participating synod. Each synod shall pay the costs for processing a judicial case arising within its bounds.”

Rules of Discipline

D-5.0100 1. Service on Permanent Judicial Commissions



D-5.0100 1. Service on Permanent Judicial Commissions

D-5.0101 Election

D-5.0102 Term

D-5.0103 Classes

D-5.0104 Vacancy

D-5.0105 Eligibility

D-5.0106 Commission Expenses



The existing paragraph details the composition of a council's PJC.

D-5.0100 1. Service on Permanent Judicial Commissions

D-5.0101 Election

The General Assembly, each synod, and each presbytery shall elect a permanent judicial commission from the **teaching elders** and **ruling elders** subject to its jurisdiction. Each commission shall be composed of **teaching elders** and **ruling elders** in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a **teaching elder** or a **ruling elder**. The General Assembly commission shall be composed of one member from each of its constituent synods. The synod commission shall be composed of no fewer than eleven members distributed equally, insofar as possible, among the constituent presbyteries. In those synods with fewer than eleven presbyteries, each presbytery shall have at least one member. The presbytery commission shall be composed of no fewer than seven members, with no more than one of its **ruling elder** members from any one of its constituent churches. Two of the members of the presbytery commission shall be designated to review any petition for review of the procedures of the investigating committee while the investigation in a disciplinary case is in process (D-10.0204) and to review any petition for review of the decision not to file charges (D-10.0303). These two members shall not take part in any subsequent trial. A session shall refer either form of petition to the presbytery commission.

12-D.4. Permanent Judicial Commissions On Amending D-5.0101

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall D-5.0101 be amended as follows:** [Text to be added is shown as italic]
- **“The General Assembly, each synod *or cooperating synods*, and each presbytery shall elect a permanent judicial commission from the teaching elders and ruling elders subject to its jurisdiction. Each commission shall be composed of teaching elders and ruling elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a teaching elder or a ruling elder. ...**

Another long paragraph – I’ve split it across three slides.

This first third of the paragraph gets broadened to include the cooperating councils that will be sharing PJs

from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the language of Recommendations 1 through 7 is clear and consistent, and proposes the necessary amendments to accomplish the intent in those sections of the *Book of Order*.

12-D.4. Permanent Judicial Commissions On Amending **D-5.0101** (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall D-5.0101 be amended as follows:** [Text to be added is shown as italic]
- “... The General Assembly commission shall be composed of one member from each of its constituent synods. The synod commission shall be composed of no fewer than eleven members distributed equally, insofar as possible, among the constituent presbyteries. In those synods with fewer than eleven presbyteries, each presbytery shall have at least one member. *When two or more synods form a shared permanent judicial commission, the commission shall be composed of no fewer than twelve members, with each synod electing members proportional to the number of the presbyteries in each synod, insofar as possible. The cooperating synods shall designate between them one stated clerk to process the cases filed with the shared permanent judicial commission. ...*

In the middle third, we see the necessary addition – again the proportionality concept introduced in the amendment above.

12-D.4. Permanent Judicial Commissions On Amending **D-5.0101** (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall D-5.0101 be amended as follows:** [Text to be added is shown as italic]
- **“...The presbytery commission shall be composed of no fewer than seven members, with no more than one of its ruling elder members from any one of its constituent churches. Two of the members of the presbytery commission shall be designated to review any petition for review of the procedures of the investigating committee while the investigation in a disciplinary case is in process (D-10.0204) and to review any petition for review of the decision not to file charges (D-10.0303). These two members shall not take part in any subsequent trial. A session shall refer either form of petition to the presbytery commission.”**

No change in the language of the last third of the target paragraph.

Rules of Discipline

D-5.0200 2. Meetings

D-5.0200 Meetings

D-5.0201 Officers

D-5.0202 Bases of Power

D-5.0203 Meetings

D-5.0204 Quorum

D-5.0205 Who Shall Not Participate

D-5.0206 Lack of Quorum



As the ROD now stands, ...

D-5.0206 Lack of Quorum

If, through absence, disqualification, or disability, a sufficient number of the members of a permanent judicial commission are not present to constitute a quorum, the permanent judicial commission shall recess until a quorum can be obtained.

Under these rules, the council fixes the quorum deficiency and pays for the cost of this delay.

12-D.7. Permanent Judicial Commissions Quorum On Amending D-5.0206

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-5.0206 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]
 - **“If, through absence, disqualification, or disability, a sufficient number of the members of a permanent judicial commission are not present to constitute a quorum, the permanent judicial commission shall recess until a quorum can be obtained.**
 - a. The permanent judicial commission shall report its inability to reach a quorum to the stated clerk ~~of the council that elected~~ *it designated for processing the cases.***
- ...

Here we see how these matters will be resolved in the sharing situation – essentially, the administrative and cost burdens go with the case. This target paragraph (with its sub paragraphs) takes two slides.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) believes that the intent of Item 05-13 is appropriate, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the language of Recommendations 1 through 7 is clear and consistent, and proposes the necessary amendments to accomplish the intent in those sections of the *Book of Order*.

12-D.7. Permanent Judicial Commissions Quorum

On Amending **D-5.0206** (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-5.0206 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]

- “...

b. The *designated* stated clerk ~~of the council~~ shall keep a current roster of those members of the permanent judicial commission whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. When-ever the permanent judicial commission reports its inability to obtain a quorum, the stated clerk shall immediately select, by rotation from that roster, a sufficient number of former members of the permanent judicial commission to constitute a quorum. The stated clerk shall report the roster annually to the council *or councils*.

c. If a permanent judicial commission is unable to try a case for lack of a quorum, the council *in whose geographic boundary the case arose* shall reimburse the expenses reasonably incurred by those persons required to be present.”

Again, the administrative and cost burdens go with the case – note the insertions in both sub-paragraphs b and c.

Rules of Discipline

D-6.0000 REMEDIAL CASES

D-6.0100 1. Initiating a Remedial Case and Obtaining a Stay of Enforcement

D-6.0101 Method of Initiation

D-6.0102 Definition of Complaint

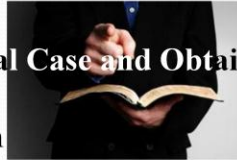
D-6.0103 Stay of Enforcement

D-6.0200 2. Filing a Complaint in a Remedial Case

D-6.0201 Parties

D-6.0202 Who May File Complaint

D-6.0300 3. Pretrial Procedures



The next two proposed amendments address remedial cases (i.e., cases where an irregularity or a delinquency of a lower council ... may be corrected by a higher council.)

The existing paragraphs read ...

D-6.0101 Method of Initiation

A remedial case is initiated by the filing of a complaint with the stated clerk of the **council** having jurisdiction.

D-6.0202 Who May File Complaint

A complaint of an irregularity or a complaint of a delinquency may be filed by one or more persons or **councils** subject to and submitting to the jurisdiction of a **council**.

a. In the instance of a complaint against a presbytery, a synod, or by a **council** against another **council** at the same level, a complaint of an irregularity shall be filed within ninety days after the alleged irregularity has occurred; and a complaint of a delinquency shall be filed within ninety days after failure or refusal of respondent to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, provided that a written request to do so has been made prior to said meeting. Those eligible

to file such a complaint are:

- (1) a **teaching elder** or a **ruling elder** enrolled as a member of a presbytery concerning an irregularity or a delinquency during that period of enrollment, against the presbytery, with the synod;
- (2) a commissioner to a synod, concerning an irregularity or a delinquency during that commissioner's period of enrollment, against the synod, with the General Assembly;
- (3) a session against the presbytery, with the synod;
- (4) a presbytery against the synod, with the General Assembly;
- (5) any **council** against any other **council** of the same level, with the **council** immediately higher than the **council** complained against and to which the latter **council** is subject;
- (6) a person who is an employee of a presbytery, a synod, or an entity of a presbytery or synod, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the **council** or entity, against the presbytery, with the synod, or against the synod, with the General Assembly.

12-D.8. Initiating a Remedial Case On Amending D-6.0101

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-6.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- “A remedial case is initiated by the filing of a complaint with the stated clerk of the council having jurisdiction. *If a different clerk has been designated to process judicial cases for a shared judicial commission, the stated clerk having jurisdiction shall immediately transmit the complaint to the clerk.*”

Remedial cases are referred to the Stated Clerk of the council having original jurisdiction.

Here the mechanics of getting the case to the responsible stated clerk among the shared PJC’s are addressed. The original recommendation was re-worked by the ACC to what is presented to the presbyteries, shown on the slide.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that the language of Recommendation 8 was unclear and recommended the following amendments to the recommendation, which were approved by the Assembly Committee on Mid-Council Review (05):

The ACC advises that Recommendation 8 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and an underline.]

“8. Shall D-6.0101 be amended as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic]

“A remedial case is initiated by the filing of a complaint with the stated clerk of the council [*or shared council*]having jurisdiction. [*If a different clerk has been designated to process judicial cases for a shared judicial commission, the*

stated clerk having jurisdiction shall immediately transmit the complaint to that clerk.]"

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the designation of a single clerk to process judicial cases may be expedient, but it does not supersede the role of the elected stated clerk as the recipient of initial complaints in remedial cases. This is warranted by the role of the stated clerk as an elected officer of the council, and the unnecessary and possibly confusing complication presented a complainant by having multiple clerks with jurisdiction.

12-D.9. Filing a Complaint in a Remedial Case On Amending D-6.0202a(6)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-6.0202a(6) be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- **“(6) a person who is an employee of a presbytery, a synod *or cooperating synod*, or an entity of a presbytery or synod, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the council or entity, against the presbytery, with the synod, or against the synod *or cooperating synod*, with the General Assembly.”**

The last of the nine implementing amendment proposals adds the sharing councils’ addition to this paragraph. Again, the ACC had to re-work the recommendation to what we see here, just simple insertions of the phrase ‘*or cooperating synod*’ where appropriate.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the assembly that the amendments proposed in the recommendation [recommendation 9] on referral are unnecessary and potentially confusing. When cooperating synods share administrative and/or judicial functions, the exercise of jurisdiction remains in the province of the synod of membership. It should not expose the co-operating synod to complaints arising in presbyteries not under its jurisdiction. However, if a person is employed jointly by co-operating synods, then the right to complain against any or all of the cooperating synods should be preserved.

The ACC advice, approved by the Assembly Committee on Mid-Council Review (05) and approved by the assembly, retained the proposed amendment to D-6.0202a(6):

Shall D-6.0202a(6) be amended as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“(6) a person who is an employee of a presbytery, a synod *or cooperating*

synod, or an entity of a presbytery or synod, claiming to have sustained injury or damage to person or property by the council or entity, against the presbytery, with the synod, or against the synod *or cooperating synod*, with the General Assembly.”

Form of Government

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

G-3.0302 Relations with Synod and General Assembly

G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions

G-3.0304 Meetings and Quorum

G-3.0305 Minutes and Records

G-3.0306 Membership of Presbytery

G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching

Elders and Congregations



Well, after that refreshing, nine-amendment proposal, its back to the single paragraph amendment proposal grind – six of these left to go ...

These next two take us back to the FOG description of councils. They are separate subjects – specifically,

- the presbytery's composition and
- how a presbytery communicates a need for Constitutional change to the GA.

Here is what the FOG now says in the target paragraphs for these two proposed amendments:

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching elders and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of

their service. A presbytery may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of ruling elders serving as moderators of committees or commissions.

G-3.0302 Relations with Synod and General Assembly

The presbytery has a responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship to synod and General Assembly by:

- a. electing commissioners to synod and General Assembly and receiving their reports;
- b. electing ruling and teaching elders to be readers of standard ordination examinations;
- c. seeing that the guidance and communication of synod and General Assembly are considered and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. proposing to synod or General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- e. sending annually to synod and General Assembly statistical and other information according to the requirements of those bodies.

12-E. Enrolling Ruling Elders as Members of Presbytery -- On Amending G-3.0301

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall the first paragraph of G-3.0301 of the *Book of Order* be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]
- “*G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities*
- “The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching elders and ruling elders. ...

This target paragraph also takes two slides, this half is not proposed for change.

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of St. Andrew as Item 06-04. The presbytery provided the following rationale:

The 2009–2011 *Book of Order* contained an explicit provision that commissioned lay pastors (now commissioned ruling elders) could be granted voice and vote at meetings of the presbytery (former G-14.0562e). The current *Book of Order* omits that explicit provision, while continuing to include it for both certified Christian educators who are ordained ruling elders under certain circumstances (G-2.1103b) and for the presbytery’s officers and moderators of its committees or commissions (G-3.0301).

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s parliamentary authority, *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition* (RONR), states as one of the general rules for the interpretation of bylaws (or constitutions) that “if the bylaws authorize certain things specifically, other things of the same class are thereby prohibited” (RONR pg. 589, ll. 33–34). At the very least, this principle draws into question whether or not presbyteries may continue to grant voice and vote to commissioned ruling elders.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: councils, presbyters

12-E. Enrolling Ruling Elders as Members of Presbytery -- On Amending G-3.0301 (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **“... This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may *enroll, or may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of, ruling elders serving as moderators of committees or commissions during terms of elected service to the presbytery or its congregations.*”**

While such membership raises ratio questions for some, in my experience is that ruling leaders serving as officers of the presbytery (or synod, for that matter) act as to help the body they serve do its work – not as ‘extra’ representatives of their congregation – to the point of recusing on issues directly affecting their congregation, if necessary.

Frankly, both teaching and ruling elders serving the council as its officers should possess and act with this sensitivity – and be treated so as to neither advantage nor disadvantage their congregation’s representation nor the parity of elders in the body of the council.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised approval of this amendment noting that it “identifies a helpful improvement in the language of the first paragraph of G-3.0301.”

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 38/5/1. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee’s recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-04 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

12-F. Concurrences for Overtures On Amending G-3.0302d

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall G-3.0302d be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]
- **“d. proposing to synod ~~or General Assembly~~ such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church, and/or *proposing to General Assembly overtures that have received a concurrence from at least one other presbytery, and”***

Next topic: ensuring that GA only deals with issues of broadly-based concern across the denomination – vice single-presbytery concerns.

Such concerns may be more properly resolved by their synod or with a commission from GA working the issue directly with the concerned presbytery.

A process like this might have headed off the MCC debacle resulting from a single presbytery’s historic dissatisfaction with their synod dating back before the reunion – and resulting in the MCC’s egregious proposal to the 220th GA to abolish synods – which now lives on as a review the necessity of both synods and presbyteries!

On this amendment topic, the committee report certainly drew broad and sharp critique on the proposal as it evolved from requiring many concurrences – its wording finally being resolved down by the ACC, as we see here.

But, even this wording would make it twice as hard to get an overture from a presbytery to GA as it now is, having first to convince another presbytery to concur.

Is this a good thing?

Well, it certainly drew a lot of material in the Study Guide to explain it and its allied concepts!

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated as Recommendation 3 from the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies Report to the 220th General Assembly (2012), Item 04-01.

The Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies was established by action of two previous assemblies. The 214th General Assembly (2002), in recommending biennial General Assemblies to the PC(USA), re-requested a review of the biennial concept following the 219th General Assembly (2010). A committee was to be appointed by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the Executive Director of the General Assembly Mission Council. *Overture 049* (Item 03-18) to the 219th General Assembly (2010) from the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy requested an expansion of the scope of the review committee to include all matters related to the form and function of the meeting of the General Assembly.

One of the original recommendations from the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies, in response to these referrals, was as follows:

That in order to improve collaboration among presbyteries, assure that the business before it is both of common concern to the mission of the church (G-3.0302(d)) and about key issues facing the church and society, and to encourage well-considered, significant overtures and resolutions of church-wide significance:

- a. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

Shall G-3.0502 be amended by adding a new section “f.” to read as follows:

“f. present to meetings of the General Assembly such overtures from presbyteries and synods that have received concurrences from at least 10 percent of the presbyteries or, in the case of overtures from a synod, concurrence by 10 percent of the synods.”

The rationale offered by the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies was as follows:

A consistent theme of the reflection and feedback we received is the need to focus the business considered by an assembly. Overtures from presbyteries represent a significant source of assembly business. At the 219th General Assembly (2010) 124 overtures were received from presbyteries; only 25 percent of these overtures had concurrences from other presbyteries.

The intent of this recommendation is not to control the business of the General Assembly; it is to help focus the business coming to any meeting of the General Assembly. Requiring the concurrence of at least 10 percent of presbyteries with any overture—and that commissioners' resolutions require signatures from at least 10 percent of the presbyteries—will indicate that the significance of and interest in a particular issue have been tested across the church. Such concurrences will encourage and increase collaboration, education, and conversation within and among presbyteries about key issues.

The Assembly Committee on Review of Biennial Assemblies (04), Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies Report to the 220th General Assembly (2012), received advice and comment on the report from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC), the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), and the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) (see below).

The committee amended the report recommendation by amending G-3.0302 rather than G-3.0502 and decreasing the concurrences from 10 percent to “at least one other presbytery.” The committee's amended recommendation was approved by the 220th General Assembly (2012).

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised the following:

Recommendation 3.a. proposes that a new section “f” be added to G-3.0502, reading as follows:

“f. present to meetings of the General Assembly such overtures from presbyteries and synods that have received concurrences from at least 10 percent of the presbyteries or, in the case of overtures from a synod, concurrence by 10 percent of the synods.”

Recommendation 3.a. proposes that a new section “f.” be added to G-3.0502. Section G-3.0502 currently consists of a series of lettered sentence fragments, each completing a sentence that begins, “The General Assembly has responsibility to maintain relationships with presbyteries and synods by....”

The meaning of existing sections a. through e. is clear in the context of the entire paragraph. The proposed addition of section f. would have a different structure and would read as follows:

“The General Assembly has responsibility to maintain relationships with presbyteries and synods by present [sic] to meetings of the General Assembly such overtures from presbyteries and synods that have received concurrences from at least 10 percent of

the presbyteries or, in the case of overtures from a synod, concurrence by 10 per-cent of the synods.”

The meaning of this sentence is not obvious, and a reasonable reader might ask whether the new section f. was intended to complete a different sentence, perhaps in a different constitutional provision, or even in the Standing Rules. Even if the grammar is corrected, the sentence would still present the reader with a provision in which the subject (“The General Assembly”) is also the indirect object of “present” or “presenting.”

Lacking clarity as to the precise text and intention of the proposed constitutional amendment, the ACC advises the assembly that the rationale for the proposed amendment raises constitutional issues.

a. Right of Appeal

It appears that the amendment is aimed at limiting the business before the assembly. This could be seen as limiting the historic right of appeal, which is restated in F-3.02 (see footnote 6), and specifically implied in F-3.0206.

Other constitutional provisions address this issue. Each of the councils of the church has a responsibility to maintain relation with the other councils. “It is of particular importance that sessions ... propose to the presbytery, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0202e). “The presbytery has a responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship to synod and General Assembly by ... proposing to synod or General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0302d). “The synod has responsibility to maintain regular and continuing relationship with the General Assembly ... by proposing to the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0402). These responsibilities in the session, presbytery, and synod presume a corresponding responsibility of the General Assembly to receive and consider the communications from them.

b. Business That Possibly Should Not Require Many Concurrences

There are many types of business that may not require substantial debate, but that are important to a small number of presbyteries. One example would be transferring a congregation from one presbytery to another. This is a matter typically brought to the assembly by overture from one presbytery with a concurrence from the other presbytery. For reasons we state in other advice before this assembly, the whole church does have a stake in such business, but it is difficult to explain why the two

presbyteries at the heart of the matter would need to lobby sixteen other presbyteries for concurrence.

c. Shifting of Power

A restriction on the handling of overtures from presbyteries and synods would work against the ability of those councils to place business before the assembly, while leaving untouched the ability of entities of the General Assembly to present business. This shift could disturb the relationships expressed in G-3.0101:

... All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with the acts of each subject to review by the next higher council.

d. Creation of Parties

The emphasis on synods and presbyteries collaborating on overtures could have the effect of fragmenting the church by privileging conversations between the like-minded over the broad discernment and conversations that are intended to take place in the council of the whole church—the General Assembly.

The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the whole church, it shall keep before it the Marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the Notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303), and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

e. The Protection of Minority Voices

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) protects the voice of the one from being silenced by the many. Our church protects the rights of dissent and protest for those who disagree with decisions made in councils (*Book of Order*, G-3.0105).

Even as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the principle that a majority shall govern (F-3.0205), it also “seeks a new openness to the sovereign activity of God, ... in its own membership, ... to see both the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms, ... to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical” (*Book of Order*, F-1.0404). Frequently, the possibility of this new openness is carried by the same prophetic voices who are repeatedly outvoted in meetings of our councils.

f. *Other Options*

The assembly has a number of other options available to focus its discernment on which matters are important enough to warrant sustained consideration.

A restriction such as proposed in Recommendation 3 might more appropriately be stated within the *Manual of the General Assembly* than in a constitutional amendment, so long as the assembly approves its policy consistent with its constitutional role and obligations, described above.

The assembly, being required to operate in accord with *Robert's Rules of Order; Newly Revised* (see G-3.0105), can control the best use of its time by its response to motions to approve the docket, by motions to limit debate, by motions to refer worthy but ill-prepared ideas for further study, or to disapprove business that does not convince the assembly of its merits. In addition, our parliamentary standard approves of the use of various additional tools of discernment and ways of crystallizing opinion.

The ACC advises the assembly that the above tools may be more helpful than merely counting concurrences, to the commissioners' efforts to seek to find and represent the will of Christ (*Book of Order*, F-3.0204).

Advice from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advised that the recommendation from the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

“a. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

“Shall G-3.0502 be amended by adding a new section “f.” to read as follows:
“f. *present to meetings of the General Assembly such overtures from presbyteries and synods that have received concurrences from at least ~~10 percent~~ [two] of the presbyteries or, in the case of overtures from a synod, concurrence by 10 percent of the synods.*”

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy pondered this:

We believe that imposing a 10 percent concurrence rule for overtures would have a seriously negative impact. The quality of overtures simply does not correspond to the number of concurrences. Concern for the prophetic

imagination makes the ability of a single presbytery to overture the whole assembly seem an important virtue of our democratic system. Requiring one or two concurrences would seem sufficient to ensure broader importance while encouraging the church's creativity. The process of seeking concurrences through collaboration, however, requires mechanisms and resources for consultation among presbyteries that they may not have and do not have equally. This could result in more "politicking" and "lobbying" by special-interest groups. Such processes are not necessarily bad, provided self-reporting General Assembly rules still apply to the special-interest "affinity" groups often involved. A further concern is diversity; seeking concurrence has the danger of "diluting" distinctive concerns of presbyteries facing particular issues. Due to the likely reduced number or eliminated role of synods, we do not see a necessary need for concurrence for any synod overtures.

Advice from the General Assembly Committee on Representation

The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) advised disapproval Item 04-01, Recommendation 3, with the following comment:

Regarding *Concurrences for Overtures and Commissioners' Resolutions*, Recommendation 3 would dramatically increase the barriers to submitting items of business (overtures and commissioners resolutions) to an assembly. Commissioners have rarely had difficulty in discerning what are the weighty matters before them and what items require less of their time. The proposed changes would prevent all items of business from being heard at the 220th General Assembly (2012) as no overture has reached the level of having 10 percent of presbyteries (or synods) concurring—for presbyteries it would require 18. The most concurrences received, as of May 15, according to PC-biz.org, was four presbyteries on a single overture (while related families of overtures do garner a few more, none receive 18 with agreement on an issue). The GACOR views this recommendation as absolutely contrary to the principles of representation and participation in the PC(USA). A great strength of Presbyterian polity is allowing space for the Holy Spirit to move within a congregation who may take it to larger councils for further discernment. It provides for voices of dissent to be heard and access for commissioners in the minority on issues of concern to raise questions for the consideration of the wider church. Requiring this level of concurrences goes against the experience of inclusiveness and representation and promotes greater politicization of the assembly meeting, encouraging the stronger lobbying activities of affinity and advocacy groups within our communion in order to get concerns raised for consideration. No longer would the single congregation be able to suggest an issue of discussion, having been heard and approved by its presbytery. This recommendation would significantly alter access and provide a significant

barrier to congregations wishing to bring concerns before the body for discussion and discernment of the will of God for the Church. Participation would be diminished in drastic ways.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Review of Biennial Assemblies (04) on the proposed amendment was 24/2/0. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 04-01 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.


Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: controversies, councils

Directory for Worship

Chapter 4: W-4.0000 Ordering Worship For Special Purposes

W-4.4000 4. Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning

- W-4.4001 Ordination and Installation
- W-4.4002 Setting of the Service
- W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions for
**Ordination, Installation, and
Commissioning**
- W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of
Ruling Elders or Deacons
- W-4.4005 Ordination of **Teaching Elder**
- W-4.4006 Installation of **Teaching Elder**



Well, so long, FOG, hello DFW! The next is the only one to touch how we worship.

It proposes to ensure a maximum participation in Presbytery-conducted worship services. Probably wouldn't affect presbyteries like ours much – where extensive travel is the main issue in participation. Chapter 4 of the directory for Worship expresses the theology that underlies worship for special purposes in our polity. It makes the sense of what we do in these and how we do them.

Your worship committee should live in this chapter – and in the preceding three chapters that deal with other forms of worship – yep, *four chapters worth!*

The proposed amendment is to **W-4.4002**.

W-4.4002 Setting of the Service – of Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning Ruling and Teaching Elders.

The service of ordination and installation, or commissioning, may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word. (W-3.3503). Ordination and installation, or commissioning, may also take place in a special service that focuses upon Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church and which includes the proclamation of the Word. The service of installation of a pastor or associate pastor shall be conducted at a convenient time to enable the substantial participation of the presbytery.

12-G. Service of Ordination, Installation, or Commissioning -- On Amending W-4.4002

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall W-4.4002 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as *italic*.]
- “The service of ordination and installation, or commissioning, may take place during the Service for the Lord’s Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word. (W-3.3503). Ordination and installation, or commissioning, may also take place in a special service that focuses upon Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church and which includes the proclamation of the Word. The service of *ordination or installation of a pastor or associate pastor-teaching elder* shall be conducted at a convenient time to enable the substantial participation of the presbytery.”

It seems that these special services do not draw an overwhelming support from members of presbytery who are not directly involved with the service, even in our presbytery – if recent experience is an indicator.

Perhaps this is a ‘teaching moment’ for our presbytery members in matters of celebration that involve the whole presbytery.

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of New Castle (which serves 54 congregations and connected ministries located in Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore, about 40 X 80 miles) as Item 17-02. The original overture proposed two changes to W-4.4002. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) noted, “The effect of the first change is to limit the application of the first sentence to the ordination and installation of deacons, ruling elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and other commissioned church workers. The effect of the second is to include in the final sentence the requirement that services of ordination (as well as those of installation) of teaching elders be conducted at convenient times to enable the substantial participation of the presbytery.”

The presbytery provided this rationale:

The current wording of W-4.4002 does not clearly explain that the ordination service of a teaching elder (formerly “minister of Word and Sacrament”)

should take place at a time that is convenient to enable the substantial participation of the presbytery. Sadly, this has sometimes resulted in these presbytery services occurring on Sunday mornings when pastors and elders from other churches cannot participate. The result is that what should be a presbytery worship service becomes a congregation's worship service with only a handful from the presbytery present.

The presbytery went on to say:

Pastors and elders need more opportunities to worship when they are not responsible for leading in worship in their own churches. Recent insights in spiritual formation and the care of/self-care for pastors have lifted up the importance of church leaders finding opportunities to worship when they have no responsibilities for the worship service so they can focus on worship alone. Presbytery worship services help nurture the spirits of the presbytery's members when all have the opportunity to worship together.

Beyond the benefits to the presbytery and its members when all can attend presbytery worship services not on Sunday mornings, there are also benefits to those being ordained and installed as well as benefits for the congregation hosting the presbytery worship service. They have the opportunity to see more people from presbytery supporting them by their ability to be present in the service; for example, the tradition in many presbyteries of ministers wearing robes and red stoles and processing in together makes a very positive, powerful impression and lasting memory. The increased participation by presbytery members reminds all that the service is truly a presbytery worship service and it is the presbytery that has the authority to ordain and install. The teaching elder is a member of presbytery and the service of ordination and installation with a good participation by the presbytery members builds affirming ties; these ties will help the teaching elder in the years to come as he or she is encouraged to faithfully live out the ordination vow to participate in the governing bodies of the church (thus benefiting the teaching elder and the presbytery).

Taking the advice of the ACC (see below), the Assembly Committee on Theological Issues, Institutions, and Christian Education approved an alternate resolution that was approved by the 220th General Assembly (2012) to be sent to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised:

In its present form, W-4.4002 permits the setting of services of ordination and

installation, as well as commissioning, as part of the Service for the Lord's Day, but it also provides that they may also be part of a special service. This statement, in its present form, applies to the ordination and/or installation of all candidates for ordered ministry. The final sentence of the section is limited in scope to the ordination and/ or installations of pastors or associate pastors, and requires that they be conducted at such times as may permit the substantial participation of the presbytery. The intent of the overture, as stated in the accompanying rationale, is to ensure that ordination and installation services of teaching elders are conducted at times that allow for greater presbytery participation.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the assembly that the amended language of W-4.4002 does not substantially broaden the present wording of the paragraph. Differentiating between the commissioning of ruling elders to pastoral service and that of other church workers appears unnecessary; both are commissioning services, albeit to different service. Limiting the scope of the first sentence to deacons, ruling elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and other commissioned servants, does not preclude the celebration of the ordination or installation of a teaching elder at a Service of the Lord's Day. In both the present and the proposed amended versions, ordination and installation services of pastors and associate pastors are under the mandate of convenience to the participation of the presbytery.

The advisory committee notes, however, that the use of the term "teaching elder" in place of "pastors and associate pastors" in the final sentence does include within the reach of this provision services of ordination and/or installation of those teaching elders who serve in validated ministries other than installed pastoral relationships, such as the staff of higher councils. Whether the inclusion of these persons is significant enough reason to propose amendment to the Constitution, as opposed to entrusting the matter to the discretion of the presbytery itself, is a matter the assembly should consider in weighing the benefits of this overture. The advisory committee notes that many presbyteries have policies governing the scheduling of ordination and installation to permit maximum participation on the part of the presbytery. The assembly may wish to encourage the development of such policies as an alternative to amending W-4.4002.

If the 220th General Assembly (2012) agrees with the intent of Item 17-02, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that this intent can better be accomplished with the following alternate language:

"The service of ordination and installation, or commissioning, may take place

during the Service for the Lord's Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word. (W-3.3503). Ordination and installation, or commissioning, may also take place in a special service that focuses upon Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church and which includes the proclamation of the Word. The service of *ordination or* installation of a ~~pastor or associate pastor~~ *teaching elder* shall be conducted at a convenient time to enable the substantial participation of the presbytery."

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Theological Issues, Institutions, and Christian Education (17) on the proposed amendment was 21/6/2. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation by voice vote. For the full report of Item 17-02 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: churches, believers

Rules of Discipline

D-3.0000 JURISDICTION IN JUDICIAL PROCESS

D-3.0101 Jurisdiction


D-3.0102 No Further Judicial Action


D-3.0103 Lower **Council** Fails to Act

D-3.0104 Jurisdiction Over Transferred **Teaching Elders**

D-3.0105 Enforce and Recognize Judgments and Decisions

D-3.0106 When Jurisdiction Ends





Well, so long, DFW, hello ROD. As quickly as we said, ‘Hi,’ we say ‘Goodbye.’ We have only three proposals to go and we are back to the ROD for the rest of the game ...

The next proposal addresses disciplinary cases within the church. These are cases of alleged errant behavior of a member of a congregation, of a teaching elder (who is a member of presbytery, not of a congregation), and of a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service in congregations in the presbytery.

The proposal touches:

D-3.0101 Jurisdiction

In judicial process, each of the **councils** has jurisdiction as follows:

Session

a. The session of a church has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving members of that church.

Presbytery

b. (1) The presbytery has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving **teaching elder** members of that presbytery and **ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service** in congregations in the presbytery. (**G-3.0307**)

(2) A **teaching elder** engaged in work within the bounds of a presbytery other than the presbytery of membership, whether that work is under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or not, does, by engaging in that work, submit to the jurisdiction of that presbytery for the purposes of discipline. Should disciplinary process be initiated against a **teaching elder** under this provision, the presbytery of membership shall be notified. This paragraph shall apply even if the provisions of **G-3.0306** concerning permission to labor outside or within the bounds have not been followed. This paragraph shall not apply if the **teaching elder** is working in a validated ministry under the provisions of **G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a**.

12-H. Jurisdiction in Judicial Process On Amending D-3.0101b(2)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-3.0101b(2) be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown in *italic*.]
- “(2) A teaching elder engaged in work within the *geographic* bounds of a presbytery other than the presbytery of membership, whether that work is under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or not, does, by engaging in that work, submit to the jurisdiction of that presbytery for the purposes of discipline. Should disciplinary process be initiated against a teaching elder under this provision, the presbytery of membership shall be notified. ...

Although it appears to be arguing how many angels can dance ..., establishing jurisdiction for disciplinary cases – in all of the permutations and combinations of service and membership for teaching elders is complex; but, very important – especially so in abuse or molestation cases (the subject of the next amendment proposal) which must be processed very quickly – and maybe in the public spotlight. We don’t want to be ‘making it up as we go’ here.

This is a three-slide proposal.

Since both geographic and non-geographic presbyteries are allowed in our polity, inserting *geographic*, as shown here, aims to define the jurisdiction where presbyteries of both kinds may overlap.

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, Item 06-18.

The *Book of Order*, D-3.0101b(2), was editorially revised in July 2011 as a result of the new Form of Government *from*:

(2) A minister engaged in work within the bounds of a presbytery other than the presbytery of membership, whether that work is under the jurisdiction of

the presbytery or not, does, by engaging in that work, submit to the jurisdiction of that presbytery for the purposes of discipline. Should disciplinary process be initiated against a minister under this provision, the presbytery of membership shall be notified. This paragraph shall apply even if the provisions of G-11.0401b concerning permission to labor outside or within the bounds have not been followed. This paragraph shall not apply if the minister is working in a validated ministry under the provisions of G-11.0410.

to:

(2) A ~~minister~~ *teaching elder* engaged in work within the bounds of a presbytery other than the presbytery of membership, whether that work is under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or not, does, by engaging in that work, submit to the jurisdiction of that presbytery for the purposes of discipline. Should disciplinary process be initiated against a minister *teaching elder* under this provision, the presbytery of membership shall be notified. This paragraph shall apply even if the provisions of ~~G-11.0401b~~ *G-3.0306* concerning permission to labor outside or within the bounds have not been followed. This paragraph shall not apply if the ~~minister~~ *teaching elder* is working in a validated ministry under the provisions of ~~G-11.0410~~ *G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a*.

12-H. Jurisdiction in Judicial Process On Amending D-3.0101b(2) (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- *...The presbytery within whose bounds the teaching elder is engaged in work may, alternatively, chose to cede jurisdiction to the presbytery of membership, or choose to cooperate with the presbytery of membership in any disciplinary inquiry, alternative form of resolution, or trial. ~~This paragraph shall apply even if the provisions of G-3.0306 concerning permission to labor outside or within the bounds have not been followed. ...~~*

Continuing with the jurisdictional issue:

The last two sentences of this paragraph refer to a situation that is not found in the current Form of Government, namely the “labor outside or within the bounds” requirement found in the former Form of Government as a requirement for a particular validated ministry. The last sentence refers to an exception to that particular validated ministry the “labor outside or within the bounds” requirement that exempted persons who were engaged in a validated ministry “in other service of this church” so that they were not required to have approval to “labor outside or within the bounds.” Since there is no longer a category anymore of “labor outside or within the bounds” the third sentence edit is erroneous but moot (not harmful). The final sentence, which was the disciplinary exception to the exception to the labor out-side the bounds requirement, now, unfortunately, incorporates the entire validated ministry category as exempt from the requirement of the first part of the paragraph. So that it reads as though the first part of the paragraph does not apply to all persons engaged in a validated ministry as opposed to a Rules of Discipline exception that mirrors the exception to the “labor outside or within the bounds” requirement (excepting persons in other service of this church from getting permission to labor outside or within the bounds) that was a subset of the validated ministry category. This has the effect of making the entire paragraph moot, which does not seem to be the intent of the editors.

The ACC resolved this difficulty by proposing what we have before us.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised the changes in the proposed amendment serially:

1. The insertion of “*geographic*” before the word “bounds”:

The ACC advises that this is a helpful modification as it removes ambiguity in the assignment of jurisdiction where a non-geographic presbytery may also have a presence in a particular community. It also clarifies that it applies to ministers engaged in service in validated ministries beyond the congregation.

2. The replacement of the sentence, “This paragraph shall apply even if the provisions of G-3.0306 concerning permission to labor outside or within the bounds have not been followed” with the sentence, “*The presbytery within whose bounds the teaching elder is engaged in work may, at its discretion, either cede jurisdiction to the presbytery of membership, or choose to cooperate with the presbytery of membership in any disciplinary inquiry, alternative form of resolution or trial.*”

The ACC regards the intent of this change as a helpful clarification of process to fulfill the responsibility of jurisdiction for the purpose of discipline. However, it advises that the use of the phrase, “may, at its discretion, either” could be understood to imply that these are the only options available to the presbytery in whose bounds the teaching elder is serving. The ACC advises that this may be remedied by replacing the phrase with the words, “may, alternatively, choose to” (with the sentence continuing as proposed), so that the sentence reads, “*The presbytery within whose bounds the teaching elder is engaged in work may, alternatively, choose to cede jurisdiction to the presbytery of membership, or choose to cooperate with the presbytery of membership in any disciplinary inquiry, alternative form of resolution or trial.*”

12-H. Jurisdiction in Judicial Process On Amending D-3.0101b(2) (cont.)

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **... This paragraph shall not apply if the teaching elder is working in a validated ministry ~~under the provisions of G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a~~ in other service of this church such as a staff member of a council beyond the session, or of an organization related to one of these councils; or in an organization sponsored by two or more denominations, one of which is this church, such as a joint congregational witness church, a specialized ministry, an administrative office, an interdenominational agency; or as a partner in mission in connection with a church outside the United States of America.”**

Finally,

3. The replacement of the sentence, “This paragraph shall not apply if the teaching elder is working in a validated ministry under the provisions of G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a.” with the sentence, “This paragraph shall not apply if the teaching elder is working in an approved, validated ministry under the provisions of G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a. *in other service of this church such as a staff member of a mid or higher council, or of an organization related to one of these councils; or in an organization sponsored by two or more denominations, one of which is this church, such as a joint congregational witness church, a specialized ministry, an administrative office, an interdenominational agency; or as a partner in mission in connection with a church outside the United States of America.”*”:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advises this to be a helpful amendment to restore the clarifying language present in the previous Form of Government. The ACC advises that such clarification is necessary for the order of the mission of the graduated councils of the church, so that those serving these councils may be accountable to the councils, agencies, and partnerships which for which the service is rendered, and to the presbytery of membership for the purpose of discipline.

However, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that the terms “mid council” and “higher council” do not appear elsewhere in the Constitution. We believe the language of the proposed amendment would be clearer and more consistent if the phrase “mid or higher council” were changed to “council beyond the session,” so that the sentence would read,

This paragraph shall not apply if the teaching elder is working in a validated ministry under the provisions of G-2.0502 and G-2.0503a. *in other service of the church such as a staff member of a council beyond the session, or of an organization related to one of these councils; or in an organization sponsored by two or more denominations, one of which is this church, such as a joint congregational witness church, a specialized ministry, an administrative office, an interdenominational agency; or as a partner in mission in connection with a church outside the United States of America.*

Note the ACC’s view of the ordering of councils – affirming my describing them, essentially, as ‘ever-widening circles of neighboring congregations.’

If the assembly agrees with the intent of Item 06-18, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that, with the exceptions noted under (2) and (3) above, the language of the amendment is clear and consistent to accomplish its intent.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 43/0/0. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee’s recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-18 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

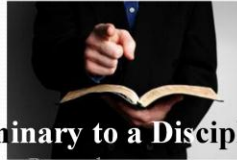
Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: councils, presbyter

Rules of Discipline

D-10.0000 DISCIPLINARY CASES

D-10.0100 1. Procedure Preliminary to a Disciplinary Case

- D-10.0101 Initiation of Preliminary Procedures
- D-10.0102 Statement of Offense
- D-10.0103 Referral to Investigating Committee
- D-10.0104 Accusation from Other Council
- D-10.0105 Transfer Prohibited
- D-10.0106 Administrative Leave



Every time abuse or molestation comes up, policy and procedures must be clear and quickly executable. Witness the Sandusky trial's heightening of public awareness – and more recent cases of churches being sued for failing to act 'quickly' enough.

Here is what we currently have as an part of the processing of such cases.

D-10.0106 Administrative Leave

When a written statement of an alleged offense of sexual abuse toward any person under the age of eighteen, or who it is alleged lacked the mental capacity to consent, has been received against a **teaching elder**, the stated clerk receiving the allegation shall immediately communicate the allegation to the permanent judicial commission. The moderator of the permanent judicial commission shall within three days designate two members, who may be from the roster of former members of the permanent judicial commission, to determine whether the accused shall be placed on a paid administrative leave during the resolution of the matter. The cost of such shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary. While administrative leave is in effect, a **teaching elder** may not perform any pastoral, administrative, educational, or supervisory duties, and may not officiate at any functions such as Baptism, funerals, or weddings.

- a. The designated members of the permanent judicial commission, after giving the accused the opportunity to be heard, shall determine whether the risk to the

congregation and to potential victims of abuse, when considered in light of the nature and probable truth of the allegations, requires administrative leave or other restrictions upon the **teaching elder's** service. Such administrative leave or restrictions will continue until resolution of the matter in one of the ways prescribed in the Rules of Discipline or the leave or restrictions are altered or removed by the designated members of the commission.

- b. If the designated members of the commission determine that no administrative leave or restriction is required, the investigating committee appointed to investigate the allegations shall be free at any point in its investigation to present additional evidence to the designated members supporting the imposition of administrative leave or other restrictions.

12-I. Administrative Leave On Amending D-10.0106

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- **Shall D-10.0106 be amended as follows:** [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through]
- “When a written statement of an alleged offense of sexual abuse toward any person ~~under the age of eighteen, or who it is alleged lacked the mental capacity to consent,~~ has been received against a teaching elder, the stated clerk receiving the allegation shall **immediately** communicate the allegation to the permanent judicial commission. [The rest of the paragraph remains unchanged.]”

I added the red to **immediately** to the existing text in this paragraph because our *BOO* requires a very fast response.

Here is the debate history of the originally proposed fix and the part of it that survived – which we see here.

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated as an overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore as Item 06-09. The original overture asked to amend two sections of *Book of Order*, D-10.0106 and G-2.0904, and provided the following rationale:

Sexual abuse is devastating to a congregation. Past PC(USA) conversations in this regard have demonstrated the tension between the protections afforded the accused, that they are innocent until proven guilty, and the protection of a congregation, the putative victims and potential victims from additional abuse.

Presently the *Book of Order*, Rules of Discipline, provides three ways (conditions under which) the teaching elder may be placed on administrative leave:

1. the accused teaching elder may volunteer for a leave of absence;
2. one of the victim/ survivors of the alleged sexual abuse is under the age of eighteen;

3. or it is alleged that the victim lacked the mental capacity to consent.

The conditions currently found in D-10.0401c(1) are included in D-10.0106. The conditions cited in D-10.0401c.(2) are not included in D-10.0106. This amendment proposes to include those conditions as well. Essentially mandatory administrative leave would be able to be imposed upon any teaching elder if sufficient evidence of sexual abuse as defined in D-10.0401c exists as judged by the two persons appointed by the PJC chair.

In summary, the presbytery stated:

The proposed changes preserve the existing rights of the accused and extend protection to the congregation, the putative victim(s), and potential victims by expanding the range of consideration to all persons, not just those who are under eighteen or who, it is alleged, lacked the mental capacity to consent. These changes make it possible to impose a leave of absence on any teaching elder accused of sexual abuse with any other person based upon the evidence available at that time. These changes leave intact the current process of consideration as defined in D-10.0106. It does not automatically impose the administrative leave but continues to leave it to the judgment of the two persons appointed by the chair of the permanent judicial commission to consider the evidence of sexual abuse.

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity approved amending D-10.0106 but not G-2.0904 and also approved the following comment:

Every presbytery needs to adopt an adequate comprehensive administrative leave policy with a list of types of allegations that trigger an immediate leave as an explicit agreement between the teaching elder, congregation, and presbytery.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised disapproval for the reasons given in the ACC's advice on Item 06-03, excerpts which follow:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly that presbyteries that have adopted an adequate administrative leave policy and that have required an explicit agreement of compliance with that policy as part of the minimum terms of call to be agreed upon by the teaching elder and the congregation do have the authority to institute administrative leave in the situations envisioned in these items. An adequate administrative leave policy would address the following six issues (identified by the ACC in 2004) in the

face of alleged misconduct:

1. What process is due the accused before a leave of absence is imposed?
2. Who should implement the process?
3. What other parties, if any, should be involved in the process?
4. What types of allegations should trigger the process of determining whether to place a pastor on a leave of absence?
5. What timeline should apply to determining whether to place the pastor on a leave of absence?
6. Whether a pastor placed on leave should be compensated, and if so, by whom?

The administrative leave provisions in D-10.0106 were added to the Rules of Discipline as part of a response to the work of the Independent Committee of Inquiry, which was raising particular concerns about the protection of children in mission settings. The adopted language protects both persons under the age of 18 and those over the age of 18 who lack the mental capacity to consent.

In answer to question 4, D-10.0106 is currently limited to allegations of sexual abuse toward any person under the age of 18, or who it is alleged lacked the mental capacity to consent. A presbytery could identify in its administrative leave policy other alleged offenses that would expose a teaching elder to the possibility of administrative leave, but the presbytery would also need to provide answers to questions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 for those additional offenses because of the limitation in D-10.0106.

This proposed amendment to D-10.0106 would give a new answer to question 4. It would enlarge the scope of those alleged offenses that would mandate a judicial procedure that could lead to administrative leave pending the final outcome of the investigation or trial. The larger set of alleged offenses would encompass allegations of any form of sexual abuse as defined in D-10.0401c.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly that the clear identification of alleged offenses that could mandate the D-10.0106 procedure is important. The current language is appropriately clear and specific, and the proposed amendment to D-10.0106 is also appropriately clear and specific.

One problem that this item and Item 06-09 point out is that D-10.0106 does not fully describe the process to be followed, who negotiates with whom about any payment for the costs of administrative leave, or how the administrative

leave is to be imposed. These questions are left to presbyteries to answer in a way that is appropriate to their individual contexts. Section D-10.0106 merely identifies the process by which a decision is to be made that there should be administrative leave or restrictions on ministry. A presbytery administrative leave policy is needed in order to explain in advance the procedures the presbytery will follow to implement any administrative leave or restrictions.

The existence of a presbytery administrative leave policy and the inclusion in advance within the terms of call of an agreement by the congregation and the teaching elder to follow the administrative leave policy of the presbytery would mean that imposing administrative leave under that policy would involve merely doing what was already agreed, not amending the call. This procedure would eliminate the problem of needing to consult with the congregation to impose administrative leave in the initial stages of dealing with dire but unproven allegations. In the absence of such a provision within the call, both the session and the congregation should be consulted.

If the General Assembly believes that D-10.0106 should be amended to address all situations of sexual abuse by a teaching elder, the ACC advises the 220th General Assembly (2012) that this item's proposed amendment to D-10.0106 is clear and consistent with the Constitution, but that D-10.0106 still requires presbyteries to determine many details in how they will implement administrative leave.

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 41/0/3. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee's recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-09 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: councils, presbyter

Presbytery of Nevada
POLICY & PROCEDURES
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

Sexual Abuse is sexual misconduct in the context of a clear breach of professional trust and/or misuse of the power, stature, influence, or authority of the clerical office or other leadership position. In a professional context, mutual expressions of affection do not abrogate the abusiveness of the relationship, for true consensuality may be considered, by definition, impossible between a professional and a person in that professional's care.

Sexual Harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- i. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in the presbytery, or
- ii. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals, or
- iii. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment based on the declared judgment of the affected individual. Lack of intent to harass is no defense.

Sexual Misconduct is a comprehensive term used in this policy to include, but is not limited to:

- i. Child Sexual Abuse as previously defined;
- ii. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation;
- iii. Sexual Malfeasance - as breach of trust by a religious leader, resulting from a relationship and/or sexual contact within a ministerial or professional or leadership relationship;
- iv. Production or distribution of pornography as defined by actions or policy statements of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- v. Sexual Harassment.

The definition of sexual misconduct is not meant to include non-abusive relationships between spouses.

The slide is not an intentional eye-test – it simply is to show the three definitions of behavior covered by the Presbytery of Nevada SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION policy.

It is here because, while passage of the proposed amendment on the previous slide does not mandate any changes in our policy, the accompanying comments of the ACC raise the following concerns about the adequacy of our policy:

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity ... approved the following comment:

Every presbytery needs to adopt an adequate comprehensive administrative leave policy with a list of types of allegations that trigger an immediate leave as an explicit agreement between the teaching elder, congregation, and presbytery.

Presbytery of Nevada

POLICY & PROCEDURES

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

7. RESPONSE PROCEDURES

a. Initial Report Procedures

...

An accuser may report alleged sexual misconduct to any of the following:

- i. The pastor of the accuser's church or the accused's church;
- ii. A member of the Personnel Committee of the church or governing body;
- iii. The Committee on Ministry;
- iv. The Executive Presbyter;
- v. The Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

The first person to learn of alleged sexual misconduct must take the allegations seriously and confidentially. This person shall complete the Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct (Exhibit A, this document). The report shall **immediately** be delivered to and called to the attention of the clerk of session or the Stated Clerk of the presbytery.

NOTE: It has been determined through case law that there is no confessional protection in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Any incident of suspected sexual abuse of a minor, by a person covered by this policy, shall **IMMEDIATELY** be reported to Child Protective Services, local law enforcement, and/or the district attorney.

These are the reporting procedures in this policy ...

The first person to learn of alleged sexual misconduct ... shall **immediately** .. (report it to) ... the clerk of session or the Stated Clerk of the presbytery.

-- AND --

Any incident of suspected sexual abuse of a minor, by a person covered by this policy, shall **IMMEDIATELY** be reported to Child Protective Services, local law enforcement, and/or the district attorney.

Presbytery of Nevada
POLICY & PROCEDURES
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

7. RESPONSE PROCEDURES

b. Presbytery Judicial Response

- i. **Immediately** upon receipt of the Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct, the Clerk shall inform the Executive Presbyter and COM Chair, and these three shall appoint an Investigating Committee (I.C.) as stipulated in the Rules of Discipline (D-10.0201).
- ii. The I.C. must **promptly** begin its inquiry into the allegations, having received orientation by the Stated Clerk and a member of the Synod Task Force, as delay may cause further harm to all parties involved. The I.C. will conduct a thorough investigation as called for in D-10.0200.

... and this is the response the Presbytery shall make to such a report.

The congregations, in their corresponding policy on Sexual Misconduct, shall specify its responses.

Have you reviewed your congregations Sexual Misconduct policy?

Presbytery of Nevada
POLICY & PROCEDURES
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

7. RESPONSE PROCEDURES

b. Presbytery Judicial Response

...

iii. Administrative leave for the accused shall be **evaluated, and recommended** when appropriate by the I.C. to the Stated Clerk, Executive Presbyter and Chair of COM, who together will determine and take the appropriate action. If administrative leave is deemed appropriate, the COM shall **immediately** begin work with the session and congregation.

iv. Administrative leave is appropriate if there is some likelihood that a similar offense as alleged may occur during the period of investigation and/or trial; or if it appears necessary to preserve the peace and purity of the congregation, related organization, or sponsored activity. Administrative leave is preventative, not punitive.

This is the administrative leave policy related to sexual misconduct in the Presbytery of Nevada.

Presbytery of Nevada
POLICY & PROCEDURES
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION

10. COMPLIANCE AND DISTRIBUTION

All continuing members of the presbytery, its employees, and volunteers in high risk positions, e.g. youth ministry, camp counselors, etc. shall be required to sign a statement (Exhibit D) acknowledging that they have received a copy of this document and that they agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the policy contained herein. It will also be distributed to the sessions of all churches in the presbytery and made available to their church members upon request. Furthermore, a summary statement of the policy and other significant portions of this document (Exhibit E) shall be posted in all church entities.

... and this is the agreement – signed by all continuing members of the presbytery, its employees, and volunteers in high risk positions – to abide by this policy.

The comments also included:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly that presbyteries that have

- **adopted** an adequate administrative leave policy and that have
- **required** an explicit agreement of compliance with that policy as part of the minimum terms of call to be agreed upon by the teaching elder and the congregation
- **do have the authority** to institute administrative leave in the situations envisioned in these items.

An ‘adequate administrative leave policy’ would address the following six issues (identified by the ACC in 2004) in the face of alleged misconduct:

1. What process is due the accused before a leave of absence is imposed?

2. Who should implement the process?
3. What other parties, if any, should be involved in the process?
4. What types of allegations should trigger the process of determining whether to place a pastor on a leave of absence?
5. What timeline should apply to determining whether to place the pastor on a leave of absence?
6. Whether a pastor placed on leave should be compensated, and if so, by whom?

**Your
POLICY & PROCEDURES
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION**

- Advisory Committee on the Constitution comments are independent of the proposed amendment. They speak to directive content in the *BOO* – NOW.
- Does the Presbytery and your congregation's policy on SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION meet the test implies by these comments?
 - **Immediately** trigger administrative leave
 - Part of the agreed terms of call or employment contract



Absorb Slide

Rules of Discipline

D-10.0000 DISCIPLINARY CASES

D-10.0200 2. Investigation

- D-10.0201 Investigating Committee
- D-10.0202 Investigating Committee Responsibilities
- D-10.0203 Rights of the Accusor (sic)
- D-10.0204 Petition Commission to Review Procedures



Well, we are to the proposed you have all been waiting for – the LAST ONE!

Sadly, our presbytery has recently experienced an investigative committee action under the current guidance.

Here is the current ROD guidance for an investigating commission. The proposal contains a tweak to that guidance.

D-10.0202 Investigating Committee Responsibilities

The investigating committee shall

- provide the accused with a copy of the statement of alleged offense described in D-10.0101;
- provide the person making the accusation with a statement of the investigating committee's procedures;
- determine whether the accusation repeats allegations previously made against the accused, and if so, report to the council having jurisdiction over the accused that it will not file charges (D-10.0202j) unless the accusation contains new information warranting investigation or is the subject of an investigation that has**

not been concluded.

d. make a thorough inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the alleged offense;

e. examine all relevant papers, documents, and records available to it;

f. ascertain all available witnesses and inquire of them;

g. determine, in accordance with **G-3.0102** and D-2.0203b, whether there are probable grounds or cause to believe that an offense was committed by the accused;

h. decide whether the charge(s) filed -- on the basis of the papers, documents, records, testimony, or other evidence -- can reasonably be proved, having due regard for the character, availability, and credibility of the witnesses and evidence available;

i. initiate, if it deems appropriate, alternative forms of resolution, ordinarily after the investigation has been completed, probable cause has been determined, but before the charges have been filed. The purpose of alternative forms of resolution will be to determine if agreement can be reached between the investigating committee and the accused concerning any charges which may be filed.

(1) Any mediation shall be completed within 120 days unless a continuance is allowed by the session or permanent judicial commission.

(2) The investigating committee shall report any settlement agreement to the session or permanent judicial commission for its approval.

(3) The session or permanent judicial commission shall convene to receive the settlement agreement; vote to approve it by at least two-thirds of the members eligible to vote; make a record of its proceedings according to the provisions of D-11.0601d, including the name of the accused, the substance of the charge(s), and censure; and transmit its decision to the clerk of session or the stated clerk, who shall report it according to the provisions of D-11.0701.

(4) The investigating committee shall provide an advocate for the accused throughout settlement negotiations, and may provide an advocate for other interested persons at its own discretion.

(5) If a settlement satisfactory to both the investigating committee and the accused in the alternative form of resolution is not reached, the investigating committee shall designate a prosecuting committee per D-10.0202j, and the case shall proceed on the charges filed.

j. report to the **council** having jurisdiction over the accused only whether or not it will file charges; and Designate Prosecuting Committee

k. if charges are to be filed, prepare and file them in accordance with the provisions of D-10.0401–.0404, and designate one or more persons (to be known as the prosecuting committee) from among its membership to prosecute the case.

12-J. Investigating Committee Responsibilities On Amending D-10.0202

The 220th General Assembly (2012) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

- Shall D-10.0202 be amended by inserting a new “a” and renumbering the remaining paragraphs “a–k” as “b–l”? The new section “a” shall read as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]
- *“a. review the statement of alleged offense to determine whether it alleges any facts that, if true, constitute an offense as defined in D-2.0203b. If no offense as defined in D-2.0203b is alleged, the investigating committee shall end its inquiry and report that to the clerk of the body. If an offense as defined in D-2.0203 is alleged, it shall proceed to the steps below.”*

I asked members of our presbytery who have recently served on an investigating committee (IC) what their thoughts are on this one. Based on their experience, they overwhelmingly support this amendment –

One member said: I would be supportive of this change. Giving the IC more options for responses can only be a benefit to the process. In our case, with the way it is set up now, we felt a little trapped and then rushed, because it looked to us like a congregation was in trouble and nothing could be done about it until *after* we finished with our investigation. We rushed to get what we could done to end it the investigation as quickly as possible so the more appropriate assistance from the Committee On Ministry could be requested.

Another, a veteran of a couple of ICs, said: I would be in favor of the proposed amendment from the standpoint that allegations that go to an IC begin a judicial process based on the *Book of Order*. As such, if there is no violation of the *Book of Order*, there is no way to proceed. This does not mean that there are not legitimate issues or concerns for the congregation and/or the person filing the allegation. It may mean; however, that the *judicial* process is not the way to go. It may mean that the Committee On Ministry needs to step in or that an Administrative Commission is needed – with a pastoral process, instead of a judicial process. The judicial process of very precise in terms of what proceeds to trial, so I would say this amendment is helpful. It could save

a lot of time and effort (and expense) that might be unnecessary.

Background and Rationale

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of Detroit as Item 06-02. The original overture asked to amend two sections of *Book of Order*, D-10.0101 and D-10.0202, and provided the following rationale:

In 1991, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission ruled in *Hoy and McGlamery, Jr. v. Pby of Tropical Florida, Remedial Case 203-1*, that “a stated clerk has no constitutional authority to refuse to transmit to a permanent judicial commission a filing which on its face purports to be a complaint” (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, p. 173). This means that a clerk receiving a statement containing allegations must refer it to an investigating committee whether or not a violation of the Constitution is alleged. Section D-10.0202d requires that investigating committee to investigate the facts, even if there is nothing alleged that could go to trial. ...

Because of the *Hoy and McGlamery* decision, the initial intent of the Rules of Discipline that allegations against members be screened by the clerk to ensure that the allegations against a member are in fact violations has been re-moved, and no other provision has been made for this initial step. The result is that a person can write allegations against another Presbyterian that cannot be tried even if true, but nonetheless an investigating committee must conduct a thorough inquiry into the facts. This amendment allows an investigating committee to review the allegations as a first item of business, and, if the allegations even if true do not constitute a violation, can close the investigation.

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity, taking the advice of the ACC (see below), approved an alternate resolution recommending the ACC suggested language to amend D-10.0202 and making no amendments to D-10.0101.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

Regarding amendment to D-10.0101, the ACC recommended disapproval with the following rationale:

The rationale of this overture points out an apparent conflict between the language of D-10.0101 and the General Assembly PJC decision in *Hoy and McGlamery v. Presbytery of Tropical Florida* (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, *Case No 203-1*). This assessment, however, appears to misunderstand the context of the case in question. *Hoy and McGlamery* addresses the procedure in a remedial case, while D-10.0101 concerns the preliminary procedure in a disciplinary

case. If there is to be an analogy to disciplinary cases, *Hoy and McGlamery* would address the refusal of a clerk to transmit to a permanent judicial commission a filing by an investigating committee that on its face purports to be charges.

Section D-10.0101 is silent concerning the matter of who is empowered to make the assessment of whether the alleged offense rises to the level of likely disciplinary action. However, D-10.0103 would appear to resolve the question: “Upon receipt of a written statement of an alleged offense, the clerk of session or the stated clerk of presbytery, without undertaking further inquiry, shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged” The proposed amendment, while consistent with Constitution, is unnecessary.

Regarding amendment to 10-10.202, the ACC advised as follows:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the insertion of this provision clarifies the responsibility for assessment of whether an offense is alleged by specifically assigning it to the investigating committee. Neither D-10.0101 nor D-10.0103 are clear about ownership of this responsibility; D-10.0101 simply provides information concerning the required threshold of the contents of a statement of alleged offense, and D-10.0103 is clear that making further inquiry beyond receipt of the statement lies outside the purview of the clerk of session or stated clerk. ...

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 220th General Assembly (2012) that, if it agrees with the intent of the overture, the language of the section proposing amendment of D-10.0202 could be made clearer and more consistent with the Constitution by inserting a new section “a.” to read as follows:

“a. review the statement of alleged offense to determine whether it alleges any facts that, if true, constitute an offense as defined in D-2.0203b. If no offense as defined in D-2.0203b is alleged, the investigating committee shall end its inquiry and report that to the clerk of the body. If an offense as defined in D-2.0203 is alleged, it shall proceed to the steps below.”

The vote of the Assembly Committee on Church Polity (06) on the proposed amendment was 42/0/1. The 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the committee’s recommendation by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 06-02 go to pcusa.org/amendments2012.

Search www.biblegateway.com at least with: discipline, accused

Next Steps for Sessions and NV Presbytery:

Jan/Feb 2013 – Sessions, Commissioners, and Ministers introduced to the GA-referred proposals for study – **study commences**

(This presentation will be updated online with session workshop and other input as occurs. See www.AGRitter.com – Equipping Ministries – Equipping the Presbyters for Spring Presbytery)

March 15-16, 2013 – Spring Presbytery @ Mt View PC – vote on the proposals

And finally, here is the preparation roadmap for the Nevada Presbytery ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Elder Commissioners to Presbytery.

Council asked Equipping to prepare each of the sessions – and since my polity presentation / workshop was to focus on it ... here is my preparation material – and here it will be until we are prepared!

I am prepared to give this over the internet/phone for any of your fellow Presbyters who missed it today and would like to see it – or simply ask questions! Please contact to me at: Art@AGRitter.com or by phone 702 236 2637.

Thank you - and God bless our effort to conform everything we do to glorify Him.

Go with His guidance and rest in His peace.