



Equipping the Presbyters: Discussing the Constitutional Amendments - Parts 1 - 3

Facilitated by Elder Art Ritter,
Vice Moderator, Nevada Presbytery

Grace and Peace to you from the Presbytery of Nevada's Equipping the Saints Committee – and WELCOME TO PRESBYTERY!

I am Art Ritter and I will be facilitating this workshop on our responsibilities as presbyters for Godly Decision-making – especially as this relates to the “Parts 1 through 3” of the Amendments to the Constitution that the 219th General Assembly of our denomination referred to the Presbyteries this last summer for affirmation – or rejection. (There are actually 17 amendments in these three parts!)

This workshop is produced for the purposes of:

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

Because our Presbytery’s job this afternoon is determining its vote on these proposals, this morning’s presentation shifts focus from the earlier workshops’ emphasis on the process of studying the proposals in preparation for considering them at Presbytery -- to understanding the proposals themselves for the purpose of equipping you to consider them this afternoon: debating them, if necessary, and voting on them.



May the words of our mouths ...

and the meditations of our hearts ...

be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord.

Amen!

Lets begin in prayer.

Introductions ...

● **Arthur Ritter**, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

- Elder and Deacon, Clerk of Session, Treasurer of the Board of Deacons
- FPC, LV Commissioner to the **Nevada Presbytery**
 - Member, Committee on Preparation for Ministry
 - Member, Equipping Ministries
 - Vice Moderator of the Presbytery of Nevada,
- NV Presbytery Commissioner to the Synod of the Pacific.
 - Member, Synod's Mission Personnel Committee.
- Vice President of the Religious Alliance In Nevada – a consortium of five mainline denominations.
- Polity (business model) wonk – in real life, too.
- Study Preparation – 1 live presentation in November – and 7 live presentations in January, and since then my presentations are online

And you? ...

This is who I am and my association with the subject of church polity – and with these 17 proposed amendments.

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

I have provided workshops on studying these proposed amendments now to eight gatherings of Presbyters – first, in our Presbytery’s “Equipping the Saints” event, as one of several workshops presented that day back in November last year ... and in seven workshops “on the road” for presbyters in churches as they conveniently cluster across our Presbytery.

How many of you have attended at least one of the “Equipping ...” workshops? How many read them online?

Now, of you, how many followed the steps for study that I laid out -- and know both: how you should vote on each of these proposed amendments – and why you should vote that way?

Well, we have an hour and a half to get you all to that point!

Those of you who are there now: Will those starting from a dead start make it by the

time these items come up for vote this afternoon?

Come on now, don't be so harsh! As you will soon see, we have a great amount of Christian maturity and broad Presbyterian polity experience in this room – and across our presbytery!

What did we get ourselves into here?

- What changes are proposed to our Constitution?
 - A new Form of Government format (in the Book of Order)
 - An addition to our Book of Confessions – the Confession of Belhar– and ...
 - 15 content changes and additions to our Book of Order
- What is “polity” ... anyway?
- What does it mean for me, my office, and the Spring Presbytery meeting?

I suppose that even by now, some may be questioning their judgment about coming today ... Well, I hope it won't be that bad!

Contemplate the slide topics

Today, we will start our discussion with the topic in the middle of this slide – an overview of what polity is.

Then, we will see what “polity” means to us and how it helps us to do what we do as a church.

Last, we will address the three proposals for *change* in our polity.

Although we will not debate, or argue these proposals in this morning, we will spend our time on their content and rationale – and how we prepare our consciences to vote on them – and on what your questions about them may be -- so that we can address them later of the floor of presbytery - “decently and in order.”

I hope that you will find this *informative* (whether you are “into this sort of thing” or not) and *instructive* – especially as you have some part to play in the process.

Again -- my purpose today is to ***persuade you*** to dig into the amendment proposals -- on your own and with mature Christians whose opinions and experiences and

expertise can be helpful -- so that our consideration of them together on the floor of Presbytery will bring us to God's will for His church in each vote.

POLITY ...

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

... brings *order out of chaos*

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

First off, what is this ***polity*** thing we have been talking about? -- 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 one is how the US Army defines its field artillery!



POLITY ...

“How God works through His people”

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

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

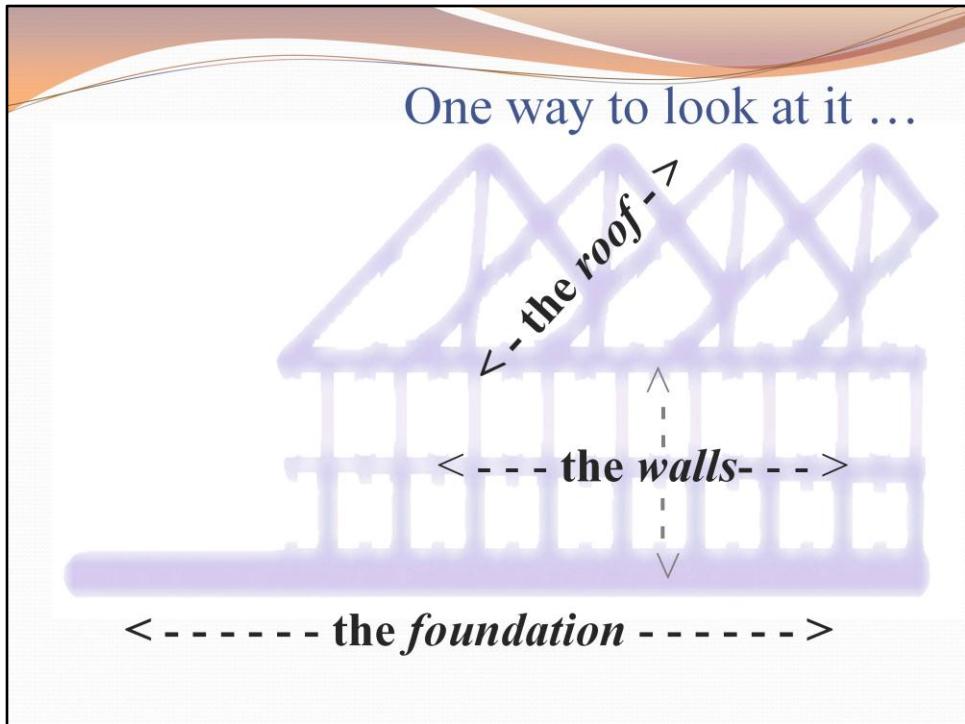
There may be many more-precise definitions of “polity”, but these may be helpful to us, today ...

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

At least you can see here that **polity** is not the work of the Church;
... participating in the mission that God has for His church is the work of the Church.

Polity ... it is how we govern our participation, our congregation’s members’ participation, our congregation’s participation, our presbytery’s participation, our synod’s participation – and our denomination’s participation in God’s work.

Here is how people who proposed the “big change” for our polity (which we will consider in a while) look at this term ...



The New FOG Task Force used this analogy:

Polity is the architecture of mission for the church

... and like any good blueprint ... *polity specifies* --

the *pitch of our covenantal roof* ...

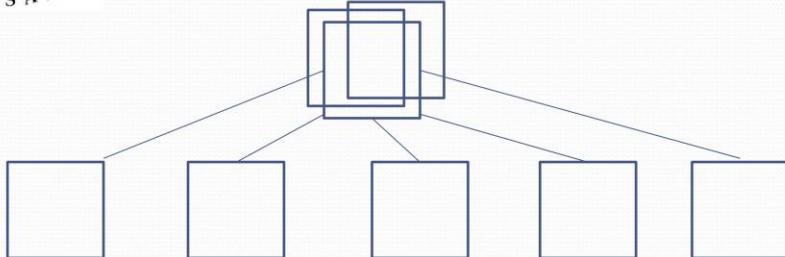
the *height and width of our ecclesiastical walls*, and

the *depth and breadth of the theological foundations* upon which our organized human effort rests.



Lets get *personal* about Polity

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church



You and all of your brothers and sisters in Christ - work directly for Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church

But -- let's get personal!

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church – and I hope that you have a direct and personal relationship with Him.

From a polity perspective: Our World Is Flat! You each work directly for the CEO of His church and so do all of your brothers and sisters in Christ. The church does not stand between you and Jesus ... between you and God ... between you and the Holy Spirit.

It helps you build your relationship with the Triune Him –

... and organize your accomplishment of His work for you –

... with and for others.

(Read the slide)



Lets get *personal* about Polity

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church

In the Presbyterian Church (USA) ...

YOU are a member of a
CONGREGATION, which is a member of a
PRESBYTERY, which is organized with other PBYS into a
SYNOD, whose **PBYS** are organized with all PBYS into the
DENOMINATION – the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The **PRESBYTERY** is the center of governance in the PC (USA)

For our organization on earth – in the Presbyterian Church (USA) ...

YOU (along with over 2 million brothers and sisters in Christ) are a member of a
CONGREGATION, (there are 10,751 congregations) which is a member of a
PRESBYTERY, (there are 173 presbyteries) which is organized with other PBYS into
a
SYNOD, (there are 16 synods) whose **PBYS** are organized with all of the other PBYS
into the
DENOMINATION – the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The **PRESBYTERY** is the center of governance in the PC (USA)

(Read the slide)

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

Hallmarks of Presbyterian Decision-making

- ... **governed by representative bodies** composed of presbyters ...
- ... “**God alone is Lord of the conscience,**” ... **Holy Scriptures are the only rule** of faith and manners ... **no Church governing body ... to bind the conscience**
- ... a **majority** shall govern ... [appeals] finally decided by the **collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church.**

These are the hallmarks of decision making within our polity in this denomination of His church ...

Absorb the slide

The message here: Presbyters shall vote their individual consciences, rightfully prepared, discerning the will of God.

References:

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

G-9.0103 Unity of Governing Bodies All governing bodies of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The governing bodies are separate and independent, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate governing body. The jurisdiction of each governing body is limited by the express provisions of the

Constitution, **with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries**, and with the acts of each subject to review by the next higher governing body.

G-1.0301 Right of Judgment (1) (a) That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.” (Westminster Confession Chapter XX or XXII, par 2) - and

G-1.0307 Church Power (7) That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that **the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners**; that no Church governing body ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

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

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

OK, how does this affect me?

Recall your vows as church officers ...

There are 11 vows of ...

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

So, how does this affect me? Recall your vows as officers, Certified Christian Educators, and Commissioned Lay Pastors of the church ...

Absorb the slide

References:

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions to Officers and Commissioned Persons: Do you
... Will you ...

- trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church
- accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be God's Word to 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,
- be instructed and led by those confessions
- fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions
- be governed by our church's polity, and abide by its discipline
- be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit
- in your own life follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world

- further the peace, unity, and purity of the church
- to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love
- (For **elder**) be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service -- share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry show the love and justice of Jesus Christ
- (For **deacon**) 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?
- (For **minister** of the Word and Sacrament) be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people -- be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry show the love and justice of Jesus Christ
- (For **commissioned lay pastor**) 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 show the love and justice of Jesus Christ
- (For **certified Christian educator**) 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?

OK, why am I here?

The 219th GA (July, 2010) referred three items to the Presbyteries for their vote:

- Part 1 Replace FOG with “Foundations of Presbyterian Polity” and “New FOG” – in the *Book of Order*
- Part 2 Add the Confession of Belhar– to the Book of Confessions
- Part 3 Approve 15 content Amendments to the *Book of Order*

OK, why am I here?

Ignoring the greater, more general and existential aspect of this question – lets just examine the practical reasons for this meeting today ...

Absorb the slide

OK, how might these affect us?

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

- How we generally *express and standardize* the way we govern,
- What we Confess our faith to be, and
- The **standards of our leadership** and 14 other things.

Here is the potential impact of these items -- if they are approved by the presbyteries.

Absorb the slide

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

Well, then, lets look at these three proposed changes to our polity – and then examine how we should prepare to vote on them.

How will the PC(USA) decide these?

Chapter 18 of our Book of Order ...

The Presbyterian Church (USA) would be **faithful** to the Lordship of Christ and to its historic tradition of the Church reformed always reforming, by the Spirit of God.

In this faith, **amendment procedures** are understood as a means to faithfulness as God breaks forth yet more light from God's Word.

Chapter 18 of our Book of Order directs how we amend our constitution. It opens with these principles:

The Presbyterian Church (USA) would be **faithful**

- **to the Lordship of Christ** and
- to **its historic tradition** of the Church ...

“... reformed always reforming, by the Spirit of God.”

In this faith, **amendment procedures themselves** are

- understood as a **means to faithfulness**
- as **God breaks forth yet more light from God's Word.**

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

G-18.0201

Amendments to Confessional Documents

... made only in the following manner:

- (1) The approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;
- (2) The approval in writing of **two thirds of the presbyteries**;
- (3) The approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

For **Amendments to Confessional Documents** this is a three step process which is made only in the following manner:

First, the approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;

The 219th General Assembly has done this with the BOC addition we will vote on in our Spring Presbytery.

Second, the approval in writing of **two thirds of the presbyteries**;

Third, the approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

Frankly the office of the GA doesn't know what would happen if step three doesn't occur – it has never happened before!

G-18.0301

Amendments to the *Book of Order*

... made only in the following manner:

- a. All proposals ...communicated in writing
- b. ... for clarity, consistency, and compatibility ...
- c. ... approved by General Assembly / transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote.
- d. ... **majority of all the presbyteries** must approve.

For **Amendments to the *Book of Order*** this is a four step process and are made only in the following manner:

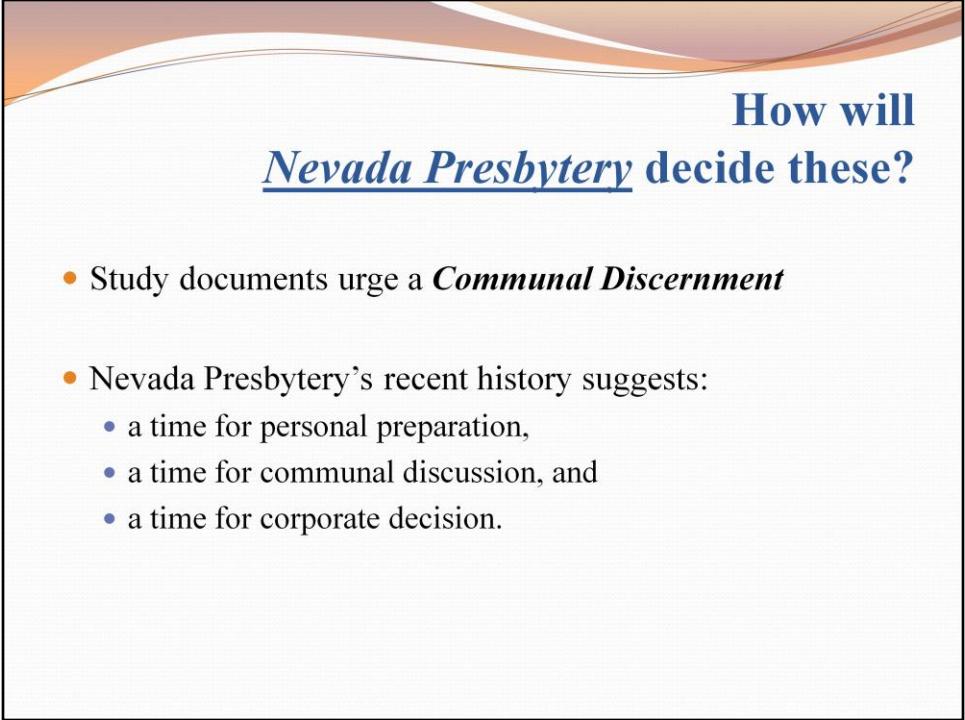
- a. All proposals requesting amendment of the *Book of Order* shall be communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.
- b. The Stated Clerk shall refer all such proposed amendments to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-13.0112), which shall examine the proposed amendment for clarity and consistency of language and for compatibility with other provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The advisory committee shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations, which may include an amended version of any proposed constitutional changes as well as advice to accept or decline the proposals referred to the committee. The General Assembly shall not consider any amendment until it has considered the report and any recommendation from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.
- c. Proposed amendments must be approved by the General Assembly and transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote.

These steps have been done for the “New FOG” and the BOO content

amendments we will vote in this Presbytery meeting – this afternoon.

... Presbyteries shall transmit their votes to the Stated Clerk by the next ensuing stated meeting of the General Assembly, but no later than one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendments.

d. When the Stated Clerk has received written advice that a proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* has received the affirmative votes of a majority of all the presbyteries, said amendment shall become effective as of one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendment.



How will Nevada Presbytery decide these?

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

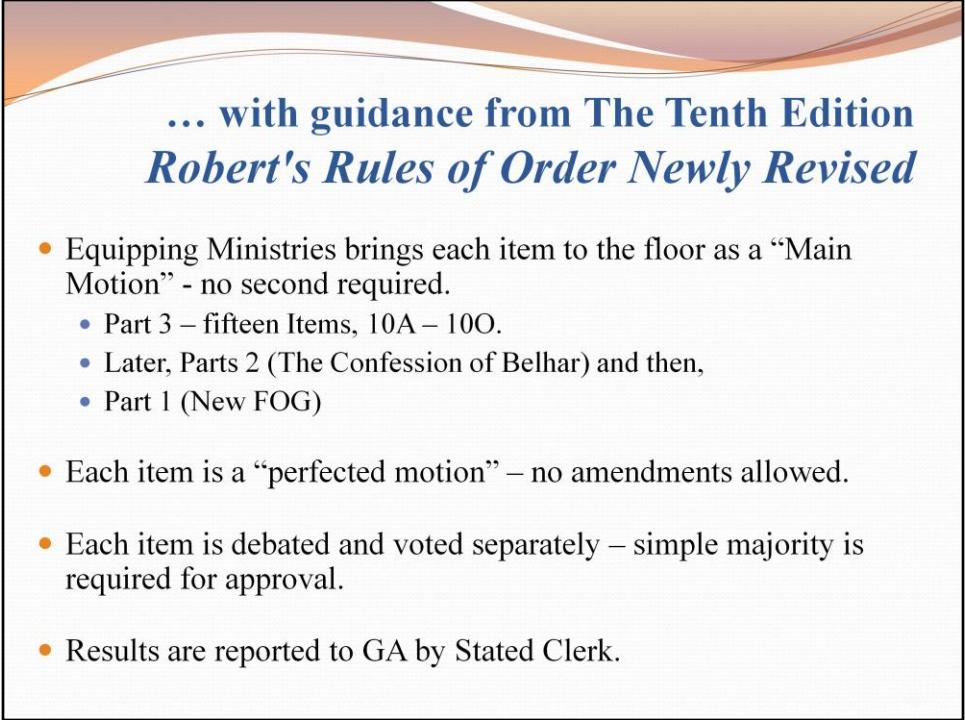
You may have found in the study guides that GA proposes a time on the docket of Communal Discernment in the Presbyteries' consideration of these amendments.

Our Presbytery is using a different process for considering these items - based on the success of our recent consideration of the SMP dissolution experience we have just had – and on the process we used successfully with the last batch of Amendments to our Constitution several Presbytery meetings ago.

My strong recommendation to you, our Presbyters, is to be thoroughly prepared to debate and vote these proposed amendments when we consider them this afternoon.

- That includes your personal study as you prepared to come to Presbytery.
- And this time for communal study and discussion.
- And then their formal consideration (debate and vote) on the floor of Presbytery.

Remember how quickly that went at South Lake Tahoe when we considered dissolving the Sierra Mission Partnership?



... with guidance from The Tenth Edition *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*

- Equipping Ministries brings each item to the floor as a “Main Motion” - no second required.
 - Part 3 – fifteen Items, 10A – 10O.
 - Later, Parts 2 (The Confession of Belhar) and then,
 - Part 1 (New FOG)
- Each item is a “perfected motion” – no amendments allowed.
- Each item is debated and voted separately – simple majority is required for approval.
- Results are reported to GA by Stated Clerk.

Here is what to expect – this afternoon:

- As part of its report, the Equipping Ministries Committee will bring the items to the floor of Presbytery. As such, no second to these items will be necessary.
- We will do the 15 Part 3 items first. You will cast 15 separate votes on a written ballot.
- While your ballots are being counted, Presbytery will hear other reports.
- Counting done, the results of Part 3 voting will be announced and Equipping will bring Parts 2 and 3, again as part of their report. You will cast your vote on each of these Parts, again, on a written ballot.
- And again, as your ballots are counted Presbytery will hear other reports.
- Counting done, the results will be announced and Equipping’s report will be completed.

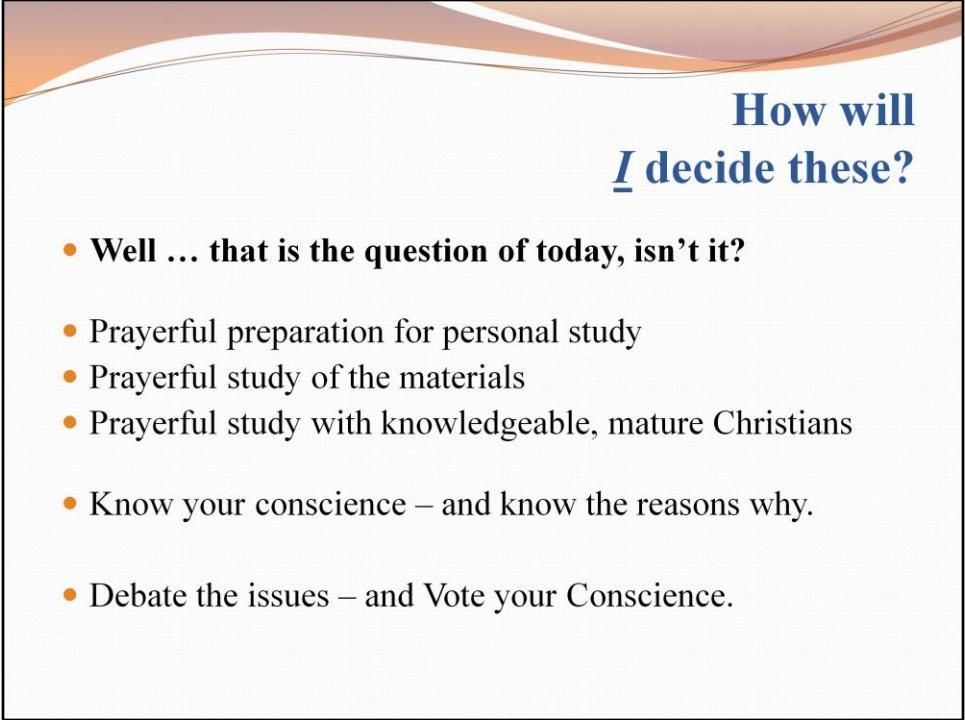
All of these items come to us for vote as “perfected motions” – that is, they cannot be amended or revised by our presbytery – they must be voted as they stand.

Once on the floor, they may be debated -- if there are opinions on them to be expressed by the members of Presbytery. This debate may be constrained in the interests of time and fairness by the Moderator. The Moderator may neither speak for nor against the motion on the floor.

When the body is ready, it shall vote – a **simple majority will prevail on every item**

brought before the body – whether the item amends the Book of Confessions or the Book of Order.

At the conclusion of voting, and without any further action or direction from the body, the Stated Clerk of Presbytery will record the vote on each of the 17 items and report these votes in writing to the Stated Clerk of General Assembly.



How will I decide these?

- Well ... that is the question of today, isn't it?
- Prayerful preparation for personal study
- Prayerful study of the materials
- Prayerful study with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know your conscience – and know the reasons why.
- Debate the issues – and Vote your Conscience.

How will I decide how to vote on each of these amendments (...you may be asking...)? Well, that is the question of today, isn't it?

In the workshops we explored these study recommendations and their tools:

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

Later we will explore debating within this “conscience-prepared” context – live on the floor of Presbytery.



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

Whom do I serve as a Presbyter?

Whose Church is it anyway?

Do I have to invent my answer?

Have I already been told what to do?

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

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

Discuss

Whom do I serve as a Presbyter?

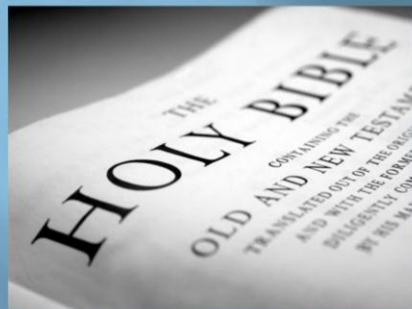
Whose Church is it anyway?

Do I have to invent my answer?

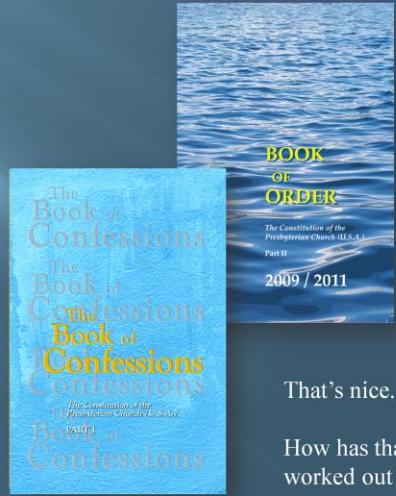
Have I already been told what to do?

It comes down to discerning God’s will – not deciding or inventing some answer on *any other basis*.

Where is this all written down?



- + BOO requires Manuals for Operation in each governing body (above Session)



That's nice.

How has that worked out for us?

Well – where is all this “polity” written down?

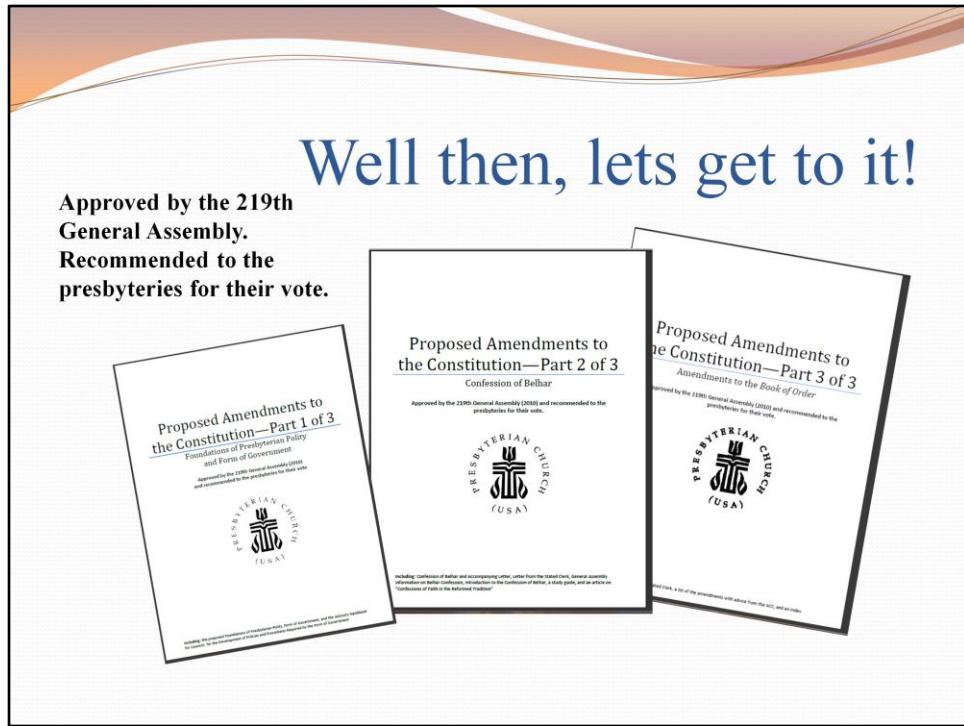
Absorb screen...

... actually – in the Holy Bible. Not very systematically, though, that is the work of our Constitution which extracts our polity from scripture and systematizes it in our constitution’s two books: The Book of Confessions and the Book of Order.

(In theory.)

We Presbyterians love to write this stuff down, so our Constitution also specifies that Manuals of Operation be written for GA, the Synods, and for the presbyteries to further explain how we govern at those levels.

Your church has written it down too – in your church’s civil Articles of Incorporation, that corporation’s bylaws, and in your policies and manuals of operation for your Session and Deaconate, too. Most of these documents make extensive reference to our Constitution – either by quoting, or by citing, or by “incorporating by reference” much of the operative guidance in the Constitution - at least in the Form of Government part of the *Book of Order*.



Now, here are the three “Parts” of the proposed amendments to our Constitution:

- **Part 1 of 3 – Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government,** 46 pages -- plus 12 more pages describing the Advisory Handbooks made from material removed from the current Book of Order’s Form of Government section - for Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and GA’s use in their governance and (and modification to “local needs”). Also included with this booklet is an 8 page insert with the explanatory material so the “Part 1 of 3” can quickly stand beside the current Book of Order and be immediately useful in July this year if it passes before the reprint is available. 58 pages in all.
- **Part 2 of 3 – the Confession of Belhar,** 3 pages and its accompanying documents, the “Accompanying Letter” and the accompanying scriptural references to the confession (another 3 pages). If this proposal is adopted, these latter two documents are to be printed with it in the Book of Confessions; but, without confessional status. This Part also includes the explanatory material and recommendation for adding this confession to the Book of Confessions. With study helps, 24 pages in all.
- **Part 3 of 3 – Amendments to the Book of Order** Fifteen separately proposed amendments to the Form of Government, Directory of Worship, and Rules of Discipline parts of the current Book of Order; and with each of them their background and rationale for approval and some notes and committee and GA voting statistics. Again with study helps, 32 pages in all.

Whose voice has prepared your conscience?

Have you ...

... read the proposed amendments and addition?

... have you considered them in ~

...personal prayer?

...the context of your experiences?

...with the counsel of mature Christians?

...within the context of the teachings of the Church?

And tested them with ...**the Bible?**

If you have, you have a ticket to the conversation.

OK -- Whose voice has prepared your conscience to vote on these amendments?

Have you ... just listened to the world and uninformed opinions? Or have you ...

... read the proposed amendments to the *BOO* and the proposed addition to the *BOC*?

... have you considered each of them in ~

...personal prayer?

...the context of your experiences?

...with the counsel of mature Christians?

...within the context of the teachings of the Church?

And have you tested them with ... **the Bible?**

If you have, CONGRATULATIONS! -- you have a ticket to the conversation today.

You have come to know God in this process -- by experiencing Him -- as you obey Him – as you have read His Word, -- and He accomplishes His work through ... you!

Amen!



Equipping the Saints

November 6

Equipping the Presbyters

January 10 - 17

Invited: Presbyters from Nevada Presbytery Churches

- About 80 attendees - most were long-time Presbyterians:
 - Elders (session and presbytery experience)
 - Ministers (session and presbytery experience – over 20 presbyteries)
 - Commissioned Lay Pastors (ministry, presbytery experience)
 - Some Observers
- Experiences –
 - Presbytery committees
 - Synod / Synod Committees
 - GA as observers – and as delegates

As I said earlier, some of you in the audience today (and I) have addressed these amendments before in preparation for their study. In fact, my presentations reached you – and many more in your home church's Sessions.

I asked the participants in these workshop about their association with denominational polity. Here is what they shared (as best as I remember) about the experience they have had - and generously shared in these workshops ...

(review slide)

For today –

How many ministers of the Word and Sacrament are with us? How many of you have served churches in more than five presbyteries? ... seven presbyteries? ... ok, who is the winner?

How many elders here have served more than two presbyteries? ... five or more?

How many of you all have served as a commissioner to Synod? ... as commissioner to GA?

Well, you see that we have quite a lot polity of expertise right in this room! Thank

you for being here!

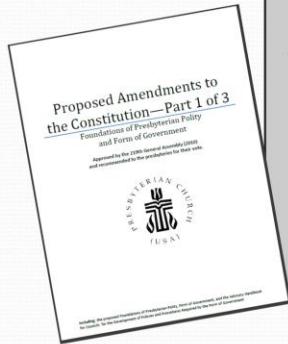
Part 1 of 3, New FOG

Approved by the 219th

General Assembly.

Recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.



Proposed Amendments to
the Constitution—Part 2 of 3

Confession of Belhar

Approved by the 219th General Assembly (2016) and recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.



Proposed Amendments to
the Constitution—Part 3 of 3

Amendments to the Book of Order

Approved by the 219th General Assembly (2016) and recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.



Passage requires majority of presbyteries approving.

Well, lets start applying that experience to the amendments that GA sent to the presbyteries for their vote.

This morning, we will go through the Part 1, the Part 2, and last the 15 items in Part 3 – even though this afternoon, Presbytery will formally consider and vote the 15 items of Part 3 first, and then Parts 1 and 2 later.

Those who heard our commissioners' reports from the 219th GA when we met at Bishop will recall that along with our presbytery's commissioners reporting, the Reverend Sharron Stanley, a GA commissioner from her home Presbytery of San Joachin (in our Synod) also shared with us the report she had given to her presbytery on “the GA experience.” Sharron, of course, is a regular attender of the Nevada Presbytery, manning her ministry display and regularly presenting her ministry to us -- so you may know her better as the founder and Executive director of the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Mission (FIRM).

I have borrowed a few of Sharron's observations here because she was generous enough to share them with me (as all of our commissioners also did) – but, she shared her *PowerPoint* with me ... and it is so easy to copy her slides for use as introductions to these amendment parts!

So, here we go – with Part 1!

New Form of Government “N-FoG”



Nothing changes until Presbyteries vote before July 10, 2011. If supported, new Book of Order begins next day.

- **Approved by 70% to 30% vote**
- **Retains historic principles of PCUSA Church Government, and keeps most of 1st 4 chapters.**
- **Proposes 6 chapters to respond to God's call to life in mission.**
- **Proposes “Advisory Handbook for Councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures Required” be developed to aid councils.**

Here is what Sharron observed happening at GA on the first part of the referred Amendments ...

(Absorb the slide content)

New FOG *newspeak*: The term “Councils” replaces our current term: “middle governing bodies.” In the picture, by the way, is JoAnn Poncho, one of our Nevada Presbytery commissioners and one of our to GA and a member of Valley PC, in Bishop, California.

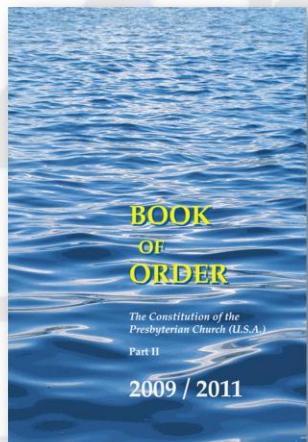
Remember from our *Book of Order*, Chapter XVIII discussion:

- At the denominational level *Book of Order* amendments – even one as extensive as this - require affirmative votes from 87 presbyteries to pass -- only a **simple majority** of the 173 presbyteries.
- At the Presbytery level, they also require only a **simple majority** of the attending and voting Presbyters to form their Presbytery’s vote.
- As a matter of practicality (and mathematics), abstention by an attending presbyter – or by a presbytery is a “no” vote.
- And, if approved, they are effective one year from the last day of the referring GA’s meeting (i.e., on July 11th 2011).

Now lets look at the Part 1 amendment.

The PC(USA) Constitution

Part Two



Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

Our current, 495 page *Book of Order* has three parts:

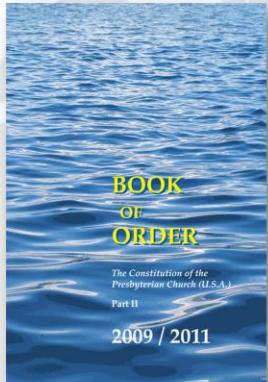
The **Form of Government**, which describes the essential tenants of our faith (in the first four chapters) ... and our church's system of governance: interrelationships, standards and processes, and function (in the remaining fourteen chapters) – all together 162 pages of these 495,

The **Directory for Worship**, which provides required standards and suggested process aspects of our worship life (in its seven Chapters) – the next 80 pages of the 495,

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 170 pages of the 495.

Leaving 80 pages for the Book of Order's introduction, table of contents, end notes (scriptural references etc. footnoted in the text of the FOG, the DOW, and the ROD), and index to the *BOO*.

The PC(USA) Constitution



**Foundations of
Presbyterian Polity**

Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline

The proposal sent to the presbyteries by the 219th General Assembly will revise **only** the **Form of Government** section of the **Book of Order**.

(This proposal envisions no changes to either the **Directory for Worship** or the **Rules of Discipline**.)

The revision proposes that the church replace the current **Form of Government** with two new documents:

“The **Foundations of Presbyterian Polity**,” containing most of the content from chapters 1-4 of the current Form of Government (13 pages of text) but in only three chapters on 11 pages of text,

And a new “**Form of Government**” containing some of the material from the 126 pages that hold the current Chapters 5-18 in the current Form of Government – reduced to six chapters on about 35 pages of text.

The rest of the content of the 2007-2009 *BOO* goes to Advisory Handbooks in the form of questions for consideration – which the middle governing bodies (or “Councils”) may use to localize these concerns in their manuals of operations for their specific situations and contexts.

I am hoping that you have read the New FOG and the paragraph maps to and from the current FOG that are provided as online study references. We won't be reading all 48 pages of the New FOG's text this morning (I know that many of you are disappointed in that, but please bear with us – you can read it at lunch).

Part 1 of 3

Considering “New FOG”

The Proposal to be voted by the Presbyteries before July 2011:

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

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
- 219th GA: 468/204/6
- Presbyteries as of :

This is what comes to our Presbytery for vote.

(pause to absorb the slide)

There are four pages of rationale for this amendment in the Part 1 Study Guide insert -- extracted from the 72 page report of the New FOG Task Force to the GA. Aside from the long history of the discussions, drafts, comment, and studies leading to the action (the task force having been formed by the 217th GA in 2006), the main points are:

- The recommended 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 proposed 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.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution is that the proposal regarding Foundations and the Form of Government 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

(the ACC notes here their historic concern over the tendency of the church to use its constitution as though it were a manual of operations and adding, via amendment, a large number of administrative and procedural details. They may be right – we have made over 300 amendments since our denomination was formed in 1983.)

- ... The proposal eliminates much of the existing process detail of governing bodies – a positive aspect which may be freedom for governing bodies to establish policies and procedures for their work that best suit the needs of their particular contexts. On the other hand, if passed, many Presbyterians may be puzzled or troubled by the new silence in the FOG concerning issues it formerly addressed.
- ... and, the proposal is coherent from a constitutional perspective to function as a replacement for the existing Form of Government...

Note the New FOG Task Force, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.

Evaluating New FOG...

My challenges to the Workshops ...

Does the New FOG:

- Give us something *practical*?
- Adequately describe the *interrelationships* of our community?
- Unambiguously set out the *standards* for measuring mission?
- Definitively outline the *functions* necessary to have a church?

- Can we get along without the deleted stuff?

- The Big Questions –

Does the New FOG express the whole counsel of God in our practices?

Will we be clearly guided by its content?

So – how should we evaluate this New FOG? Here is how I challenged the workshop participants:

Recall what polity is ... even as the Task Force defined it ...

Does the New FOG:

Adequately describe the *interrelationships* between the parts of the church,
Unambiguously set out the *standards* by which the church measures its ministry,
Definitively outline the *functions* necessary to being the church.

The Big Questions –

Does the New FOG express the whole counsel of God in our practices?

Will we be clearly guided by its content?

Evaluating New FOG...

THE WORKSHOPS' CONCERNS:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Is this biblical ? – or is it just political correctness? | Is it all worth it? |
| Will changes make it better? | Will it position the church for better doing of the mission? |
| Is God honored more with this? | Is this more important than what is in the bible on these subjects? |
| Will the church benefit? | Does it honor God? |
| Does it preserve our distinctives?
... support Peace, Unity, Purity? | Can we trust its words? |
| Will it divide the church? | Do we trust / care? |
| Can we build the church on this? | |

The workshops joined the question of evaluation criteria and collectively came to these questions for study aids.

You can see here the concerns of the attending presbyters ...

Study the slide

These concerns generally arose across all three of the Parts as we discussed them in the workshops – note the top one.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of the New FOG.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 1 for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Any comments or answers to these questions?

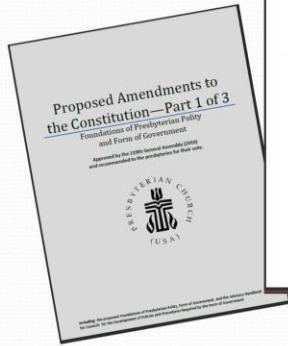
Part 2, of 3, the Confession of Belhar

Approved by the 219th

General Assembly.

Recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.



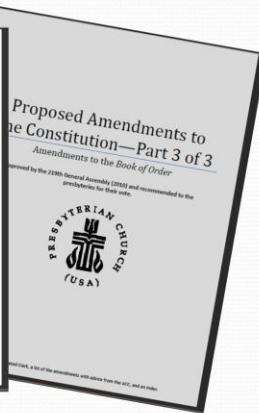
Proposed Amendments to the Constitution—Part 2 of 3

Confession of Belhar

Approved by the 220th General Assembly (2011) and recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.

(U.S.A.)



Passage requires 2/3 of presbyteries approving
— and 220th GA approval.

OK – lets turn now to **Part 2 of 3 – the Confession of Belhar**, 3 pages of confession and its “Accompanying Letter” and its accompanying scriptural references (another 3 pages).

If this proposal is adopted, these latter two documents are to be printed with the Confession in the Book of Confessions; but, without confessional status.

This Part also includes the explanatory material and the committee’s recommendation for adding this confession to the Book of Confessions. With study helps, 24 pages in all.

Belhar Confession

Approved 525-150-3 to send confession to Presbyteries for consideration for ratification by July 2011.

Approved form includes 2 amendments recommended by committee:

1) Original scripture references to be added as footnotes

2) Accompanying Letter to be included as background

Would be 1st confession approved in nearly 30 years.



80% of Christians live in global South. If approved, this would be our 1st confession from the region.

Here is what Sharron saw happen at GA ... (Yup – that's Sharron!)

Absorb the slide.

Recall that at the denominational level *Book of Order* amendments require affirmative votes from 87 presbyteries to pass -- a simple majority of the 173 presbyteries.

Well - unlike the *Book of Order* amendments, approval of changes to the Book of Confession ...

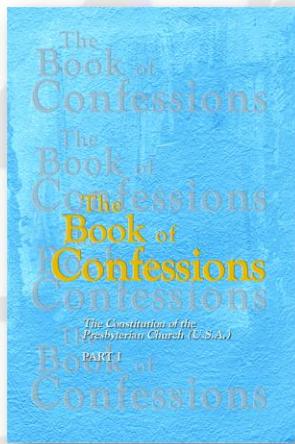
- Require affirmative votes from 116 presbyteries to pass this step at the denominational level -- a two-thirds majority of the 173 presbyteries.

But, at the Presbytery level, they again only require a simple majority of the attending and voting Presbyters to form the Presbytery's vote.

- Once again, at either level, abstention is a “no” vote.
- And if approved by two thirds of the presbyteries, they go to the next GA for approval and enactment.

The PC(USA) Constitution

Part One



- The Nicene Creed – A.D 325
The Apostles' Creed – A.D. 1st - 5th Cent

The Scots Confession – A.D. 1560
The Heidelberg Catechism – A.D. 1563
The Second Helvetic Confession – A.D. 1566
The Westminster Confession of Faith --
 The Larger Catechism 1647 /
 The Shorter Catechism 1729

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

The Book of Confessions, the theological polity part – is a collection of eleven creeds, confessions, and statements – 313 pages long - that define our theological heritage as Reformed and Presbyterian Christians.

These confessions stretch from the earliest, the Nicene Creed of 325 and the Apostles Creed (dating to the first or second century in one form or another) ...

Through the Reformation era confessions of the 15- to 1700s ...

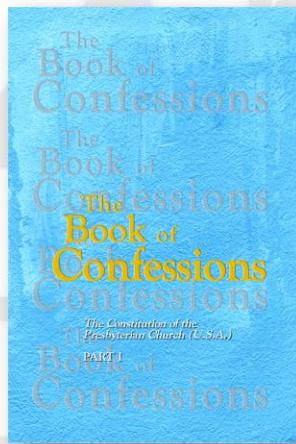
To the four statements made within living memory – including the last which marks the creation of our denomination from its “Northern Church” and “Southern Church” predecessors in 1983.

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

Review the slide

The PC(USA) Constitution

Part One



- The Nicene Creed – A.D 325
The Apostles' Creed – A.D. 1st - 5th Cent

The Scots Confession – A.D. 1560
The Heidelberg Catechism – A.D. 1563
The Second Helvetic Confession – A.D. 1566
The Westminster Confession of Faith --
 The Larger Catechism 1647 /
 The Shorter Catechism 1729

The Theological Declaration of Barmen 1934
The Confession of 1967
A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian
Church (USA) A.D 1983
The Confession of Belhar – A.D. 2012

The Confession of Belhar, would add its three pages of confessional content to this long confessional history.

Remember the timing for this new Confession to be added to the Book of Confessions, the 2/3 majority of the 173 presbyteries must approve it before this summer – and then the next GA must also approve and enact it – and that would be in the summer of 2012.

Part 2 of 3

Studying The Confession of Belhar

The Proposal to be voted by the Presbyteries before July 2011:

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall *The Book of Confessions* be amended by adding the Confession of Belhar following A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its accompanying documents? The “Accompanying Letter” and scriptural references to the confession should be printed with it without confessional status if this proposal is adopted.

Committee vote: 43/11/1
219th GA: 525/150/3
Presbyteries as of:

This is how the question comes to the presbyteries.

Pause to read slide

The process of preparing our church for the possibility of adopting the Confession of Belhar began with a task force reporting to the General Assembly in 2004. The Office of the General Assembly response to the Task Force to Study Reparations advised (and that General Assembly approved) that one part of the report be answered, commending “the Belhar Confession to the church as a resource for reflection, study, and response, as a means of deepening the commitment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to dealing with racism and a means of strengthening its unity” and urged presbyteries to study this confession before the 218th GA in 2008.

The 218th GA formed a Special Committee on the Belhar Confession which unanimously and enthusiastically recommended that the 219th General Assembly (2010) approve the inclusion of the Confession of Belhar in *The Book of Confessions*, and send it to the presbyteries for vote – which it did.

The Part 2 study guide contains three pages of rationale extracted from the Special Committee’s report – the highlights of which are:

- *Relevance* The Confession of Belhar confesses the Christian faith powerfully, touching hearts especially at those places where we are struggling today to be

faithful.

- *Reconciliation and Unity* ... the PC(USA) is preoccupied with questions about the unity of the church. The Confession of Belhar both reassures and challenges us when it speaks of Christ's work of reconciliation being made visible in the church.
- *Justice* Our church is preoccupied with questions of justice, certainly including racial justice. As we read the Confession of Belhar, we remember that not long ago our own church struggled with overt and even legal racial segregation in church and state.

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns concurred.

Note the Theological Issues and Institutions Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.

Evaluating The Confession of Belhar...

My challenges to the Workshops ...

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

Does this confession express our faith?

Will we be clearly guided by its content?

Here are my evaluation challenges to the workshops ...

Pause to absorb the slide

Remember specifically, that as officers of the church, you do vow to “... 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” (W-4.4003c.).

Evaluating The Confession of Belhar...

THE WORKSHOPS' CONCERNS:

- Is this **biblical**? – or is it just political correctness?
- Will changes make it better?
- Is God honored more with this?
- Will the church benefit?
- Does it preserve our distinctives?
... support Peace, Unity, Purity?
- Is this relevant to the PCUSA?
- Can we build the church on this?
- Will it position the church to do the mission better?
- Do the other confessions already speak to this issue?
- Can we trust its words?
- Is there an enduring controversy needing our witness here?
- Will it bring persecution for hate speech?

Here are the combined concerns of the workshop participants.

Study the slide

Note the continuing, similar, and new concerns of these participants...

Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed addition actually add to our Confessional Standards?
- What does this proposed addition NOT actually add?
- Is this proposed addition in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed addition?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of the Confession of Belhar.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 2 for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Any comments or answers to these questions?

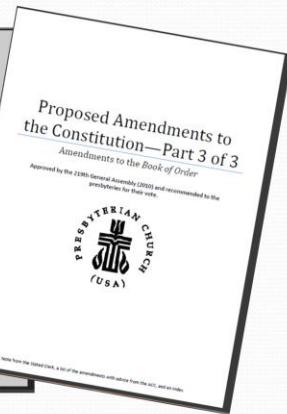
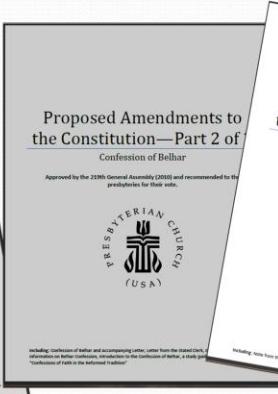
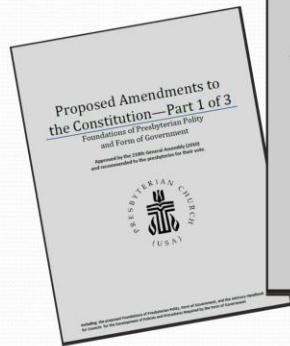
Part 3 of 3, 15 *BOO* Amendments

Approved by the 219th

General Assembly.

Recommended to the

presbyteries for their vote.



Passage requires majority of presbyteries approving.

This bring us to **Part 3 of 3 – Amendments to the *Book of Order*.**

Fifteen separately proposed amendments to the Form of Government, Directory of Worship, and Rules of Discipline of the current *Book of Order*.

Including with each of the amendment their background and rationale for approval and some notes and committee and GA voting statistics -- Part 3 is 32 pages in all.

The BOO Content Amendments

Fifteen amendments to Book of Order:

- **Form of Government:** ten affected paragraphs:
G-6.0106b; G-9.0203b; G-9.0404; G-9.0801a; G-11.0407; G-12.0100;
G-13.0108; G-13.0111a; G-13.0202b; G-14.0730
- **Directory for Worship:** three affected paragraphs:
W-4.4003h, W-4.4004a(2), W-4.4006b(2)
- **Rules of Discipline:** nine affected paragraphs:
D-6.0103; D-6.0306; D-8.0302; D-10.0202; D-10.0401; D-13.0102; D-
13.0106; D-13.0302; D-13.0404.

In these 15 amendments, 22 paragraphs of the current *Book of Order* are affected – across the FOG, the DOW, and the ROD.

This is a very broad set of changes to the Constitution – far greater than any set that I have voted on to date (except for the wholesale movement of ordination service information from the FOG to the DOW - and the procedural information removed to Advisory Handbooks for CPM and COM - a few years ago).

Our Presbytery will consider each of these 15 proposals individually.

Remember, again:

- At the denominational level ... each of these *Book of Order* amendments requires the affirmative votes of 87 presbyteries to pass -- a simple majority of the 173 presbyteries.
- At the Presbytery level, they also require only a simple majority of the attending and voting Presbyters to form the Presbytery's vote.
- And again, abstention at either level is a “no” vote.
- And, if approved, they are effective one year from the last day of the referring GA’s meeting (i.e., on July 11th 2011).

Yes, **the red one is the hot one** – it will be the whole story for the secular media.

The editors notes for each of these proposals that modify current FOG paragraphs, indicate that if they are approved – and if New Fog is approved – the approved content will be placed into New FOG in the appropriate place.

Evaluating *BOO* Amendments...

My challenges to the Workshops ...

- Will this amendment make it easier to do the work of the church?
- Will this amendment sufficiently standardize our practices?
- Does this amendment further the Purity, Unity, and Peace of the PC (USA)?
- The Big Questions –

Does this amendment express the whole counsel of God in our practices?

Will we be clearly guided by its content?

These are my evaluation challenges to the workshops ...

Pause to absorb the slide

Evaluating *BOO* Amendments...

THE WORKSHOPS' CONCERNS:

Is this **biblical**? – or is it just political correctness?
Will changes make it better?
Is God honored more with this?
Will the church benefit?
Does it preserve our distinctives?
... support Peace, Unity, Purity?
Will it divide the church?
Is it just cultural convenience?

Is it judicially useful?
Will it position the church for better doing of the mission?
Will it be applied across the denomination?
Does it honor God?
Can we trust its words?
Do we trust / care?

... and here are the combined concerns of the workshop participants.

Study the slide

Again, note the continuing, similar, and new concerns of these participants...

We start our 15 paragraph amendments with an old favorite.

Ordination Standards

Proposed Change to Ordination Standards

(One of 15 proposed BOO
Amendments).

**Majority of presbyteries
must approve by July
2011 to replace current
G-6.0106b with new
language that begins:**

**“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)**



Here is what Sharron saw at GA during consideration of this proposal.

This is an historic hot-button issue and here was how the vote went at GA on referring it to the presbyteries ...

For those who don't have the current G-6.0106b memorized, we will see on the next slide.

10-A. Ordination standards – Studying G-6.0106b change...

“b. 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.”

- Current BOO and New FOG now read the same, change would be affected in either
- Church Order and Ministry Committee vote 36/16/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010), vote 373/323/4.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 24/23/0

Our first of fifteen paragraph amendment proposals here is also the first of eight proposals related to paragraphs the Form of Government of the *Book of Order*.

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

A little history ...

The current text of G-6.0106b 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 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 *BOO* construction. This good intention didn't go as hoped. Instead, it has brought continuing and even more contention to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Encouraging its passage, the Church Orders and Ministry Committee notes and asserts that the current 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 candidate ordained or installed since its adoption.”

On the other hand, other observers note that it is being ignored altogether by some governing bodies.

So you should not be surprised that the Church Order and Ministry Committee reported to the 219th GA that, the PC(USA) has no consensus in the interpretation of Scripture on issues of same-sex practice. 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, 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. If 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 ACC also found that the proposed language is clear and not inconsistent with any other provision of the *Book of Order*. But, they also observe 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 and send a pastoral letter encouraging the denomination to stop marginalizing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people in its ministries.

Note the vote of the 2010 Church Order and Ministry Committee to bring this overture to the floor of GA, of the 219th GA to refer it to the presbyteries, and the vote of the presbyteries themselves, so far. These will give you a hint as to the level of controversy attached to the proposal.

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 (colored red), even though these words may show up in other places in the *Book of Order* or Book of Confessions. Instead, before God, we must evaluate the effect of removing these words - from this place - in the *Book of Order*.

I challenged the workshops on this item as I challenge you: Do the Constitutional ordination questions adequately contain the emphases that are deleted from this paragraph in this proposal? ... or are these emphases effectively lost to our practice? Does this emphasis matter to our faith and practice?

The Constitutional Questions: (you have seen these before – they 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?



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change *actually* change?
- What does this proposed change **NOT** actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of the G-6.0106b and its proposed amendment.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-A for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-B. Removing Stated Clerk (process) - Studying G-9.0203b addition...

“b. The clerk of the session shall be an 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 governing body for a definite term as it may determine, and must be eligible for membership in the governing body. *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-9.0705.*”

- Proposed is in neither Current *BOO* nor New *FOG*, change would be effected in either
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 42/0/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 51/1/0

This next amendment proposal comes in response to a question asked of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) by a member of the Presbytery of New York City, asking what recourse a governing body has if an officer - moderator, or stated clerk - is alleged to have failed to carry out the duties and responsibilities of their office.

The ACC advised the 219th General Assembly (2010) “... that the request points to a deficiency in the current language of G-9.0203b in the *Book of Order*, best addressed by constitutional amendment” and relies in its rationale on *Robert's Rules of Order, Tenth Edition*, for removing a moderator. It does not address removing a Clerk of Session.

There was no minority report on this amendment proposal.

Note the vote of the 2010 Church Polity Committee to bring this overture to the floor of GA, of the 219th GA to refer it to the presbyteries, and the vote of the presbyteries themselves, so far. These will give you a hint as to the level of controversy attached to this proposal.

G-9.0201 Officers. Officers of each of the governing bodies shall be a moderator and a clerk. Governing bodies may provide additional officers, as required.

These offices are historically understood to be ecclesiastical (i.e., relating to the ministry aspects of church operations) – not administrative (i.e., relating to the non-ministry aspects of church operations).

Note: Except for the moderator of a session (who is appointed as a result of the congregation's call to its pastorate), all officers are elected by the governing body they serve. (G-9.0202 paragraph 2b and G-9.0203 a and b.)

This proposed amendment addresses only part of the question that prompted it – dismissing a Stated Clerk (of presbytery, synod, or General Assembly). Unaddressed by the *BOO* are dismissing the other officers: Clerk of Session, and Moderators of sessions, presbytery, synods, and General Assembly. For these, the ACC and relies on *Robert's Rules of Order, the latest (Tenth) Edition*, for removing a moderator. Perhaps this is dangerous – for *Robert's* is a secular book whose content is not driven by our relationship to God's Word – and whose change process is not under our control.

The process named in the referenced paragraph is currently used for Termination of Synod and Presbytery Staff (who are or may be appointed by administrative means to strictly administrative, not ecclesiastical, positions) – not to officers, all of whom are elected or called by the body they oversee to these ecclesiastical positions.

G-9.0705 Termination of Synod and Presbytery Staff

The relationship between executives or other administrative staff of presbyteries and synods and their respective governing bodies may be dissolved by majority vote of the electing governing body on request of the staff member or on recommendation of the council or a special committee or commission of the electing governing body. When the council, committee, or commission has decided to prepare a recommendation to terminate, it shall notify the person in writing, stating the reasons for proposing to terminate, and offering the staff member an opportunity to resign or to request a hearing before the recommendations are adopted and reported by the council, committee, or commission to the governing body for action. The hearing shall be one in which the staff person may appear personally with counsel (D-7.0301, D-11.0301) to respond to the findings of the committee or commission and present reasons and evidence why the relationship should not be terminated.

The hearing shall afford safeguards as in cases of process, following the rules of evidence in the Rules of Discipline, Chapter XIV (D-14.0000). A record shall be made of the hearing, which shall become a part of the record filed

under D-6.0304 in the event of a judicial complaint following the final action of the governing body.

The questions you want to entertain on this proposal may be:

- Do(?) – and how do(?) ecclesiastical and administrative positions differ in their composition, manning, service, and treatment?
- If persons are treated differently in filling staff and called/elected positions, shall appointed and called/elected persons to be treated the same for their removal?
- Are Robert's Rules sufficient for removing these called/elected officers?



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of removing a Stated Clerk.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-B for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-c. Sexual misconduct policy – Studying G-9.0404e addition...

“G-9.0404 In order to give meaning to the interdependent nature of Presbyterian polity:...

“e. All governing bodies shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy.”

Additionally, the General Assembly “strongly recommends that prior to vote on this amendment, presbyteries take time to educate the presbytery on the reasons for and value of a sexual misconduct policy. Resources are available on the PC(USA)Web site” (*Minutes*, 2010, Part I, p. 227).

- Proposed is in neither Current *BOO* nor New *FOG*, change would be effected in either
- General Assembly Procedures Committee (03) vote 52/1/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 52/1/0

Nevada Presbytery has adopted such a policy – your session should too.

This amendment comes as part of the response to a recommendation from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC) that the 219th General Assembly (2010) approve a Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures for employees and committee members of the COGA and the GAMC. The policy was approved and the 219th General Assembly (2010) also approved strongly urging all employers of governing bodies and related entities to update or establish policies, procedures, and practices related to sexual misconduct using the guidelines set out in the Sexual Misconduct Manual published by the Office of the General Assembly.

Note the Procedures Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.

If you want a model policy, email me (Art@AGRitter.com) and I will send the Nevada Presbytery Policy to you.

The PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES are contained in the Procedures Committee full report - <http://www.pcbiz.org/IOBView.aspx?m=ro&id=3277&promoid=155>.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of the wisdom of having a Sexual Misconduct policy.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-C for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-D. Representation cleanup – Studying G-9.0801a change...

- “a. Each presbytery and synod shall elect a **nominating committee** broadly representative of the member churches of the presbytery or presbyteries, with a membership of **one third** ministers of the Word and Sacrament, **one third laywomen**, and **one third laymen** and elders, women and men, in **numbers as nearly equal as possible**. The nominating committee shall consist of three classes, each serving for a three-year term except where initial classes of one- and two-year terms are necessary to establish regular rotation.”
- Proposed is in neither Current *BOO* nor New *FOG*, change would be effected in either
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/1/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 49/3/0

This amendment was brought by the General Assembly Committee on Representation to update current language (dating from 1983) to reflect current presbyter demographics which now include a more equal number of male and female ministers of the word and sacrament today than in 1983. The Committee notes:

Presbyterians pride themselves in the theological and constitutional concept of shared power. The reality of participation and representation in General Assembly entities is not reaching this standard.

The current measure is un-Presbyterian in its discounting the value of theological education, ministry experience, and understanding of church operation. While elders rightly predominate on sessions, Presbyterians honor minister/elder parity in every other council, including the General Assembly. This parity signifies shared ministry and mutuality between ministers and other servants of Christ, between women and men. It is also about sharing power, general wisdom, and knowledge of the church itself—which should be equitably represented.

We will see this ratio description revision amendment in other proposals. Of course, when you deal with small numbers, you cannot achieve precise ratios, anyway.

Note the Church Polity Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of presbyter demographics.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-D for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-E. Roll and register – Studying G-11.0407 change...

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

- Proposed is in neither Current BOO nor New FOG, change would be effected in either
- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 35/3/2.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 50/3/0

This amendment originated as an overture from the Presbytery of Hudson River, in which there were two other *Book of Order* provisions also included for revision. The General Assembly Church Polity Committee (committee # 05) chose to recommend changes only to G-11.0407. The original overture requested five rolls to be kept by presbyteries, one of which would list all commissioned lay pastors (CLPs) entitled to voice and vote during their term of service.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution suggested that keeping four rolls and adding the language about two registers was preferable and their advice was followed.

“Rolls” and “registers” are technical distinctions relating to the *permanency* assumptions of membership in presbytery – ministers are “permanent members,” others are members because they occupy their position as educator or lay pastor.

The amended and new language proposed in G-11.0407 sets forth commissioned lay pastors as a distinct classification of ministry and assures that the Office of the General Assembly has a complete and accurate accounting of all commissioned lay pastors. This includes adding a new and separate roll and introduces language that is specific to commissioned lay pastors – but, is identical in form to the language in G-11.0407 regarding both *certified* and *certified associate* Christian educators.

The Church Polity Committee report notes that:

It is the intent of this overture to assure that the Office of the General Assembly maintains a separate and complete roll of commissioned lay pastors and to clarify language regarding validated ministries served by commissioned lay pastors. It is further the intent to clarify that those serving in ministries validated by a governing body beyond a session may be commissioned *to* that governing body.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution calls attention to the fact (noted in the rationale) that “... the diversity of the ministries of commissioned lay pastors continues to unfold.” The church should consider the implications of this expansion of the role of the commissioned lay pastor (CLP) for the meaning of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in light of the present overture.

This amendment directs the Stated Clerk of Presbytery how to account for Certified Christian Educators and CLPs – recognizing that those CCEs who are also ordained as Elders may vote.

Our clerk has already created these documents.

Note the Church Polity Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries’ votes to date.

We will see the application of this “fix” again, too.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of "rolls and registers."

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-E for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-F Elder-CCE voice and vote— Studying G-11.0407 and G-14.0730b change...

... one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only, and, in the case of Certified Christian Educators *who are ordained elders, voice and vote*, at all presbytery meetings, ...

“b. provide the following support to the Certified Christian Educators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4,4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503). The presbytery may grant the privilege of the floor to the Certified Christian Educator at all its meetings with voice only, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote under the provisions of G-11.0101b, during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery. (G-11.0407) In accordance with G-11.0407, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators *who are ordained elders, voice and vote* during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery.

- Proposed is in neither Current BOO nor New FOG, change would be effected in either
- Church Orders and Ministry Committee (06) vote 53/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) vote 570/67/10.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 48/5/0

... and, as promised, here is the other part of the previous amendment’s “fix:”

This amendment originated from the Presbytery of Mission and concurrence was received from three other presbyteries.

The rationale accompanying the original overture said that When the 217th General Assembly (2006), worked over Chapter 14, it created an inconsistency between G-11.0407 and G-14.0730b – and the 218th GA further confused, rather than fix the problem. This overture seeks to bring the two references concerning the privileges granted to Certified Christian Educators into consistency and (as the ACC notes) brings the *BOO* back to “a foundational principle of our polity which is that ‘[t]his church shall be governed by presbyters (elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament, traditionally called ruling and teaching elders).’ ”

Note the Church Polity Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries’ votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of CLPs and CCEs and their vote.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-F for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-G. Reduced synod function & shared admin– Studying G-12.0100 change...

Add a new G-12.0103 - “A synod may decide, **with the approval of a two-thirds majority of its presbyteries**, to reduce its function. In no case shall synod function be less than the provision of judicial process and administrative review of the work of the presbyteries. Such a synod shall meet at least every two years for the purposes of setting budget, electing members to its permanent judicial commission, and admitting to record the actions of its permanent judicial commission and administrative commissions. Presbyteries of such a synod shall assume for themselves, by mutual agreement, such other synod functions as may be deemed necessary by the presbyteries for the fulfillment of their missions.”

Add a new G-12.0104 -“Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, **with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods**, may share administrative services.”

- Proposed is in neither Current BOO nor New FOG, change would be effected in either
- Committee on Middle Governing Body Issues (04) vote 36/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by a voice vote.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 51/1/0

This amendment was sent by the Synod of Rocky Mountains; two presbyteries and another synod sent concurrences. It was apparently an attempt to share resources and operate less expensively – does this sound like SMP on steroids? More to come next GA - the Assembly Committee on Middle Governing Body Issues has sent a number of suggestions raised by the overture (but not contained in this proposal) to the Office of the General Assembly for review and report to the 220th General Assembly in 2012. The overture and committee report noted:

It seems clear that emerging practice has led to sixteen very different operating styles in the current synods. With synods having presbyteries in number from three to twenty-two, the current extensive list of functions for synods is unlikely to fit more than a few of the synods well.

The wording of the first element of this proposal provides this reduced / minimum synod functions permission and process.

The second element is intended to permit two or more synods to decide cooperatively (with the consent of their presbyteries) which administrative or judicial functions to share (again, whether New FOG is approved or not).

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that this proposal is virtually identical to the provision in the proposed Form of Government. Its language is clear

and coherent from a constitutional perspective, and maintains appropriate constitutional limitations on the reduction of function – and neither does allowing contiguous synods to share administrative services raise any constitutional issues.

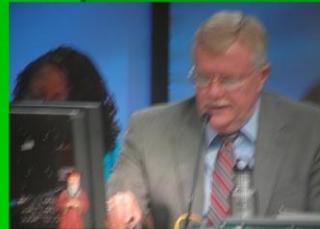
There was no minority report.

Note the Committee on Middle Governing Body Issues, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.

Relate this proposal to the newly approved, GA Commission on Middle Governing Bodies – and what they are charged to do ...

Middle Governing Body Commission

GA created a middle governing Commission with the power to act as the GA, upon request of presbyteries and synods.



The Commission has the power “to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing” (G-13.0103m) and “to approve the organization, division, uniting or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods” (G-13.0103n) by majority request of the affected Pres. or Synod.

Sharron noted (in her presentation to Presbytery): GA formed a Commission that has the power “to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing” (G-13.0103m) and “to approve the organization, division, uniting or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods” (G-13.0103n) by majority request of the affected Pres. or Synod.

Reported at Synod – this commission may see itself with a far more sweepingly activist mandate. Apparently, some synods aren’t getting the job done! But this is an organizational model issue – as you may remember we developed in the workshops out of one of the papers on MGB Connect related to the Middle Governing Body Commission. Though there was little argument on this, it could radically affect a presbytery’s or congregation’s expectations from Synod on a Synod-to-Synod basis.

The Synod of the Pacific will be meeting with a delegation from this committee in connection with its May meeting – we hope this to be simply an informational meeting at this time. I will attend this meeting for the Nevada Presbytery.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of synod functions.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-G for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-H.“...nearly equal as possible...— Studying G-13.0108, G-13.0111a, and G-13.0202b change...

(G-13.0108) “The General Assembly shall establish a permanent Committee on Representation ... of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are **one third** ministers (both women and men), **one third** laymen, and **one third** laywomen ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers *nearly as equal as possible.*”

(G-13.0111a) “a. The ... General Assembly Nominating Committee ... shall consist of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are **one third** ministers (both women and men), **one third** laymen, and **one third** laywomen ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers *nearly as equal as possible.* (G-9.0801, G-11.0501, G-12.0102d, G-13.0202) [The rest of the paragraph remains unchanged.]”

(G-13.0202b) “b. In the nominating process, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall ... shall ensure that, exclusive of the Moderator and predecessor Moderators, **one third** of the members are ministers of the Word and Sacrament (both women and men), **one third** laymen, and **one third** laywomen ministers and elders (both women and men) are in numbers *nearly as equal as possible.* ...”

- Proposed is in neither Current *BOO* nor New FOG, change would be effected in either
- Committee on Church Polity (05) vote 42/1/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 49/3/0

As promised -- here is the other presbyter-demographics item.

This amendment was offered by the General Assembly Nominating Committee -- and it applies (beyond other equal representation guidance in the *BOO*) to the membership thereof, to the nominations it makes for the General Assembly Mission Council, and to the membership of the General Assembly Committee on Representation.

The Committee’s rationale was that the longstanding Presbyterian pattern of governance has been equal representation of elders and ministers in the governing bodies of the church - its presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly. This proposed amendment brings the membership of certain GA *Book of Order* committees in conformance with this pattern – but recognizes that for specialized programmatic committees, which may need specific skills and expertise, this pattern could be altered to enable church members to serve on non-*Book of Order* entities.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution found that if the 219th GA agreed with the intent of , the ACC advises that the proposed language is clear and consistent with the other presbyter-demographic item, we saw before. The General Assembly Committee on Representation concurred on this item – and there was no minority report.

Note the General Assembly Nominating Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries’

votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of presbyter demographics.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-H for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)



10-I. Vows to pray for those in their charge— Studying W-4.4003h, W-4.4004a(2) and W-4.4006(b)2 addition...

(W-4.4003) – add: “h. Will you *pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*”

(W-4.4004a) – add:“(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?”

(W-4.4006(b)) – add:“(2) Do we agree *to pray for him (her)*, to encourage him (her), to respect his (her) decisions, and to follow as he (she) guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?”

- Theological Issues and Institutions Committee (16) vote 54/0/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 50/2/0

This amendment – the only proposal related to the Directory of Worship part of the *Book of Order* -- came from the Presbytery of Western New York, who noted the members and officers of the Church of Jesus Christ are repeatedly urged by the Holy Spirit in Scripture to pray for one another (Ex. 8:9; 1 Sam. 12:23; 2 Kings 19:4; Ezra 6:9f; Ps. 72; Mt. 5:44; Jn. 17; Acts 4:23–31; Rom. 15:31f; Eph. 1:15–21, 3:14–19, 6:18–20; Col. 1:3, 4:3; 1Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18; Jas. 5:16) -- yet nowhere in our services of ordination and/or installation do either members or officers commit to do so!

This addresses that oversight. Whether it *fixes it* -- or not, of course, becomes a matter of individual fidelity in practice.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised GA that the language of this proposal is clear and consistent with its intent and consistent with the teaching of the Bible and with other provisions of the Constitution – but, then they noted:

As all members of the church are to be involved in prayer as part of corporate and personal worship as well as in fulfilling their membership as ministry (G-5.0102c), it is not necessary to amend the constitutional questions for new officers and for congregations so as to include the promise that they will pray for one another. Given the importance of the constitutional questions for ordination and installation, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

advises that the General Assembly only amend them when there is a clear, broadly supported, and necessary rationale.

I suggest that we might hear this note as a warning from the ACC - in terms of Item 10-A, which removes certain language from G-6.0106b in favor of reference to the constitutional questions.

There was no minority report.

Note the Theological Issues and Institutions Committee, the GA, and the presbyteries' votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of presbyter prayer responsibility.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-I for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-J. Stay of enforcement – Studying D-6.0103 change...

(Very long text) Defines and replaces procedures for stay of enforcement (i.e., the suspension of a decision or an action until a complaint or appeal is finally determined).

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/0/2.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 49/2/0

This is the first of the six Part 3 proposals related to the Rules of Discipline in the *Book of Order*.

This is really wonk stuff and the amendment (a full two pages of strike-out and replacement) is long and is not quoted on the slide – you will have to read the existing and proposed wording on the mechanics of this for yourself.

This recommendation is in response to a 2006 request for an interpretation of D-6.0103, Re Stay of Enforcement, from the Manager of Judicial Process and Social Witness.

The original 2006 request for interpretation said that although D-6.0103 delineates the process by which a stay of enforcement may be entered, certain then-recent changes could easily result in a failure to make such entry within the 45 day deadline – resulting in an unintended consequence of the then-recent changes: placing more decision making power into the hands of the Stated Clerk that will affect the remedial case in substance. The request asked several questions for interpretation:

- Is there a mechanism in D-6.0103 that allows entities requesting a Stay of Enforcement to challenge any action taken by or actions failed to be taken by the Stated Clerk?
- Is this challenge limited to a motion to be considered by the PJC or may it be a hearing?

- If the challenge may be a hearing, D-6.0103 will need to be amended to give the requesting complainant standing to challenge the failure to enter a stay of enforcement?
- If the challenge may be in the form of a motion, might D-6.0103 not need to be amended, but merely interpreted by General Assembly through an authoritative interpretation?

In 2006, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution recommended that the 217th General Assembly answer it: “The present wording of D-6.0103 provides no basis for a challenge. If the assembly wishes to provide for a challenge, D-6.0103 must be amended to make this provision.” The 2006 recommendation was referred to the Office of the General Assembly for consultation with the ACC to develop an appropriate response to this issue.

Having worked up the proposed amendment now before us, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 219th General Assembly (2010) to approve it, saying that upon referral from the 217th General Assembly (2006), the manager of Judicial Process, in consultation with the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission, the ACC recommended amendment to clarify the procedures for obtaining a stay of enforcement – and finds that the recommended language is clear and consistent with the stated intent.

Besides the referral history and other administrivia, the committee report is silent. There was no minority report.

If there are issues here, I hope that our experienced Judicial Commission experts will advise us!

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date. But, these votes may not reveal the complexity of this issue.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of stay of enforcement.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-J for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

**10-K.(Limited) finding without challenge –
Studying D-6.0306, D-8.0302, and D-13.0302 addition...**

“d. If no challenge is made to a finding of the moderator and clerk that one or more points listed in D-6.0305 (or D-8.0301, or D-13.0106, as applicable) has been answered in the negative, the case shall be dismissed without further action or order of the permanent judicial commission.”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 41/2/0.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 50/1/0

This amendment is the first of three (we will get to the other two) from the Office of the General Assembly upon recommendation of the Manager for Judicial Process.

This one came with the rationale that in situations where there is no challenge made to the findings of the moderator and clerk, the proposed change makes dismissal automatic without any further action by a permanent judicial commission.”

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution found the language to be clear and consistent with the stated intent.

This is the rule of “silence is assent” found in Roberts Rules of Order – which would here be made explicit here in our *Book of Order*.

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of "silence is assent."

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-K for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-L. Limit repetition of charges – Studying D-10.0202 addition ...

(insert and re-number list) “*c. determine whether the accusation repeats allegations previously made against the accused, and if so, report to the governing body having jurisdiction over the accused that it will not file charges (D-10.0202j) unless the accusation contains new information warranting investigation or is the subject of an investigation that has not been concluded.*”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 42/0/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 51/0/0

This amendment comes from the Church Polity Committee as the result of a request for rulings on several questions regarding repeat allegations of the same or a similar offense that were received by the Advisory Committee on the Constitution from the stated clerk of the Presbytery of Seattle. The rationale for this addition is that it clarifies the role of the investigating committee in preventing repetitive allegations against one person for the purpose of harassment.

The five questions and the ACC findings (comprising the whole of the committee’s report) are included in this item’s discussion in the Part 3 study guide – and the resulting amendment arises from these findings. There was no minority report.

Frankly, this is the judicial analog of the rule of “dilatory repetition” found in Robert’s – made explicit here.

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of allegation repetition.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-L for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-M. Increase time for filing charges – Studying D-10.0401 change...

“No charges shall be filed later than ~~three~~ five years from the time of the commission of the alleged offense, nor later than one year from the date the investigating committee was formed, whichever occurs first, except as noted below.”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 38/5/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 37/14/0

This amendment is the second of three (the one is further down) from the Office of the General Assembly upon recommendation of the Manager for Judicial Process.

The rationale simply said, “This will allow more time for the governing body to gain notice that an offense has been committed.”

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised GA to disapprove this recommendation, finding “... that the referral provides insufficient justification for this change. The more time that elapses after an alleged offense, the less likely that the testimony of witnesses will be accurate and credible.”

This amendment provides a slight increase in time to file charges.

On a personal note, in my church in New Mexico several years ago, an adult female finally came to the conscious realization that she had been sexually molested as a child by an elder and pillar of that church. She complained to session and session, blessed at the time with a trained Federal Investigator within it membership, investigated to find that not just her -- and not only several -- but, many children had been systematically molested by this elder – over a very long period of time. As transient a town as it was, the fact of families leaving the church was never noticed. We were transferred away before our two young daughters came to the age of interest for this predator. The session heard the case, stripped him of his office,

excommunicated him from the church, and reported his acts to the civil authorities. At the civil trial, as these young women finally came forward to testify, he said that he didn't even recognize who they were. He is still in the New Mexico State Prison.

This amendment provides only a slight increase in time to file charges. Is it enough of an increase? Who among us will present an overture to the next GA to further increase the time to file for such crimes?

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of time limitations for filing charges.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-M for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

10-N. Appeal of “Not Guilty” Verdict— Studying D-13.0102 and D-13.0106 change...

(D-13.0102) ~~“Either party may initiate the first level of appeal by the filing of a written notice of appeal”~~

Only the person found guilty may initiate the first level of appeal by the filing of a written notice of appeal.”

(D-13.0106) “a. The grounds for appeal by the person found guilty are [list of 8 items is retained and renumbered]

~~“b. The grounds for appeal by the prosecuting committee are~~ [and its list of 6 items is also deleted]

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 40/1/1.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 39/12/0

This amendment is the last of that series of three and it came from the Presbytery of Arkansas – and is intertwined with the next proposed amendment, 10-O.

The rationale for this amendment notes that the Rules of Discipline were amended in 2004–05 to include numerous changes that were intended to clarify and advance our judicial process. However, of the changes made, one (more) has emerged as both problematic in practice and contradictory to our tradition and theology – the right of a prosecuting committee to appeal a ‘not guilty’ finding of a session or permanent judicial committee. Citing how long such an appeal/retrial process may take and how draining it may be for the defendant, its reversal is both necessary and consistent with Presbyterian principles of discipline.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution did have reservations about this issue in its advice to GA in 2004. But, it now believes that the rationale for this item cites several enough reasons to reverse the subject provisions and correctly summarizes the need for the proposed amendment– and that the language of the proposal is clear and is consistent with the stated intent.

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date.

[Editor’s Note: If this amendment is approved by a majority of the presbyteries, it will make the next Proposed Amendment, 10-O, moot -- since that item limits the

Permanent Judicial Commission response to an action that will no longer be allowed under the Rules of Discipline. However, if item 10-N is not approved by a majority of the presbyteries, then item 10-O, if approved by a majority of the presbyteries, will limit the response that a Permanent Judicial Commission may make in a judicial disciplinary case where the prosecuting committee has appealed a verdict of not guilty.]

Bottom Line: consider items 10-N and 10-O separately and as if the other had not passed.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of verdict appeal – and considering on its own as though the next proposal has not passed.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-N for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

**10-O. Remand if case is an appeal of “not guilty” by prosecutor—
Studying D-13.0404 addition ...**

Note logical linkage to previous item, 10-N.

“After the hearing and after deliberation, the permanent judicial commission shall vote separately on each specification of error alleged. The vote shall be on the question, ‘Shall the specification of error be sustained?’ The minutes shall record the numerical vote on each specification of error. *If the appeal was initiated by a prosecuting committee appealing a verdict of not guilty and the permanent judicial commission sustains that portion of the appeal, the permanent judicial commission shall remand the case for a new trial.*”

- Church Polity Committee (05) vote 39/1/4.
- The 219th General Assembly (2010) approved by consensus.
- The Presbyteries, as of Feb 18, vote 44/7/0

Last BOO content amendment item!

This proposal also came from the Office of the General Assembly upon recommendation of the Manager for Judicial Process.

The rationale states: There is a problem when a prosecuting committee appeals a decision in a disciplinary case. A 2/3 majority vote is required for a judgment of guilt by the trial adjudicatory but only a simple majority vote is required to sustain a specification of error on appeal. When an appellate permanent judicial commission reverses the trial court in a case in which the prosecuting committee has appealed a not guilty decision, the appellate permanent judicial commission’s remedies should be limited to remanding the case for a new trial. This would protect the integrity of the original super-majority vote by the trial court. It is the trial court who has the opportunity to hear witnesses and evaluate their credibility.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that when the amendments allowing the prosecuting committee to appeal a decision of not guilty were proposed in 2004, it was not envisioned that the permanent judicial commission hearing the appeal would overturn a decision of the original court. The intent was stated

Under the current form of the Rules of Discipline there is no recourse at the first level of a disciplinary case for the prosecuting committee if a session or permanent judicial commission commits reversible error in the process leading to finding the accused ‘not guilty.’

Since the original session or permanent judicial commission was the trier of fact, it is appropriate for that body to retry the case when an appeal has been sustained. For this reason, requiring the remand of a case when the appellate permanent judicial commission has sustained a specification of error is advisable.”

There was no minority report.

Note the Church Polity Committee, GA, and the presbyteries votes to date.

Recall the *Editor's Note* attached to the last item – that if it is approved by a majority of the presbyteries, Item 10-N will make this item moot -- since this one limits the Permanent Judicial Commission response to an action that will no longer be allowed under the Rules of Discipline. However, if item 10-N is not approved by a majority of the presbyteries, then this item, if approved by a majority of the presbyteries, will limit the response that a Permanent Judicial Commission may make in a judicial disciplinary case where the prosecuting committee has appealed a verdict of not guilty.]

Again, the **Bottom Line:** consider items 10-N and 10-O separately and as if the other had not passed.



Time for airing, illuminating, perceiving ...

- What does this proposed change actually change?
- What does this proposed change NOT actually change?
- Is this proposed change in line with God's whole counsel on the matter? Where does it depart God's Word?
- Are there any other questions about this proposed change?

Now it is time for you to share what you have learned in your study of remand on appeal – and considering it on its own and as though the previous proposal does not pass.

You may wish to refer to specific portions of the Part 3 item 10-O for reference – but please address your concerns or questions from the guidance of God's word on the issue you raise.

Can discuss these questions - decently and in order?

(Discussion among the presbyters)

So, how is it going so far?

1/6/2011, 8:01 AM <http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/votes.pdf>

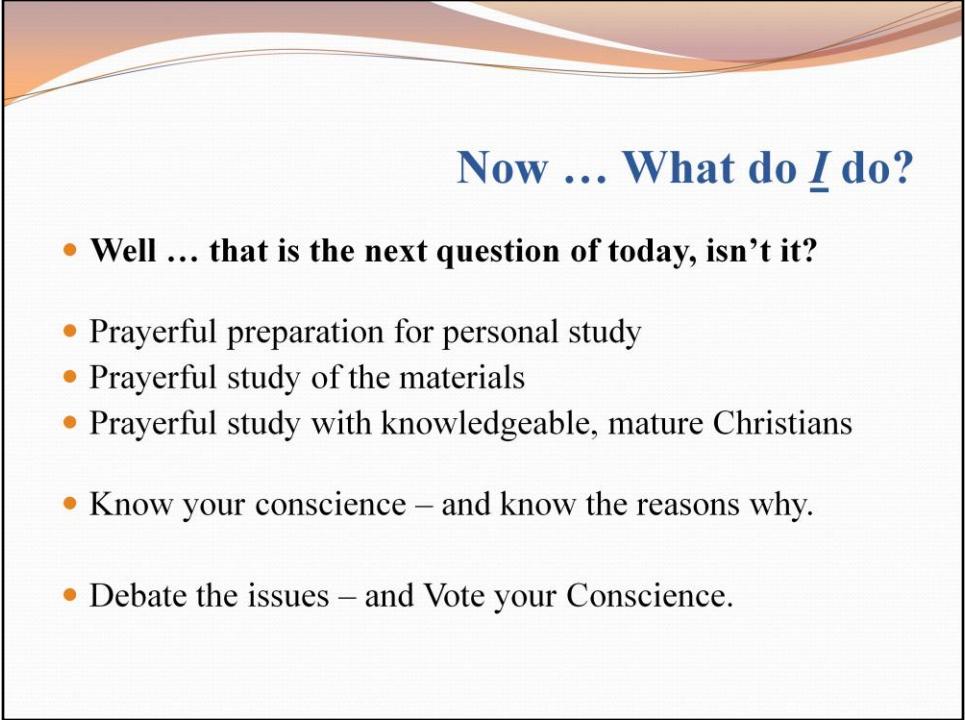
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Approved By The 219th General Assembly (2010) Approval of Belhar requires 116 affirmative votes; all other amendments require 87 affirmative votes.

	Affirm.	Neg.	No Action	Have Voted	To Vote	Needed to Pass
Part 1 10-1 New Form of Government	8	2		10	163	79
Part 2 10-2 Confession of Belhar	14	6		20	153	102
Part 3 – Items of Content change						
10-A Gifts and Requirements, G-6.0106b	3	13		16	157	84
10-B Removing Stated Clerk or Clerk of Session	23	1		24	149	64
10-C Requiring Sexual Misconduct Policy	23	1		24	149	64
10-D Nominating Committees	22	2		24	149	65
10-E Presbytery Rolls and Registers	22	2		24	149	65
10-F Certified Christian Educators	22	2		24	149	65
10-G Synod Function	24	0		24	149	63
10-H Nominations Process	22	2		24	149	65
10-I Prayer Added to Ordination and Installation	22	1		23	150	65
10-J Stay of Enforcement	22	1		23	150	65
10-K Preliminary Questions	23	0		23	150	64
10-L Reviewing Work of Investigating Committee	23	0		23	150	64
10-M Time Limit	18	5		23	150	69
10-N Appeal of “Not Guilty” Verdict	17	6		23	150	70
10-O Decision of Permanent Judicial Commission	18	5		23	150	69

Here is how the vote is going as of the last GA Stated Clerk report:

Source: <http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/votes.pdf>



Now ... What do I do?

- Well ... that is the next question of today, isn't it?
- Prayerful preparation for personal study
- Prayerful study of the materials
- Prayerful study with knowledgeable, mature Christians
- Know your conscience – and know the reasons why.
- Debate the issues – and Vote your Conscience.

How will I decide how to vote on each of these amendments (...you may be asking...)? Well, that is the question of today, isn't it?

I hope that our discussion has proven helpful to you. Recall these study recommendations and their tools:

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

You may wish to use your time until Presbytery comes into session to further your understanding and God's direction to you through prayer and conversation with mature Christians – who also "have a ticket to the discussion" over lunch.

Are there any questions?



May the words of our mouths ...
and the meditations of our hearts ...
be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord.

Amen!

In closing, and for our future service to the Lord as His presbyters ...