

The Councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations and/or church, each council shall keep before it the Marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the Notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303), and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

In light of this charge, councils of the church exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ.

They do so as they

Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. ...

Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. ...

Nurture a covenant community of disciples of Christ. ... (G-3.0101)

Each council of the church is charged with fulfilling these responsibilities and power in differing ways.



Session

The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active service as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors. (G-3.0201)

The session shall have the responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. (Ibid.)



Presbytery

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and teaching elders within that district. (G-3.0301)

The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. (Ibid.)



Synod

The synod is the intermediate council serving as a corporate expression of the church throughout its region. (G-3.0401)

Synod is responsible for the life and mission of the church throughout its region and for supporting the ministry and mission of its presbyteries as they seek to support the witness of congregations, to the end that the church throughout its region becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. (Ibid.)



General Assembly

The General Assembly is the council of the whole church and it is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-3.0501)

The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. (Ibid.)