



Just to make sure we are all in the right room -- This workshop is produced for the purpose of teaching, preparing, and informing presbyters about the polity of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) as a context for resolving the near-term and longer-term issues for congregations and Sessions that are related to the Form of Government in our denomination-- which is new since July 2011. If we are all here to hear about that ...

Good morning and welcome!

As a PCUSA ruling elder and deacon, **Grace and Peace to each of you!** -- from the congregation and Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas, Nevada -- serving the whole Las Vegas valley from the "cross-roads of the valley."

And as the Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada, **God be with you -- and greetings!** -- from the 24 neighboring Presbyterian churches, and nine worshipping fellowships, new church developments, and specialized ministries beyond **Mt View**. -- and from the 53 active and retired pastors who, together with the churches, comprise the Presbytery of Nevada.

There are 11 Presbyterian churches, new church developments, worshipping fellowships, and specialized ministries in our valley -- all of them open for business this Sunday and one even worshipping regularly on Wednesday

night. Each week, in these congregations, God is worshipped in this valley in seven of the world's languages – and you are welcome to worship in any of them and join with them in their ministries to our valley!

And as a Nevada Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific (of which our presbytery is a part), **welcome and enjoy God's Holy love today!** -- from the 397 churches in the other 10 presbyteries of our Synod which also spans Oregon, Idaho, and Northern California ...

I give you these greetings from all of these councils with which I have a personal association in our church – and from my heart.

I am Art Ritter, your teacher today.



Lets begin with prayer ...

Open our hearts and minds to your teaching, Lord, that we may learn your ways and glorify you in everything we do. Amen

Let's begin our considerations today with prayer ...

Absorb slide

You have just been through a get-to-know-each-other exercise.

Now lets do a team cohesiveness exercise – and get to know us as a collective, operating unit better ...

Let's get personal ...

Recall when we were ordained we each took 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 as you lead God's Church

Lets begin by remembering who we work for as presbyters in His church –

here at Mt View Presbyterian Church ... and

in our personal lives, as well.

The Constitutional questions you affirmed when you were ordained and installed are the defining statements of your commitment to the office – or – ordered ministry you now hold.

These eleven vows represent our agreement on sensitivity, obedience, and on following our Lord

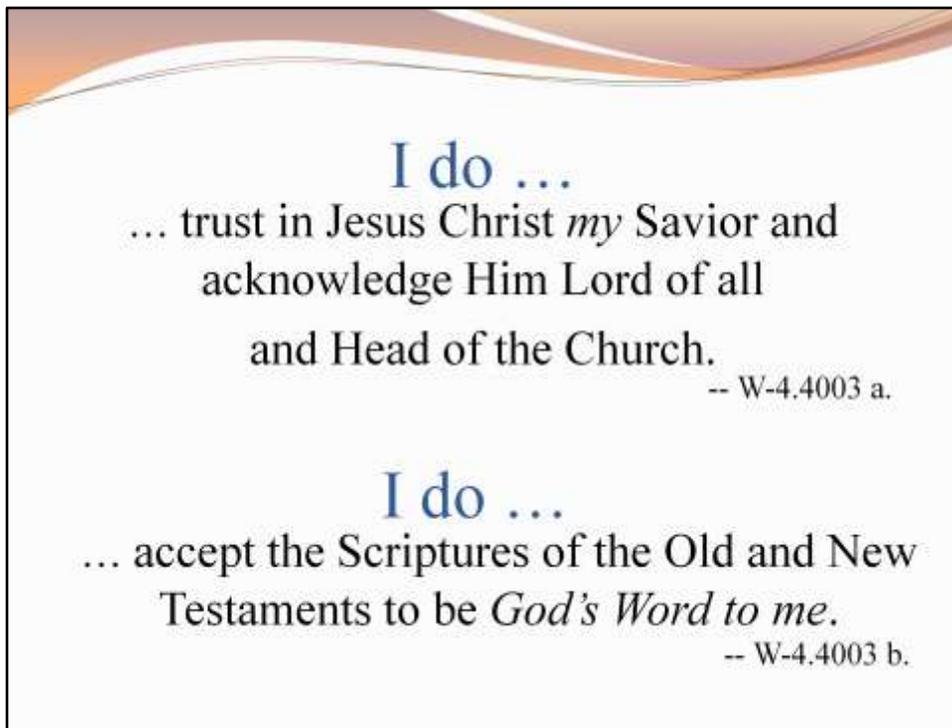
– as we lead His people and His church

– and in our own private and public lives.

It turns out, these vows are the heart of our responsibilities for responding to the challenge that the new Form of Government presents to sessions in the PCUSA, today

...

So, lets stand and repeat them again -- in a slightly more personal format than when you took them before your congregation when you were or installed -- as a reminder of the seriousness of our business today.



As you can, please stand ... Lets say these together ...

Read slide

References:

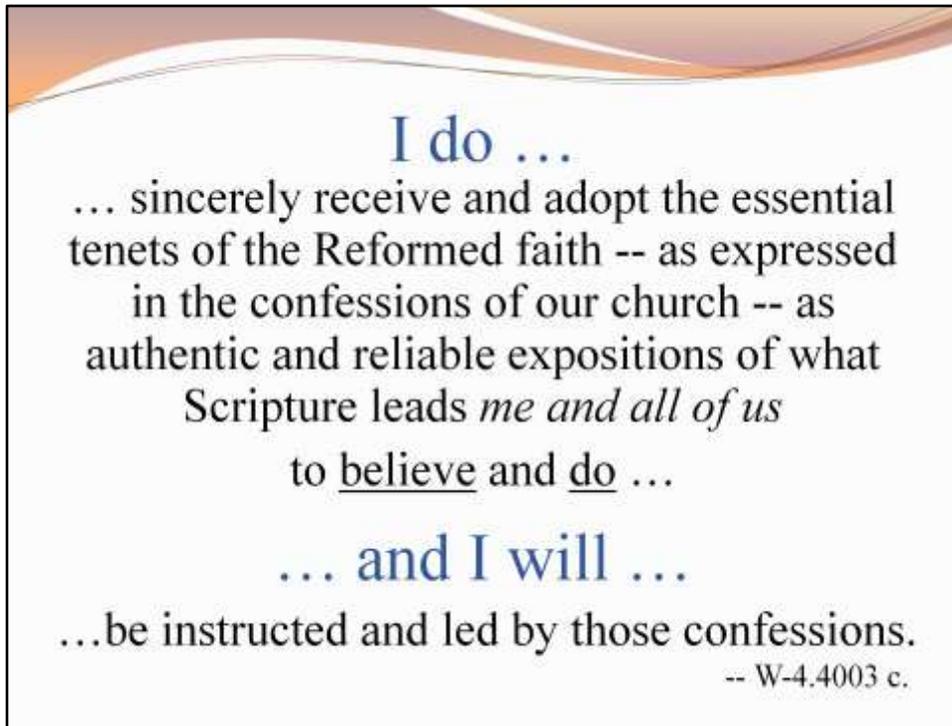
W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions:

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 be God's Word to you?

...



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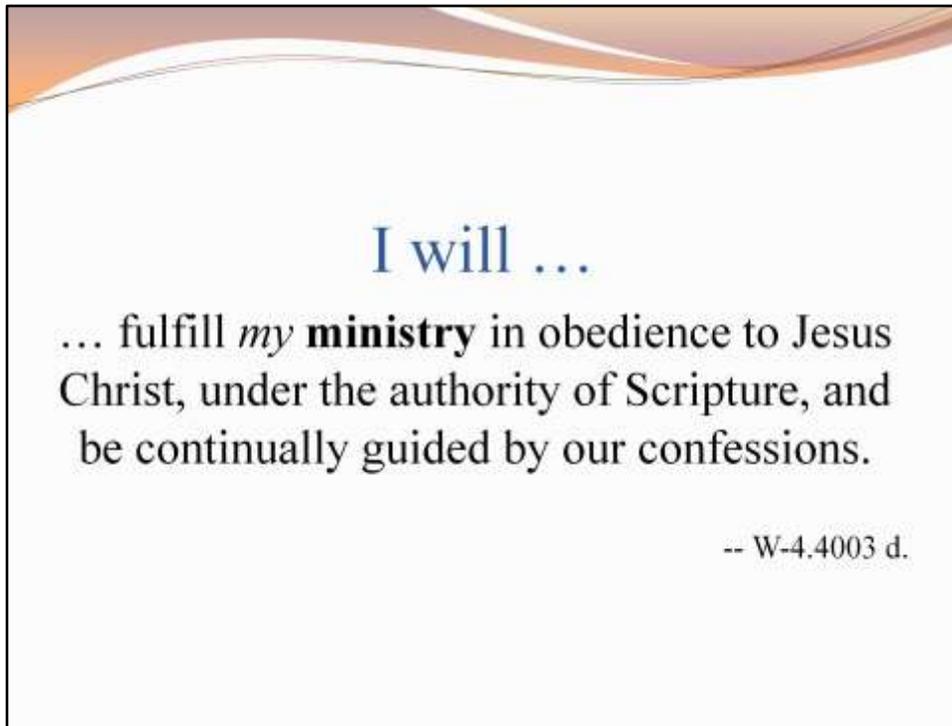
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References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

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?



... continuing ...

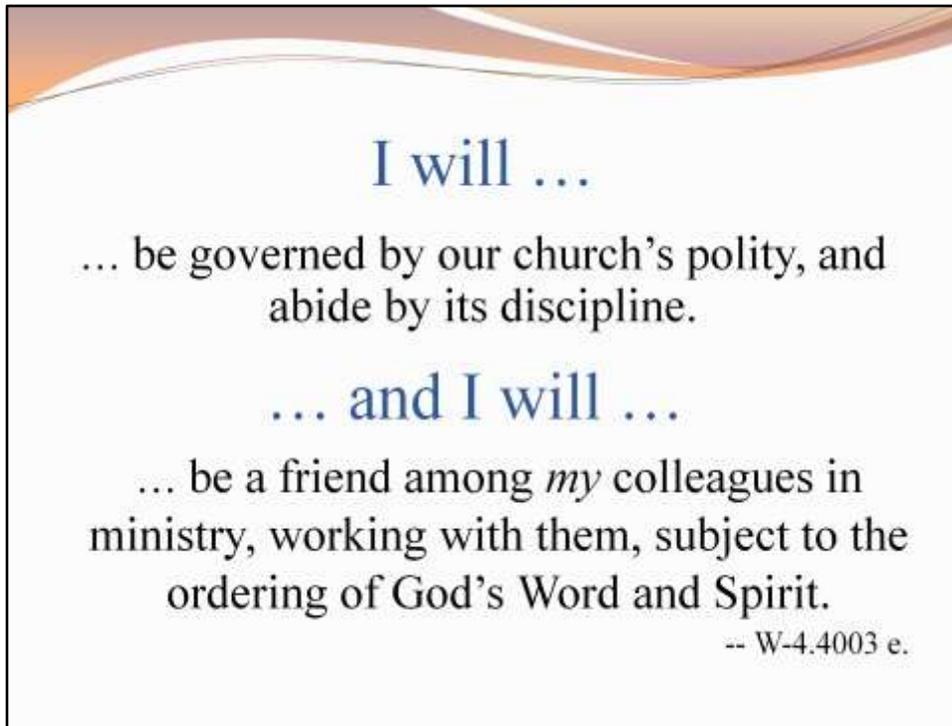
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References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

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



... continuing ...

Read slide

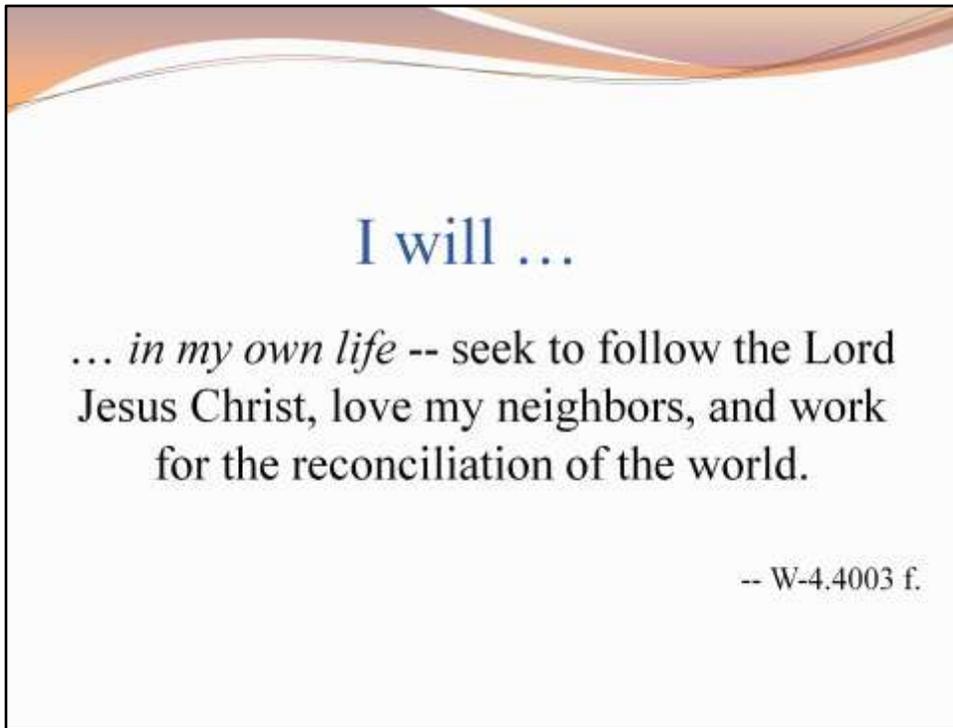
References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

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?



... continuing ...

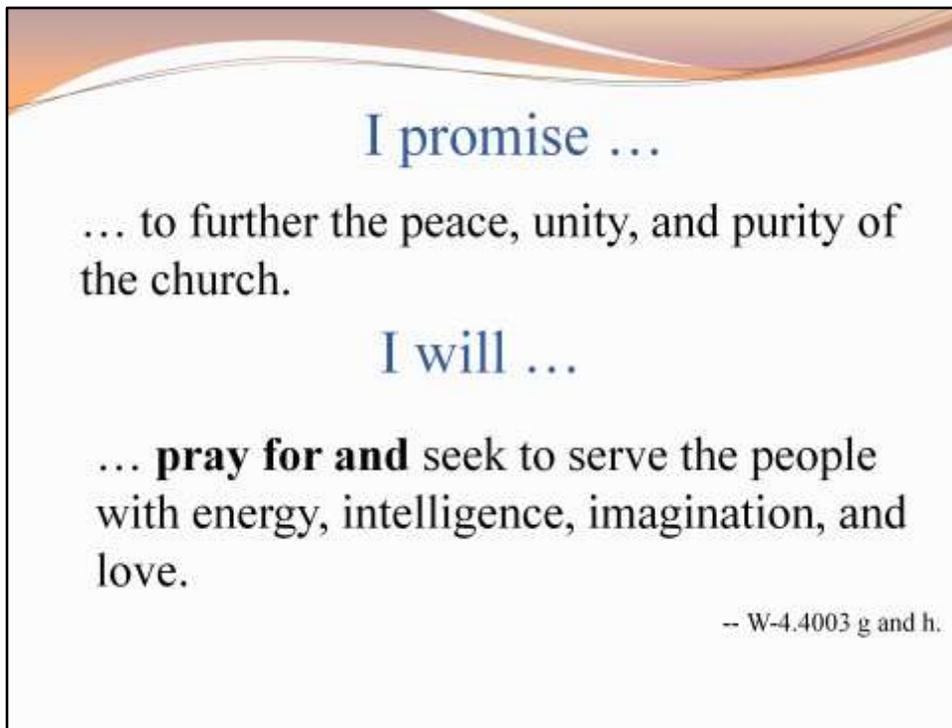
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References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

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?



... continuing ...

Read slide

References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

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 will ...

... be a faithful **ruling** elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service?

... and I will ...

... 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.

-- W-4.4003 1 (1).

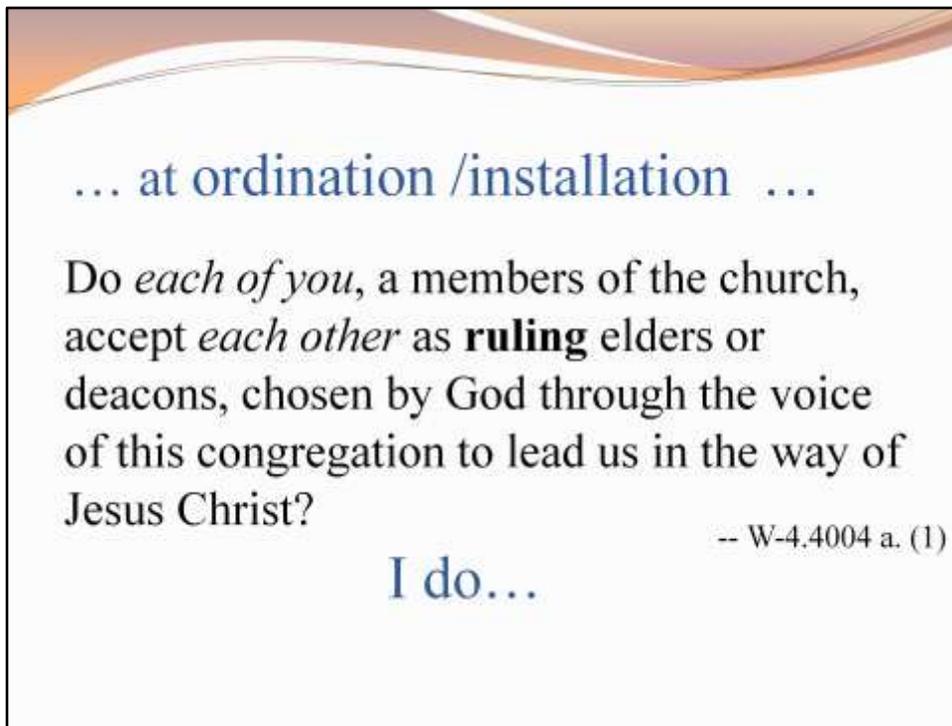
Ray and *Linda*, you do not say this vow.

The rest of us; however ... continuing ...

Read slide

Reference:

W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of **Ruling** Elders or Deacons Questions to Congregation (quoted above).



At the service of ordination and/or installation of **ruling elders** and deacons:

- a. The **ruling** elders-elect and deacons-elect having answered in the affirmative, a **ruling** elder shall stand with them before the congregation and shall ask the congregation to answer the following questions:

Will the clerk please read the question and the session please answer?

- (1) Do we, the members of the church, accept (your name is read) as **ruling** elders or deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?

References:

W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of **Ruling** Elders or Deacons Questions to Congregation (quoted above).

... at ordination /installation ...

Do *each of you* agree **to pray for each other**, to encourage *each other*, to respect *each other's* decisions, and to follow as they guide *you and the congregation*, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

-- W-4.4004 a. (2)

I do...

Will the clerk please read this question and the session answer?

(2) Do we agree **to pray for them**, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

References:

W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of **Ruling** Elders or Deacons Questions to Congregation (quoted above).

... at ordination /installation ...

“Lord God, bless our brothers and sisters here whom you and this congregation have called into this special ministry as **ruling elders** in this congregation. Bless each to each other – and to this congregation. In Jesus’ holy name, Amen.”

-- W-4.4004 a. (2)

The members of the church having answered these questions in the affirmative, those to be ordained shall kneel, if able, for prayer and the laying on of hands by the session. Those previously ordained ordinarily shall stand, along with the congregation, if able, for the prayer of installation. The session may invite other **ruling elders** and **teaching elders** to participate in the laying on of hands.

Please lay your hands on each other.

“Lord God, bless our brothers and sisters here whom you and this congregation have called into this special ministry as **Ruling Elders** in this congregation. Bless each to each other – and to this congregation. In Jesus’ holy name, Amen.”

References:

W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of **Ruling Elders** or Deacons Questions to Congregation (quoted above).

... at ordination /installation ...

You are now **ruling** elders and deacons in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

-- W-4.4004 c.

The moderator shall say to those who have thus been ordained and installed:

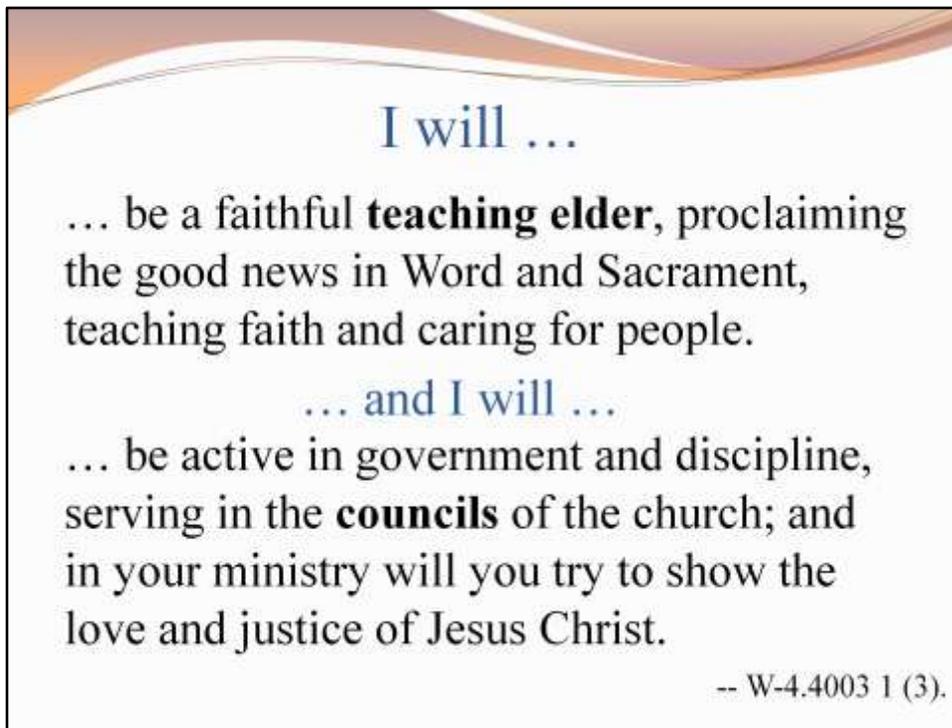
Ray will you please read ...

You are now **ruling** elders and deacons in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

Please be seated ... not you, **Ray**.

References:

W-4.4004 Ordination or Installation of **Ruling** Elders or Deacons Questions to Congregation (quoted above).



... and finally, having made the same first ten vows as the elders and the deacons, ...

Ray and Linda, would you please read the eleventh vow that **teaching elders** make ...

Read slide

References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons

The moderator of the governing body of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to stand before the body of membership and to answer the following questions: ...

i. (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?

..upon being ordained:

Ray Schroeder and Linda Kelly, you are *each* now ordained a **teaching elder** in the church of Jesus Christ. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

-- W-4.4005 a.

At the services of ordination of **Ray** and **Linda** to the **ministry** of the Word and Sacrament ... These candidates, having answered the questions in the affirmative, shall kneel, if able, [... you don't have to kneel, **Ray** or **Linda** – you are already ordained ...] and the presbytery, or presbytery commission, shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands, ordain the candidate to the **ministry** of the Word and Sacrament.

The member presiding shall then say:

(Ray Schroeder and Linda Kelly), you are now ordained a **teaching elder** in the church of Jesus Christ. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

Every Christian is called by God to serve the church; however, God calls some persons to serve the church in particular and specific ways in congregations. When the congregation, the presbytery, and the **teaching elder** (or candidate) have all concurred in a call to a permanent or designated pastoral position, the presbytery shall complete the call process by organizing and conducting the service of installation. Installation is an act of the presbytery establishing the pastoral relationship.

On the day designated for the installation, the presbytery or commission appointed for this purpose shall convene and shall call the congregation gathered to worship. The service shall have the same focus and form as the service of ordination and the

person being installed shall be asked to answer the questions asked at the time of ordination.

References for the following slides ...

W-4.4005 Ordination of **Teaching Elder** and W-4.4006 Installation of **Teaching Elder**, generally quoted, but tailored to this congregation and session.

... upon being installed ...

Do *each of us*, as members and leaders of the church, accept ***Ray Schroeder and Linda Kelly*** as *our* pastors, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide you personally and all of us together as a session and as a congregation in the way of Jesus Christ?

-- W-4.4005 b. (1)

I do ...

b. Following the affirmative answers to the questions asked of the person being installed, a **ruling** elder shall face the congregation along with the pastor-elect and shall ask them to answer the following questions:

Will the clerk please stand here with **Ray** and **Linda** and read the next four questions and will the session please answer?

(1) Do we, the members of the church, accept (**Ray Schroeder** and **Linda Kelly**) as our pastors, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ?

... upon being installed ...

Do *each of us* agree **to pray for them**, to encourage him, to respect *their* decisions, and to follow as *they* guide *each and all of us*, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

-- W-4.4005 b. (2)

I do ...

Will the clerk please read the question and the session answer?

(2) Do we agree **to pray for them**, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

... upon being installed ...

Do *each of us* promise to pay *them* fairly and provide for *their* welfare as *they* work among us; to stand by *them* in trouble and share *their* joys? Will *each of us* listen to the word *they* preach, welcome *their* pastoral care, and honor *their* authority as *they* seek to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord? I do ... and I will. -- W-4.4005 b. (3)

Will the clerk please read these questions and the session answer?

(3) Do we promise to pay them fairly and provide for their welfare as they works among us; to stand by him in trouble and share his joys?

Will we listen to the word they preach, welcome their pastoral care, and honor their authority as they seek to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?

... upon being installed ...

“Lord God, bless our brother and sister, **Ray Schroder and Linda Kelly**, whom you and this congregation have called into this special ministry as **teaching elders** in this congregation. Bless *them* to the congregation and to its leadership – and them to **Ray and Linda**. In Jesus’ Holy Name, Amen.”

– W-4,4005 c.

c. The [leaders and] members of the congregation having answered these questions in the affirmative, [presbytery – elder commissioners - shall lay on their hands and pray].

Will the elder commissioners to presbytery please lay hands on **Ray** and **Linda**. Elder Arthur Ritter, the Moderator of Presbytery prays:

“Lord God, bless our brother **Ray Schroder** and our sister, **Linda Kelly** whom you and this congregation have called into this special ministry as **teaching elders** in this congregation. Bless them to the congregation and to its leadership – and them to **Ray and Linda**. In Jesus’ holy name, Amen.”

... upon being installed ...

Ray Schroeder and Linda Kelly, you are now **teaching elders** in and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

-- W-4.4005 d. (2)

d. The member presiding shall then say:

(1) (For one being ordained and installed) ... you are now a **teaching elder** in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

(2) (For a **teaching elder** previously ordained) ***Ray Schroeder*** and ***Linda Kelly***, you are now **teaching elders** in and for this congregation. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.

Thank you and please be seated.

Are we ready now to look further into the new Book of Order?

Now, let's be honest ...

- Who among you has a copy of the **2011 – 2013 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America?**

Now, let's be honest ...

Who among you has a copy of the **2011 – 2013 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America?**

Now, let's be honest ...

- Who among you has a copy of the **2011 – 2013 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America?**
- Who among you have read it?

Who among you have read it?

Now, let's be honest ...

- Who among you has a copy of the **2011 – 2013 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America?**
- Who among you have read it?
- Who among you are just going to rely on this class for you **everything you need** to be an effective session member at Mt View Presbyterian church ?

Who among you are just going to rely on this class for you **everything you need** to be an effective session member at Mt View Presbyterian church ?

Good answer! But, maybe only as a start...

Well, lets look specifically at the topic of polity – and how we got to where we are today ...

The topic today, is ...*polity*

- ... So, what is polity?
- How did we get here?
- Where are we now?
- What do we do with it?

The topic today, is ...*polity* –

You may already have at least these questions!

Why should we study this stuff?

- So we can –
 - ... lead our church appropriately,
 - ... act creatively, responsibly, and accountably,
 - ... exploit the gifts God has given us in our tasks,
 - ... manage our participation and not burn out,
 - ... understand and grow in God's calling,
 - ... operate within God's will,
- to **His glory** in everything we do.

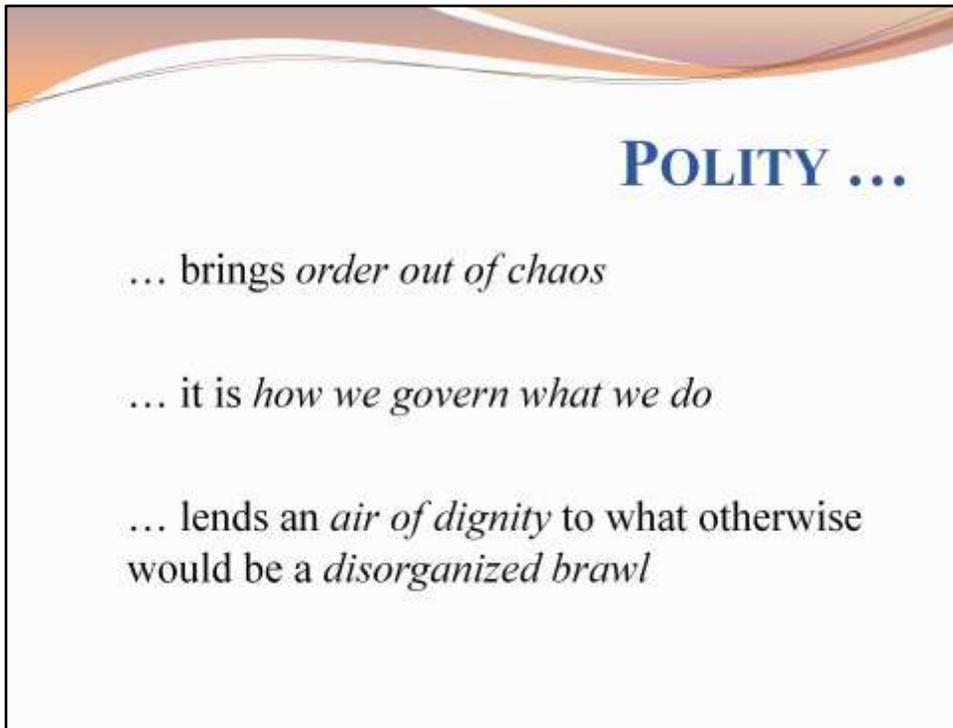
Bottom line: we to study this stuff - to do our work as Session!

We must know:

- what our congregation is supposed to be – and be doing and how it should be doing it
 - so we can lead it appropriately to that end,
- what freedom of action / responsibility and accountability for action we have
 - so we can ability to operate within that freedom -- with creativity, responsibility, and accountability,
- how our specific ordered ministry is defined
 - so we can act within those roles exploiting the gifts, skills, and talents God gives us for our tasks,
- how and where we may be tasked to operate in our elected capacity
 - so we can assess and manage the practical availability we need to fulfill their tasking, - and not burn-out,
- what our individual calling is to these ordered ministries – and how to foster, illuminate, and develop that calling

- so we can mutually encourage our growth and maturation in faith and service,
- ... and how to discern the will of God in the situations He presents
 - so we can lead our congregation and personally act within His will.

A strong understanding of our polity can help us with all of these.



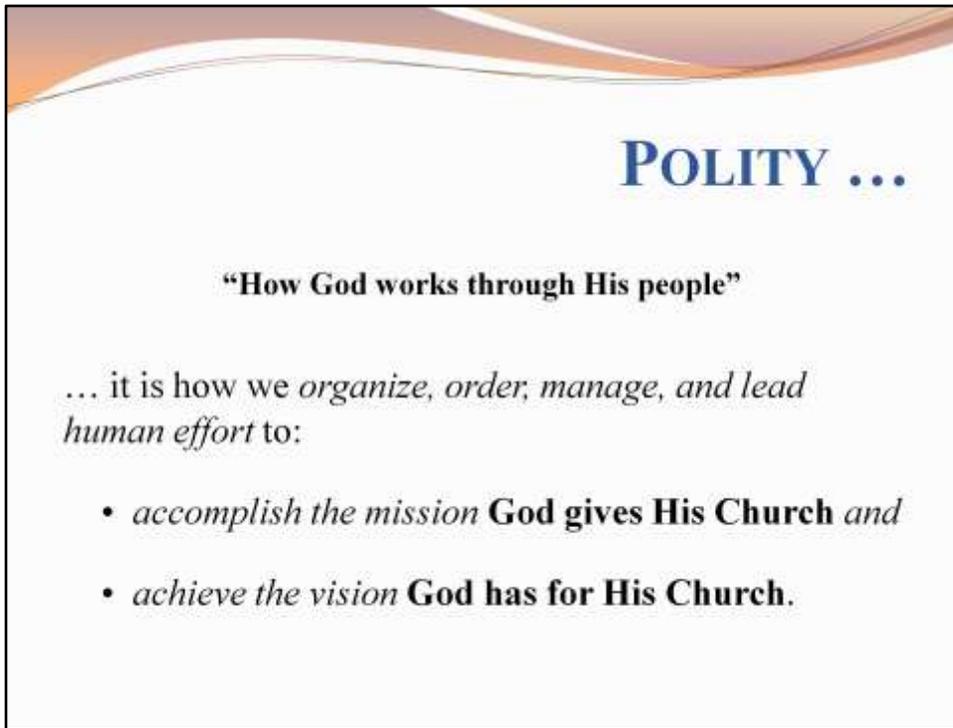
First off, what is this **polity** thing? -- and -- What is the role of polity in the life of the Church?

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

Pause to read the slide

The first two are pretty good *conceptual* definitions ...

The last one is how the US Army describes its field artillery!



These may be more precise definitions of “polity” ...

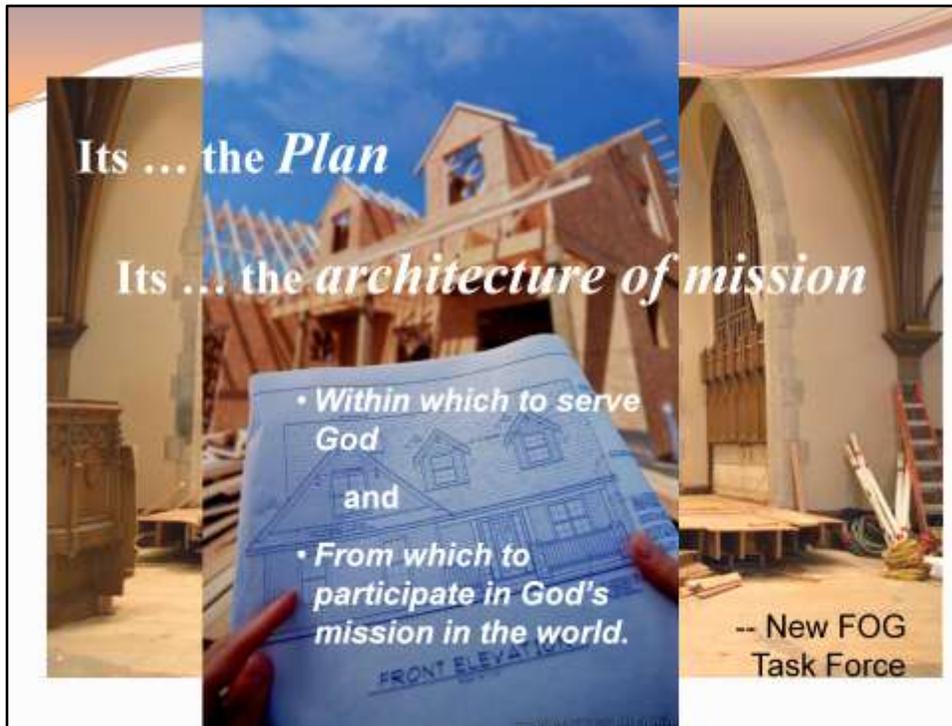
Pause to read the slide – and let these words *sink in*

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 (which we will examine in a minute) look at this term ...



The New Form Of Government Task Force defined **polity** for us with this analogy:

- **Polity** is a **plan** - for building an organization ...
 - In which to serve God
 - and
 - From – or – through which to participate in God's mission in the world.

It is, if you will, a **blueprint** – or the **architecture** – of both the church's organization and its operation.

Just as a blueprint is a plan for building a house in which to live and work ...

- **Polity** is the *architecture of mission*.



*Describes the building
- but - leaves the
interior design
...to the occupants*

Polity should mandate:

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



... to stretch this analogy (probably to its limit), **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. Making those decisions is what helps turn a **house into a home**, a **church organization into a faith community**.

To put it succinctly, polity should mandate –

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

Where is this all written down?



So – where is our polity, today, 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 defines itself to be of two parts.

Quick reference:

F-3.04 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A) DEFINED

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consists of ***The Book of Confessions*** and the ***Book of Order***.

The Book of Confessions includes:

The Nicene Creed

The Apostles’ Creed

The Scots Confession
The Heidelberg Catechism
The Second Helvetic Confession
The Westminster Confession of Faith
The Westminster Shorter Catechism
The Westminster Larger Catechism
The Theological Declaration of Barmen
The Confession of 1967
A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The *Book of Order* now includes:
The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
The Form of Government
The Directory for Worship
The Rules of Discipline

Polity resolves sticky issues ...

- Who replaces Judas Iscariot among the Apostles?
 - Acts 1:12-26
 - The congregation - from within its own - elects its general leadership.
- How do we divide the ministry load?
 - Acts 6:1-7
 - The congregation - from within its own - elects its leadership in serving ministries.

We believe Jesus to be the head of the church, while He was on this earth – and now!

While he was on earth in human form, He pretty much ran the whole show until His ascension – which we will commemorate toward the end of Eastertide on Ascension Day – this year, Thursday, May 17th.

But, soon after His death, His earthly, direct leadership fell to others. In fact, the transition began even before His ascension. As we read in Acts 1

³ After His suffering, [Jesus] presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ⁶ Then they gathered around Him and asked Him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Then, as we see here in Acts 1, there was a scriptural polity crisis – and it was recognized by Peter.

Would you have recognized it?

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

¹⁸ (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰ “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’
and,
‘May another take his place of leadership.’

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must

become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

.. And later ...

The Choosing of the Seven Acts 6:1-7

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said,

“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” ⁵

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Polity re-sizes with the church ...

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ...

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ **Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,** ¹⁰ **Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome** ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); **Cretans and Arabs** — we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ...

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

You remember the birthday of the church – don't you? It happened at the feast of Pentecost. We see its essential elements on the slide; but ...

Please read Acts 2 out loud ... yep, all of it.

Go get your Bible (or Google: Acts 2)!

I'd say that Peter, a graduate of the three-year immersion course at the Jesus Seminary, did a pretty good job preaching that day!

What did those **3000** do with the message they heard on that day from Peter?

Let's see what happened ...

... and they all went home.



Well, those **Parthians, Medes and Elamites**; residents of **Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt** and the parts of **Libya** near **Cyrene**; visitors from **Rome** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); **Cretans** and **Arabs** – who had been in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost – and had been in the crowd when Peter had preached ... all went home

... and told their neighbors about the good news (this 'Gospel') they had heard in Jerusalem!

... and, as with them, the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of those who heard the good news from them

... and there were more believers – who gathered into congregations -- wherever the Word was heard.

(Have you shared the Good News you hear from the pulpit of your church each Sunday with your neighbors who weren't in church with you to hear it?)

In fact, we know that throughout the rest of the New Testament, we see that whenever and wherever that great traveling evangelist, the Apostle Paul, went to synagogues all across the known world to preach "Christ and him crucified," he found Christian churches already existing in them – every where he went!

... “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian”

- The church resolved disputes with councils – of presbyters:
 - Dispute arose
 - Resolution sought from the elders of the whole church
 - Atmosphere of welcome
 - Elders met to consider the question
 - Question debated, scripture applied, decision made
 - Decision recorded, transmitted, delivered in love, and accepted

And 13 chapters after Peter preached at Pentecost in Jerusalem - when controversy arose in Antioch over the “How a Gentile Becomes a Christian” process -- *the* crucial issue for the church arose in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. And when it became a stumbling block for this ministry to the Gentiles, the Antioch congregation sent Paul and Barnabas to the elders of the larger church – who gathered in Jerusalem to resolve the dispute: because this matter affected all of the dispersed congregations of the church – not just the one in Antioch.

Lets look at the polity of what happened:

Please open your Bible (or another browser window in your computer) 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* (because it is not recorded here) that Paul and Barnabas first went privately to these “Judaizers*” to remonstrate and correct them and then, 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. Remember, Paul and Barnabas were not among the original disciples and did not hear Jesus teaching on disputes – his teacher, Ananias, may not have covered it. Matthew's Gospel where it is recorded was written after this first council met. Paul was well schooled in Jewish law pertaining to the required number of witnesses; however. People and councils may err – it happens. (See Matthew 18:15-20** for the process that Jesus teaches.)]

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' were sent to this early 'council' – to resolve the dispute.]

4 When they came to Jerusalem, **they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders**, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

[note the way these traveling and troubled presbyters were treated]

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."

6 **The apostles and elders met to consider this question**

[note who heard the dispute – the assembled presbyters (both 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**

[they must have been Presbyterians – this was all done 'decently and in order'] ...

13 **When they finished, ... James**

[the apparent 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).”

[assigning the Stated Clerk’s role - 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 and send them**

[Judas and Silas - the first administrative commission of the assembly] ...

and ²³ with them they sent the (the letter that recorded the specific decision) ...

[Here are the commission’s 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.

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 [Catholics](#) and [Orthodox](#) 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. Some scholars dispute that Galatians 2 is about the *Council of Jerusalem* (notably because Galatians 2 describes a private meeting) while other scholars dispute the [historical reliability of the Acts of the Apostles](#). 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.

*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**.

The New Testament –

... a sharing of the **Good News**
and **polity** “best practices”

On Polity -

- Jesus teaching on dispute resolution
- Jesus teaching on prayer and worship
- Apostles’ letters on governance, etc.

So we can read the New Testament (and the old testament too) as a

- sharing of the **Gospel**
- and of **polity**.

The Church

*“Ecclesia reformata,
semper reformanda
secundum verbum Dei”
(the Church reformed,
always being reformed
according to God’s word)*

Since these early Jerusalem Councils, the Church developed a bit over time. The common understanding of the things the original believers had been told about God’s Word began to diverge -- leading the church in several ways ...

In fact, with the emergent issues and their resolutions,

- sometimes, the church emerged unified and strengthened –
- but sometimes, the church saw splits over unresolved issues and
- sometimes (as detailed on the last chart, showing the Presbyterian witness in America) re-joins when they eventually resolved ... or just went away.

And so there we are – from the first century’s presbyters and the Jerusalem Councils - to Presbyterianism in America today.

Presbyterians came to America with

- their Bibles – and
- their polity heritage

... which was grounded in Calvin's Geneva experience, their national church history in Knox's Scotland, and the Westminster Confession.

But, our polity didn't freeze with these once they were here.



Scholars observe that:

- Presbyterians in America have had a great deal of opportunity to re-invent how they govern their church.
- Presbyterians (and especially, Presbyters) in America have always owned, operated, and/or managed American industry – or schooled with those who do.
- Presbyterians – because of the strangeness of our polity -- have always had an intense desire for legitimization in the eyes of the ambient culture.

... if we want to understand our polity, the question becomes: what has *influenced the development of the polity of God's Church On Earth – in America?*

The *Bible?* – or the *surrounding organizational culture?*

Scholars observe that this answer is a toss-up!

Because of the training of our presbyters – it should be no surprise that our modern polity was so heavily influenced by the corporate governance development of our

cultural surroundings. In short, by the mid- to late-1900s we pretty much reflected America's federal government, our state governments, and our large national corporations – having lent our polity to the emerging constitutional representative democracy in the late 1700s.

With a fully regulatory bureaucratic polity model, including its one-size-fits-all processes, firmly emplaced by 2010, the PCUSA Book of Order had swollen from the two pages it occupied in the minutes of the Synod adopting the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1729 -- to its full 495 pages – adding well over 300 amendments to the BOO since it was last re-written in 1983 on the occasion of the great northern strand / southern strand reunion. (see <http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/> - and the current *BOO*, Appendix B.)

Thus, the stage was set for a radical change to the “practices” part of our constitution: *The Book of Order*.

Time to change! Time to get back to basics! Time to let local counsels determine their own processes for “how” stuff gets done – and retain in the constitution only the standards of “what” needs to be done.

Of course, we find both God and the Devil – in the details...



I can appreciate that there may be some confusion here ... perhaps as with these characters from Saturday Night Live?

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

Absorb slide

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

“New FOG” -- Part 1 of 3

Came to the Presbyteries as ...

Shall the *Book of Order* be amended by striking out the text of Chapters I–XVIII of the current Form of Government (G-1.0000–G-18.0401) and inserting two documents,

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and a new Form of Government, to read as follows: ...

[Their text is in the study materials.]

FOG Task Force: 37/5/0	219 th GA: 468/204/6
Nevada Presbytery: 14/59/0	The Presbyteries: 90/81/2

This is the question that came to the Presbyteries for vote -- referred to them by the 219th General Assembly.

(pause to absorb the slide)

Aside from the decade-long history of discussions, drafts, comment, and studies leading to the action (its authoring task force having been formed by the 217th GA in 2006), the main points are:

- The revisions do not change the constitutional standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) -- rather, they return the Form of Government to its original intent — a *constitution* rather than a *manual of operations*.
- The new Form of Government spells out the constitutional framework for government of this denomination as it seeks to respond to God’s call to life in mission.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution commented that newFOG represents a significant shift in the way the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would relate to its Constitution in at least two ways:

- First, it envisions a polity that is more missional in nature.

The Church is seen purposed to bear witness and participate in God's work in the world – and that mission takes place in particular contexts and in the life of congregations. Its focus is on supporting the work of the congregation. As understood in this polity, the work of the church at all levels is organized around the classical Reformed marks of the Church:

- that the Word of God is proclaimed,
 - the sacraments are rightly administered, and
 - the covenant community is nurtured through ecclesiastical discipline.
- Second, it offers less regulation than the existing Form of Government.
 - ... it eliminates much of the existing process detail of governing bodies – a positive aspect which may be freedom for local governing bodies to establish policies and procedures for their work that best suit the needs of their particular contexts.
 - On the other hand, many Presbyterians may be puzzled or troubled by the new silence in the FOG concerning issues it formerly addressed. (How many of you picked out that we would no longer “be able to just look it up” to find out how *to church* – and, instead, we would have to really know it and make it our own?)

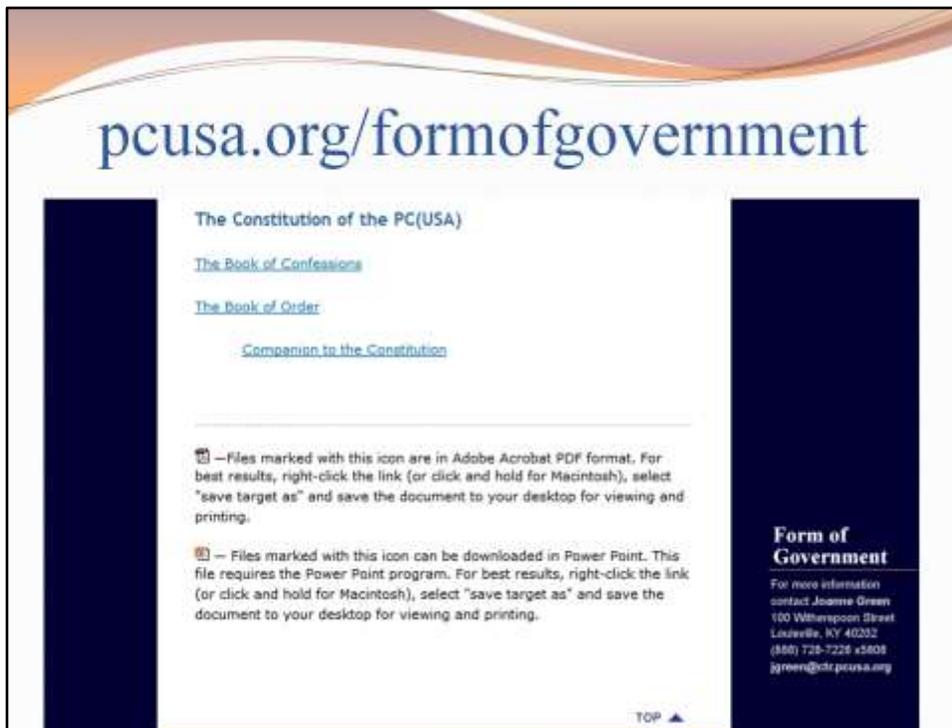
It was passed by the presbyteries, as shown – along with 15 other amendments to the substantive content of the *BOO*.

Let's have a look ...



But first, please write down this website universal resource locator (URL).

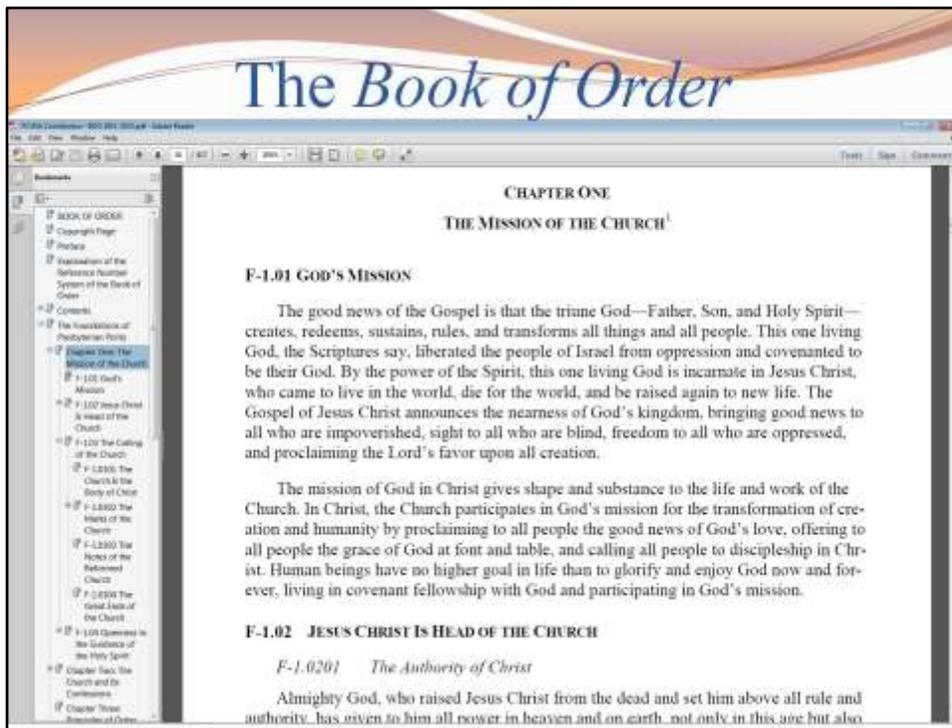
This page, on our denominational website, pcusa.org, is the location of some very helpful tools for presbyters and councils.



Scroll to the bottom and find our constitution – both the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order* – in downloadable, PDF formats – which means that you can keep them on your computer – and search them electronically.

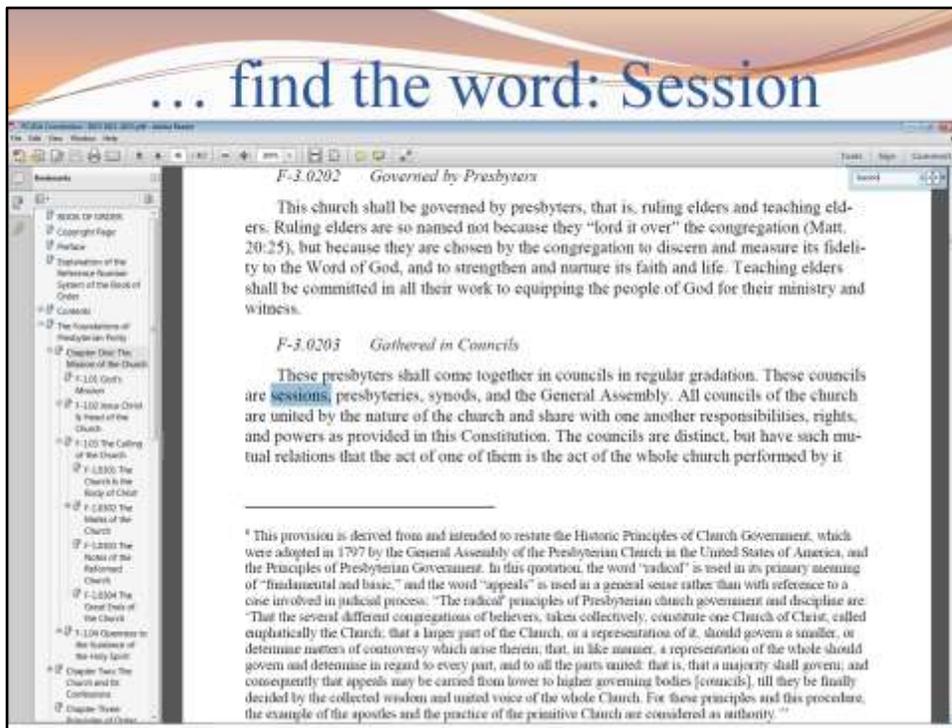
I have these both on my netbook computer – and I don't leave home without it!

Also find the *Companion to the Constitution* which provides a plethora of sample documents your council may be interested in. Sadly, it has not yet been updated to the current *Book of Order* (it was written to accompany the 2007 version), but it can be very useful if used with care – and with two more documents ...



... and here is how it looks!

You can open the organizational side-bar on the left, click on a chapter or even subchapter heading – and you are there!



Or you can key Cntrl-F to get this box in the upper right to search for a word ... lets say, Session ... and hit enter to find the word in each of its uses in the *BOO*.

... and here is how that looks!

Keep hitting “Enter” and keep finding the word the next place it appears!



Scroll back up a bit to find two maps – these downloadable and electronically searchable PDFs “map” the current Book of Order into the previous Book, paragraph by paragraph – and *vice versa*:

[Comparison chart of the previous Form of Government to the current Foundations & Form of Government.](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-chart-former-form-government-new-founda/) (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-chart-former-form-government-new-founda/>)

[Comparison chart of the current Foundations and Form of Government to the previous Form of Government.](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-chart-new-foundations-and-form-governme/) (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/comparison-chart-new-foundations-and-form-governme/>)

Again, I have them on my netbook. All presbyters should have this minimum toolset ready for their immediate use.

Well, lets dive into a purposed overview – focused on what we are called to do, what we are called to be, and what guidance we have in our new Fog to help us on our way. We will select parts to this purpose – and leave the other parts for further study at your own leisure

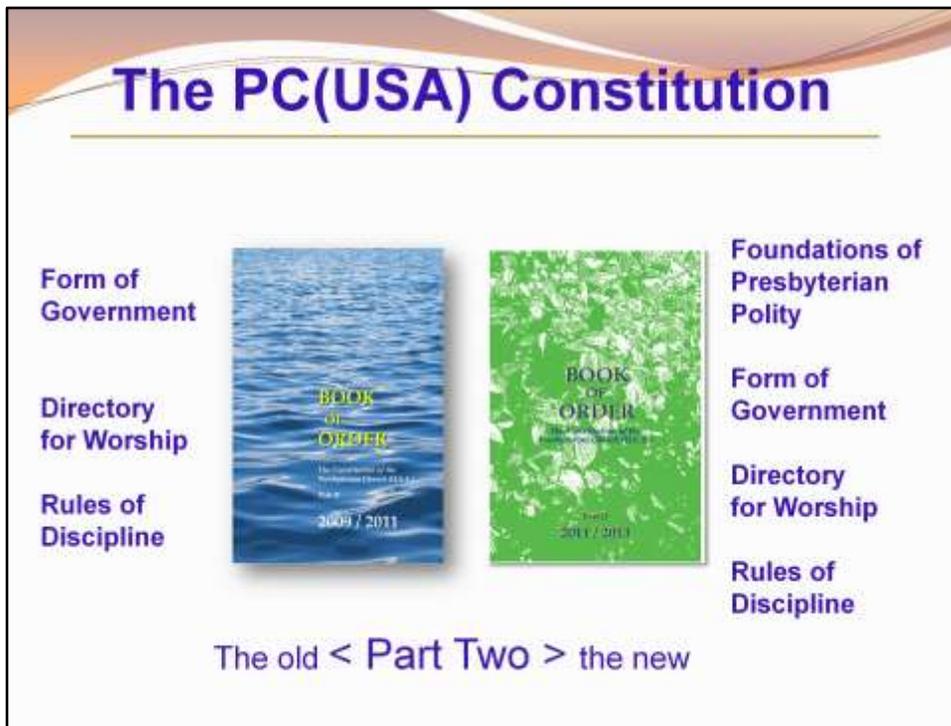
Ready? Here we go -- first, with the new **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** ...

Old – to new / new to old	
<p>F-1.01 God's Mission</p> <p>The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people. This one living God, the Scriptures say, liberated the people of Israel from oppression and covenanted to be their God. By the power of the Spirit, this one living God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to live in the world, die for the world, and be raised again to new life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ announces the nearness of God's kingdom, bringing good news to all who are impoverished, sight to all who are blind, freedom to all who are oppressed, and proclaiming the Lord's favor upon all creation.</p> <p>The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God's mission.</p>	<p>G-3.0100 Form</p> <p>The mission of the Church is given form by God's activity in the world as told in the Bible and understood by faith.</p> <p>G-3.0101 God's Activity</p> <p>G-3.0101a. God's Creation and Community</p> <p>God created the heavens and the earth and made human beings in God's image, charging them to care for all that lives; God made men and women to live in community, responding to their Creator with grateful obedience. Even when the human race broke community with its Maker and with one another, God did not forsake it, but out of grace chose one family for the sake of all, to be pilgrims of promise, God's own Israel.</p> <p>G-3.0101b. God's Covenant</p> <p>God liberated the people of Israel from oppression; God covenanted with Israel to be their God and they to be God's people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord; God confronted Israel with the responsibilities of this covenant, judging the people for their unfaithfulness while sustaining them by divine grace.</p>
<p>F-1.02 Jesus Christ Is Head of the Church</p>	<p>G-1.0100 1. The Head of the Church</p>
<p>F-1.0201 The Authority of Christ</p>	<p>G-1.0100a. Christ is Head of the Church</p>

... and here is how these maps look!

This one happens to be the new-to-old map.

OK – now to the new *Book of Order*



As you know, our previous, 495 page *Book of Order* (on the left) had three parts:

The **Form of Government**, which described the essential tenants of our faith (in the first four chapters) ... and our church's system of governance: the interrelationships, standards by which we measure our ministries, the processes, and the functions of our church (in the remaining fourteen chapters). All together, this part in 162 of the BOO's 495 pages, was entirely replaced by the 71 pages of what we term 'NewFOG.'

The **Directory for Worship**, which provides required standards and suggested process aspects of our worship life (in its seven Chapters) – the next 78 pages of the 495, none of which were affected by the 'NewFOG.'

And the **Rules of Discipline**, which outlines the standards and process for resolving disputes within the life of our church (in its fourteen Chapters and seven Appendices) – the next 62 pages of the 495, again, none of which were affected by the "New FOG."

It also contained 153 pages of introduction, table of contents, section headings, end notes (i.e., the scriptural references and other notes footnoted in the text of the FOG, the DOW, and the ROD), six topical appendices, and the presbyter's (and seminarian's) best friend – the exhaustive indexes to the *BOO* which are the last 70 pages of the *Book*. Of course, these were also affected by 'NewFOG.'

So, the “NewFOG’ amendment replaced only the previous, 18 chapter **Form of Government** in the *Book of Order* - shown on the left, with two books, cutting the previous FOG’s chapter count in half and reducing its page count by just over 56%.

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

- A brand-new, 11 page, three chapter re-statement of the 13 pages that had held the first 4 chapters in our previous FOG, titled the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** ,
- 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 Confessions*. (This book was further modified in their substance by 8 of the other 15 amendments voted by the presbyteries last summer.),
- The traditional, **Directory for Worship** - unchanged by newFOG – but substantively modified in three places by one of the 15 amendments,
- The traditional, **Rules of Discipline** - unchanged by newFOG – but also substantively modified by 6 of the 15 amendments voted by the presbyteries last summer,
- ... and those 153 wonderful pages of introduction, table of contents, section headings, end notes, the six topical appendices, and our best friend – the exhaustive 70 pages of indexes to the *BOO* which remain and were revised to accommodate the extensive newFOG reorganization.

Let’s turn our attention to today’s *Book of Order* – slimmed down by the removed procedural material to a svelte 417 pages.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

- God's mission in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church
- "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic"
- Marks/Notes of the true, Reformed Church
- Great Ends of the Church
- Commitment to unity in diversity

The **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity** reduces the previous **Form of Government's** first four chapters with a 15% net content reduction, made *primarily* through re-expression of the historic and fundamental concepts of our polity.

The content looks like confessional / theology stuff, because it is -- the scriptural basis for ecclesiastical polity / the expression of God's direction on how to "church."

Remember, we noted that we can read the New Testament (and the old testament too) as a sharing of the Gospel – and of polity.

Chapter One is about the Mission of the Church, and deals with our core theological commitments. It draws heavily on the *concepts* in Chapters 1, Preliminary Principles, 3, The Church and Its Mission, and 4, The Church and Its Unity, of our previous Form of Government, generally re-writing and re-ordering the *text* of these three chapters.

The chapter – indeed, the entire polity of the church – begins with the confession that the Triune God is engaged through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in a mission of creation, redemption, and transformation of lives, societies, and the whole of creation. The Church, created by God's mission in the world, exists to bear witness to and to participate in that mission. We affirm that Jesus Christ is the only Lord and head of the Church. This chapter then makes four statements about the Church that echo our values.

The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity understands the Church...

1. to be the **body of Christ**, and a community called to faith, hope, love, and witness
2. to be “**one, holy, catholic, and apostolic**” – the marks of the Church from the Nicene Creed
3. to the Notes of the true Church from the Scots Confession
 - proclaim to all people the good news through **proclamation of the Word**,
 - sharing with all people the grace of God through **administration of the sacraments**, and
 - calling all people to a **common life of discipleship through ecclesiastical discipline**

[These are important later in the Form of Government Chapter 3, where they provide the framework for discussing the responsibilities of the four councils of the church.]
4. to work toward the six "**great ends**" or *purposes of the church* (as they are termed in this chapter).

The final section of this chapter focuses on the Church’s openness to God's Spirit as it seeks constant reformation, broader ecumenicity, and greater commitment to unity and diversity.

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH

- *F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ*

The Church is to be a **community of**

Faith

Hope

Love

Witness

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH

F-1.0301 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.

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH ...

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church

... presence of the true
Church wherever:

- the Word of God is truly preached and heard,
- the Sacraments are rightly administered, and
- ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church

(See The Scots Confession, Ch. XVIII (The Book of Confessions, 3.18))

Where Christ is, there is the true Church.

Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever:

- the Word of God is truly preached and heard,
- the Sacraments are rightly administered, and
- ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH ...

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church

... presence of the true
Church wherever:

- the Word of God is truly preached and heard,
- the Sacraments are rightly administered, and
- ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

... faithful to the mission
of Christ as it:

- *Proclaims and hears the Word of God,*
- *Administers and receives the Sacraments,*
- *Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ,*

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church

(See The Scots Confession, Ch. XVIII (The Book of Confessions, 3.18))

In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, the Church is faithful to the mission of Christ as it:

Proclaims and hears the Word of God,

responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and inviting all people to participate in that new creation;

Administers and receives the Sacraments,

welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ, bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection, anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ,

living in the strength of God's promise and giving itself in service to God's mission.

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH ...

F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church

The **Great Ends of the Church** are:

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- the maintenance of divine worship;
- the preservation of the truth;
- the promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the Church are:

the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;

the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;

the maintenance of divine worship;

the preservation of the truth;

the promotion of social righteousness; and

the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

(This statement of the Great Ends of the Church, slightly edited in the Foundations, came from the United Presbyterian Church of North America, which united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1958. The statement was then made a part of the Constitution of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as the united body was called. This now classic statement was adopted before that denominational uniting, by the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1910, following various actions between 1904 and 1910 looking

forward to the revision of the church's Constitution.)

Chapter 1: The Mission of the Church

F-1.03 THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH ...

F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity

- The unity of believers -- rich diversity of ... membership.
- ... God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.
- There is ... no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person.
- ... full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership.
- No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27–29).

- The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership.
- In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.

(factors which, after all, are irrelevant to a person’s salvation and faith in Christ – right?)

- There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person (on these bases).

(Thanks to our Reformed understanding of humanity’s sad history and its tendency toward idolatry and tyranny – as we will note in **F-2.05** -- we now have to explicitly

state ...)

- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership.
- No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

Chapter 2: The Church and Its Confessions

- **Current G-2.0000, almost verbatim**
- **The confessions in the life of the PC(USA)**



Chapter Two is about the Church and Its Confessions – which underlay all of our practice – as the church faced difficult problems through its age.

It outlines our commitment to Christian, Protestant, and Reformed creeds and confessions, understanding them as efforts by the Church to articulate universal truths of the gospel from within particular historical moments.

It lists the confessions, details the Book, and tells us how to use them. Your worship committee should live in this chapter!

The contents of this chapter are almost word-for-word the contents of chapter two, The Church and Its Confessions, in the previous Form of Government.

We will dive into the theology in this book later today – here we will examine the polity in it as it is manifest in the *BOO*.

Suffice it here to say that ...

Chapter 2: The Church and Its Confessions

- **F-2.01 THE PURPOSE OF CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS**

... declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do.

They guide...summarize...direct...equip...strengthen

- **F-2.02 THE CONFESSIONS AS SUBORDINATE STANDARDS**

...subordinate to Jesus as scripture bears witness... not lightly drawn ... not ignored or dismissed.

F-2.01 THE PURPOSE OF CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states its faith and bears witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ in the creeds and confessions in *The Book of Confessions*. In these statements the church declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do. These statements identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Reformed Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church for its work of proclamation. They serve to strengthen personal commitment and the life and witness of the community of believers.

The creeds and confessions of this church arose in response to particular circumstances within the history of God's people. They claim the truth of the Gospel at those points where their authors perceived that truth to be at risk. They are the result of prayer, thought, and experience within a living tradition. They appeal to the universal truth of the Gospel while expressing that truth within the social and cultural assumptions of their time. They affirm a common faith tradition, while also from time to time standing in tension with each other.

F-2.02 THE CONFESSIONS AS SUBORDINATE STANDARDS

These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church, subject to

the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nonetheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed.

The church is prepared to instruct, counsel with, or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions. Moreover, the process for changing the confessions of the church is deliberately demanding, requiring a high degree of consensus across the church.

Yet the church, in obedience to Jesus Christ, is open to the reform of its standards of doctrine as well as of governance. The church affirms *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*, that is, “The church reformed, always to be reformed according to the Word of God” in the power of the Spirit.

F-2.03 THE CONFESSIONS AS STATEMENTS OF THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) witnesses to the faith of the Church catholic. The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic

Church in the recognition of canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of

Chapter 2: The Church and Its Confessions

THE CONFESSIONS AS STATEMENTS OF THE FAITH OF THE ...

- **... CHURCH CATHOLIC (F-2.03)**
... one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
- **... PROTESTANT REFORMATION (F-2.04)**
... grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone
- **... REFORMED TRADITION (F-2.05)**
... providence of God who in Christ and by the power of the Spirit creates, sustains, rules, and redeems

F-2.03 THE CONFESSIONS AS STATEMENTS OF THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) witnesses to the faith of the Church catholic. The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church in the recognition of canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds with their definitions of the mystery of the triune God and of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ.

F-2.04 THE CONFESSIONS AS STATEMENTS OF THE FAITH OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upholds the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation. The focus of these affirmations is God's grace in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. The Protestant watchwords—grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone—embody principles of understanding that continue to guide and motivate the people of God in the life of faith.

F-2.05 THE CONFESSIONS AS STATEMENTS OF THE FAITH OF THE REFORMED TRADITION

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed tradition. Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who in Christ and by the power of the Spirit creates,

sustains, rules, and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love.

Related to this central affirmation of God's sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:

- The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;
- Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;
- A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation; and
- The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny,

... which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

Chapter 3: Principles of Order and Government

- Historic Principles of Church Order (1789)
- Historic Principles of Church Government (1797)

Chapter Three gathers the familiar “Historic Principles of Church Government” (previously G-1.0400) and the “Principles of Presbyterian Government” (previously G-4.0301) in a single statement (F-3.02).

Again, though it draws heavily on the *concepts* in the previous Chapters 1, Preliminary Principles, and 4, The Church and Its Unity, of our previous Form of Government – it generally re-writes, condenses, and re-orders the *text* of these two chapters.

This new chapter also clarifies the relationship between the Foundations and the rest of the *Book of Order*, indicating that provisions of any part of the Constitution are to be interpreted in light of the whole Constitution – an historic and foundational concept of our practice also resident in our previous Form of Government.

F-3.01 HISTORIC PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH ORDER

(These principles – in pretty much the words of this text, date from the late 1700s when the first presbyteries joined together as a large synod and then as the general assembly, divided into several synods of presbyteries. Thus, the words “men” and “man’s” throughout this quotation from the eighteenth century should be understood as applying to all persons, regardless of gender. Likewise, the terms “officers” and “office” are preserved here as part of the historic language of the Principles -- elsewhere in the Form of Government the terms “ordered minister” and “ordered ministry” are used in place of “officer” and “office.” The term “judicatory,” employed

here, again, as part of the historical language of the Principles, and is elsewhere in the Form of Government replaced with “council” – which for us, is a term that includes and applies to our “session.”)

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.01 HISTORIC PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH ORDER

- *F-3.0101 God Is Lord of the Conscience*
 - a. God alone is Lord of the conscience
 - b. ... no religious constitution aided by civil power
- *F-3.0102 Corporate Judgment*

terms, qualifications, its internal government
... may err ... not infringe
- *F-3.0103 Officers*

... our blessed Savior ... hath appointed officers,
... to exercise discipline, [preserve] both truth and duty;
... [and] to censure ... the erroneous and scandalous....

In setting forth this *Book of Order*, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms the historic principles of church order, which have been a part of our common heritage and which are basic to our Presbyterian concept and system of church government, namely:

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."
- b. Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others.

F-3.0102 Corporate Judgment

That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax

or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

F-3.0103 Officers

That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.01 HISTORIC PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH ORDER

- *F-3.0106 Election by the People*

... the character, qualifications, and authority of Church officers
... election ... to the exercise of this authority, ... is in that society.

- *F-3.0107 Church Power*

... the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners;
... no Church judicatory ... to bind the conscience [by] their own authority;
... all ... decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God.
... all synods and councils may err,

F-3.0106 Election by the People

That though the character, qualifications, and authority of Church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution, yet the election of the persons to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

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 judicatory 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.

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

- *F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters*

This church shall be governed by **presbyters**,

Ruling elders ...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 -- sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly.

... The larger part of the church, ... shall govern the smaller.

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.

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

- *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.

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

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

- *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-3.0206 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. *(There are some limitations to this – notably, election and ordination of officers – see G-2.0102.)*

F-3.0207 Ordination by Council

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

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

- *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.

The **jurisdiction of each council is limited** by the express provisions of the Constitution, **with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.**

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.

The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with **powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.**

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.03 FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

... ecclesiological and historical commitments ...

... any part ... be interpreted in light of the whole.

No provision ... can of itself invalidate any other.

... councils and judicial commissions to resolve
[tensions between provisions] ... to effect all.

F-3.03 FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

The statements contained in this section, “The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity,” describe the ecclesiological and historical commitments on which the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) rests.

Provisions of any part of this Constitution are to be interpreted in light of the whole Constitution.

No provision of the *Book of Order* can of itself invalidate any other.

Where there are tensions and ambiguities between provisions, it is the task of councils and judicial commissions to resolve them in such a way as to give effect to all provisions.

Chapter 3 *Principles of Order and Government*

F-3.04 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) DEFINED

The Book of Confessions includes:

- The Nicene Creed
- The Apostles' Creed
- The Scots Confession
- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Second Helvetic Confession
- The Westminster Confession of Faith
- The Westminster Shorter Catechism
- The Westminster Larger Catechism
- The Theological Declaration of Barmen
- The Confession of 1967
- A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Book of Order includes:

- The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- The Form of Government
- The Directory for Worship
- The Rules of Discipline

F-3.04 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) DEFINED

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consists of *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

The Book of Confessions includes:

- The Nicene Creed
- The Apostles' Creed
- The Scots Confession
- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Second Helvetic Confession
- The Westminster Confession of Faith
- The Westminster Shorter Catechism
- The Westminster Larger Catechism
- The Theological Declaration of Barmen
- The Confession of 1967
- A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Book of Order includes:

- The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- The Form of Government
- The Directory for Worship
- The Rules of Discipline

With this definition of our Constitution, we leave the basics -- the **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity**, the first part of our ***Book of Order***, now to drill into the constitutional descriptions of the:

- congregation and its membership;
- the ordered ministries of the Ruling Elder, the Teaching Elder (as it relates to the Session), and the Deacons (as it relates to the Session); and
- the councils of the church – specifically, the Session.

These are found in the Form of Government – the second part of the Book of Order.

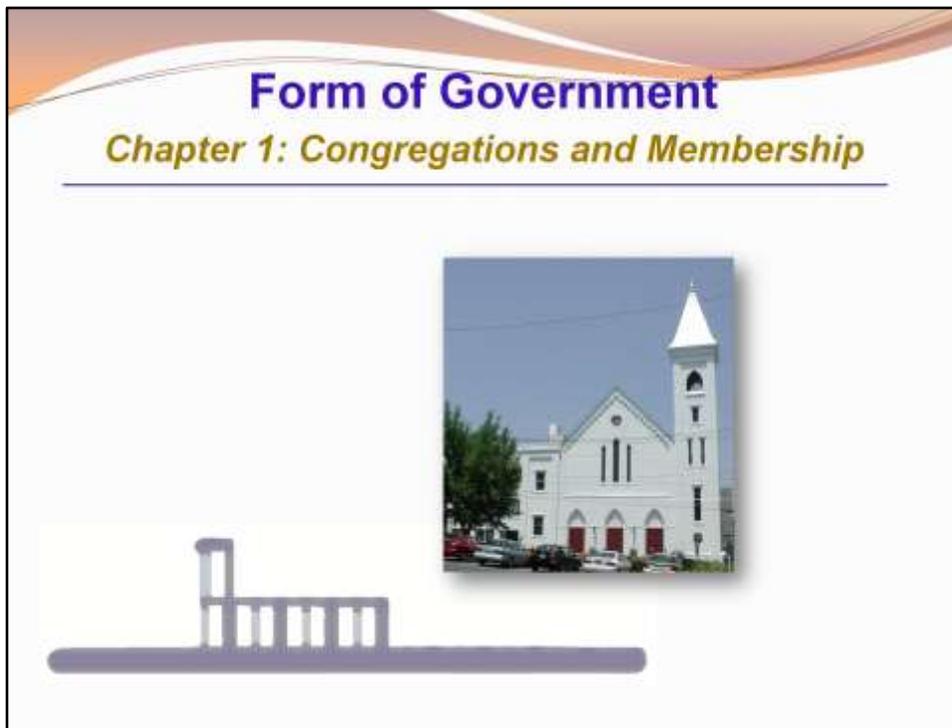
Form of Government



Turning to the second book – the **Form of Government**, it takes the remaining 14 chapters of the previous Form of Government (G-5 - G-18), and presents them in 6 chapters – reducing the previous **117 page** treatment of the concepts presented in these fourteen chapters of nuts-and-bolts (one size fits all), process guidance by 78% to **26 pages** – primarily by removing the “process-detail” stuff to the Advisory Handbooks’ challenge-questions to the councils, so the councils can beef-up (or write) their Manuals of Operation to assure that they cover all the bases -- from their local perspective.

What is not removed is also re-ordered and re-expressed in a more “principal” form – rather than as process-detail form.

You will see topics treated again here – as the historic and foundational principles are applied to the topics of governance in our congregation and the councils of the church.



Chapter One of the new **Form of Government** covers material previously found in G-5.0000, The Church and Its Members, and G-7.0000, The Particular Church.

The chapter begins with an affirmation of our Presbyterian form of connectional government. It affirms that

although 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,

... it asserts that a congregation is of itself an insufficient form of the church.

We need the relationships we have through 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.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

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.

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.

- *G-1.0102 The Fellowship of the Congregation*

The polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presupposes the fellowship of women, men, and children united in covenant relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ.

The organization rests on the fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love.

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.

G-1.0102 The Fellowship of the Congregation

The polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presupposes the fellowship of women, men, and children united in covenant relationship with one another

and with God through Jesus Christ. The organization rests on the fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.01 THE CONGREGATION ...

- *G-1.0103 Governed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

... a formally organized community chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided in this Constitution.

... governed by this Constitution.

... under the leadership of the session and the higher councils (presbytery, synod, and General Assembly).

The session ...

... responsible to guide and govern the life of the congregation.

... leads the congregation in ... service of all people, for the up-building of the whole church, and for the glory of God.

Other forms of corporate witness established by the presbytery shall also be governed by this Constitution and shall be subject to the authority of the presbytery.

G-1.0103 Governed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A “congregation,” as used in this Form of Government, refers to a formally organized community chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided in this Constitution.

Each congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution.

The members of a congregation put themselves under the leadership of the session and the higher councils (presbytery, synod, and General Assembly).

The session is responsible to guide and govern the life of the congregation.

The session leads the congregation in fulfilling its responsibilities for the service of all people, for the up-building of the whole church, and for the glory of God.

Other forms of corporate witness established by the presbytery shall also be governed by this Constitution and shall be subject to the authority of the presbytery.

We will skip **G-1.02 THE ORGANIZING OF A CONGREGATION** – you have done that

already; but, when it becomes a missional priority for you to sprout another congregation, then read this section!

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.03 THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CONGREGATION

- *G-1.0301 The Meaning of Membership and Baptism*

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church
- Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim

- *G-1.0302 Welcome and Openness*

A congregation shall welcome all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of his Church

- *G-1.0303 Entry into Membership*

Persons may enter into active church membership in the following ways:

- a. Public profession of faith, (shall be baptized)
- b. Certificate of transfer
- c. Reaffirmation of faith

G-1.0301 The Meaning of Membership and Baptism

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim on a human life and of entrance into the membership of the church. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The baptism of those who enter the covenant of membership upon their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls forth a response of faithfulness. Thus, the triune God, incarnate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, gives to the Church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership.

G-1.0302 Welcome and Openness

A congregation shall welcome all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of his Church (F-1.0403). No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith. The Gospel leads members to extend the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the Gospel.

G-1.0303 Entry into Membership

Persons may enter into active church membership in the following ways:

- a. Public profession of faith, made after careful examination by the session in the meaning and responsibilities of membership; if not already baptized, the person making profession of faith shall be baptized;
- b. Certificate of transfer, when a person is a member of another Christian church at the time of transfer;
- c. Reaffirmation of faith, for persons previously baptized in the name of the triune God and having publicly professed their faith.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.03 THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CONGREGATION ...

- *G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members*

Membership ... a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes:

proclaiming	living responsibly
life and worship	working in the world
studying	participating in the church
demonstrating a new life	reviewing membership
responding through service	growth

G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission.

A faithful member (*key definition*) bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church.

Such involvement includes:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,

- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and
- considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.04 CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

- *G-1.0401 Baptized Member*
- *G-1.0402 Active Member*
- ~~*G-5.0303 Inactive Member*~~
- *G-1.0403 Affiliate Member*
- *G-1.0404 Other Participants*

Notice any changes here?

G-1.04 CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

The membership of a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) includes baptized members, active members, and affiliate members.

G-1.0401 Baptized Member

A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members receive the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

G-1.0402 Active Member

An active member is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. In addition, active members participate in the governance of the church and may be elected to ordered ministry (see G-2.0102). Active members shall regularly, after prayerful consideration, recommit themselves to the disciplines and responsibilities of membership

outlined in G-1.0304. The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become active members of the congregation.

G-5.0303 Inactive Member – is no longer a category of membership in the new BOO. Session must decide what to do with any of these on their membership roll. Note the similarity and contrasts to *G-1.0404 Other Participants*

G-5.0303 Inactive Member (BOO 2009-2011)

An inactive member of a particular church is one who does not participate in the church's work and worship. An inactive member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of an active member except the right to speak in the meetings of the congregation and to vote and hold office.

G-1.0403 Affiliate Member

An affiliate member is a member of another congregation of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the congregation of membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member may participate in the life of the congregation in the same manner as an active member except that an affiliate member may not vote in congregational meetings or be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation.

G-1.0404 Other Participants

Persons who are not members of, or who may have ceased active participation in, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are welcome and may participate in the life and worship of this church and receive its pastoral care and instruction. The invitation to the Lord's Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love (W-2.4011). Confessing members of other Christian churches may present children for baptism, in conformity with W-2.3014.

Use great, pastoral care when reassigning members to these new categories. It will take a great deal of patient teaching about membership to do this right.

The class had quite a discussion on this issue.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

- *G-1.0501 Annual and Special Meetings*

... shall hold an annual meeting and special meetings as necessary,

... business (at special meetings) limited to the call

All active members present are entitled to vote.

Congregations shall provide by rule the quorum

- *G-1.0502 Calling a Congregational Meeting*

Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the session, by the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one fourth of the active members on the roll of the congregation.

Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given.

Congregations shall provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting.

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

G-1.0501 Annual and Special Meetings

The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold special meetings as necessary, for any or all of the purposes appropriate for congregational consideration.

- The business to be transacted at special meetings shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting.
- All active members of the congregation present at either annual or special meetings are entitled to vote.
- Congregations shall provide by rule the quorum necessary to conduct business*.

G-1.0502 Calling a Congregational Meeting

Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the session, by the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one fourth of the active members on the roll of the congregation. Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given*.

Congregations shall provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting*.

*has your congregation made these rules? ... included them in its bylaws?

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION ...

- *G-1.0503 Business Proper to Congregational Meetings*

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, ... 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

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

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION ...

G-1.0503 Business Proper to Congregational Meetings

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.

Chapter 1: Congregations and Membership

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION ...

- *G-1.0504 Moderator*

The installed pastor shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the congregation.

... [may] invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator.

... [or] the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator.

- *G-1.0505 Secretary and Minutes*

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation.

... [or] the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting.

The secretary shall record the actions of the congregation in minutes of the meeting.

G-1.05 MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

G-1.0504 Moderator

The installed pastor shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the congregation. If it is impractical for the pastor to preside, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator.

If there is no installed pastor, or the installed pastor is unable to moderate and/or to name another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator.

G-1.0505 Secretary and Minutes

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If the clerk of session is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting. The secretary shall record the actions of the congregation in minutes of the meeting.



Chapter Two of the FOG 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).

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 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 Administrators.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

- *G-2.0101 Christ's Ministry*

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. ...

The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to **ordered ministries**, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ.

- *G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries*

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are **deacons** and **presbyters (teaching elders and ruling elders)**.

Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. ...

The government of this church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. ...

Ordination to the ministry of teaching elder, ruling elder, or deacon is unique to that order of ministry.

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0101 Christ's Ministry

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church.

- Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation.
- Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of the one who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28).
- The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions.
- Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ.

G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are **deacons** and **presbyters (teaching elders and ruling elders)**.

Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered

ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church.

The government of this church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the church except by election of that body.

Ordination to the ministry of teaching elder, ruling elder, or deacon is unique to that order of ministry.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0103 Call to Ordered Ministry*

The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by:

the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience,

the approval of a community of God's people, and

the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.

G-2.0103 Call to Ordered Ministry

The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by:

the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience,

the approval of a community of God's people, and

the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications*

... [possess] the necessary gifts and abilities,

... be 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.

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications

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.

This paragraph was modified as one of sixteen constitutional changes (specifically, Item 10A) voted upon in the year following the 219th General Assembly. The majority of the presbyteries affirmed this change to the former BOO paragraph G-6.0106b and it applies here in the new Form of Government (also approved in that voting).

10-A. Ordination standards – ... came to the Presbyteries as:

G-6.0106b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. *Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. 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). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*"

Church Order and Ministry : 36/16/1
Nevada Presbytery: 14/59/0

219th GA: 373/323/4
The Presbyteries: 90/81/2

This how the question came to the presbyteries...

While you are reading it ...

The Presbytery of the Western Reserve proposed this amendment to G-6.0106b ("Item 06-09"), this time, to the 219th GA and three other presbyteries concurred with their overture. The 2010 General Assembly Church Orders and Ministry Committee, after reviewing more than a dozen overtures related to this subject, sent this recommendation to the General Assembly, which approved and referred the proposal as shown to the presbyteries.

The text of G-6.0106b in question was voted into the *Book of Order* in 1996 (only thirteen years after our denomination was formed!) in an attempt to bring closure to the growing scuffling between practices in certain parts of our denomination – and judicial rulings and Authoritative Interpretations on the issue of the ordination of persons in same-sex relationships -- as mid-20th Century American cultural perspectives clashed with the early 18th century *Book of Order* construction. This good intention didn't go as hoped. Instead, it has brought continuing and maybe even more contention to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Encouraging its passage, the Church Orders and Ministry Committee noted and asserted that the previous language "purports to apply even-handedly to all

candidates, but is overwhelmingly used only to exclude gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons — many of whom exhibit abundant gifts and strong calls to ministry ... (and) it has rarely or never been honestly applied to any [other] candidate ... since its adoption.”

On the other hand, other observers noted that it was being ignored altogether by some ordaining bodies.

So then, you should not be surprised that the Church Order and Ministry Committee reported to the 219th GA that the PC(U.S.A.) has no consensus in the interpretation of Scripture on “same-sex” issues. It went on to offer this guidance for our practice:

When convictions about important issues are so different, and so firmly-held, **our long-standing Presbyterian commitment to freedom of conscience and mutual forbearance** is vital to maintaining our fellowship ... [because we believe, per G-1.0305, now F-3.0105, 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.**”

The 2010 Advisory Committee on the Constitution noted: This overture seeks to restore the ordination practice and principles affirmed in the Adopting Act of 1729 (see the middle two paragraphs of this four paragraph Act at <http://www.pcanet.org/admin/OldPCA%20Historical%20Center/Adopting%20Act%20of%201729.html>) -- the paradigm through which the tension between the differing points of view and the unity of the church have been maintained through much of our denomination’s history. When approved, examining bodies would be required not only to examine

‘... each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office,’ but [would] also [be] required to judge the candidate’s ‘... ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003).’ These questions require that the candidate affirm the authority of scripture, adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as contained in our confessions, and submit to the polity and discipline of the church. Moreover, the overture specifically states, consistent with the Adopting Act, that the examining bodies ‘... shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates ...,’

The Advisory Committee also found that the proposed language is clear and not inconsistent with any other provision of the *Book of Order*. But, they also observed

that the language has some similarity, and a similar intent, to the amendment submitted by the 218th General Assembly (2008) to the presbyteries and was rejected by a majority of the presbyteries.

The minority report would have the GA leave the existing language intact; but, send a pastoral letter encouraging the denomination to stop marginalizing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people in its ministries.

Note the votes. These will give you a hint as to the level of controversy attached to the proposal. The current flood of departure talk and separation action among conservative congregations across the denomination indicates the level of controversy that this change did not resolve.

For this one, the controversy is not in the proposed substitute words which I colored blue on the slide – or even in the words that are removed (shown as struck out), even though these same words remain in other places in the *Book of Order* or *Book of Confessions*. Instead, before God, the presbyteries were faced with evaluating the effect of removing these words - from this place - in the *Book of Order*.

Note the vote.

At our 2011 Spring Presbytery meeting – in which the Nevada Presbytery rejected this question, a team was formed to write a statement on this subject for Presbytery. It was presented and affirmed in the Fall, 2011 presbytery and is in the form you have today. It ends with ...

FOR REFERENCE -- The Constitutional Questions: (All of them bind you)

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 office 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 seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

i. (1) (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service?

Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(2) (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(3) (For minister of the Word and Sacrament) Will you be a faithful minister, 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 governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(4) (For commissioned lay pastor) Will you be a faithful commissioned lay pastor, 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?

(5) (For certified Christian educator) Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Statement of the Presbytery of Nevada

1. The Presbytery of Nevada upholds the Biblical standards of fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness for leaders in our Presbytery.
2. We further uphold the requirement that persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which scripture identifies as sin shall not be ordained and/or installed Deacons, Ruling Elders or Teaching Elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament)....

Nevada Presbytery: 42/29/0

Relationship with the PC(U.S.A.)

Relationships between church members and between congregations within the PC(U.S.A.) have been damaged in a new and deeper way by requirements approved in 2011. The decision officially to reject Biblical standards for ordination of church officers is a violation of our essential beliefs and has driven a wedge between members of our churches, congregations and higher governing bodies. In response, the Presbytery of Nevada makes the following declarations.

1. The Presbytery of Nevada upholds the Biblical standards of fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness for leaders in our Presbytery.
2. We further uphold the requirement that persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which scripture identifies as sin shall not be ordained and/or installed Deacons, Ruling Elders or Teaching Elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament).
3. We will work to restore the PC(U.S.A.) to Biblical standards and faithfulness. We will continue to stand together as a Presbytery for our church, the PC(U.S.A.), working:

- 1) for the Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind,
- 2) for the Shelter, Nurture and Spiritual Fellowship of God's Children,
- 3) for the Maintenance of Divine Worship,
- 4) for the Preservation of the Truth,
- 5) for the Promotion of Social Righteousness and
- 6) for the Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World.

4. The Presbytery of Nevada affirms our thoughtful ethos as Presbyterians of humility and mutual respect in the midst of passionate and important debate over vital issues of faith and life. We will bless our brothers, sisters and churches who cannot in good conscience affirm this statement by the Presbytery of Nevada. And we will bless our brothers, sisters and churches who cannot in good conscience affirm the recent decisions of the PC(U.S.A.) as a whole.

5. In accordance with our Presbytery's "Policy for Churches Leaving for other Reformed Bodies," we will support churches within our Presbytery who feel it necessary, in order to be faithful to Jesus Christ, to affiliate with a different denomination.

-- passed by the Presbytery of Nevada, September 20, 2011
and effective with no further action, as of that date.

Note the vote.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications ... continued*

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The council responsible for ordination and/or installation 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. Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

This is how the standards for ordination read in the new *BOO*:

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications ... continued

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.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0105 Freedom of Conscience*

... adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in this Constitution.

... freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

... exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds.

... captive to the Word of God.

The decision ... ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member.

... *[or peaceably] withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism*

G-2.0105 Freedom of Conscience

It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve it in ordered ministries shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in this Constitution. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

It is to be recognized, however, that in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds.

His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry.

The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member.

(Very early in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, even before the General Assembly was established, the plan of reunion of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia contained the following sentences: 'That when any matter is determined by a majority vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination; or if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceable withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism. Provided always that this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government.'

-- (Hist. Dig. (P) p. 1310.) (Plan of Union of 1758, par. II.)

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0201 Deacon Defined*

The ministry of deacon as ... is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. ...

G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. ... their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. ... If the congregation has neither a board individually commissioned deacons, the function ... shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.

G-2.0201 Deacon Defined

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need, handling educational tasks, cultivating liberality in giving, collecting and disbursing monies to specific persons or causes, or overseeing the buildings and property of the congregation. Deacons shall assume other duties as may be delegated to them by the session, including assisting with the Lord's Supper. (W-3.3616). A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined*

... congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. ... to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. ... exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships.

When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session.

When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office.

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people.

Accordingly, congregations should elect persons
... of wisdom and maturity of faith,
... having demonstrated skills in leadership and
... being compassionate in spirit.

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.

Ruling elders, together with teaching elders,
... exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and
... have responsibilities for the life of
-- a congregation as well as
-- the whole church,
-- including ecumenical relationships.

When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session.

When elected as commissioners to higher councils,

- ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and
- they are eligible for any office.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0401 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons*
 - ... elected by the congregation from among its members.
 - The nomination ... shall express the rich diversity of the congregation's membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness (F-1.0403).
 - ... nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership.
 - **Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee**, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote.
 - ... full opportunity ... for nomination from the floor ...
 - A majority of all the active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

G-2.0401 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons

- Ruling elders and deacons are men and women **elected by the congregation from among its members**.
- The nomination and election of ruling elders and deacons **shall express the rich diversity of the congregation's membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness (F-1.0403)**.
- Ruling elders and deacons **shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership**.
- Congregations may provide by their own rule* for a **congregational nominating committee**, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote.
- When elections are held, **full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor** of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation.
- A **majority of all the active members present and voting** shall be required to elect.

*has your congregation made such a rule?

We will skip here, the provisions related to:

- *G-2.0402 Preparation for Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon and*
- *G-2.0403 Service of Ordination and Installation today.*

Please read them at your leisure.

Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ...

- *G-2.0404 Terms of Service*

- Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected to serve terms of no more than three years on the session or board of deacons, and **may be eligible for reelection according to congregational rule.**
- ... serve [no] more than six consecutive years, ... shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year.
- **Election shall be to classes as nearly equal in number as possible, with the term of only one class ending each year.** The presbytery may, ... grant a congregation a waiver of this limitation on terms.
- Once ordained and while they are active members of any congregation of this denomination, ruling elders or deacons not in active service on a session or board of deacons continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which they have been ordained,

G-2.0404 Terms of Service

- Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected to serve **terms of no more than three years** on the session or board of deacons, and may be eligible for reelection according to congregational rule*.
- However, no ruling elder or deacon shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder or deacon who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year.
- **Election shall be to classes as nearly equal in number as possible, with the term of only one class ending each year.** The presbytery may, upon written request and by majority vote, grant a congregation a waiver of this limitation on terms**.
- Once ordained and while they are active members of any congregation of this denomination, ruling elders or deacons not in active service on a session or board of deacons continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which they have been ordained, except as provided in G-2.0406, G-2.0407, or in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

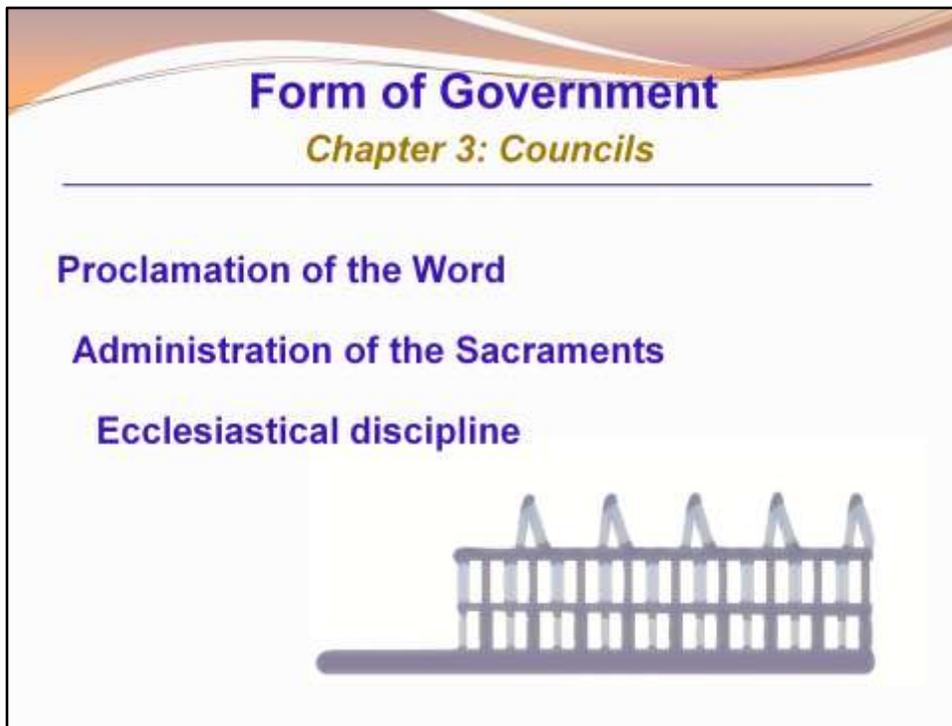
*has your congregation made such a rule?

**has your congregation found the need to request such a waiver?

We will skip the provisions in the rest of this chapter related to:

- *G-2.0405 Dissolution of Relationship.*
 - *G-2.0406 Release from Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon.*
 - *G-2.0407 Renunciation of Jurisdiction, and the sections on*
 - **G-2.05 TEACHING ELDERS: THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT,**
 - **G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY,**
 - **G-2.07 ORDINATION,**
 - **G-2.08 CALL AND INSTALLATION,**
 - **G-2.09 DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS,**
 - **G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICE,** and
 - **G-2.11 CERTIFIED CHURCH SERVICE.**
- ... as these do not address the concerns we have today.

Please read them at your leisure.



Chapter Three deals with the Councils of the Church, and covers material previously in G-9.000 through G-13.0000 -- Governing Bodies, The Session, The Presbytery, The Synod, and The General Assembly.

This chapter 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.

“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 now, so do we.

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.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

- *G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church*
 - The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church
 - Powers not mentioned in this Constitution are reserved to the presbyteries.
 - Councils of the church exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ.

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church

The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church. Congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while possessing all the gifts necessary to be the church, are nonetheless not sufficient in themselves to be the church. Rather, they are called to share with others both within and beyond the congregation the task of bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the world. This call to bear witness is the work of all believers. The particular responsibility of the councils of the church is to nurture, guide, and govern those who witness as part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to the end that such witness strengthens the whole church and gives glory to God.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by councils composed of presbyters elected by the people (F-3.0202). These councils are called the session, the presbytery, the synod, 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. 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. **Powers not mentioned in this Constitution are reserved to the presbyteries.**

Councils of the church exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ. They do so, as they

Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard,
responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and inviting
all people to participate in that new creation;

Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received,
welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ, bearing witness
to Christ's saving death and resurrection, anticipating the heavenly
banquet that is to come, and committing itself in the present to
solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurture a covenant community of disciples of Christ,
living in the strength of God's promise, and giving itself in service to
God's mission.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0102 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*
 - ... for the purpose of serving Jesus Christ and declaring and obeying his will in relation to truth and service, order and discipline.
 - ... frame statements of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in life, resolve questions of doctrine and discipline, give counsel in matters of conscience, and decide issues properly brought before them under the provisions of this *Book of Order*.
 - ... authorize the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Directory for Worship.
 - ... have power to establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ.
 - They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church that is under their jurisdiction.

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0102 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

Councils of this church have only ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the purpose of serving Jesus Christ and declaring and obeying his will in relation to truth and service, order and discipline.

- They may frame statements of faith,
- bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in life,
- resolve questions of doctrine and discipline,
- give counsel in matters of conscience, and
- decide issues properly brought before them under the provisions of this *Book of Order*.
- They may authorize the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Directory for Worship.

They have power to

- establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and
- to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ.

They have responsibility for the

- leadership,
 - guidance, and
 - government
- ... of that portion of the church that is under their jurisdiction.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0103 Participation and Representation*
 - ... give full expression to the rich diversity of the church's membership
 - ... provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices
 - ... give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry and
 - ... the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0103 Participation and Representation

The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church's membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403).

In fulfilling this commitment, councils shall give due consideration to both

- the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and
- the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F-3.0106).

Each council shall develop procedures and mechanisms* for promoting and reviewing that body's implementation of the church's commitment to inclusiveness and representation.

Councils above the session shall establish by their own rule committees on representation to fulfill the following functions: to advise the council regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, to advocate for diversity in leadership, and to consult with the council on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403. A committee on representation should not be merged with another

committee or made a subcommittee of another committee.

*has your session made such a rule?

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0104 Officers*

The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation. ... co-pastors shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting

- ... authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body.
- ... shall convene and adjourn the body in accordance with its own action.

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0104 Officers

The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation.

- In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting*.
- If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator.
- If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator.

*has your session made such a rule?

The moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body.

- He or she shall convene and adjourn the body in accordance with its own action.

Each council higher than the session shall elect a moderator for such terms as

the council determines. At the time of their election, moderators must be continuing members of, or commissioners to, the council over which they are elected to preside. They shall preside at meetings of the council during their term of office; councils shall provide by rule who shall preside in the absence of the moderator.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0104 Officers*

- Each council shall elect a clerk who shall
- ... record the transactions of the council,
- ... keep its rolls of membership and attendance,
- ... **including the rolls of all CCE, CACE, and REC,**
- ... preserve its records, and
- ... furnish extracts when required by another council.

- Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church.

- The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine.

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0104 Officers

...

Each council shall elect a clerk who shall
... record the transactions of the council,
... keep its rolls of membership and attendance
... **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.

Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church.

The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine.

The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the council for a definite term as it may

determine, and must be a ruling elder or teaching elder. **A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-3.0110.**

Councils may elect such other officers as the council requires.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *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.

... dissent ...

... protest ...

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.*

When a council makes a decision, a member of the body who voted against the decision is entitled to file a dissent or a protest. Filing a dissent or protest neither initiates nor prevents judicial process.

a. A dissent is a declaration expressing disagreement with a decision of a council. It shall be made at the particular session during which the decision is made. The names of members dissenting shall be recorded.

b. A protest is a written declaration, supported by reasons, alleging that a decision of a council is or contains an irregularity or a delinquency. Written notice of the protest shall be given at the particular session of the council

during which it arose and shall be filed with the clerk before adjournment. If the protest is expressed in decorous and respectful language, it shall be entered in the minutes of the meeting, and may be accompanied by an answer prepared by the council. No further action is required.

*has your session made such a rule? ... does it describe that process so all members may understand it?

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0106 Administration of Mission*
 - Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work.
 - **Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council.**
 - **All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy.**
 - A council may delegate aspects of its tasks to such entities as it deems appropriate, provided that those entities remain accountable to the council.
 - The funding of mission ...
 - Per Capita ...

G-3.0106 Administration of Mission

Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work.

Administration is the process by which a council implements its decisions.

- Administration enables the church to give effective witness in the world to God's new creation in Jesus Christ and strengthens the church's witness to the mission of the triune God.

Councils higher than the session may provide examples of policies and procedures that may be gathered into advisory handbooks.

- These examples illumine practices required by the Constitution but left to councils for specific implementation.
- Such handbooks may also offer information that enhances or secures the ministry of the particular council.

Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council*.

All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy.**

*has your session established such a Manual?

** has your session established such a Policy? If not, please close on this action soon. See discussion of mandatory sexual misconduct reporting at **G-4.03**, below, and note the discussion of Nevada mandatory reporting law at the same place.

A council may delegate aspects of its tasks to such entities as it deems appropriate, provided that those entities remain accountable to the council.

The administration of mission demonstrates the unity and interdependence of the church, in that councils share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers (F-3.0203). Through their members and elected commissioners, lower councils participate in planning and administration of the work of higher councils, and in consultation between bodies concerning mission, budget, staffing and fair employment practices, and matters of equitable compensation.

The funding of mission similarly demonstrates the unity and interdependence of the church. The failure of any part of the church to participate in the stewardship of the mission of the whole church diminishes that unity and interdependence. All mission funding should enable the church to give effective witness in the world to God's new creation in Jesus Christ, and should strengthen the church's witness to the mission of God.

Each council above the session shall prepare a budget for its operating expenses, including administrative personnel, and may fund it with a per capita apportionment among the particular congregations within its bounds.

- Presbyteries are responsible for raising their own funds and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and the General Assembly.
- Presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to sessions within their bounds, but in no case shall the authority of the session to direct its benevolences be compromised.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0107 Records*
- *G-3.0108 Administrative Review*
- *G-3.0109 Committees and Commissions*

Councils may designate by their own rule such **committees and commissions** as they deem necessary and helpful for the accomplishment of the mission of the church ...

- A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council.
- A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council.

We will skip the provisions related to:

- *G-3.0107 Records and*
- *G-3.0108 Administrative Review* – today. Please read them at your leisure.

G-3.0109 Committees and Commissions

Councils may designate by their own rule such committees and commissions as they deem necessary and helpful for the accomplishment of the mission of the church*, and may create such structures jointly with other councils, in consultation with the next higher council. In appointing such committees and commissions councils shall be mindful of the principles of unity in diversity consistent with the provisions of this Constitution (F-1.0403, G-3.0103).

*has – or - does your session established such committees and/or commissions? ...
have you established the necessary policies for their composition and chartering? ...
have you adequately chartered existing committees / commissions – and established procedures for their supervision, oversight, and reporting?

** has your session established such joint structures? ... have you established the necessary policies for their composition and chartering?

A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council. It shall make a full report to the council that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by that body. Committees of councils higher than the session shall consist of both teaching elders and members of congregations, with at least one half being members of the congregation.

A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council. The designating council shall state specifically the scope of the commission's powers and any restrictions on those powers.

Please do not give committees commission work or *vice versa* – it confuses them and the outcomes are seldom good.

A council may designate two types of commissions:

a. *Judicial Commissions**

Judicial commissions shall consider and decide cases of process for the council 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).

*these rarely happen at session level – and are best studied ad hoc, with higher council experts before establishing/chartering.

b. *Administrative Commissions*

Administrative commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.

Functions that may be entrusted to administrative commissions include, but are not limited to:

- (1) (by sessions) ordaining and installing ruling elders and deacons, receiving and dismissing members, and visiting organizations within the congregation to settle differences therein;
- (2) (by presbyteries) ordaining and installing teaching elders;
- (3) (by presbyteries) examining and receiving into membership teaching elders seeking admission to presbytery, including approval of terms of call and

commissions for ordination and installation; and receiving candidates under care;

(4) (by presbyteries) developing immigrant fellowships, organizing new congregations, merging congregations, or forming union or federated congregations (G-5.05);

(5) (by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly) visiting particular councils, congregations, or agencies over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein, except that no commission of a presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body (G-2.0901);

(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.

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 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.

A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings and shall submit that record to the council for incorporation into its records. Actions of a commission shall be regarded as actions of the council 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 decisions of an administrative commission shall be reported to the clerk of the designating council, who shall report it to the council at its next stated meeting. A council may rescind or amend an action of its administrative commission in the same way actions of the council are modified.

When an administrative commission has been designated to settle differences within a particular organization or council, it shall, before making its decision final, afford to all persons affected by its decision fair notice and an opportunity to be heard on matters at issue.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.01 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS ...

- *G-3.0110 Administrative Staff*
- *G-3.0111 Nominating Process*
- *G-3.0112 Insurance*

Each council shall obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers.

- *G-3.0113 Finances*

Each council shall prepare and adopt a budget to support the church's mission within its area. ... and review ...

We will skip the provisions related to:

- *G-3.0110 Administrative Staff (for councils above session),*
- *G-3.0111 Nominating Process,*
- *and*
- *G-3.0108 Administrative Review* – today. Please read them at your leisure.

G-3.0112 Insurance

Each council shall obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers.

*has your session established or recently its insurance coverage needs?

G-3.0113 Finances

Each council shall prepare and adopt a budget to support the church's mission within its area.

A full financial review of all financial books and records shall be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures.

Reviewers should not be related to the treasurer(s).

*has your session established its budget – and its financial review methods and cycle?

Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.

... and this brings us to ...

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION

- *G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities*
 - The session is the council for the congregation.
 - All members of the session are entitled to vote.
 - The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and
 - the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator.
 - The session shall .. govern the congregation and guide its witness ...

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities

The session is the council for the congregation.

- It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active serviced as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors.
- All members of the session are entitled to vote.
- The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provisions for a moderator.
- Presbyteries shall provide by rule for moderators when the session is without a moderator for reasons of vacancy or inconvenience.

The session shall have responsibility for

- governing the congregation and
- guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world,
=> so that the congregation is and becomes a community of **faith, hope, love,** and **witness.**

As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it

- the marks of the Church (F-1.0302),
- the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves
- throughout history (F-1.0303) and
- the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

- In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:
 - a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*
 - b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
 - c. *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities

...

In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:

- a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*

This responsibility shall include

... providing a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture;

... providing for regular preaching of the Word by a teaching elder or other person prepared and approved for the work;

... planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship;

... planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and

... initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.

- b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*

This responsibility shall include

... authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at least quarterly and
... the administration of Baptism as appropriate, in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship; and
... exercising pastoral care among the congregation;
=> in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.

This responsibility shall include

- ... receiving and dismissing members;
- ... reviewing the roll of active members at least annually and
- ... counseling with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership;
- ... providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship;
- ... training, examining, ordaining, and installing those elected by the congregation as ruling elders and deacons;
- ... encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources;
- ... managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission;
- ... directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation;
- ... employing the administrative staff of the congregation;
- ... leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church;
- ... warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community; and
- ... serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

*has your session engaged and established programs to address each of these needs?

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

- *G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils*
 - a. *elect*, as commissioners to presbytery, ...
 - b. *nominate* to be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly,
 - c. *see that* the guidance and communication of [higher councils] are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
 - d. *welcome* representatives ...,
 - e. *propose* ... such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
 - f. *send* ... requested statistics etc., as well as voluntary financial contributions.

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

- a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports;
- b. nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);
- c. see that the guidance and communication of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;

e. 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; and

f. send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

- *G-3.0203 Meetings*

... notice ... quorum ...

- *G-3.0204 Minutes and Records*

... minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees.

a. Membership Roll

There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members

The session may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years.

b. Registers

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0203 Meetings

- The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly.
- The moderator shall call a special meeting when he or she deems necessary or when requested in writing by any two members of the session.
- The business to be transacted at special meetings shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting.
- There shall be reasonable notice given of all special meetings*.
- The session shall also meet when directed by presbytery.
- Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings**; such quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.

*has your session established the minimum notice requirements for its meetings?

*has your session established the quorum requirements for its meetings?

G-3.0204 Minutes and Records

Minutes of the session shall be subject to the provisions of G-3.0107. They

shall contain the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees.

Each session shall maintain the following roll and registers:

a. *Membership Roll**

There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members in accordance with G-1.0401, G-1.0402 and G-1.0403. The session shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The session may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.

*has your session established its process for reviewing the rolls?

b. *Registers*

There shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.

*has your session established its process for establishing and maintaining its registers?

Chapter 3: Councils
G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

• *G-3.0205 Finances*

The session shall

- ... prepare and adopt a budget
- ... determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences
- ... authorize offerings for Christian purposes
- ... account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement.
- ... provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters.

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0205 Finances

In addition to those responsibilities described in G-3.0113, the session shall ... prepare and adopt a budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences.

It shall authorize offerings for Christian purposes and

... shall account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement.

It shall provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters.

*has your session established its processes for fulfilling these responsibilities?

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

- *G-3.0205 Finances ... continued*

The session shall

... elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide
... supervise the work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees.

Those in charge of various congregational funds shall report at least annually to the session and more often as requested.

Sessions may provide by rule for standard financial practices of the congregation,

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0205 Finances ... continued

The session shall elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide and shall supervise his or her work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees.

Those in charge of various congregational funds* shall report at least annually to the session and more often as requested.

Sessions may provide by rule** for standard financial practices of the congregation, but shall in no case fail to observe the following procedures:

- a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;
- b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions shall be kept and shall be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable

times;

c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities

shall be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.

*has your session identified / inventoried the various funds and fund managers within the congregation? ... brought them under the supervision of the session?

**has your session established its processes for its financial management responsibilities?

Chapter 3: Councils

G-3.02 THE SESSION ...

- *G-3.0205 Finances ... continued*

Sessions ... shall in no case fail to observe ...

a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;

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G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0205 Finances ... continued

Sessions ... shall in no case fail to observe the following procedures*:

a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;

b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions shall be kept and shall be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;

c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities shall be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.

*has your session established its processes for these financial management responsibilities?

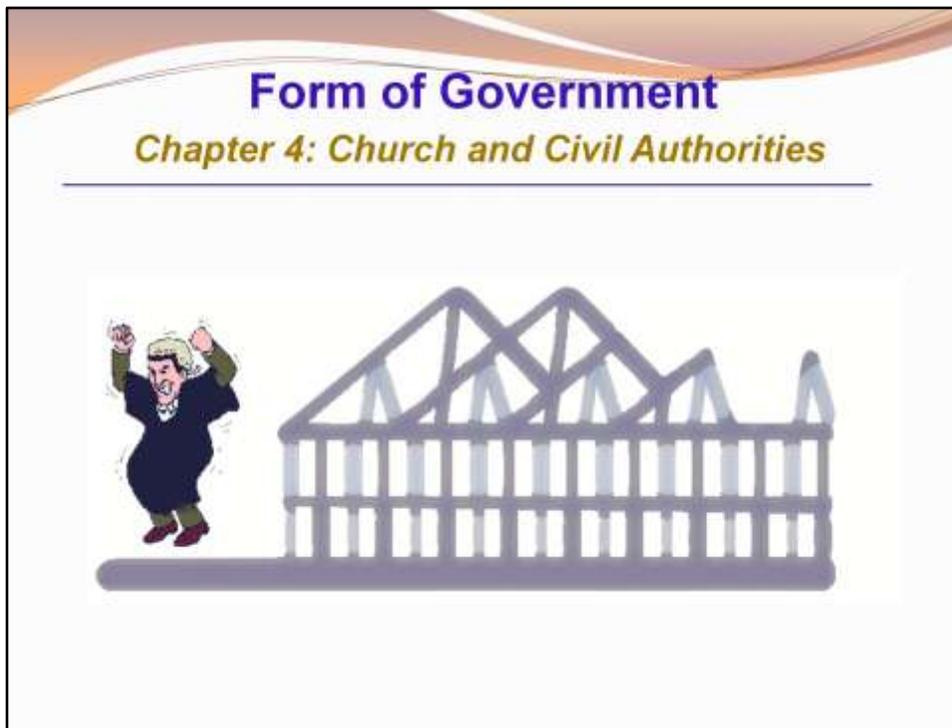
We will skip the provisions related to:

- **G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY,**
- **G-3.04 THE SYNOD,** and

- **G-3.05 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** – today.

Please read them at your leisure.

This brings us to the end of Chapter 3. But we are not done with session responsibilities yet!



Chapter Four deals with the relationship between the Church and Civil Authority.

Its contents are the same as those of previous G-8.0000, The Church and Its Property – matters related to incorporation and trustees, as well as church property – and the addition of the language about confidentiality and mandatory reporting that is previously in G-6.0000, The Church and Its Officers.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.01 INCORPORATION AND TRUSTEES

- *G-4.0101 Incorporation and Power*

Where permitted by civil law, **each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained** with these powers:

- ... deal with property -- under congregation's approval
- ... defend its title
- ... manage funds for the congregation (within bounds)

Other councils are similarly directed and empowered.

G-4.01 INCORPORATION AND TRUSTEES

*G-4.0101 Incorporation and Power**

Where permitted by civil law, each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained. If incorporation is not permitted, individual trustees shall be elected by the congregation. Any such individual trustees shall be elected from the congregation's members in the same manner as those elected to the ordered ministries of deacon and ruling elder. Terms of service shall be governed by the provisions of G-2.0404.

The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers:

- to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the congregation, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted in a duly constituted meeting;
- to accept and execute deeds of title to such property;
- to hold and defend title to such property;
- to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.

*has your session formed a corporation with these powers? ... kept it current with Nevada non-profit legal requirements (NRS Title 82)? ... filed for an IRC Section 501 (c)(3) tax-status determination?

Where permitted by civil law, each presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained and shall determine a method to constitute the board of trustees by its own rule. The corporation so formed, or individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for and at the direction of the council.

Martha E. Clark, PCUSA General Counsel and author of the **Legal Resource Manual for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - 2010**, which is generally quoted here and below, notes:

Almost all corporate and trustee matters are governed by state law. An attorney familiar with your state's laws in these areas should be used. They should also review all sample forms to ensure they comply with controlling state law.

The church itself does not incorporate; instead, it causes a corporation to be formed. This is a recognition of the difference between ecclesiastical jurisdiction (reserved to church courts) and civil jurisdiction (in civil courts).

When corporate membership meetings are required, the following applies:

- Where permitted by civil law, corporate and ecclesiastical business can be conducted at the same meeting.
- Because ministers are not members of the congregation (they are members of presbytery), they are not members of the corporation. Generally, this means ministers do not serve as officers of the corporation either. Some states' civil corporation laws allow nonmembers to serve as officers of the corporation. While such a provision would allow the minister to serve as an officer, the preferred method is that the minister not serve in such a capacity. The corporation president, not the minister, should preside at corporation meetings.

Another resource for the presbyter's toolbag ...

- Legal Resource Manual for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Middle Governing Bodies and Churches - Third edition (2010) 187 pages.
- <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/legal-resource-manual/>
- Use with the old-to-new *BOO* map.



Legal Resource Manual for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Middle Governing Bodies and Churches Third edition (2010)

Introduction

The Office of Legal/Risk Management Services performs work for the General Assembly Mission Council, the Office of the General Assembly, the ministry divisions, and other corporations and work areas at the General Assembly level. ...

Over the years we have also provided general informal advice to the middle governing bodies and the particular churches. This third edition Manual is a compilation of some of the advice and resources we have shared over the years. Our first edition Manual (2000-2003) and second edition Manual (2004-2007) were well received and well used. We trust the same will be true for this Manual.

The law is far ranging in modern American society. This Manual does not cover every topic. Let us know if there are additional resources or changes you would like to see in future publications. Moreover, let us know if you have resources or articles to share. Some of our very best materials have been provided to us by churches, presbyteries, and synods.

...

Table of Contents

Introduction
Section 1: Basic Organization of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Section 2: Property
Section 3: Incorporation and Boards of Trustees
Section 4: Copyright and Trademark
Section 5: Contracts
Section 6: Personnel and Employment Matters
Section 7: Immigration
Section 8: Taxation
Section 9: Risk Management
Section 10: Estates and Planned Giving
Section 11: Other Resources

(-- from the web page)

Finally, be certain to consult your local attorney for legal advice and expert assistance. While the information in this resource Manual should be a helpful guide, it cannot substitute for your local counsel familiar with the law and facts of your particular situation. The laws, of course, continue to change. Your local counsel will ensure the current law is applied to your needs.

Sincere regards,

Martha E. Clark

General Counsel
General Assembly Mission Council
Office of Legal/Risk Management Services
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202
(888)728-7228, ext. 5390
Fax: (502)569-8033

Important Disclaimer

While this Manual is provided in the hope it will assist you generally in answering questions, the Office of Legal/Risk Management Services is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services to you. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional advisor should be sought. Indeed, before relying on information contained in this Manual or any resource, including Web sites, please consult with an attorney or other professional advisor licensed in your state.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.01 INCORPORATION AND TRUSTEES ...

- *G-4.0102 Members of the Corporation*

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees.

... shall be ruling elders of the session eligible under civil law

– unless --

... corporation makes its own rule for electing trustees

G-4.01 INCORPORATION AND TRUSTEES ... continued

G-4.0102 Members of the Corporation

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees. The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees.

Presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly shall provide by rule for the election of trustees from among persons eligible for membership in the council.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

- *G-4.0201 Property as a Tool for Mission*

The property of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), of its councils and entities, and of its congregations, is a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world.

- *G-4.0202 Decisions Concerning Property*

The provisions of this Constitution prescribing the manner in which decisions are made, reviewed, and corrected within this church are applicable to all matters pertaining to property.

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

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Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

- *G-4.0203 Church Property Held in Trust*

All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

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All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Martha E. Clark, again, notes:

This clause is central to [the constitution] and, in many respects, the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It establishes, as all Presbyterians know, that our church is not congregational in its structure. It is connectional. The governing bodies of the church interrelate with and depend on one another in many ways — defined and established by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Constitution.

While the church does not describe itself as hierarchal, this is the term most civil courts use when ruling on Presbyterian Church property cases. In this

context, the civil courts use hierarchal to distinguish our structure from the congregational form. As they view our structure in church property disputes, the civil courts correctly focus on the core principles of Presbyterian government: —A higher governing body 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.

This and other *Book of Order* provisions cause the typical civil court to view the Presbyterian Church as hierarchal in regards to its property.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

- *G-4.0204 Property Used Contrary to the Constitution*

Whenever property of, or held for, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ceases to be used by that congregation as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in accordance with this Constitution, such property shall be held, used, applied, transferred, or sold as provided by the presbytery.

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

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Whenever property of, or held for, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ceases to be used by that congregation as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in accordance with this Constitution, such property shall be held, used, applied, transferred, or sold as provided by the presbytery.

Martha E. Clark, again, notes:

As is evident from this discussion, most church property cases appear in civil court because of difficult and often wrenching disputes. When such disputes arise in the particular Presbyterian church, it is the presbytery that holds central responsibility and power to resolve the matter. If it cannot be successfully resolved, again the presbytery determines how the property will be handled.

G-4.0204 establishes the central principle that when the property of a particular church is not being used in accord with the Constitution, the presbytery shall determine how the property shall be held, used, applied, transferred, or sold.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

- *G-4.0205 Property of a Dissolved or Extinct Congregation*
- *G-4.0206 Selling, Encumbering, or Leasing Church Property*
... written permission of the presbytery
- *G-4.0207 Property of Congregation in Schism*
- *G-4.0208 Exceptions*

G-4.02 CHURCH PROPERTY

G-4.0205 Property of a Dissolved or Extinct Congregation

Whenever a congregation is formally dissolved by the presbytery, or has become extinct by reason of the dispersal of its members, the abandonment of its work, or other cause, such property as it may have shall be held, used, and applied for such uses, purposes, and trusts as the presbytery may direct, limit, and appoint, or such property may be sold or disposed of as the presbytery may direct, in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

G-4.0206 Selling, Encumbering, or Leasing Church Property

a. Selling or Encumbering Congregational Property

A congregation shall not sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber any of its real property and it shall not acquire real property subject to an encumbrance or condition without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation.

b. Leasing Congregational Property

A congregation shall not lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation.

G-4.0207 Property of Congregation in Schism

The relationship to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of a congregation can be severed only by constitutional action on the part of the presbytery (G-3.0303b). If there is a schism within the membership of a congregation and the presbytery is unable to effect a reconciliation or a division into separate congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the presbytery shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property because it is identified by the presbytery as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote within the congregation at the time of the schism.

G-4.0208 Exceptions

The provisions of this chapter shall apply to all congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) except that any congregation which was not subject to a similar provision of the constitution of the church of which it was a part, prior to the reunion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been excused from that provision of this chapter if the congregation, within a period of eight years following the establishment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), voted to be exempt from such provision in a regularly called meeting and thereafter notified the presbytery of which it was a constituent congregation of such vote. The congregation voting to be so exempt shall hold title to its property and exercise its privileges of incorporation and property ownership under the provisions of the Constitution to which it was subject immediately prior to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This paragraph may not be amended (G-6.05).

Martha E. Clark, again, notes:

In a similar vein but more specifically, when a particular church is dissolved by the presbytery, the presbytery has all the same powers in regards to the property (**G-4.0205**). Finally, in a schism at the particular church, the presbytery again holds the central authority. As established by **G-4.0207**:

- Only the presbytery can sever the relationship with a particular church (**G-3.0301**).
- The presbytery is to effect a reconciliation of the membership or divide the church into two separate PC(USA) churches.
- If this is not possible, the presbytery determines which faction is entitled to the property because the presbytery identifies it as the true church within

the PC(USA). This determination does not depend on the majority vote within the particular church.

These mandates, in conjunction with the property trust and other provisions of the Constitution (**G-4.0201**), establish a systematic process whereby the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) makes decisions about its property.

As noted above, most civil courts ruling on Presbyterian Church property disputes will recognize and enforce the property trust set forth in the Constitution. Others will look to the trust along with a combination of

- the core polity that a higher governing body has the right of review and control over a lower governing body;
- other constitutional provisions setting forth the authority of presbytery;
- the historic interrelationship, support, customs, and functions between a church and other governing bodies.

Courts that consider these factors rule in favor of the presbytery pursuant to the free exercise of religion found in the First Amendment. They respect the polity and structure the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has determined for itself via its Constitution and polity. They do not transform the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) into a congregational polity it does not and never has embraced.

Unfortunately, a number of church property cases do not reflect the free exercise of religion by respecting the polity and structure a church has chosen for itself. Presbytery officials and their legal counsel must be wary of these rulings.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.03 CONFIDENCE AND PRIVILEGE

- *G-4.0301 Trust and Confidentiality*

... maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality,

... hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing care and all information relating to the exercise of such care.

... with consent *may*; but, cannot be compelled to reveal

... *may* reveal - risk of bodily harm.

G-4.03 CONFIDENCE AND PRIVILEGE

G-4.0301 Trust and Confidentiality

In the exercise of pastoral care, teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders who have been commissioned by a presbytery to limited pastoral service (G-2.10), shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing care and all information relating to the exercise of such care.

When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a teaching elder or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information.

A teaching elder or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.

Chapter 4: Church and Civil Authorities

G-4.03 CONFIDENCE AND PRIVILEGE ...

- *G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting*

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, **shall report** to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a **minor** or an **adult who lacks mental capacity** when:

- 1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301,
- 2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or
- 3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

G-4.03 CONFIDENCE AND PRIVILEGE

G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when

- (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301,
- (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or
- (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

Martha E. Clark, only notes this resource and further advice:

T. Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

Clergy Discipline and Church Polity
Office of the General Assembly
Constitutional Services

Laurie Griffith, Manager of Judicial Process
(888)728-7228 ext. 5432

Harassment and misconduct should be reported to the minister and clerk of session at the church where it occurred. If the harassment or misconduct was perpetrated by a minister, report it to the presbytery (both the presbytery executive and the stated clerk) of which the minister is a member.

The **Nevada Legislative Committee on Senior Citizens, Veterans, and Adults with Special Needs**, meeting March 21, 2012 reviewed this item of note and interest to Nevada churches. It was reported in the RAIN meeting for interest and following – with possible testimony to follow, as needed:

Discussion on Persons Required to Report the Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, or Isolation of Older Persons, presenter: Sally Ramm, Elder Rights Attorney, ADSD, Department of Health and Human Services.

Sally reviewed that the attorneys and clergy formerly on this mandatory reporting list were dropped from the list during the 2005 legislative revision of the law at the request of two legislators – one a lawyer and one a clergyman (though they are still required to report child sexual abuse). There was no public hearing or debate during the committee or legislative session. This is both an attorney client privilege and clergy penitent privilege issue. (Counter to nationwide expansion of the mandatory lists, Nevada shrunk theirs). Sally noted that there is a need to reinstate them to this list – which will require new law.

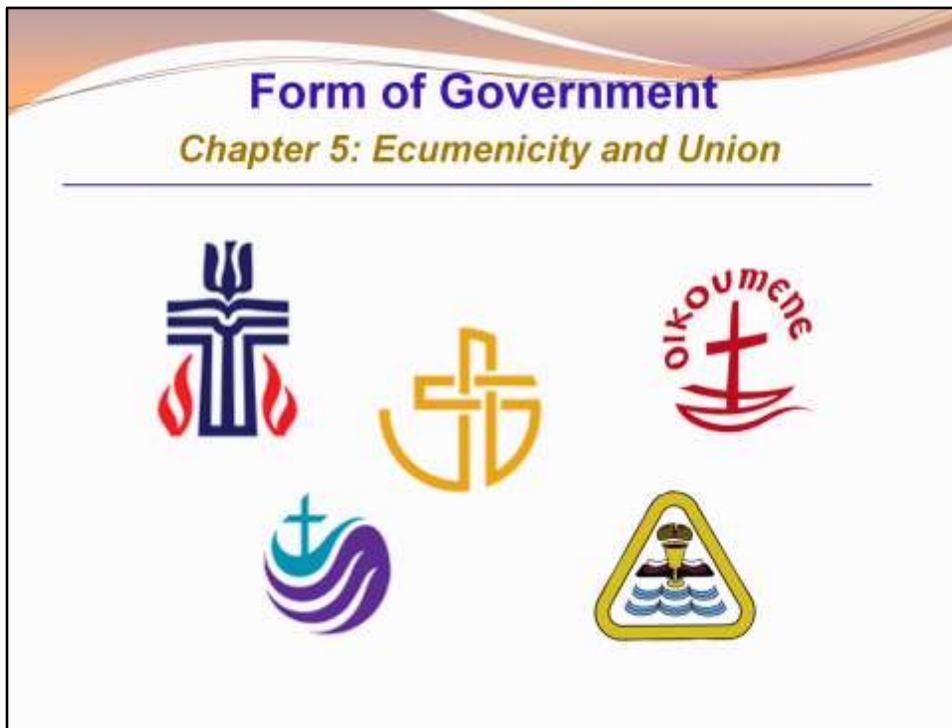
Recommend the Committee to do a Bill Draft Request.

Q&A: Resource impact? No. All reports go to law enforcement – no impact. Sticky issue on counselor turn-in -- too serious to change? State Bar opinion? Assemblyman Anderson is uncomfortable with revisiting attorney-client privilege; but, has no qualms about revisiting clergy-penitent privilege (!). The Bar has not yet been asked into the conversation, but could be and could help draft the BDR. Reporter's names are held confidential. Noted: Mandatory report exceptions for both clergy and attorneys in child sexual abuse.

Assemblyman Anderson – both statutory and case law impact this – we need the Bar in the room.

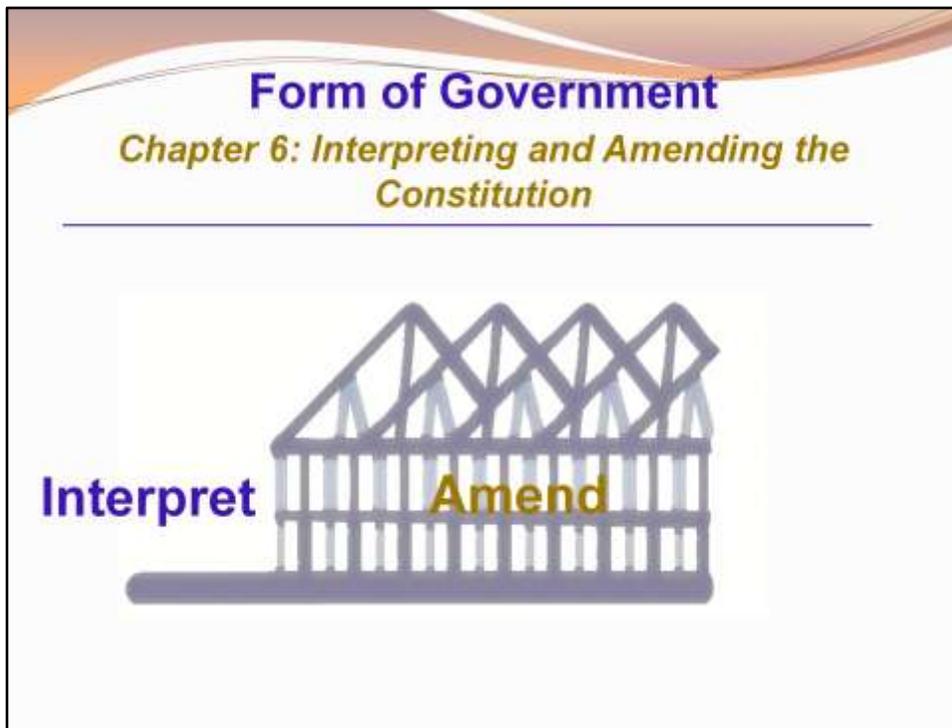
RAIN noted that it needs to explore this question with its judicatories and “be in the room” when the committee reviews this! Next meeting 9am May 16th – Agenda pending, this item may or may not be on the agenda.

What are your views?



Chapter Five is about Ecumenicity (say that five times, fast) and Church Union, the material covered in Chapters 15, Relationships, 16 Union Churches, and 17, Union Governing Bodies, of the previous Form of Government.

Also included here are the various ways in which the PCUSA relates to other denominations: correspondence, full communion, ecumenical statements; full organic union; union presbyteries; and various forms of joint congregational witness.



Finally, Chapter Six covers Interpreting and Amending the Constitution, and is the same material as in the previous G-18, Amendments.

Also in this last chapter is the description of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution which has been moved here from its previous location in G-13.0112, Advisory Committee on the Constitution.

No further substantive changes!

- The Directory for Worship remains substantially unchanged.
- The Rules of Discipline also remains substantially unchanged.

One change to the constitutional questions for ordination / installation:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions **for Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning**
– now reads:

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

Several procedural changes were affirmed for the Rules of Discipline – read this part only when you need it. Study it with an expert before using it.

So, what does newFOG demand of us?

A change of mindset

Can we learn to approach our polity not as a set of rules but as a description of our common life?

Can we change the pattern of creating a rule to address every uncertainty, and learn to apply the broad principles of our polity with creativity and flexibility?

NewFOG takes a new mindset. (an old one actually – back to 1729...?)

Absorb slide

Decisions Congregations Need to Make

- Determine the quorum for congregational meetings. (G-1.0501)
- Determine the period of minimum notice for a congregational meeting (G-1.0502)
- Determine whether the congregation wishes to adopt *Robert's Rules* as parliamentary authority.
- Determine the size and composition of the congregational nominating committee (G-2.0401)

Now, here is what your congregation needs to do – as these things are no longer done for them in the *BOO*.

These key organizational determinants are no longer defined in the new Book – so get your house in order with these actions so it can actually hold meetings and do business.

Since much of what the congregation does is defined in its corporation and bylaws, check these documents, as well.

Decisions Sessions Need to Make

- Whether to keep a list of inactive members (G-1.04)
- How will you prepare people for active membership? (G-1.0402)
- How will you examine those elected as deacons and ruling elders? (G-2.0104b)
- What term will the session clerk serve? (G-3.0104)
- Develop a manual of operations, including a sexual misconduct policy and a process for financial review. (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205)
- Obtain / maintain property and liability coverage (G-3.0112)
- Determine the quorum for session meetings. (G-3.0203)
- Etc.! – as noted above...

Now, here is what your session needs to do.

These things are no longer defined or required in the new Book, either – so get the session's house in order with these actions so it can do business.

Since some of what the session does is defined in the church's corporation and bylaws, check these documents as well.

So, where do **we go** from here?

(Let's be sure to ask the right questions ...)

- Fix what we have to so we can continue to do business – now!
- Fix the longer term stuff – later!

Absorb slide

Well, ...

**Our congregations are really two organizations!
(who knew?)**

Spiritual (Ecclesiastical)	Civil, Non-profit
• Minutes of Session	• Articles of Incorporation
• Minutes of the Deacons	• Bylaws of the Corporation
• Collection of Policies	• Minutes of the Corporation
... and now --	• Collection of Policies
• Manual of Operation	• Etc., etc., etc.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ –

This September, I reviewed with our Presbytery, that our denominational constitution has “always” required our congregations to organize as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state in which the congregation resides (if the state permits). This gives each of our congregations / worshipping fellowships / specialized ministries two organizations – a spiritual and ecclesiastical organization and a civil, non-profit organization -- each with their own distinct governing body and specific responsibilities: to God and His people (the congregation) and to the state and the civil corporation’s members (also the congregation).

Not only have our congregations done that, so, too, have many of the presbytery’s worshipping fellowships and specialized ministries.

Some have written wholly original incorporation documents (Articles of Incorporation, bylaws).

But, some may have included pertinent and specific paragraphs from our denominational constitution in them by quoting the paragraph in whole or simply by referring to its number in the denominational constitution.

- In the latter case, the paragraph reference is to the denominational constitution effective at the time of incorporation, unless a “successors’

clause is included.

- In both the former and latter cases, the paragraph quoted or included by reference may have been amended and may no longer say what the congregation means or needs it to say for them.

In any event, now that the “old” Book of Order has been replaced by NewFOG, our constitution’s Form of Government is so radically changed as to content and paragraph numbering it may be a good time for you to review the governance documents (**Articles of Incorporation** and **Bylaws**) of your civil non-profit corporation – and the **current corporation law governing non-profit corporations in your state** (the Nevada Revised Statutes Title 82 - <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/nrs-082.html>, or the several appropriate Titles and Chapters of the California Corporation Code – indexed at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=corp&codebody=&hits=20>) to see if your civil governance documents still meet your needs.

In their June meetings, the Trustees and Council reviewed the civil Articles of Incorporation of the Presbytery of Nevada non-profit corporation in anticipation of the majority of presbyteries affirming the New FOG for our denomination’s constitution. This is my record of the Council’s action:

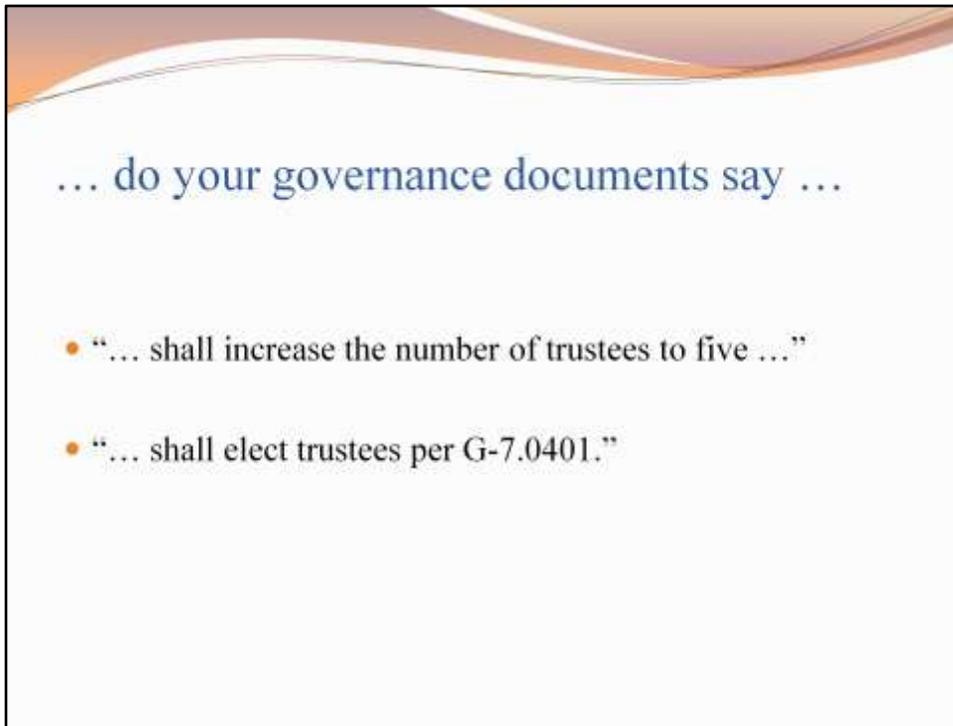
- On the issue of interpreting the Nevada Presbytery’s 1909 Articles of Incorporation as to which Book of Order the Articles actually refer to now: The Trustees proposed to the Council to take no action. **Council AFFIRMED**
- On the issue of the conflict between the 1909 Articles of Incorporation (which specifies **three** to **five** trustees) and the Council proposal to amend the Manual of Operations to increase the number of Trustees from **five** to **seven** (which has already been read before Presbytery in March): The Trustees proposed to amend the Manual of Operations proposal from the floor of Presbytery in its September meeting to - amend the Articles of Incorporation making size of the Board of Trustees a Standing Rules (Manual of Operations) issue rather than an Articles of Incorporation issue, *and* to increase the number of Trustees to seven. **Council AFFIRMED**
- On the issue of how we ensure that the Nevada Presbytery’s civil and ecclesiastical governance documents are compliant with their governing civil and ecclesiastical law: The Trustees and the Council proposed reviewing our Manual of Operations with counsel of the Nevada Revised Statutes Title 82 (non-profit corporations) the Constitution (New FOG) of the PC(U.S.A) on the schedule prescribed in the Manual of Operations. **Trustees and Council each AFFIRMED**
- On the issue of how Presbytery shall best serve our churches, worshipping

fellowships, and specialized ministries (as necessary) needs for their absorption of the content of the New FOG into their civil and ecclesiastical governance documents, the Trustees and the Council proposed that Presbytery shall alert them to the civil and ecclesiastical issues and let them resolve them on their own – but -- to offer help reviewing and resolving them from Presbytery through Equipping Ministries. **Trustees and Council each AFFIRMED** Elder Arthur Ritter will write a (this) letter to the sessions of our churches and the governing bodies of our worshipping fellowships and specialized ministries alerting them of the issues, outlining a process for review and resolution, and offering his (and others’) volunteer help with their resolution of the issues that may exist in their governance documents - through Equipping Ministries.

The presbyteries’ votes having been taken and reported, the “old” Book of Order has been replaced by NewFOG and our constitution’ governance section is now radically changed as to content and paragraph numbering insofar as the governance section (the Form of Government) goes.

The implication of this change is that your organization’s civil governance – and ecclesiastical governance -- documents may have become difficult to understand with this radical change – and / or (thanks to over 300 amendments to our constitution in the 28 short years of our denominational existence) may no longer meet the needs of your congregation / worshipping fellowship / specialized ministry.

In addition, sessions are now required to maintain Manuals of Operation just as Presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly have been so required by the Book of Order all along.



Here is a test...

Do your governance documents say ...

"... shall increase the number of trustees to five ..."

-- or --

"... shall elect trustees per G-7.0401."

If the latter, who knows what that means? (You already know this is an old book reference – the current book has only six chapters!)

Time to change it.

Here is my suggested process ...

- **Attend to the good order, housekeeping stuff!**
Then ...
- **First**, locate, open, and study the civil governance documents of your congregation
- **Second**, locate, open, and study your state's governing law
- **Third**, locate, open, and study the sections on ecclesiastical governance
- **Fourth**, note every place ...

As a committee of the whole --

Step Zero! Be sure that you can have a meeting at all! Fix the quorum and notice definitions in your governance documents for your congregation, session, and corporation. *Then ...*

First, locate (what a concept!), open, and study the civil governance documents of your congregation, worshipping fellowship, or specialized ministry. Each member of your session and your governance committee should have a copy of these documents.

Second, locate, open, and study your state's governing law on non-profit corporations and determine the options presented in the law for how your civil non-profit corporation can/could be organized and governed.

Third, locate, open, and study the sections on ecclesiastical governance in the new Form of Government in our denominational constitution (<http://oga.pcusa.org/constitution.htm#boo>) – and the questions posed to Sessions in the [Advisory Handbook for Councils](#).

Fourth, note every place in your civil and ecclesiastical governance documents where they directly quote or refer to specific paragraphs of the denominational constitution

that was in force when the document were brought into being and/or was filed with the state.

Your organization is legally covered here – by the book in force when your predecessors filed the organizing documents. Do you have a copy of it?

Here is my suggested process ...

- **Fifth**, compile and address the questions in the [Advisory Handbook for Councils](#)
- **Sixth**, compare your civil and ecclesiastical governance documents
- **Seventh**, discern God's will ...
- **Eighth**, resolve any conflicts -- on paper
- **Ninth**, take the necessary adoption and implementing actions

As a committee of the whole --

...

Fifth, compile and address the questions in the appropriate [Advisory Handbook for Councils](#) with the policy decisions you have already made and recorded in your session or steering committee minutes.

Sixth, compare what your civil and ecclesiastical governance documents *describe* -- to -- how you *actually* govern your congregation, worshipping fellowship, or specialized ministry in civil issues.

Seventh, discern God's will for your congregation, worshipping fellowship, or specialized ministry in its place -- now and into the future you foresee and determine the form of governance He leads you to for His purpose.

Eighth, resolve on paper any conflicts that may exist between the expression of your civil governance documents (the First through Sixth steps) and God's will (the Seventh step).

Ninth, take the necessary adoption and implementing actions to effect God's will in the governance of your civil and ecclesiastical documents -- *and practices*.

Advisory Handbook for Councils

ADVISORY HANDBOOK FOR COUNCILS

Reference	Constitutional Provision	Questions or Options to Consider
F-1.01 G-1.0101	Each congregation is charged to "carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, and living in covenant life with God and each other."	Does the session give evidence of a defined mission and do its programs reflect the defined mission?
G-2.03 G-2.04 G-2.05 G-3.02	Nurturing the faith of members & seeing to the proper preparation of persons for ordered ministry.	Has the session sought out members to be encouraged to consider their call to the ordered ministries of ruling elder, teaching elder, and deacon and recommended and supported those who undertake this process?
G-3.0201	Session is directed to an expansive list of responsibilities.	Are routine responsibilities carried out by the session? Is there evidence of energy, intelligence and imagination in the work of the session?
G-1.0305 G-1.0304 G-1.0404 G-1.0101 G-1.0102	Members are to be trained, received, and nurtured.	What opportunities are given for members to be received? Is there a regular program of member nurture after joining the congregation?
G-3.0113	Church members and financial stewards seek	To the congregation resources, to the support of the

... and here is how these look

The congregation and all of the councils of the church are treated in this one reference.



So, where do **we go** from here?

... because

-- in any case --

we are **GOING ...**

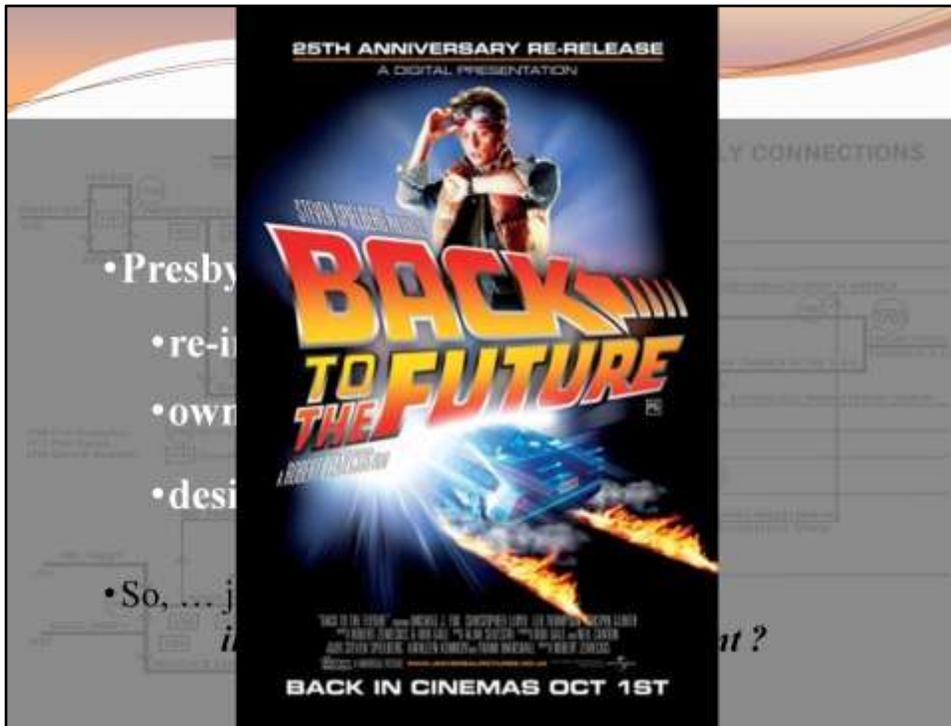
Even in these times of great uncertainty over all of this,

-- we can be certain of one thing -- **we are going!**

(in the words of that great American Astronaut and Theologian, Buzz Lightyear):

“to infinity ... and beyond!”





I think that we will find that we are really going ... **Back to the Future!**

Get those housekeeping things done first.

Then, when you are ready, inspect and re-build your foundation, as needed -- and then, inspect and re-build the house.

... and the best place to start with that – for any organization – is with its understanding of

its values,

its market,

its mission,

its vision, and

its goals.

Would you like to give it a test ride? OK – here we go!

So -- What is the Church??

In **organizational terms**, the best short description of any organization is an integrated expression of these most fundamental statements –

“We are (**our values**) sent to (**our market**) to accomplish (**our mission**) *so that* (**God’s vision of the future**) is achieved* by (**His goal**).”

* By the way ... His vision **will** be achieved – this is the Church’s part in it.

So -- What is this Church??

We will be speaking in polity terms now – about the “church visible” - as an organization.

In real life, I tell my clients that ... in **organizational terms**, the best short description of any organization is an integrated expression of these most fundamental statements – Values, Market, Mission, Vision, and Goals – like this:

“We are (**our values**)
sent to (**our market**)
to accomplish (**our mission**)
so that (in our case - **God’s vision of the future**)
is achieved by (**His goal**).”

(Let me assure you ... His vision **will** be achieved – this statement is simply descriptive of the Church’s part in His work.)

I also tell my clients that making these foundational Values, Market, Mission, Vision, and Goals statements is **the singular responsibility of the owner of the organization** – who, after all, is the one who has some purpose, some objectives, something in mind to get out of the organization by making it! – and accomplishing/achieving

these things by some date or event in the future.

Such a statement could be made for any type of organization (modified a bit to suite its specific needs).

- Done formally, the organization itself has a far better self-understanding about what its owner wants to get out of its very existence, let alone its operation – and what its members are to do and why.
- Done clearly and accurately, this statement will describe exactly how - **and will predict how well** - the organization works and will work -- in terms of its owner's purpose for it.

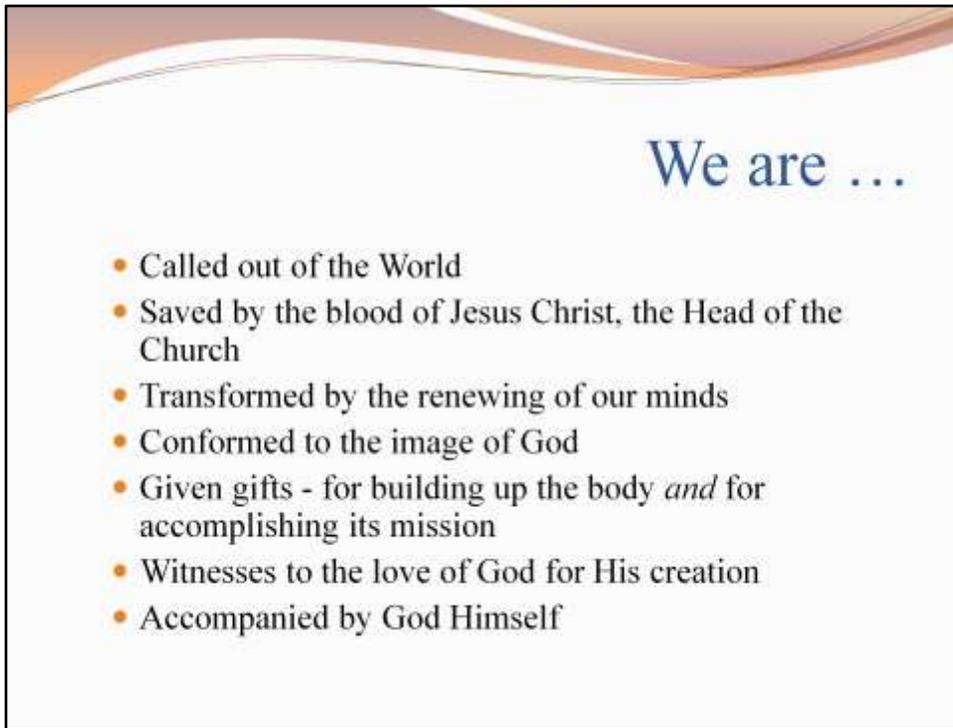
Sadly, most churches screw these statements up entirely – mistaking vision for mission, mission for vision, ignoring market entirely or addressing it over-broadly, ignoring values, and over-focusing on time goals rather than event goals. Our results show how badly we fumble this ball -- from the very start.

This last observation might have been a note-taking moment.

Formally done or not, done well or not, good or bad, clear or unclear, unified or scattered, this statement will diagnose how, how well, and even whether any organization will produce what the owner wants from it.

Well, so much for the free consultation – lets see how this statement describes the church.

In polity terms, lets look at “The Church” ...



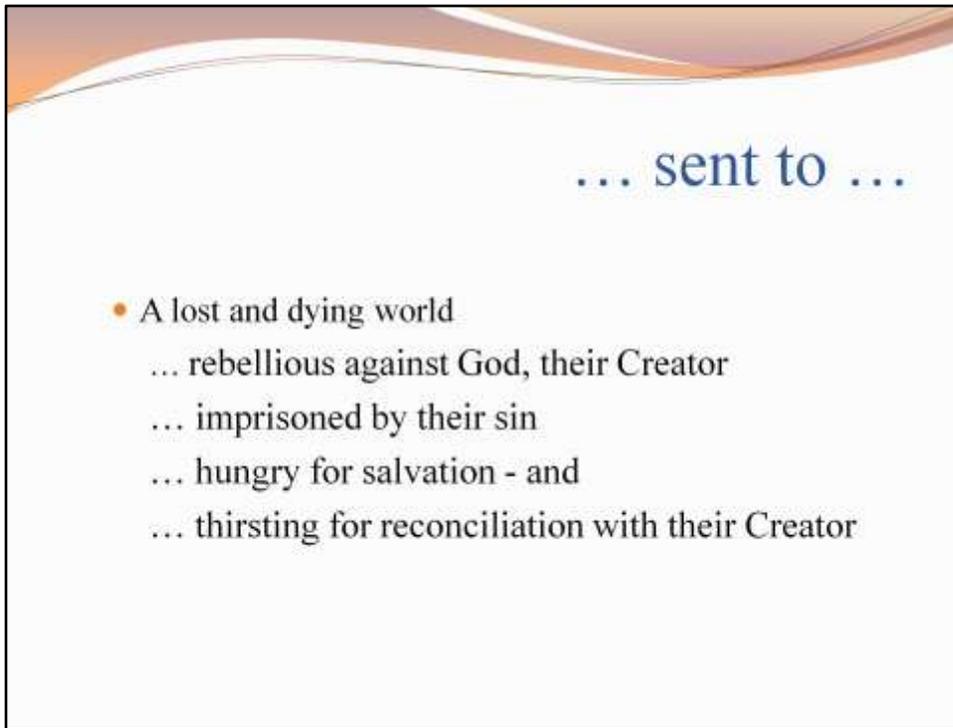
We are ...

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture who the church is – and what it dearly values?

What about ***Mt View Presbyterian Church***? ... in its current, specific situation ... today?

Could you add elements from scripture to improve this?



We are ... **sent to** ...

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture who the church is sent to serve – its “market?”

What about ***Mt View Presbyterian Church***? ... in its current, specific situation
... today?

Could you add elements from scripture to improve this?

... our **Mission...**
(what we are sent to **do**)

- **Proclaim the gospel** for the salvation of humankind;
- **Provide shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship** of the children of God;
- **Maintain (and practice) divine worship;**
- **Preserve the truth;**
- **Promote social righteousness;** and
- **Exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven** to the world

We are ... sent to ... our market to perform ... our **Mission** (or, what we are sent to **do**) which is to ...

(Read the slide)

Do these elements describe what the church is sent to **do**?

What about **Mt View Presbyterian Church**? ... in its current, specific situation ... today?

Could you add elements from scripture to improve this?

These are the “Six Great Ends of the Church.”

And they are all mission statements - “**do**” statements.

... God's Vision and Goal
(**why** we do it – **when** we will be finished)

...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

-- The Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian Churches 2:10-11
-- and to the Roman Churches 14:11
-- all the while, quoting God's prophet, Isaiah 45:23

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

-- Jesus to his disciples in Mark 13:32
-- Matthew 24:32
-- and Acts 1:7

but... we'd better be ready!

And here is why this body -

- described-by-its-**values**, is sent to its
- **Market** (described in terms of its lost state), and does
- the things we **do** with them / to them / for them (our **mission**) --

All of this makes sense to us humans (who are created in God's intellectual image and need to have the reason behind our actions – we are hard-wired this way) when we can see ...

God's Vision and Goal (why we do it – when we will be finished)

(Read the slide)

Do these elements capture why the church is sent to do its mission?

What about for **Mt View Presbyterian Church**? ... in its current, specific situation ... today?

Could you add elements from scripture to improve this **vision**?

And when will we achieve the **Goal**?

I don't know.

Do you know?

Did Jesus know when He was with His church on this earth?

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." – Mark 13:32.

-- or --

Matthew 24:36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

-- or --

Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

“The Church” described in our Constitution:

- *F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ*
 - ... given ... all the gifts necessary to be his body. ... to demonstrate these gifts in its life
 - ... a community of faith, of hope, of love, of witness
- *F-1.0302 The Marks of the Church*
 - With all Christians of the Church catholic, we affirm that the Church is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”
- *F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church*
 - the Word of God is truly preached and heard,
 - the Sacraments are rightly administered, and
 - ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

Here is how our church is described in our Constitution – the “blueprint for mission:”

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.

F-1.0302 The Marks of the Church

With all Christians of the Church catholic, we affirm that the Church is “**one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.**”

a. *The **Unity** of the Church*

Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Church seeks to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone. There is one Church, for there is one Spirit, one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5–6).

Because in Christ the Church is one, it strives to be one. To be one with Christ is to be joined with all those whom Christ calls into relationship with him. To be thus joined with one another is to become priests for one another, praying for the world and for one another and sharing the various gifts God has given to each Christian for the benefit of the whole community. Division into different denominations obscures but does not destroy unity in Christ. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity, and is willing to seek and to deepen communion with all other churches within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

b. *The **Holiness** of the Church*

Holiness is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Through the love of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God takes away the sin of the world. The holiness of the Church comes from Christ who sets it apart to bear witness to his love, and not from the purity of its doctrine or the righteousness of its actions.

Because in Christ the Church is holy, the Church, its members, and those in its ordered ministries strive to lead lives worthy of the Gospel we proclaim. In gratitude for Christ's work of redemption, we rely upon the work of God's Spirit through Scripture and the means of grace (W-5.5001) to form every believer and every community for this holy living. We confess the persistence of sin in our corporate and individual lives. At the same time, we also confess that we are forgiven by Christ and called again and yet again to strive for the purity, righteousness, and truth revealed to us in Jesus Christ and promised to all people in God's new creation.

c. *The **Catholicity** of the Church*

Catholicity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God overcomes our alienation and repairs our division.

Because in Christ the Church is catholic, it strives everywhere to testify to Christ's embrace of men, women, and children of all times, places, races, nations, ages, conditions, and stations in life. The catholicity of the Church summons the Church to

a deeper faith, a larger hope, and a more complete love as it bears witness to God's grace.

d. *The **Apostolicity** of the Church*

Apostolicity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God sends the Church into the world to share the gospel of God's redemption of all things and people.

Because in Christ the Church is apostolic, it strives to proclaim this gospel faithfully. The Church receives the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ through the testimony of those whom Christ sent, both those whom we call apostles and those whom Christ has called throughout the long history of the Church. The Church has been and is even now sent into the world by Jesus Christ to bear that testimony to others. The Church bears witness in word and work that in Christ the new creation has begun, and that God who creates life also frees those in bondage, forgives sin, reconciles brokenness, makes all things new, and is still at work in the world. To be members of the body of Christ is to be sent out to pursue the mission of God and to participate in God's new creation, God's kingdom drawing the present into itself. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the Gospel of Jesus Christ as received from the prophets and apostles, and stands in continuity with God's mission through the ages.

The Church strives to be faithful to the good news it has received and accountable to the standards of the confessions. The Church seeks to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of Christ alone as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples.

The Church is sent to be Christ's faithful evangelist:

- making disciples of all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
- sharing with others a deep life of worship, prayer, fellowship, and service; and
- participating in God's mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from sin, suffering, and oppression; and to establish Christ's just, loving, and peaceable rule in the world.

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church (See The Scots Confession, Ch. XVIII (The Book of Confessions, 3.18)

Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever:

- **the Word of God is truly preached and heard,**

- **the Sacraments are rightly administered, and**
- **ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.**

“Our Mission” described in our Constitution:

- *F-1.0303 (continued)* ... the Church is faithful to the **mission of Christ** as it:
 - *Proclaims and hears the Word of God,*
 - *Administers and receives the Sacraments, and*
 - *Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ,*
- *F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church* The **great ends of the Church** are:
 - the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
 - the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
 - the maintenance of divine worship;
 - the preservation of the truth;
 - the promotion of social righteousness; and
 - the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

Here is what God does! Will you see these things happening in your community and join God in doing them?

F-1.01 GOD’S MISSION

The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — **creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms** all things and all people. This one living God, the Scriptures say, liberated the people of Israel from oppression and covenanted to be their God. By the power of the Spirit, this one living God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to live in the world, die for the world, and be raised again to new life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ announces the nearness of God’s kingdom, bringing good news to all who are impoverished, sight to all who are blind, freedom to all who are oppressed, and proclaiming the Lord’s favor upon all creation.

The **mission of God** in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, **the Church participates in God’s mission** for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. **Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God’s mission.**

The **Church’s life and mission** are a joyful participation in **Christ’s ongoing life and**

work. 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 gives to the Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its order and discipline. 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. -- F-1.0201 - F-1.0205 (selected)

F-1.0303 (continued) In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, **the Church is faithful to the mission of Christ** as it:

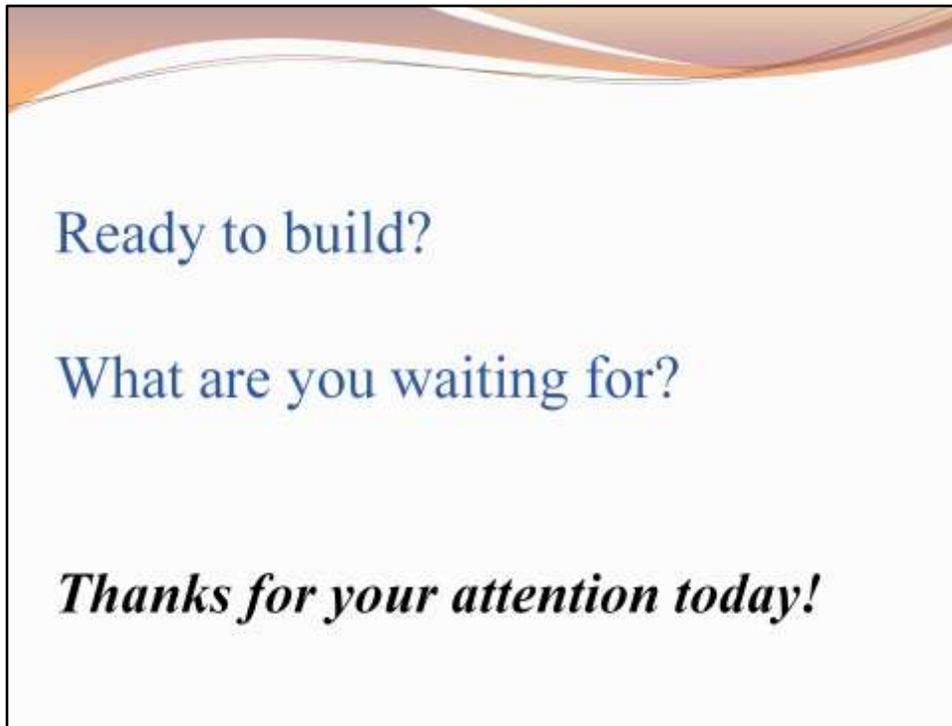
- **Proclaims and hears the Word of God**, responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and inviting all people to participate in that new creation;
- **Administers and receives the Sacraments**, welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ, bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection, anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and
- **Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ**, living in the strength of God's promise and giving itself in service to God's mission.

F-1.0304 *The Great Ends of the Church*

The great ends of the Church are:

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- the maintenance of divine worship;
- the preservation of the truth;
- the promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

(This statement of the Great Ends of the Church, slightly edited here, came from the United Presbyterian Church of North America, which united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1958. The statement was then made a part of the Constitution of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as the united body was called. This now classic statement was adopted by the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1910, following various actions between 1904 and 1910 looking forward to the revision of the church's Constitution.)



OK! The pen is yours ... give it a shot! Write your own descriptive statement of Mountain View Presbyterian Church – as it is now ... and as you see God’s leading to what it should be.

Thank you for your attention and participation today.

If you have any questions or requests, please email me at: Art@AGRitter.com and we can arrange help for you or your church with more detailed help on values, market, mission, vision, and goals – and your other organizational documentation - at your convenience.