

# MANUAL OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



2024—2026

**Standing Rules  
Guidelines and Policies  
Organization for Mission**

OFFICERS

*226th General Assembly (2024)*  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Office of the General Assembly

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## STANDING RULES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

<b><u>1. Foundations and Values of the General Assembly</u></b> .....	1
<b>The Worship of God</b> .....	2
<b>Creation of Community</b> .....	2
<b>Faithful Discernment and Governance</b> .....	3
<b><u>2. Worship of God</u></b> .....	4
<b>A. Corporate Worship at General Assembly</b> .....	4
<b>B. Worship and Spiritual Formation Throughout the Assembly</b> .....	4
<b>C. Mission and Public Witness</b> .....	5
<b>D. Sabbath-keeping</b> .....	5
<b>E. Accessibility</b> .....	5
<b>F. Land Acknowledgment</b> .....	5
<b><u>3. Creation of Community</u></b> .....	6
<b>A. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Assembly Participants</b> .....	6
1. Role of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates .....	6
2. Preparation of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates .....	6
3. Attendance and Participation .....	6
4. Commissioners .....	6
5. Advisory Delegates .....	7
6. Corresponding Members .....	8
7. Advisory Committee on the Constitution .....	9
8. Other Participants .....	9
9. List of Participants .....	9
10. Participant Expenses .....	10
<b>B. General Assembly Arrangements</b> .....	11
1. Date, Place, and Format of Meeting .....	11
2. Site Selection for In-Person Meetings .....	11

3. Electronic Meetings .....	12
4. Meeting Arrangements .....	12
5. Sponsorship of Events .....	13
6. Peaceful Demonstrations .....	13
<b>C. Accessibility and Inclusion .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>D. Assembly Leaders and Elections .....</b>	<b>14</b>
1. The Moderators of the General Assembly.....	14
2. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly .....	17
3. Associate Stated Clerks .....	22
<b><u>4. Faithful Discernment and Governance .....</u></b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A. Business Before the General Assembly .....</b>	<b>23</b>
1. Sources of Business .....	23
2. Deadlines .....	23
3. Priorities for Translation .....	24
4. Editing and Clarifying Business .....	24
5. Overtures .....	24
6. Overture Advocates .....	25
7. Reports of Entities, Commissions, and Committees .....	25
8. Types of Reports .....	26
9. Resource Materials .....	26
10. Synod Minutes .....	26
11. Commissioners' Resolutions .....	26
12. Comments .....	27
13. Advice and Counsel Memoranda .....	27
14. Advisory Committee on the Constitution Report.....	27
15. Financial Implications .....	27
<b>B. Assembly Committees .....</b>	<b>27</b>
1. Formation of Committees.....	27
2. Approval of Committee Structure .....	28
3. Assembly Committee Moderators .....	28
4. Orientation .....	28
5. Assigning Commissioners to Assembly Committees .....	28
6. Referral of Business .....	29

7. Assembly Committee on Business Referral .....	29
8. How Business is Referred .....	29
9. Tentative Docket .....	30
10. Committee Support .....	30
11. Committee Assistants .....	30
12. Procedures for Assembly Committee .....	30
13. New Business .....	32
14. Public Hearings .....	32
15. Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures .....	33
16. Reports of Assembly Committees .....	34
<b>C. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Assembly Participants .....</b>	<b>35</b>
1. Registration of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates .....	35
2. Seating and Access to Commissioners and Delegates .....	35
3. Quorum .....	35
4. Debate and Discernment .....	35
5. Previous Question Motions .....	36
6. Voting .....	36
7. Plenary Consent Agenda .....	36
8. Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures .....	36
9. Assembly Committee Reports .....	36
10. Substitute Motions .....	37
11. Constitutional Issues .....	37
12. Executive Session .....	37
13. Committee Reports on the Budget .....	38
14. General Assembly Nominating Committee .....	38
15. Special Greetings .....	39
16. Previous Notice .....	39
<b>D. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Assembly Participants .....</b>	<b>39</b>
1. Calling a Special Meeting .....	39
2. Signature Verification .....	40
3. Arrangements and Notice .....	40
<b>E. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Assembly Participants .....</b>	<b>41</b>
1. Commissions and Special Committees .....	41
2. Administrative Commission on Mid Councils .....	42

3. Special Administrative Review of Synods .....	42
<b>F. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Assembly Participants .....</b>	<b>42</b>
1. Recommending Amendments to the Standing Rules .....	42
2. Amending the Standing Rules .....	43
3. Suspending the Standing Rules .....	43
<b><u>5. Glossary of Terms</u> .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>A. Entity/General Assembly Entity .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>B. Meeting .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>C. Moderators .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>D. Session .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>GUIDELINES AND POLICIES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY</b>	
Open Meeting Policy .....	50
Guidelines for Preparation of Minutes of Agencies .....	59
Guidelines for Reviewing Synod Records .....	54
Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement.....	56
Forming Social Policy.....	58
Guiding Principles: Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates .....	62
Interreligious Stance for the PC(USA) .....	66
<b>Historical Note.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Standards for Review of General Assembly Permanent, Advocacy, and     Advisory Committees and Commissions.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Standards for Review of General Assembly Agencies .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates     to the General Assembly.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Cultural Proficiency Standards .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection     Policy and Its Procedures.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Organization for Mission.....</b>	<b>102</b>

The  
**STANDING RULES**  
of the  
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



# Part 1

## Foundations and Values of the General Assembly

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;  
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;  
and there are varieties of activities,  
but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.  
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.  
If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;  
if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.  
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

*1 Corinthians 12:4–7, 26–27*

In a broken and fearful world,  
the Spirit gives us courage  
to pray without ceasing,  
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

*from A Brief Statement of Faith – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

The great ends of the Church are:

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

*Book of Order, F-1.0304*

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.).

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 (*Book of Order*, G-3.0501). We are reminded that "Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ" (*Book of Order*, F-3.0204).

With glad and grateful hearts, we affirm these core values, characteristics and commitments of the General Assembly in three areas: worship of God, creation of community, and faithful discernment and governance.

### **Worship of God**

- ❖ Experiencing God's presence and action in community, through corporate worship, prayer, study, and other practices of discipleship.
- ❖ Worshipping in ways that reflect the diversity of God's people.
- ❖ Encountering Christ through proclaiming and hearing the Word, gathering at the table, celebrating the promise of baptism, and being sent for service in the world.
- ❖ Hoping and yearning together that our mutual witness and work will point to the reign of God.
- ❖ Participating joyfully in Christ's ongoing life and work.

### **Creation of Community**

- ❖ Encountering and learning from people within the Reformed tradition and beyond across the United States and around the world.
- ❖ Developing and renewing relationships that lead towards the fulfillment of God's reign.
- ❖ Learning from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, particularly from voices that have been silenced or not heard.
- ❖ Witnessing with joy and thanksgiving and providing for the emergence and formation of new leaders for the church.
- ❖ Following the Spirit into new paths that reflect the needs of church and culture while learning from our history and holding onto the ways Presbyterians have been faithful since our first General Assembly in 1789.
- ❖ Dismantling those systems and structures that have been used to hurt, exclude, or maintain power and building just and equitable ways to be the church together.

### **Faithful Discernment and Governance**

- ❖ Reflecting in all things Christ's command to love God and neighbor.
- ❖ Employing a spirit of flexibility and openness that allows for the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Affirming the Presbyterian distinctives that God is sovereign and God alone is Lord of the conscience.

- ❖ Seeking together to find and represent the will of Christ rather than the will of the people.
- ❖ Experiencing an intentional, equitable, multilingual, and accessible process for discernment and decision making.
- ❖ Making decisions through contemplation, prayer, and honest sharing with siblings in Christ.
- ❖ Respecting the diversity of experience and understanding that each person brings to the discussion and ensuring all voices are represented, respected, and heard.
- ❖ Embracing an easily understood and accessible process that creates opportunities for questions, prayer, and God's unexpected movement.
- ❖ Exercising responsible care of creation and stewardship of human and financial resources.
- ❖ Utilizing appropriate technology to efficiently conduct business, increase accessibility, and connect the assembly to the breadth of the church.

## Part 2

# The Worship of God

### A. Corporate Worship at General Assembly

Through Word and Sacrament, the General Assembly shares in the life of the Spirit, is united to Jesus Christ, and gives glory to God (*Book of Order*, W-1.0106).

The worship of God is at the center of the assembly's corporate life. The Moderators of the General Assembly shall set the vision for worship during the assembly, select those sharing the proclamation of the Word, and participate with any host council, the Stated Clerk, and the Office of Theology and Worship in planning worship. Worship shall be planned in accordance with the *Directory for Worship* and, in its words, languages, music, style, and liturgy, reflect the wide diversity of the church. The Moderators shall consult with the General Assembly Committee on Representation to ensure inclusivity in the planning and leadership of worship.

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at the first plenary service of worship during the assembly, and may be celebrated at other worship services during the assembly. The Moderators shall preside at the first plenary service and offer the proclamation of the Word.

The Stated Clerk shall work with the Moderators to plan and provide leadership for a worship service that bears witness to the unity of the body of Christ through the participation and leadership of ecumenical partners. The Stated Clerk as head of communion issues the invitation for the person to offer the proclamation of the Word in the service.

### B. Worship and Spiritual Formation Throughout the Assembly

In addition to its corporate worship, the General Assembly also provides other opportunities for praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and supplication in the course of its discernment and deliberation (*Book of Order*, W-5.0205).

Each committee meeting or plenary session of the assembly shall begin and end with prayer. These business meetings may, at the discretion of the Moderator, include practices such as prayer, scripture reflection, singing, and silence. Those serving in leadership positions should be provided with training and resources to aid in these practices.

An atmosphere of worship and Christian growth may be cultivated at the assembly through meaningful spiritual practices such as Bible study and offering quiet space for prayer and reflection.

### **C. Mission and Public Witness**

Worship is inextricably linked with the church's mission in the world. As such, the General Assembly may include opportunities for its participants to engage in acts of service and public witness that embody the adopted social witness policies of the denomination. The context of the community where the assembly is being held should be considered and care shall be taken to work in partnership with local individuals and groups who are already engaged in mission and public witness.

### **D. Sabbath-keeping**

The General Assembly shall be planned in such a way that allows its participants to engage in God's gift of Sabbath through rest, recreation, and personal renewal. When the assembly is scheduled to meet on the Lord's Day, it will ordinarily begin that day by joining in worship with congregations of the host council as a reminder of the importance of that day and an opportunity to join in local expressions of worship.

### **E. Accessibility**

In the preparation and conduct of all elements related to the worship of God, care shall be taken so that there can be full participation of all attendees.

### **F. Land Acknowledgment**

Opening worship or the first plenary meeting of the General Assembly shall include an acknowledgment of the Indigenous peoples on whose land the assembly is meeting.

## Part 3

# Creation of Community

### A. Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and Other Participants

#### 1. Role of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates

Commissioners and advisory delegates serve as the primary embodiment of the foundations and values of the General Assembly as they gather to do their work. Together they discern and guide the church in its fidelity to the Word of God and strengthen its witness and nurture its faith and life.

#### 2. Preparation of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates

It is the joint responsibility of the Stated Clerk and the sending organizations to provide orientation and instruction for the commissioners and delegates and to prepare the commissioners and delegates for their work.

#### 3. Attendance and Participation

a. Commissioners and advisory delegates must plan to be in attendance for the duration of the General Assembly. In consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] and the commissioner's presbytery leadership, the Stated Clerk may direct that an alternate commissioner be seated if a commissioner is not in regular attendance during committee or plenary meetings or must be replaced for other reasons.

b. Committee assistants should be informed if a commissioner or advisory delegate needs to be absent during the work of the committee to participate in another part of the assembly's discernment.

#### 4. Commissioners

##### a. Number of Commissioners

The number of commissioners is set in the *Book of Order* under G-3.0501. Any determination of the size of presbyteries under these rules shall use the number of active members, including teaching elders, reported by the presbytery as of December 31 of the year for which the most recent statistical information is available.

#### b. Election and Reporting Deadline

Presbyteries shall elect commissioners in sufficient time to permit the list of commissioners to be delivered to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly 180 days prior to the convening of the session of the General Assembly to which they are commissioned. Presbyteries may elect alternates equal to the number of commissioners to which the presbytery may be entitled. In the event a commissioner is unable to serve, the alternate will serve until the adjournment of the assembly.

#### c. Voice and Vote Privilege

Commissioners shall be entitled to speak under the rules, and to vote and present motions in meetings of the General Assembly and of assembly committees to which they are assigned.

#### d. Newly Created Presbyteries

In the case of a newly created presbytery, the presbytery shall be entitled to elect commissioners to the General Assembly if the qualifying enrollment of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and congregations in that presbytery shall have been completed by December 31 of the year preceding the assembly meeting (*Book of Order*, G-3.0501).

### 5. Advisory Delegates

The purpose of advisory delegates is to ensure that the assembly hears from people who would not otherwise have access to the discernment and deliberation of the highest council of the church. By their presence and participation, advisory delegates provide an extended viewpoint which enables the assembly to be a more representative body.

Advisory delegates shall serve in committees with voice and vote, having the same rights as commissioners. During plenary meetings, advisory delegates shall have voice and may be polled before commissioners vote on items of business.

The categories of advisory delegates are as follows:

- ❖ Young Adult
- ❖ Theological Student
- ❖ Partner

#### a. Young Adult Advisory Delegates

Each presbytery may elect one young adult advisory delegate, who shall be an active member of one of its congregations or a participant in a worshipping community in relationship with the presbytery, and who shall be between the ages of 18 and 23 years on the date the General Assembly convenes.

#### b. Theological Student Advisory Delegates

There shall be up to 20 advisory delegates representing Presbyterians engaged in theological education. Current master's level theological students are invited to apply to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly with the endorsement of their presbytery for selection as an advisory delegate. In the event that more than 20 applications are received, the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] will be authorized to make the selection of delegates in consultation with other relevant bodies, applying the principles of inclusion from the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity.

#### c. Partner Advisory Delegates

There shall be up to 20 advisory delegates from ecumenical and mission partners. No fewer than 10 of these delegates shall be from churches outside of the United States. No more than five shall be from member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Up to five may be from mission partners who may not represent a denomination or member church. Partner advisory delegates representing other churches shall be selected by the highest ecclesiastical authorities of their churches, in response to the invitation of a previous General Assembly. The assembly shall extend such invitations at the recommendation of the [Presbyterian Mission Agency] upon nomination by the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations.

### 6. Corresponding Members

The following persons shall be corresponding members:

- ❖ Moderators of earlier General Assemblies.
- ❖ The Stated Clerk, Associate and Assistant Stated Clerks, and other members of the staff of the [Office of the General Assembly] as designated by the Stated Clerk.
- ❖ The members of the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly]; the members of the [Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Coordinating Committee] and staff of the [Presbyterian Mission Agency] designated by the [Presbyterian Mission Agency Board]; the chair (or co-chairs) of the Board of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other persons designated by the A Corporation Board.
- ❖ The members of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.
- ❖ One person designated by each synod, ordinarily the executive or stated clerk.
- ❖ One person designated by each entity reporting directly to the General Assembly, including permanent, special, and advisory committees (additional persons may be designated by such bodies if authorized by the Moderator of the preceding General Assembly in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly]).
- ❖ The moderator of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. or designee.
- ❖ The executives of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, Board of Pensions, Investment and Loan Program, Presbyterian Foundation, [Presbyterian Mission Agency],



Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc., and

- ❖ The presidents (or their designee) of the theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and seminaries related by covenant agreement.

Corresponding members shall be entitled to speak, under the rules, in meetings of the General Assembly and of assembly committees on matters related to the work of the body represented, but they may neither vote nor present motions.

## 7. Advisory Committee on the Constitution

During the General Assembly, three or more members of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) shall be present at the session of the General Assembly to advise the General Assembly and its Moderator on constitutional matters.

## 8. Other Participants

### a. Special Guests

The assembly, out of honor, courtesy, recognition, and the need for information and resource material, may recognize other persons as special guests. As such, they may be invited by the General Assembly to speak to the assembly for the purpose of conveying greetings or messages, or bringing information to the decision-making process. An assembly committee may extend a similar invitation at its own meeting. The Stated Clerk shall work with any host council to extend an invitation to the Indigenous stewards of the land where the assembly is gathering to bring a welcome (see also Standing Rule 2.F).

### b. Ecumenical Representatives

Ecumenical representatives are individuals sent at the initiative of another church to be the official representative of that church. The Stated Clerk may announce to member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches the date and place of the next meeting of the General Assembly. When officially certified through appropriate ecclesiastical channels at least 45 days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, these persons shall be welcomed as guests of the General Assembly and introduced to the council through the report of the assembly committee addressing ecumenism.

### c. Invited Persons from General Assembly Entities

The assembly may welcome persons invited by an entity of the General Assembly for the purpose of establishing or affirming particular ecumenical, mission, or program relationships, or assisting the entity in the presentation of particular items of business. Any expense reimbursement shall be the responsibility of the inviting entity.

#### d. Interreligious Representatives

Three observers of other faiths or religious traditions, who shall be representatives chosen by recognized religious bodies of non-Christian religious traditions and/or faith communities, shall be present at the assembly at the invitation of the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. The interreligious representatives shall be present with the church in its deliberations, and speak to the assembly for the purpose of conveying greetings or messages, or bringing information to the decision-making process.

#### e. Observers

The General Assembly is a public meeting conducted in adherence to the Open Meeting Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Appropriate arrangements shall be made to provide access for those without particular roles in the work of the General Assembly who wish to observe its work through in-person attendance or video technology.

### 9. List of Participants

Upon request by entities of the General Assembly, councils, or educational institutions of the denomination, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or independent organizations composed primarily of members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Stated Clerk shall make available access to communicate with the commissioners and advisory delegates registered for a session of the General Assembly through the online platform chosen to host the General Assembly meeting. A fee may be assessed to cover the processing costs incurred.

### 10. Participant Expenses

#### a. Commissioners and Advisory Delegates

The approved reimbursement for the travel expenses, food, lodging, and other approved expenses of commissioners and advisory delegates at the sessions of the General Assembly shall be paid from the budget for the General Assembly. When an alternate commissioner is seated, the total expenses for the two persons paid from the General Assembly budget shall not be larger than payment for a single commissioner attending the full assembly.

#### b. Interreligious Representatives

The assembly may assume the expense of housing on the same basis as the expense of commissioners but shall not reimburse any travel expenses to the assembly site.

c. Ecumenical Representatives

The assembly may assume the expense and housing of such guests on the same basis as the expense of commissioners but shall not reimburse any travel expenses to the assembly site.

d. Partner Advisory Delegates

The PC(USA) shall cover all of the transportation expenses of each partner advisory delegate to attend the General Assembly.

## **B. General Assembly Arrangements**

### **1. Date, Place, and Format of Meeting**

Plans for General Assembly meetings are made so that participants will be able to engage as fully as possible in the worship of God, the creation of community, and the work of faithful discernment and governance. Arrangements for the assembly shall be made with careful attention to the church's commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, stewardship, and the physical and spiritual well-being of participants.

Meetings of the General Assembly may be conducted by gathering participants at a particular location, by means of a digital meeting platform, or both, as authorized by the assembly or by the Stated Clerk in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.]

The date, method, and place (if appropriate) of a particular session of a General Assembly shall ordinarily be set by a preceding General Assembly no later than two assemblies prior to that session being convened. Meetings of the General Assembly shall ordinarily take place between May 15 and July 31. Should a change in the date, method, or place of meeting become necessary, the Stated Clerk is empowered to fix a new date, method, or place of meeting, with the concurrence of the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.]

### **2. Site Selection for In-Person Meetings**

The Stated Clerk, in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly], shall determine the criteria that render a place an eligible site for a meeting of the General Assembly, including the requirement that all meeting arrangements shall be made to facilitate full participation by persons with differing abilities.

As far as is feasible, meeting sites should rotate to different geographic regions so that people throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will have the opportunity to be part of the General Assembly meeting. When the assembly convenes at a particular location, the Stated Clerk shall seek the support of the local presbytery or presbyteries and synod

in bringing regional expressions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) into the life of the assembly.

### 3. Electronic Meetings

When some or all participants have been authorized to participate by means of a digital meeting platform, the following minimum standards shall be observed:

a. The technology shall enable all persons participating in the meeting who are authorized to do so to have simultaneous communication, with accommodations as needed, in accordance with the *Book of Order* and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

b. The Stated Clerk shall provide information about the platform(s) to be utilized no later than 60 days in advance of the convening of the General Assembly. Such information shall include:

- How to access the meeting platform.
- The method for establishing and assuring the maintenance of a quorum.
- How to seek recognition, make motions, and vote.

c. The Stated Clerk shall provide a required technology orientation for participants as appropriate prior to the convening of the assembly.

d. While every effort will be made to provide stable access to electronic platforms, each assembly participant is responsible for their audio, video, and internet connections; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a participant's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.

e. Online meeting service availability shall begin at least 15 minutes before the start of each meeting.

f. The [Committee on Office of the General Assembly] will manage a program that will strive to provide that all participants have access to required technology and internet access.

### 4. Meeting Arrangements

The Stated Clerk shall oversee the arrangements for the meeting of the General Assembly, including: the assignment of time and place for any official special events, public meetings, and exhibits connected with or scheduled at the time of the assembly; and the assignment of commissioners, advisory delegates, and other official participants to hotels and other accommodations.

## 5. Sponsorship of Events

The sponsor or sponsoring organization(s) shall clearly identify themselves in the invitation or publicity for any event scheduled before, during, or immediately following a session of the General Assembly that includes any participant of the assembly.

## 6. Peaceful Demonstrations

Peaceful demonstrations are appropriate outside the meeting area (including digital spaces) of the General Assembly or one of its committees and shall not impede access to the meeting.

### **C. Accessibility and Inclusion**

Commissioners and advisory delegates must be able to travel for any portion of an in-person General Assembly and be fully available for all committee and plenary meetings of the assembly as well as any required pre-assembly training and orientation. Commissioners and advisory delegates will be expected to use the technology required for participation in the work of the assembly.

Every effort will be made to provide reasonable accommodations for commissioners and advisory delegates who require assistance to be able to fully participate in the assembly. In the planning for assemblies, care will be taken to ensure that the facilities are accessible and provide appropriate services for all genders and abilities, taking into consideration state law, local ordinances, facility use policies, or other discriminatory local rules and policies that may create an unsafe space or make LGBTQIA+ persons feel unsafe or unwelcome. Full consideration will be given towards creating a safe space for people of all gender identities. Interpretation and translation for Spanish, Korean, and English will be provided. If a commissioner or advisory delegate requires an assistant, the expenses of the assistant will be covered on the same basis as expenses of commissioners, and the assistant will be enrolled by the Stated Clerk along with the commissioner.

Language used by staff, leadership, commissioners, and advisory delegates will seek to reflect an understanding of the fullness of God and the range of human identity. Personal pronouns shall be respected and language for worship and prayer shall use diverse imagery for the Trinity.

### **D. Assembly Leaders and Elections**

#### 1. The Moderators of the General Assembly

##### a. The Office of Moderator

The Moderators of the General Assembly are officers of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in accordance with the *Book of Order*, G-3.0104. The

ministry of Moderator is grounded in the ministry of baptized persons and in the particular ordained ministry of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

The Moderators are elected at the end of the General Assembly meeting to serve as ambassadors of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church's life and upholding the people of God through prayer. They then preside over meetings of the next General Assembly as a sign of the bond of unity, community, and mission in the life of the church.

The title of the office is "The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)."

#### b. Service in Partnership

The office of Moderator may be filled by two commissioners to the General Assembly who share the office. The Moderators will together determine how to fulfill the duties of the office, modeling for the church our calling to do ministry in partnership with one another and embodying the broad diversity of the Church.

#### c. The Ministry of Moderators

Those serving in the office of Moderator of the General Assembly will:

- ❖ Preside over meetings of the General Assembly until a successor is elected, possessing the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the assembly (*Book of Order*, G-3.0104).
- ❖ In partnership with the Stated Clerk, act as ambassadors for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), sharing the actions of the General Assembly and upholding the values and commitments of the Church.
- ❖ In partnership with the Stated Clerk and any host council, be active in the planning of the General Assembly which they will moderate.
- ❖ Appoint assembly committee leadership in accordance with Standing Rule 4.B.3.
- ❖ Participate in the preparation of commissioners and advisory delegates.
- ❖ Participate in the planning of worship, including selecting preachers for General Assembly worship except the ecumenical service (Standing Rule 2.A).
- ❖ Appoint members of special committees and commissions as directed by the assembly (Standing Rule 4.E.1).
- ❖ Serve as members, by virtue of office and in accordance with these Rules and the Organization for Mission, of bodies that provide leadership for the governance and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

#### d. Candidates for Moderator

1. Each person seeking to serve as Moderator of the General Assembly must be a commissioner to the General Assembly at the time of their nomination (*Book of Order*, G-

3.0104). They may be endorsed by a presbytery no earlier than the adjournment of the immediately preceding assembly. Commissioners wishing to serve as Moderator will notify the Stated Clerk of their intention to stand for election no later than 45 days prior to the convening of the assembly.

2. The Office of the General Assembly [and/or its unified successor entity] shall provide resourcing and orientation for Moderatorial candidates.

#### e. Guidelines for Candidates

1. Through the election process, the assembly joins candidates in discerning God's call for service. Thus, candidates for Moderator do not "campaign" for the office, but rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. Neither candidates nor their supporters may advocate directly with individual commissioners or advisory delegates.

3. Candidates shall minimize any financial expenses in the spirit of faithful stewardship and equity among those standing for Moderator. Total expenses shall not exceed \$2,000, excluding in-kind contributions.

4. Each pair of candidates shall submit to the Stated Clerk no less than one week prior to the convening of the assembly an itemized statement of actual and expected expenses, including travel and meeting expenses related to their candidacy and in-kind contributions. This statement shall be reviewed by [the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] prior to the convening of the assembly and shall be distributed to commissioners and advisory delegates prior to the election of the Moderator.

5. Candidates are encouraged to meet and make themselves available for conversation with commissioners and advisory delegates in times and places arranged by the Stated Clerk. Distribution of any material related to candidates for Moderator shall be limited to these events.

6. Candidates may submit information to the Stated Clerk for inclusion in a publication that will be posted by the Stated Clerk not less than 15 days before the convening of the General Assembly that includes biographical information, a statement of the candidate's sense of call, and vision of the church. The Stated Clerk shall determine the format and content of this publication so that there is equity among candidates.

#### f. Election of the Moderators

So that the Moderator candidates may fulfill their responsibilities as commissioners to the General Assembly, including being active in the work of committees and debate during plenary, the election of the Moderators will occur during the final plenary meeting of the assembly before closing worship.

The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be elected in the following manner:

1. Each set of candidates shall be nominated by another commissioner to the assembly. No nominating speeches will be given and no seconds to the nomination are required.
2. After nominations are closed, each set of nominees shall be afforded an opportunity to address the General Assembly for a time not to exceed five minutes, expressing the concerns that the nominees feel to be most important for the church. The order of speaking shall be determined by lot, the drawing conducted by the most recent Moderator attending the General Assembly.
3. At the conclusion of all the presentations by the nominees, they shall respond to questions from the floor. The first question shall be addressed to the set of nominees who spoke first in the original presentation, and the same question shall then be put to the other nominees in the order in which they spoke earlier. The second question shall be directed to the second set of nominees in this order and then to each of the other nominees in this sequence. This process shall continue for a period not to exceed the number of sets of nominees times 15 minutes or for one hour, whichever is shorter, unless terminated earlier by vote of the General Assembly.
4. Where there is only one nomination for Moderator, the election may be by acclamation.
5. When there is more than one nomination, the election shall be by ballot. Names on the ballot shall be listed in the order in which the nominees originally spoke to the General Assembly. A majority of the legal votes cast by those present and voting shall be necessary for election.
6. If no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast on the first ballot, the General Assembly shall proceed to a second ballot. All nominees named on the first ballot shall appear on the second ballot in the order in which the nominees originally spoke to the General Assembly.
7. If no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast on the second ballot, the General Assembly shall proceed to a third ballot. The two nominees receiving the most votes plus ties on the second ballot shall be placed on the third ballot in the same order as they appeared on the first and second ballots. If additional ballots are necessary, each ballot will contain only the two nominees receiving the most votes plus ties on the previous ballot.
8. The advisory delegates shall be polled and the results of the poll announced prior to each ballot.

The Stated Clerk shall provide a service of installation for the newly elected Moderators. This service may happen immediately after the election or as part of



closing worship for the assembly. Symbols of the office shall be presented by the outgoing Moderators.

The newly-elected Moderators shall participate in closing worship of the assembly by offering the closing prayer and benediction.

g. Vacancy

If the Moderators are temporarily unable to preside over the assembly for any reason, the Stated Clerk shall arrange for a previously elected Moderator of the General Assembly to preside until the Moderators are able to return to the chair.

Should one of the persons serving as Moderator vacate the office, all constitutional functions as prescribed by the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and the *Book of Order* shall be fulfilled by the remaining Moderator until new Moderators are elected.

If all persons serving as Moderator vacate the office, the Stated Clerk shall arrange for a previously elected Moderator of the General Assembly to preside. The first order of business at such a time shall then be the election of the Moderators.

2. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

a. The Office and Title of the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is the continuing ecclesial officer and head of communion for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), offering constitutional and spiritual leadership for the life and witness of the church and exercising pastoral authority over concerns of the church in times of crisis. The title of the Stated Clerk is “The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” and may be used by the incumbent until a successor is elected and installed to office.

b. The Ministry of the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk is responsible for all matters related to the sessions of the assembly and all other matters relative to and arising from the assembly for which no other assignment has been made. A list of the full duties/responsibilities is found in the *Organization for Mission*.

In addition to responsibilities listed in *Book of Order*, G-3.0104, G-6.02, and G-6.04, the Stated Clerk:

- Serves as ambassador, in partnership with the Moderators, for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), speaking to the actions of the assembly, upholding the values and commitments of the church, and showing forth the bond of love and peace of the body of Christ.

- Provides guidance on the procedures for Moderator candidates and election.
- Determines the number and names for each assembly committee in consultation with the assembly governing entity and appropriate assembly entities.
- Participates in the preparation of commissioners and advisory delegates.
- Prepares a list of staff to be seated as corresponding members to the assembly.
- Transmits to councils, agencies, others affected by the assembly's actions, a report on actions of the assembly on matters pertaining to their concerns.
- Transmits to the presbyteries all assembly actions on which the presbyteries are requested to take action.
- Directs the publication of the assembly's proceedings.
- Selects a preacher for ecumenical worship at the assembly.

#### c. Election of the Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall be elected for a term of four years and is eligible for reelection to additional terms of four years.

No member of the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] or other persons involved in this procedure as a member of the search committee or as a person providing staff services to the committee may be considered for nomination as Stated Clerk. The incumbent Stated Clerk may not participate in any way in the election process described in this standing rule. During the time of the election at the General Assembly, the Moderators shall appoint a temporary Stated Clerk, who may be a member of the staff of the [Office of the General Assembly].

#### d. Election of the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee

The General Assembly that meets prior to the end of a term of a Stated Clerk shall elect a Stated Clerk Nominating Committee. After consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall prepare a slate of nominees to serve on the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee and present it to the assembly.

The Stated Clerk Nominating Committee shall have at least five and no more than seven members, including:

- Two representatives of the [new governance body], one of whom shall serve as moderator of the committee.
- At least one person who is a stated clerk of a mid council at the time of their election.
- Commissioners and/or advisory delegates who are members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) from one of the three most recent General Assemblies, who shall make up at least half of the committee.
- Nominations from the floor are in order for members not representing the [New Governance Body]. Any name placed in nomination from the floor for the

committee shall be presented as an alternative to a particular nomination by the General Assembly Nominating Committee and must be in the same category as the nomination from the committee.

e. The [New Governance Body] shall:

- Be responsible for providing the nominating committee with an up-to-date position description.
- Ensure that an adequate budget for the nomination process is provided in the [new governance body] and shall designate staff services for the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee.
- Provide for an end-of-term evaluation of the Stated Clerk, which shall be shared with the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee.

f. Stated Clerk Nominating Committee Process

The Stated Clerk Nominating Committee shall begin its work no less than one year before the start of the General Assembly that will elect the Stated Clerk. The committee is responsible for determining what materials will be required from applicants and the process for receiving applications.

All interested persons, including an incumbent who wishes to be considered for an additional term, must submit an application to the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee no later than 180 days prior to the start of the assembly.

The Stated Clerk Nominating Committee shall announce its nominee no later than 60 days before the opening of the assembly.

The Stated Clerk Nominating Committee shall be dismissed at the adjournment of the session of the assembly at which the committee presents a nominee for Stated Clerk.

g. Candidates for Stated Clerk

Any of the applicants for the position of Stated Clerk, including the incumbent if not the committee's nominee, who wish to be placed in nomination against the committee's nominee shall declare their intention to do so to the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee no later than 45 days before the opening of the General Assembly. No one may be nominated to serve as Stated Clerk who has not provided complete application materials to the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee.

Prior to the opening of the General Assembly, the [new agency] shall publish information about each candidate standing for election as Stated Clerk. This information must be submitted no less than 30 days prior to the opening of the General Assembly and shall include:

- A biographical sketch and personal statement by the candidate that expresses the candidate's sense of call to the position.
- The responses of the candidate to a questionnaire developed by the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee based upon issues before the church.

Neither the candidates nor any organizations supporting their candidacy may distribute any other materials, print or electronic, including flyers, buttons, tokens, or other objects that would denote a campaign for the office of Stated Clerk.

Each candidate will be provided an opportunity to meet and talk with commissioners and advisory delegates prior to the election.

#### h. Election Process

The General Assembly shall elect the Stated Clerk in the following manner:

1. Within 48 hours of the convening of the assembly in plenary, the assembly shall receive the report of the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee.
  - a. The committee shall place in nomination a single nominee and make a speech not to exceed five minutes in length in support of the nominee.
  - b. The Moderators shall then invite other nominations of those who have completed the nomination process, which shall include a speech not to exceed five minutes in length in support of each nominee.
2. If there are no other nominations, the election shall proceed immediately as follows:
  - a. The nominee for Stated Clerk shall be given an opportunity to address the assembly for up to five minutes about their sense of call to the position of Stated Clerk.
  - b. The Moderators shall give commissioners an opportunity to address questions to the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee for up to 15 minutes.
  - c. The Moderators shall give commissioners an opportunity to address questions to the nominee for Stated Clerk for up to 15 minutes, after which the voting shall take place.
3. If there are other nominations, the election shall proceed as follows:
  - a. The election of the Stated Clerk shall take place as the first order of business on the next to last day of the assembly's session.
  - b. Each nominee shall be given an opportunity to address the assembly for a time not to exceed five minutes about their sense of call to the position of Stated Clerk. The nominees shall speak in the same order as the presentation of nominating speeches.

c. The Moderators shall give commissioners an opportunity to address questions to the nominees for Stated Clerk. The first question shall be addressed to the nominee who was nominated first and the same question shall then be put to the other nominees in the same order in which they were nominated. The second question shall be directed to the second nominee in this order and then to each of the other nominees in sequence. This process shall continue for a period not to exceed the number of nominees times 15 minutes, or one hour, whichever is shorter, unless terminated earlier by vote of the Assembly, after which the voting shall take place.

d. The election shall be made by secret ballot. Names on the ballot shall be listed in the order in which the nominees originally spoke to the Assembly. A majority shall be necessary for the election.

If no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast on the second ballot, the assembly shall proceed to a third ballot. The two nominees receiving the most votes plus ties on the second ballot shall be placed on the third ballot in the same order as they appeared on the first and second ballots. If additional ballots are necessary, each ballot will only contain the two nominees receiving the most votes plus ties on the previous ballot.

#### i. Assumption of Office

A new Stated Clerk shall be installed to the office at the final meeting of the session of the General Assembly where they are elected. The outgoing and incoming Stated Clerk may overlap in service for up to 90 days after the adjournment of the assembly at which they have been elected, in coordination with the outgoing Stated Clerk and the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly].

#### j. Vacancy

If the office of Stated Clerk becomes vacant, the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] shall designate an Acting Stated Clerk until such time as the Stated Clerk is able to resume the duties of the office or the General Assembly elects a new Stated Clerk.

### 3. Associate Stated Clerks

Associate Stated Clerks are ruling or teaching elders who serve in particular roles on behalf of the Stated Clerk. The General Assembly may elect one or more Associate Stated Clerks as the assembly shall determine. The Stated Clerk shall nominate persons to fill such office in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly]. The term of office shall be four years, subject to reelection by the assembly.

## Part 4

# Faithful Discernment and Governance

### A. Business Before the General Assembly

As the council of the whole church, the General Assembly leads and guides the witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that it becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. The General Assembly serves to build up the whole church in its consideration of business while being particularly responsive to those matters placed before it by presbyteries and synods (*Book of Order*, G-3.0302d).

The particular powers and responsibilities of the General Assembly are set out in the *Book of Order*, G-3.0501, and all business considered by the assembly shall seek to serve these ends. Business items are to provide clear statements of proposed action and/or necessary information, including identifying the person or entity to carry out the action as appropriate, with rationale to support the assembly's discernment.

All items of business for potential consideration by the General Assembly shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk in accordance with the provisions of this section.

#### 1. Sources of Business

The General Assembly receives the following types of business:

- ❖ Overtures from presbyteries and synods in accordance with *Book of Order*, G-3.0302d.
- ❖ Reports from entities established by and/or responsible to the General Assembly.
- ❖ Minutes of synods for general administrative review (in accordance with *Book of Order*, G-3.0108a and G-3.0502c).
- ❖ Commissioners' resolutions submitted by commissioners to the assembly.

#### 2. Deadlines

To facilitate the compilation and translation of materials for the assembly's discernment, business for consideration by the General Assembly must be submitted to the Stated Clerk in accordance with the following schedule of deadlines:

- a. No later than 120 days prior to the convening of the assembly, all business (including overtures) with constitutional implications, all reports (other than entity and synod minutes), and any questions requiring an interpretation by the General Assembly (*Book of Order*, G-6.02).

- b. No later than 60 days prior to the convening of the assembly, all other overtures and the report and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.
- c. No later than 45 days prior to the convening of the assembly, all comments, concurrences, and entity and synod minutes for review.
- d. No later than 30 days prior to the convening of the assembly, all nominations to positions elected by the General Assembly.
- e. No later than 24 hours after the convening of the assembly, all commissioners' resolutions.

The Stated Clerk has the discretion to receive items of business after the scheduled deadlines as needed to support the discernment of the church.

### 3. Priorities for Translation

The business of the General Assembly shall be available in English, Korean, and Spanish. The Stated Clerk shall provide for translation of the full text of all recommendation items, along with the rationale and comments for constitutional changes. The Stated Clerk shall also seek to provide for translation of other parts of assembly business with the following priority:

- ❖ The rationale for other items of business;
- ❖ Other comments; and
- ❖ Other resource materials.

The Stated Clerk shall provide a report of the translations completed.

Entities who are required to submit their minutes for General Assembly review must provide them in English, Korean, and Spanish.

### 4. Editing and Clarifying Business

The Stated Clerk has the authority to make necessary edits to any item of business as submitted for purposes of clarification. If a particular division or subordinate entity is named in an assembly action, the Stated Clerk shall edit the language so that the action names the entity that is directly responsible to the assembly.

### 5. Overtures

Overtures are items of business that have been approved by a presbytery or a synod and shall request the General Assembly to take a particular action, or approve or endorse a particular statement or resolution (*Book of Order*, G-3.0302d). The recommendation, rationale, and any resource materials submitted for an overture shall ordinarily not exceed 1,500 words. If the Stated Clerk determines that a proposed overture has an action identical to that already proposed by another presbytery, it shall be considered a concurrence.

The presbytery or synod shall submit the overture in the following form:

“The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ overtures the [# of the assembly] General Assembly [(year)] of the PC(USA) to [state the specific action the General Assembly is asked to take].”

A rationale for the proposed action shall be included.

Those preparing an overture are responsible for consulting with the Stated Clerk and other entities to determine whether a similar overture has already been considered and how best to fulfill the desired end of the overture.

A presbytery or synod may take action to concur with an overture from another presbytery or synod in accordance with a process managed by the Stated Clerk.

## 6. Overture Advocates

Each council who submits an overture that is received as business may appoint one overture advocate to provide information on the background and intent of the overture to any assembly committee to which the overture may be referred (Standing Rule 4.B.12).

## 7. Reports of Entities, Commissions, and Committees

Entities of the General Assembly submit reports that may include any or all of the following:

- ❖ Descriptions of ongoing work of the entity.
- ❖ Responses to referrals from previous General Assemblies.
- ❖ Items proposed for action, including a rationale for the work.
- ❖ Items shared with the assembly for information.

The content of these reports demonstrates the interconnected nature of the church. Recommendations for action in particular should show the ways in which the entity has been coordinating its work and consulting with other entities of the assembly and councils of the church.

Reports of entities of the General Assembly are to be no longer than 5,000 words.

## 8. Types of Reports

Entities are responsible for submitting the following types of reports, in accordance with the Organization for Mission and the actions of previous General Assemblies:

- a. Reports with Recommendations: An entity report that includes a recommendation uses the following form:



The [name of agency, commission, or committee] requests the [# of the assembly] General Assembly [year] of the PC(USA) to [state the specific action or actions the General Assembly is being asked to take].

A rationale shall be included to state the reasons for the request.

b. Minutes of Entities: The General Assembly shall review the minutes of General Assembly entities from the preceding two calendar years. Such minutes must be submitted with translation into English, Korean, and Spanish and shall be reviewed in accordance with the guidelines in the Manual of the General Assembly.

c. Reports for Information: Entities may submit a report for the information of the Assembly without a recommendation for proposed action.

## 9. Resource Materials

Resource material (except for previously published books) may be prepared by an entity submitting a report to the General Assembly. Resource materials shall be submitted with a report of an entity and shall not exceed 1,000 words on each item of business referred.

## 10. Synod Minutes

The General Assembly shall review the minutes of synods from the preceding two calendar years in accordance with the guidelines in the Manual of the General Assembly.

## 11. Commissioners' Resolutions

A commissioners' resolution is an item of business that addresses an issue that arose subsequent to the deadlines for other business before the assembly. It must be endorsed by commissioners representing at least two presbyteries, and no commissioner may endorse more than two commissioners' resolutions.

a. Commissioners' resolutions shall be no longer than 750 words, including the rationale.

b. In the preparation of a resolution, commissioners are urged to be aware of existing General Assembly policies relevant to their proposal and, where appropriate, to make reference to these policies.

c. Commissioners' resolutions shall not contain business that requires an amendment to or interpretation of the Constitution (*Book of Order, G-6.04a*) or proposes an amendment to the Standing Rules.

## 12. Comments

Written comments on items of business under consideration by the assembly may be received from:

- ❖ Entities of the General Assembly
- ❖ Presbyterian Women
- ❖ Organizations in which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) holds membership; and
- ❖ Other denominations in correspondence with the General Assembly.

These comments shall neither contain nor constitute business requiring action by the assembly.

### 13. Advice and Counsel Memoranda

Advice and counsel memoranda are resources prepared by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee, the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice, and the LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee for the purpose of providing information about existing policy, current work on specific topics, recent developments, and other factors useful to commissioners as they consider business before the assembly.

### 14. Advisory Committee on the Constitution Report

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution shall report its findings and any recommendations on those items referred under the *Book of Order*, G-6.02 and G-6.04. These findings shall ordinarily be listed alongside the appropriate item of business.

### 15. Financial Implications

The financial implications of each proposed item of business shall be calculated by staff of the appropriate General Assembly entities and made available prior to its consideration by an assembly committee and/or plenary.

## **B. Assembly Committees**

### 1. Formation of Committees

Business of the General Assembly shall ordinarily be referred to an assembly committee for initial discernment and recommendation for action. Committees, formed of commissioners and advisory delegates, work together in faithful discernment to receive reports, engage with the business, review rationale, and prepare items of action for the consideration of the whole assembly.

### 2. Approval of Committee Structure

The Stated Clerk shall establish the number of assembly committees and the scope of their work in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly].

### 3. Assembly Committee Moderators

The Moderators of the General Assembly shall appoint a moderator and vice moderator for each committee. Assembly committee moderator positions are filled by commissioners to the upcoming General Assembly or commissioners from the preceding three assemblies.

These guidelines shall be followed as committee moderators are chosen:

- At least one-half of those selected to serve as assembly committee moderators shall be ruling elders.
- The composition of committee moderators should ensure fair representation across all gender identities.
- At least two-thirds of those selected to serve as committee moderators shall be current commissioners. Each committee shall have at least one moderator who is a commissioner to the current assembly.
- No more than one person from any one presbytery may be selected to serve as a moderator.
- Every effort shall be made so that each synod is represented among the committee moderators.

Appointments shall be made after consultation with representatives of the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] and the General Assembly Committee on Representation.

### 4. Orientation

The Stated Clerk shall conduct an orientation for leadership of assembly committees no less than three weeks prior to the convening of the General Assembly.

### 5. Assigning Commissioners to Assembly Committees

A random process for assigning commissioners to assembly committees will be published no later than 180 days prior to the convening of the session of the General Assembly for which the assignments are being made. No later than 45 days before the convening of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall assign each commissioner and advisory delegate to one of the assembly committees by a process of random selection using that process and provide the list of assignments to assembly participants.

The process developed by the Stated Clerk to make committee assignments will ensure that:

- Membership of each committee represents the geographic diversity of the church, with ordinarily no more than one commissioner or advisory delegate from any presbytery serving on a particular committee.
- There is equitable distribution of the categories of persons identified in the *Book of Order*, F-1.0403.
- Each committee includes equal numbers of ruling elder and teaching elder commissioners.

- Young adult advisory delegates and theological student advisory delegates are distributed evenly among the committees.
- Partner advisory delegates are assigned to assembly committees in consultation with these delegates.

## 6. Referral of Business

The Stated Clerk, in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly], prepares the referral of all items of business submitted before the convening of the General Assembly to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral.

## 7. Assembly Committee on Business Referral

The moderators of the assembly committees shall be the members of the Assembly Committee on Business Referral, which shall be moderated by the moderators of the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures. This committee shall report to the assembly for its action at the first meeting of the General Assembly for the transaction of business. The Assembly Committee on Business Referral shall also meet, if necessary, just prior to the convening of the assembly. Its function shall end once the assembly has been called to order.

## 8. How Business Is Referred

Items of business to be considered by the General Assembly shall be referred in one of the following ways:

- For consideration by an assembly committee and recommendation for action by the General Assembly;
- For consideration by the General Assembly in a plenary business session; or
- Declined for referral.

Each item of business referred to a committee shall ordinarily be considered by only one assembly committee, but in no case should there be more than one committee making a recommendation on an item of business. Business of a related nature shall be assigned to a single committee insofar as possible.

## 9. Tentative Docket

The Stated Clerk, in consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly], shall submit a proposed docket to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral. This committee shall present a final recommendation of a docket to the first business session of the assembly.

## 10. Committee Support

Appropriate support persons will be assigned to committees to assist them in their work and may serve, as appropriate, as part of the committee leadership team. The Stated Clerk, in consultation

with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] and other General Assembly entities as necessary, is authorized to determine the areas of support necessary to best facilitate the work of the committees and make such assignments. Support persons are not to participate in deliberations by advocating any particular point of view on an issue before the committee, and must avoid the appearance of any conflict of interest in the committee's work. The appointments shall be made in accordance with *Book of Order*, F-1.0403.

## 11. Committee Assistants

Each committee shall have a committee assistant to provide administrative and process support services to the committee moderators and serve as a member of the committee leadership team. Persons proposed shall not be commissioners to the General Assembly or any person who is staff or an elected member of any entity of the General Assembly.

## 12. Procedures for Assembly Committee Meetings

- a. Meetings of assembly committees shall be open to the public (as space permits) provided, however, that the committee may go into executive session at any time in accordance with the Open Meeting Policy of the General Assembly.
- b. Up to two initial meetings of each assembly committee may be conducted in executive session for the purpose of developing intergroup dynamics and providing orientation to the committee's process. During these meetings, no business items shall be discussed nor any actions taken. These meetings may be scheduled prior to the convening of the assembly.
- c. Each meeting of the committee shall include a time of worship and opportunity for prayer.
- d. Committee meetings shall be conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (RONR)* except when in contradiction to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). If a standing or special committee is so large that it can function best in the manner of a full-scale assembly, it should be instructed that the informalities and modifications of the regular rules of parliamentary procedure listed for small boards in *RONR* 49:21 are not to apply to its proceedings.
- e. Each committee determines the use of the resource material or resource persons made available to it. The leadership team of each assembly committee determines whether or not to permit the distribution of particular materials to the committee members.
- f. When an assembly committee is considering the report of a special committee or commission appointed by a previous assembly, it shall set aside no less than 30 minutes to receive their report.
- g. During the deliberations of the committee, in contrast to public hearings, only the following persons may be recognized by the moderators to speak:

- Members of the committee
- Committee support persons
- Overture advocates and signers of commissioners' resolutions
- Corresponding members of the assembly, including presenters of reports of special committees and commissions
- Resource persons with special expertise, including elected members or staff members of General Assembly entities
- Representatives of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution
- Persons invited by the committee through a majority vote of the committee.

The committee moderators provide that the total time allotted to persons, other than members of the committee, who speak for or against a recommendation be equal so far as possible, excluding reports by special committees or commissions.

When individuals other than committee members advocating a particular point of view have spoken to the committee, the committee moderator shall offer to the committee the opportunity to hear from other individuals advocating a different point of view.

h. The overture advocate or one of the signers of a commissioners' resolution shall be entitled to speak, as an individual or in cooperation with other overture advocates in a pre-arranged presentation, to the background and intent of the overture or resolution at the time of its consideration.

i. Resource persons offer special knowledge and/or expertise to the discernment of assembly committees. As staff, elected members, or other appointees of General Assembly entities, they are appointed by the entity to share information about particular items of business. When speaking, such persons shall fully identify their role and any other roles they have or have been elected to with any of the entities of the General Assembly.

j. When an item of business affects the budget, mission priorities, or organizational capacity of an entity of the General Assembly, a representative from that entity shall be entitled to speak to that item of business at an appropriate time.

### 13. New Business

Each assembly committee shall consider only matters referred to it by the General Assembly. No assembly committee may initiate new business except as it relates to the business of the particular assembly committee.

New business initiated in an assembly committee proposing an amendment to the Constitution, requiring an interpretation of the Constitution by the General Assembly, or having constitutional implications (*Book of Order*, G-6.04b and G-6.02) shall be referred to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, which shall report its findings and recommendations to the committee as soon as practicable and as a part of any plenary consideration of the item.

Recommendations and reports to the assembly regarding such new business must be approved in assembly committees by three-fourths of the committee members voting on the matter.

#### 14. Public Hearings

##### a. Schedule

Each committee, with the exception of the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures, shall provide for public hearings on matters before it, including on any commissioners' resolutions submitted to it. Public hearings are the opportunity for the committee to hear from those who do not have other avenues for addressing the committee – including those who are not Presbyterian. For this reason, those who are given privilege to speak to the committee in Standing Rule 4.B.12 are not entitled to address the committee during public hearings.

##### b. Registration

The Stated Clerk shall announce, no later than 30 days prior to the first meeting of the assembly, the method by which a person who wishes to be heard in a public hearing shall register to speak, and the deadline for registering. The person shall indicate the item of business they would like to speak to and whether they are speaking for or against it.

##### c. Time Limits

The committee may limit the time for presentation by any person during a public hearing and the total time allotted for such public comments. If the time allotted for the public hearing is not sufficient to accommodate all the persons wishing to speak, committee leadership shall seek to allow an equal number of persons on each side of an issue to speak. Any person denied the right to speak at the hearing may appeal to the committee on the basis that the method employed in selecting speakers was not fair.

#### 15. Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures is responsible for the coordination of the assembly's discernment processes once the assembly convenes. It shall be made up of two co-moderators appointed by the Moderators of the General Assembly and one ruling elder commissioner and one teaching elder commissioner from each assembly committee, along with two young adult advisory delegates and one theological student advisory delegate. The commissioners from each assembly committee serving on the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures shall be selected at random from the members of each assembly committee no later than 45 days before the convening of the General Assembly and may decline their selection for service. A similar random selection process shall be used to determine the advisory delegates serving on the committee.

#### a. Responsible for Referral of Business

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures is responsible for referral of any business that is presented to the Stated Clerk after the assembly has been called to order. If a proposed item of new business substantially duplicates other matters before the assembly, then it may decline to refer it to an assembly committee. If a commissioners' resolution effects a substantial change in an existing social witness policy, the Stated Clerk should recommend to the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures that it be referred to the next General Assembly. Otherwise, the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures shall determine which assembly committee will consider the matter.

#### b. Coordination Between Committees

This committee shall keep itself informed of the subjects being considered by the other assembly committees, and, when any subject is taken up by more than one committee, this committee shall advise the moderators of those committees regarding ways to avoid redundant or inconsistent recommendations.

#### c. Coordinate Docket

The committee is responsible for coordinating the docket of the assembly in plenary. It shall review any requests for distribution of materials to assembly participants or additional events to be added to the docket. It monitors the assembly's use of time in plenary and may make recommendations to the assembly regarding necessary changes to the limits of debate so that business may be completed in a timely fashion. In this work, any report from the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures shall take precedence over any other business, including the orders of the day.

#### d. Review Minutes, Dissents, and Protests

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures is responsible for approving the minutes of the General Assembly while it is in session and immediately following adjournment. It also reviews any dissents or protests filed by commissioners and includes them in the minutes when appropriate, in accordance with the *Book of Order*, G-3.0105b. As the committee exercises these responsibilities on behalf of the assembly, advisory delegates assigned to the committee shall have voice but no vote.

#### e. Credentials and Ethical Conduct

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures shall serve as directed under the Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the General Assembly or in any other matter related to the credentials of a commissioner, advisory delegate, or other assembly participant. As the committee exercises these responsibilities on behalf of the assembly, advisory delegates assigned to the committee shall have voice but no vote.



## 16. Reports of Assembly Committees

The report of each assembly committee contains a recommendation for the assembly's action on each item of business referred to the committee, including a record of the committee's vote on that recommendation. The report shall indicate which items are included on the plenary consent agenda (Standing Rule 4.C.7) and the order in which the action items expect to be taken up when presented in plenary. Any financial implications for a General Assembly entity beyond the initial budget presented to the assembly shall be identified. The report is prepared by the committee's leadership team, along with any other persons designated by the moderators.

### a. Minority Report

At least two members of an assembly committee may submit a written minority report expressing views that differ from those in the committee's recommendation. If the moderators of the committee affirm that the positions expressed as recommendations for action by the assembly in a minority report were presented to the whole committee during its consideration of the matter, the Stated Clerk shall distribute it to the assembly with the report of the committee. A minority report must be appropriate for consideration as a substitute motion.

## C. General Assembly Plenary Meetings

### 1. Registration of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates

The Stated Clerk shall enroll commissioners and advisory delegates at the opening of the General Assembly and shall determine any question that may arise regarding registration of commissioners and delegates. Any complaints regarding such a decision shall be referred to the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures.

### 2. Seating and Access to Commissioners and Delegates

When the assembly is meeting in-person, the Stated Clerk shall determine arrangements for commissioner and advisory delegate seating in advance of the meeting. Seating shall also be designated for mid council executive staff and stated clerks, ecumenical representatives, and corresponding members.

The only persons who shall be permitted to access the commissioner and advisory delegate seating area during plenary sessions are commissioners, advisory delegates, the Stated Clerk, Associate and Assistant Stated Clerks, and other persons who are assigned responsibilities that require access to this area. The Stated Clerk will provide special credentials for the particular staff and assembly assistants who are authorized to enter the commissioner/advisory delegate seating area. Registered mid council leaders may have access to the seating area to support their commissioners and advisory delegates during breaks in business.

### 3. Quorum

A quorum of the General Assembly shall be 100 commissioners, 50 of whom shall be ruling elders and 50 teaching elders, representing presbyteries of at least one-fourth of its synods (*Book of Order*, G-3.0503). The presence of a quorum may be established by sign-in to the voting system at the beginning of the meeting. Thereafter, the continued presence of a quorum may be determined by the number of participating members.

### 4. Debate and Discernment

Persons recognized by the Moderators may speak for no more than three minutes. In debate on any pending matter, no commissioner or delegate shall be recognized to speak a second time until all other commissioners or delegates seeking recognition have been recognized. Additional limits on debate may be approved by the assembly by a two-thirds vote. These or any other limitations to debate in the Standing Rules or approved by the assembly apply to all persons recognized by the Moderator for any purpose, including resource persons and corresponding members. However, resource persons shall not be limited in the number of times they may respond to questions from commissioners or delegates. Members of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution are not subject to these limits.

### 5. Previous Question Motions

Motions for the previous question on more than one pending item are not in order at any time.

### 6. Voting

The General Assembly shall ordinarily decide questions by electronic voting. The Moderator may also call for unanimous consent.

### 7. Plenary Consent Agenda

Any actions requiring constitutional change or interpretation must be considered in plenary, unless the assembly committee recommends disapproval by a three-quarters vote, in which case the recommendation for disapproval may be placed on the plenary consent agenda. All other decisions made by assembly committees by a three-quarters vote shall be placed on the plenary consent agenda to be considered as the first order of business following committee meetings.

In addition to all consent items from assembly committees, the following items shall be placed on the plenary consent agenda:

- All unchallenged nominations from the General Assembly Nominating Committee.
- Unanimous recommendations from assembly agencies and entities for confirmations of those offices that, according to the Manual of the General Assembly, require General Assembly confirmation.

Any commissioner may remove any item from the plenary consent agenda. To assist the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures with planning, the Stated Clerk may establish a process by which commissioners may provide advance notice of items they intend to remove from the plenary consent agenda.

#### 8. Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures (Standing Rule 4.B.15) shall report at the beginning of each meeting regarding any of its business completed since its last report.

#### 9. Assembly Committee Reports

The reports of assembly committees (Standing Rule 4.B.16) shall ordinarily be made available no later than the close of the meeting prior to the one at which they are to be considered.

The Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures, in consultation with the Stated Clerk, shall docket adequate time for the reports of committees, including ample time for debate and action. If a committee report requires more time than docketed, the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures shall consult with the committee leadership team regarding additional time to complete consideration of the report.

Committee moderators should move the approval of recommendations with minimum comment, and should not read aloud material in the commissioners' provided resources.

The financial effect of each recommendation on budgets previously approved or under consideration shall be clearly presented at the time that the recommendation is considered by the assembly. The effort required of staff and elected members to carry out the General Assembly's instruction shall also be clearly presented.

#### 10. Substitute Motions

For the purposes of these Standing Rules, a substitute motion replaces the main motion and stands as a full and complete substitution for the main motion's recommendations. A substitute motion shall be moved only after the main motion has first been moved.

The process for a substitute motion is as follows:

- a. The assembly first considers amendments to the main motion.
- b. When consideration of amendments to the main motion is complete, the assembly then considers amendments to the substitute motion.
- c. Once amendments to the main motion and substitute motion are complete, the question before the assembly is, "Shall the substitute motion become the main motion?"

After consideration of a first substitute motion on an item of business, additional substitute motions are in order; however, any parts of the new main motion previously amended shall not be amended further.

A minority report (Standing Rule 4.B.16) may emerge from an assembly committee and will ordinarily be treated as a substitute motion. An initial presentation of both the committee's recommendation and the minority report shall be coordinated so as to be as equal in length as possible and shall be presented before the process of amendment begins.

#### 11. Constitutional Issues

When the General Assembly is in plenary session considering an item of business, questions arising in debate concerning constitutional matters shall be referred to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) present at the plenary. In cases where the ACC cannot give an immediate response, the Moderator may entertain a motion to postpone the pending motion until the ACC is prepared to advise the assembly concerning the question that has been asked.

#### 12. Executive Session

The assembly may go into executive session only in accordance with the provisions of the General Assembly Open Meeting Policy. Any person permitted to remain during any executive session is bound by the confidentiality required of commissioners.

#### 13. Committee Reports on the Budget

At the first meeting of the General Assembly for the transaction of business following the meetings of assembly committees, the assembly shall hear a report on the per capita budget from the committee that has reviewed that budget.

Throughout the assembly, updates on the per capita budget shall be made available to commissioners and advisory delegates.

On the final day of the assembly, an updated per capita budget incorporating the financial implications of actions taken by the assembly shall be presented to the assembly for action. If the assembly approves a budget that does not adequately fund the estimated financial implications of new actions, all new items will be scaled in proportion to the amended per capita budget.

#### 14. General Assembly Nominating Committee

The General Assembly Nominating Committee shall present a report to each session of the General Assembly. This report ordinarily includes a nominee for election to each existing vacancy on the entities of the General Assembly.

#### a. Nominations from the Floor

Nominations by commissioners shall be in order unless the vacancy is required to be filled upon nomination from some other source. The commissioner making the nomination will provide the Stated Clerk, no later than 48 hours after the convening of the General Assembly, with pertinent information about the person whose name is being presented and the particular position to be filled, including the name of the committee's nominee, if appropriate. The Stated Clerk shall provide this information to the assembly at least 24 hours in advance of the nomination being made from the floor.

In the event that there are nominations from the floor, the election shall proceed as follows:

1. The General Assembly will deal with one position with multiple nominees at a time.
2. The name of the General Assembly Nominating Committee's nominee shall be placed in nomination by its moderator. The Moderator of the General Assembly shall call upon the commissioner who is placing a nomination from the floor to put that name in nomination. No second is required.
3. Once the names are placed in nomination, the order of speaking shall be:
  - a. First, the commissioner or a designee speaking on behalf of the floor nominee.
  - b. Second, the General Assembly Nominating Committee member or a designee speaking to its nominee.
4. Each speech shall not exceed three minutes in length.
5. Without further discussion or debate, the General Assembly will move to a vote.

#### 15. Special Greetings

When the Head of Communion of an ecumenical partner or equivalent leader of another religious tradition is present, the Moderators and Stated Clerk shall have authority to provide up to three minutes to each such leader to present a greeting to the assembly at an appropriate time.

#### 16. Previous Notice

In accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, when previous notice of any motion is required, it may be given through the following means:

- Written notice included in a proposed item of business;
- Submission of an electronic notice through the process designated by the Stated Clerk; or

By a verbal statement offered in a plenary meeting after being recognized by the Moderator.

## D. Special Meetings of the General Assembly

The *Book of Order* permits the calling of special meetings of the General Assembly (*Book of Order*, G-3.0503). A special meeting should be a highly unusual occurrence, meant to address only the most urgent matters that cannot wait for action by the next stated meeting of the General Assembly.

### 1. Calling a Special Meeting

A special meeting is called by the required number of commissioners submitting a petition with the full text of the resolution to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

The resolution for a special meeting and its subject matter must meet the following requirements:

- The subject matter shall fall within the General Assembly's responsibilities;
- The resolution shall state the specific action proposed and shall include the reasons for proposing the action;
- A special meeting may not be called for the purpose of discussion only;
- The matters should be able to be resolved in a session of one or two days; and
- The full text of the resolution shall appear on each page of the signed petitions.

The Stated Clerk may consult with the Moderators and the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] to determine any questions concerning whether the resolution meets the criteria for a called meeting or concerning the specific actions in the proposed resolution.

Resolutions requiring or proposing constitutional interpretation are subject to the 120-day requirement in the *Book of Order*, G-6.02. The 120-day requirement begins upon receipt of the petition by the Moderator. The Moderator may consult with the Advisory Committee on the Constitution to determine any questions concerning whether the resolution requires a constitutional interpretation.

### 2. Signature Verification

In accordance with the *Book of Order*, G-3.0503, a petition for a special meeting must have the concurrence of at least one-fourth of the ruling elder commissioners and one-fourth of the teaching elder commissioners to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly. These persons must represent at least 15 presbyteries, under the jurisdiction of at least five synods.

Upon receipt of the petition, the Stated Clerk shall complete the following steps within 30 days:

- Verify the current Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) membership of each signatory to the petition.
- Request each signatory to the petition to verify the signature on the petition and if the commissioner concurs with the purpose of the request as stated in the resolution.

- During the verification process, a commissioner may request removal of their name from the petition by notifying the Stated Clerk.
- After all reasonable efforts of verification have been made, the name of any commissioner failing to reply shall be removed from the petition.
- The Stated Clerk shall report to the Moderators the results of the verification process.

### 3. Arrangements and Notice

Upon receiving certification from the Stated Clerk that the petition has met the requirements of the *Book of Order* and the Standing Rules of the General Assembly, the Moderators shall report to the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] the decision to call the meeting.

The [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] has the responsibility to fix the date and place of a meeting of the General Assembly when the General Assembly is not in session.

[COGA] shall be responsible for setting the method or place of meeting and determining the date(s). A special meeting should ordinarily take place using a digital meeting platform.

[COGA] shall submit to the called meeting a plan to pay for its expenses. This plan shall be considered to be part of the business of the special meeting.

The notice of the called meeting will be sent to the commissioners no later than 60 days before the start of the meeting.

## **E. Commissions, Special Committees, and Special Administrative Review**

### 1. Commissions and Special Committees

The General Assembly may establish special committees and commissions to carry out decisions of the assembly or make recommendations to the assembly on matters that cannot be undertaken or accomplished by an existing entity (*Book of Order*, G-3.0109). Special committees and commissions have a special focus and serious consideration should be made in determining the need to establish them.

- a. A special committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by the General Assembly. It shall make a full report to a future assembly, and its recommendations shall require action at that time.
- b. A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by the General Assembly. The action creating the commission shall state specifically the scope of the commission's powers and any restrictions on those powers.

When the assembly is considering the creation of a special committee or commission, the Stated Clerk shall ensure that input is received from the most closely-related assembly entity or entities as to whether the work to be assigned to the special committee could more effectively and economically be assigned to that entity or entities. The Stated Clerk will also consult with the

[Committee on the Office of the General Assembly], the General Assembly Committee on Representation, and the assembly committee considering the proposal. The Stated Clerk shall report to the assembly committee considering the proposal and to the assembly regarding this consultation and may provide comment, guidance, or an alternate recommendation to the assembly regarding the creation of a special committee or commission. Financial implications of special committees or commissions shall accompany any recommendation to the assembly.

When the report of the special committee or commission is presented, its moderator shall serve as a corresponding member of the assembly and may be accompanied by one other member of the committee or commission to present and interpret the committee's work to the assembly.

The Stated Clerk shall provide staff services and other assistance to special committees and commissions. The funds for the work of the special committees and commissions shall be from per capita, unless another source is specified in the action creating the committee.

## 2. Administrative Commission on Mid Councils

The General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils has the authority to act as the General Assembly, upon request of synods and presbyteries, with the authority of the General Assembly to “approv[e] the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e), and to approve exceptions to the minimum composition of a presbytery (G-3.0301). The administrative commission shall be composed of seven members whose length of term will be four years with eligibility for an additional four-year term.

## 3. Special Administrative Review of Synods

The General Assembly has authority to undertake special administrative review of synods (*Book of Order*, G-3.0502b and G-3.0108b). There are four ways the General Assembly could be requested to consider such review:

- a. By an overture from a presbytery or synod (*Book of Order*, G-3.0302d; G-3.0402; Standing Rule 4.A.5).
- b. By request from one of the General Assembly entities (Standing Rule 4.A.7).
- c. By a commissioners' resolution (Standing Rule 4.A.11). If such overture, request, or resolution is acted on favorably by the General Assembly, the General Assembly could undertake Special Administrative Review (*Book of Order*, G-3.0108b) through a commission or special committee as provided for in Standing Rule 4.E.1 and *Book of Order*, G-3.0109.
- d. By a written request for review received by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly (when the assembly is not in session) from another synod or a presbytery within the synod of the alleged irregularity or delinquency. If the request relates to an alleged delinquency, the request can only be filed with the Stated Clerk after the failure or refusal of the synod to cure the alleged delinquency at its next meeting, having been requested to do so in



writing prior to the meeting. When the request for special administrative review is received, the Stated Clerk shall consult with the Moderators of the General Assembly to determine if the request is in order and whether the special administrative review needs to be undertaken before the next meeting of the General Assembly. If they determine that the request should be granted, the Moderators of the General Assembly shall appoint a special committee (Standing Rule 4.E.1) to conduct a special administrative review in accordance with the *Book of Order*, G-3.0108b, which will report its findings and recommendations to the next General Assembly.

## **F. Amendment or Suspension of the Standing Rules**

### **1. Recommending Amendments to the Standing Rules**

In consultation with the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly], the Stated Clerk is responsible for conducting a regular review of the Standing Rules, and in coordination with the committee, proposing such amendments as might be necessary. After each assembly through the 229th General Assembly (the first three conducted under these revised Standing Rules), this review shall be conducted by a task force appointed by the [Committee on the Office of the General Assembly] that includes a member of the General Assembly Committee on Representation.

### **2. Amending the Standing Rules**

When an amendment to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly has been proposed as an item of business with at least 60 days' notice to the assembly, the Standing Rules of the General Assembly may be amended by a majority vote of the commissioners present and voting. A motion to amend the rules is debatable. Amendments to the Standing Rules go into effect at the adjournment of the session of the assembly that adopts them, unless the General Assembly stipulates a different time.

### **3. Suspending the Standing Rules**

The Standing Rules may be suspended in one of the following ways:

- a. The motion to suspend may be submitted as a recommendation by the Assembly Committee on Business Referral prior to the convening of the assembly.

Such a motion is debatable and requires a majority vote of the commissioners present and voting.

- b. The motion to suspend may be received after the assembly has been convened.

Such a motion is not debatable, shall require notice no later than the previous meeting, and a majority vote of the total enrollment of the commissioners.

# Part 5

## Glossary

### A. Entity/General Assembly Entity

An entity is a body created by and accountable to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including but not limited to the standing committees of the General Assembly, the agencies of the General Assembly, and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.

### B. Meeting

In accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (8:6), a meeting of the General Assembly is a single official gathering of the commissioners, advisory delegates, and other participants for the work of worship and discernment described in these Standing Rules.

### C. Moderators

Throughout the Standing Rules, whether speaking of the Moderators of the General Assembly or an assembly committee, the term *Moderator* or *Moderators* is used to describe the shared leadership of two persons in leading meetings and discernment processes described in these rules. According to the particular preferences of those elected or appointed to serve, this may be done through service as Co-Moderators, by serving alternately, or as Moderator and Vice-Moderator.

### D. Session

In accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (8:2), a session of the General Assembly is a series of meetings held over several days under the same program and docket.

GUIDELINES AND POLICIES  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## OPEN MEETING POLICY\*

Approved by the 209th General Assembly (1997)<sup>1</sup>

Amended by the 218th General Assembly (2008)<sup>2</sup>

1. The work of the church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust. Church members have a basic right to know about the work done and the decisions made by entities within the church. Church leaders have a basic responsibility to honor that right by conducting their business with a spirit of openness and vulnerability to public scrutiny. Therefore, open meetings shall be the norm for all such entities.
2. It is the policy of the General Assembly; the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the entities and work groups related to them, that their meetings shall be open to all interested persons. A separate policy exists governing non-business gatherings. Documents being considered at such meetings shall be available to interested persons at the meeting.
3. In certain circumstances, when the confidentiality of the subject matter is impeding the open work of the group, meetings of these entities may be closed. The following requirements apply:
  - a. Subjects dealt with must be limited to property negotiation, personnel, civil and criminal litigation, including cases under the Rules of Discipline, or security.
  - b. Closed meetings may be authorized only after serious consideration and by a majority vote of the members present. Such closure must be limited in time and scope to matters in 3(a) above.
  - c. In closed meetings, only voting members and other persons invited by the group to serve it are to be present.
  - d. The reason(s) for closing must be announced before closure and also must be recorded in the minutes.
  - e. The decisions reached shall be recorded in the minutes, and shall be made public as soon as possible following the end of the closed meeting.
4. Since staff groups have neither authority nor responsibility for establishing policy, their meetings are not subject to these provisions. This does not preclude them from opening their meetings.
5. The provisions of this policy shall apply to visitors and to representatives of both church and public media, including print, electronic, and photographic journalists.
6. All the provisions of this policy are to be applied equitably to all persons and groups.
7. The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is responsible for resolving questions relating to the application and interpretation of the open meeting policy.

\*The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the following statement in regards to the Open Meeting Policy:

The General Assembly Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the PC(USA) shall be exempt from this open meeting policy in order to go into closed session solely for the purpose of exchanging views on sensitive theological issues in cases where it is determined by two-third's vote of the members of the task force present in a duly called and constituted meeting. (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 23)

<sup>1</sup>*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 212–13.

<sup>2</sup>*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 34, 35, 162.

\*The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the following statement in regards to the Open Meeting Policy:

Direct the entities subject to the PC(USA) Open Meeting Policy to post the dates, times, and locations of their open meetings on the PC(USA) calendar Web page within a reasonable time of making such plans.

# GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF MINUTES OF AGENCIES

Adopted by the 197th General Assembly (1985)<sup>2</sup>  
Amended by the 215th General Assembly (2003)<sup>3</sup>

## General

1. Minutes must be submitted to the General Assembly on a calendar-year basis.
2. The original signed copy of the minutes shall be submitted to the Office of the General Assembly on the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly.
3. All minutes to be reviewed by the assembly shall reflect an accurate record of all substantive decisions, whether determined by negative or positive vote. Where subsequent action is required, it shall be recorded in later minutes.
4. All minutes shall be approved by the respective body before submission to the General Assembly for review and approval.
5. Minutes of all meetings shall be submitted together with those of the executive committee if the committee is empowered to act independently.
6. The minutes shall show whether or not each meeting was opened and closed with prayer.
7. A record of the attendance of members shall be included, along with a list of visitors and staff present.
8. Minutes shall be on 8-1/2 x 11-inch permalife acid-free paper that shall be supplied on request by the Department of History.
9. Minutes shall be placed in secure binding, such as a post or clamp binder.
10. Pages shall be sequentially numbered with material on both sides of the paper.
11. A slash should be inserted from the final sentence to the bottom of a partially filled page to preclude further additions, except where signatures indicate end of report.
12. One year following approval, the original minutes shall be placed on deposit at the Department of History for permanent safekeeping.

## Style

1. Acronyms or initials should either be defined in a single place at the end of the minutes or be written out the first time they are used in each set of minutes.
2. Extensive typographical errors corrected through erasures and correction fluid should be initialed.
3. Marginal topic headings should be used to facilitate referencing and reading of minutes.

<sup>2</sup>*Minutes*, 1985, Part I, pp. 735–36

<sup>3</sup>*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 34, 119

## GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING SYNOD RECORDS

Approved by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly  
February 16, 2024

### Content of the Minutes

The following matters shall be included in the minutes, as applicable:

1. The minutes shall contain a table of contents.
2. The date, time, and place of the council meeting; the name of the moderator presiding; and whether it is a “stated,” “adjourned,” or “special” council meeting (*Robert’s Rules*, Chapter XV, Section 48).
3. The call of the special meeting and the name of requester(s) and/or the caller in accordance with Synod’s own rules (G-3.0405).
4. The opening of each meeting with prayer (G-3.0105).
5. The closing of each meeting with prayer (G-3.0105).
6. The roll of commissioners in attendance and their presbyteries (G-3.0104).
7. The names of absentees and their presbyteries.
8. A statement that a quorum was present. (G-3.0405).
9. A record of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, if applicable (G-3.0401b).
10. The report of the Committee on Representation (G-3.0103, G-3.0401) showing implementation of the principles of participation and inclusiveness in order to assure fair representation in decision-making (G-3.0401).
11. The names of members of commissions, committees, and similar groups, including those groups that exist only during a synod meeting.
12. Action taken on reports and recommendations and all reports with clear indication of amendments.
13. The decisions of the Permanent Judicial Commission and other commissions should be reported. A report should be made that lawful injunctions to the presbyteries have been obeyed.
14. Actions concerning the organization of new presbyteries or the division, uniting, or otherwise combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries previously existing, subject to the approval of the General Assembly (G-3.0403c).
15. The review of the records of presbyteries, including any exceptions taken (G-3.0403, G-3.0108a).
16. The report of the synod entities, if any, and action on its recommendations (G3.0108a).
17. The approved synod budget (G-3.0113).

18. The complete report of the full financial review (G-3.0113).
19. Report of its ecumenical relationship, if any (G-5.01, 5.04).
20. Indication that the minutes have been approved by the synod according to its own rule prior to presentation of the peer review.
21. A record of the synod having considered matters referred to it by the General Assembly (G-3.0402).



22. An alphabetical roster of former members for the last six years of the Permanent Judicial Commission who may be called upon when necessary to constitute a quorum (D-5.0206b).
23. A report of property and liability insurance carried by the Synod (G-3.0112).
24. Actions taken by synod entities/commissions held between synod meetings.

### General Provisions

1. Each synod shall deliver to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly one copy of the minutes of all sessions of the synod that have occurred since the last review by the General Assembly, provided that such minutes have been approved by the synod or its authorized committee.
2. The minutes shall include revisions to bylaws and standing rules and all policies required by the Book of Order or attestation of the existence of these instruments, with the date of approval and/or date of revision.
3. The minutes shall be electronically signed and attested by the stated clerk of the synod; such signature should appear at the end of the journal before any attachments.
4. The minutes shall be submitted in the PDF or PDF/A file format.
5. An approval letter shall show attestation that the minutes of meetings of the most recent previous session or sessions have been reviewed by the General Assembly and shall give page references to action on exceptions, if there be such.
6. The review of the minutes of each synod shall occur as peer reviews by a gathering of all synod stated clerks. Their written review of each synod minutes shall be submitted to the General Assembly Committee assigned the review of the minutes, who shall attest that the minutes of each synod have been reviewed. If peer review is not completed, the synod shall submit its minutes for review by the General Assembly Committee charged with overseeing this review.
7. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall transfer to the Presbyterian Historical Society the signed, electronic copies of the synod minutes and their corresponding approval letters for preservation.

### Report of the Assembly Committee

1. The assembly committee reviewing synod minutes shall be resourced by at least two current Synod Stated Clerks chosen by at the peer review.
2. The assembly committee reviewing synod minutes shall report to the General Assembly as evidenced by the report of the Synod Stated Clerks whether the
  - a. proceedings have been correctly recorded;
  - b. proceedings have been regular and in concurrence with the Constitution;
  - c. proceedings have been prudent and equitable;
  - d. proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church, and
  - e. lawful injunctions of the General Assembly have been obeyed.

3. The assembly committee shall include in its report recommended corrective actions to be taken by the General Assembly regarding irregularities or delinquencies identified as exceptions in the written review of each synod's minutes by the peer review conducted by the synod stated clerks.

## SEEKING TO BE FAITHFUL TOGETHER:

### Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement

**Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

**Give them a hearing  
... listen before we  
answer**

John 7:51 and  
Proverbs 18:13

**Speak the  
truth in love**

Ephesians 4:15

**Maintain the unity  
of the spirit in the  
bond of peace**

Ephesians 4:3

In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will:

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus Christ:
  - we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange;
  - we will not ask questions or make statements in a way that will intimidate or judge others.
2. Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.
3. State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.
4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus's teachings.
5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence, or integrity; we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
6. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.
7. Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.
8. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension; we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
9. Follow these additional guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:
  - urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
  - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
  - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
  - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways that are consistent with these guidelines.
10. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

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As Presbyterians, we are called to work for “the peace, unity, and purity of the church” (*Book of Order*, G-14.0207g [now W-4.4003]) as we seek to be faithful to God’s work in the world. However, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) As we try to be faithful. They exist within committees, congregations, presbyteries, synods, at General Assemblies, and in the national life of the denomination.

Conflicts are inevitable in all of life and certainly in the church. The history of the church is filled with conflicts and disagreements. Several of Paul’s letters address the conflicts that were [common] in the early church. There have been and are going to be disagreements as Christians attempt to discern God’s work in the world and as we interpret Scriptures.

Conflicts can be harmful and even destructive. They can cause individuals a great deal of pain and the community of faith immeasurable damage. Congregations have been divided; denominations have experienced schisms.

At the same time, conflicts can be an opportunity for new insights, learning, and individual and corporate growth. Disagreements can illuminate a topic in helpful ways and can present solutions to problems that previously had not been seen. The successful resolution of conflict can also bind people together in a powerful way.

The Bible contains many stories of conflict and disagreement and much advice about how they can be addressed. As those stories indicate, God is already present whenever there is brokenness, granting wholeness and peace. God promises to be with us in times of disagreement and calls us to reconciliation, trust, love and forgiveness.

We realize that our perspectives are limited, so to help us affirm each other, enhance our community, stay open to the viewpoints of others and be sensitive to cultural diversity, we commit ourselves to the guidelines in a spirit of prayer, trust, and love, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## FORMING SOCIAL POLICY

### 1. Definitions

Entities of the General Assembly use the following documents to make a social witness policy:

- a. A “policy statement” establishes the fundamental principles that guide the denomination’s social witness. From this policy base a strategy is developed, a program is defined, and personal social witness is empowered. The most current policy document produced in conformance to the requirements of 2.a.–g. of this document and adopted by a General Assembly shall be the policy in force. Any previous policies and statements, having been examined and considered by the group producing the new policy, shall be superseded by the adoption of the most current policy. When requests for policy statements are made, the most recent policy statement shall be given; however, past statements shall be included in full response to requests for information.
- b. A “resolution” applies existing policy statements to new circumstances.
- c. A “study paper” is designed to stimulate churchwide study of a social concern, social witness policy, or social witness. It does not need to be an elaboration of existing policy statements.
- d. A “social involvement report” evaluates Presbyterian social witness in light of particular social concerns and existing policy statements.

### 2. Requirements

All social witness policy documents developed by General Assembly entities, including special committees of the General Assembly (see section 1. above) must meet the following requirements:

- a. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy will be responsible for the process of developing and recommending social witness policy to the General Assembly. If any other entity is involved in processes of developing and recommending social witness policy, then appropriate consultation and linkage with the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy shall be undertaken.
- b. The body writing a document (i.e. task force, study group, or subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy) shall be selected in such a manner that persons of diverse viewpoints, expertise, and social experience are participants.
- c. A social witness policy document may include a section of recommendations that guide the work of divisions and related entities of the church. If approved by an assembly, recommendations shall be referred to the Presbyterian Mission Agency for implementation in accordance with the practices defined in the Presbyterian Mission Agency Operations Manual. These recommendations may suggest the ways in which the document is to be distributed.
- d. The narrative reports of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and other entities shall not propose policy nor recommend witness. Moreover, narrative reports are not considered social witness policy documents and are exempt, therefore, from the requirements of these guidelines.
- e. A document shall clearly identify its type of social witness (i.e., policy statement, resolution, study document, or social engagement report).
- f. No social witness policy documents shall use language that implies the conscience of individual members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is bound by General Assembly statements or recommendations.
- g. All social witness policy documents, listed in section 1. above, shall have an initial distribution by the Stated Clerk and be sent with an official cover letter that indicates the nature of the document, specific recommendations approved by the assembly, and an affirmation of the

freedom of a believer's conscience.

### 3. Policy Statements Requirements

In addition to section 2. on p. 65, "policy statements" must meet the following requirements:

- a. A prospectus defining the social issue(s) to be addressed by a policy statement shall be developed, adopted, and published by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy or other entity. This prospectus shall be distributed to the Presbyterian News Office, *Monday Morning*, and other appropriate media. A brief (one-page) summary of the prospectus describing the problem to be addressed, information on where to obtain a full prospectus, and an invitation to respond with comments and suggestions, shall be sent to all synods and presbyteries. This prospectus shall be distributed to all presbyteries with sufficient copies for all congregations, encouraging input from the presbytery and the congregations and indicating how input can be made.
- b. A task force called to develop a policy statement shall be appointed from nominees submitted from the church.
- c. The task force shall develop and make known to the whole church a plan indicating the manner in which the whole church can participate (advise, offer input, etc.) in its deliberations.
- d. The task force shall listen to the
  - (1) voices of the biblical text;
  - (2) wisdom of theological discourse;
  - (3) guidance of the Reformed confessions;
  - (4) insights of sociopolitical disciplines;
  - (5) tradition of past policy statements;
  - (6) advice of members and all governing bodies of the church;
  - (7) insights of people who are poor, victims of existing policies, and those who have not had a voice in the councils of the church; and
  - (8) counsel of ecumenical partners.
- e. The task force shall cause a policy statement to be written that
  - (1) explicates its recommended social witness policy based on biblical scholarship;
  - (2) defines its recommended social witness policy in light of theological reflection;
  - (3) is consistent with the confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
  - (4) reports relevant policy statements adopted by prior General Assemblies and the manner in which church and society have participated in the development of its policy statement;
  - (5) details the contextual situation that prompted its witness;
  - (6) states the ethical norms upon which its guidance is premised;
  - (7) describes the social witness the church, its governing bodies, and members are called to make; and
  - (8) describes the manner in which society should change.
- f. The task force shall provide a summary (one-page maximum) of its policy statement that
  - (1) explains what caused the document to be written;
  - (2) outlines the document's conclusions; and

- (3) suggests how the document might be used, what impact it ought to have on the church, and what consequences it ought to have in the public order.
- g. The task force may cause a series of recommendations to be written for consideration by the General Assembly. The recommendations may include a strategy for distribution of the policy statement.
- h. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy shall submit a penultimate draft of the policy statement for consultation as described in section 3.a on p. 66.
- (1) The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy may augment the number of participants gathered in consultation for purposes of inclusivity and expertise.
  - (2) The consultation may create a report, including suggested changes to the proposed policy statement, which shall be received by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.
  - (3) The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy may amend the proposed policy statement, refer the proposed policy statement back to the task force, or reaffirm the original policy statement.
- i. The policy statement shall be distributed with an official cover letter from the Stated Clerk that says, in part:

In exercise of its responsibility to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life, the (number) General Assembly (year) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved this policy statement. It is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which it ministers. It will determine procedures and program for the units and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by other governing bodies (sessions, presbyteries, and synods). It is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

#### 4. Resolution Requirements

In addition to section 2. on p. 65, “resolutions” must meet the following requirements:

- a. A resolution shall clearly identify the policy statement(s) upon which it is based.
- b. A resolution shall be distributed with an official cover letter from the Stated Clerk that says, in part:
 

In exercise of its responsibility to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life, the (number) General Assembly (year) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved this resolution. It is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which it ministers. It will determine procedures and program for the entities and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by other governing bodies (sessions, presbyteries, and synods). It is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

#### 5. Study Document Requirements

In addition to section 2. on p. 65, “study documents” must meet the following requirements:

- a. A study document may not contain recommendations for consideration by a General Assembly.
- b. A study document shall provide bibliographic and interpretive resources. This material shall reflect and represent various ethical stances found within the Christian Church.
- c. A study document may make a coherent, thoroughgoing argument for a particular ethical

stance. In addition, however, a study document shall include a fair presentation of alternative ethical stances in either the main body of text or its appendixes.

- d. A study document shall be distributed with a cover letter that states who is invited to respond, a study guide, a “user-friendly” response form, the address and phone number of the body responsible for receiving responses, and a schedule that allows at least twelve months for completion.
- e. A study document shall include an official cover letter that says:

A study document of the General Assembly seeks to stimulate study and discussion within the church on particular social issues. It is not to be construed as a social witness policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore, nothing in this document can be used to direct the mission program of the church.

- f. A study document shall state the intended outcome of a study process by adding to the above paragraph one of the following:
  - (1) This study document is distributed to stimulate study and discussion as an end in itself; or
  - (2) This study document is distributed to inform and help prepare a policy statement; or
  - (3) This study document is distributed to inform and help revise the policy statement, [name], passed by the [number] General Assembly [year].
- g. The report, based on responses to the study document, shall not be presented to the General Assembly until at least eighteen months have elapsed since the study’s initial distribution.

## 6. Distributing a Social Involvement Report

In addition to section 2. on p. 65, “social involvement” reports shall be distributed with an official cover letter that says, in part:

A social involvement report of the General Assembly seeks to stimulate discussion on particular social issues and the church’s response to these issues. It is not to be construed as a social witness policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore, nothing in this document can be used to direct the mission program of the church.

## 7. Guidelines

The church’s social witness is multidirectional and multilateral. To guide entities preparing the General Assembly’s social policy, the following statements encourage appropriate attitudes and behaviors.

- a. No social witness policy may purport to bind the conscience of individual members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- b. A social witness policy document is a minute of a council meeting. It may be extracted from the minutes for publication. If it is extracted, it shall be treated in the same manner as any other minute. (The nature of debate and the final vote are irrelevant.)
- c. A social policy document shall include instructions for its distribution (i.e., to all governing bodies, the president of the United States of America, the president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, or the secretary general of the United Nations).
- d. The Stated Clerk and directors of divisions or related entities shall respond to emerging mission needs that require an “official” Presbyterian social witness by explicating the most current General Assembly social witness policy.



- e. The Presbyterian Mission Agency is prepared to respond to invitations to consult on regional social policy development in the manner defined by *Book of Order*, G-3.0106. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy shall participate and represent the council in these consultations.
  
- f. All governing bodies are communities of correspondence and may direct social witness material to the assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board refers correspondence concerning social witness policy development and supporting documents to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy for response.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES PRESBYTERIES' COOPERATIVE COMMITTEE ON EXAMINATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

**NAME:** This permanent committee of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is called the *Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates*. For convenience, the committee may be referred to as the PCCEC.

**PURPOSE:** The PCCEC's purpose was defined by the action of the 1965 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in creating the committee:

In order to assist and support the work of presbytery committees which are responsible for the examination of candidates for ordination, to provide a more equitable standard of expectation among all the presbyteries, and to offer candidates a more uniform basis for their preparation for ordination examination, there shall be a Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates which shall report regularly to the General Assembly. (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1965, Part I, p.

113; for the full report and action, see pp. 104–118)

Historical note: A similar committee was created by the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1976. At the time of the reunion of the PCUS and the UPCUSA in 1983, a successor committee was included in the Constitution of the re-united church.

The continuing work of the PCCEC is governed by the provisions of the most recent *Book of Order* as duly amended by the General Assembly and the several presbyteries. Its current commission derives from G-2.0607d that gives to the General Assembly the ability to approve standard ordination examinations that “shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.”

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** The PCCEC is charged with:

- Preparing those standard ordination examinations approved by the General Assembly. Currently these examinations are developed in five subject areas:
  - Bible Content
  - Open Book Biblical Exegesis (including Old Testament/Hebrew and New Testament/Greek texts)
  - Theological Competence
  - Worship and Sacraments
  - Church Polity

The PCCEC, in conversation with other bodies and representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), may propose changes to the examination areas, names, or forms of these standard ordination examinations. Such proposed changes require a two-thirds majority vote by the committee prior to submission to the General Assembly for approval. These changes will continue to uphold the importance of integrated and critical thinking in the life and work of a pastor with regard to Scripture, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. Candidates taking examinations will be directed to answer questions within the tradition of Reformed Theology, understood as theology in broad agreement with *The Book of Confessions* and the theology of John Calvin.

- Maintaining the security of the examination questions until they have been administered and maintaining the security of the Bible Content examination questions indefinitely. Security entails making sure that no one other than committee members, consultants (e.g., sensitivity reviewers), or staff of the Office of Preparation for Ministry/Examinations have access to draft or final versions of the examination questions prior to their administration.
- Administering the examinations.
- Organizing and working with readers to evaluate examinations.
- Training the readers to evaluate the examinations reliably and to write constructive comments.
- Maintaining a record of the final evaluation of each examination.
- Distributing the evaluations to the candidate, seminary, and presbytery.

- Providing a *Handbook for Candidates* that describes each examination as well as the process for registering for and taking the examinations.
- Collaboration with units within the Office of Vocation and the Committee on Theological Education.
- Reviewing regularly the nature, format, and effectiveness of the standard examinations and the means by which they are administered and evaluated.

The PCCEC is assisted in carrying out these responsibilities by staff of the Office of Preparation for Ministry/Examinations within the Office of Vocation.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** The PCCEC is accountable to the General Assembly that is mandated to regularly review the work of each permanent committee. In its on-going work, the PCCEC is accountable through the Office of Vocation to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The PCCEC assists and supports the work of the presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a number of ways—first and foremost through the examinations administered on behalf of the presbyteries. Presbyteries elect readers to evaluate the examinations, and these readers are strongly encouraged to report their experience to their respective presbyteries. Those who have experience with the evaluation process can be a valuable resource for their presbytery’s committee overseeing inquirers and candidates.

**MEMBERS:** There shall be a total of twenty-four members who are ruling elders or ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Any changes to this structure will require a two-thirds majority vote of the committee before submission to the General Assembly for approval.

- Twelve members are elected by the General Assembly to four-year terms and are eligible to be reelected for an additional term. Candidates for these positions shall be nominated through the General Assembly Nominating Committee with consideration being given to areas of needed expertise, to gender and racial/ethnic representation, and to an approximate balance of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament on the PCCEC.
- Each of the six regional reading groups will elect (on a staggered schedule) two members to serve as co- conveners of the reading group and as members of the PCCEC, preferably a minister of the Word and Sacrament and a ruling elder. Each convener/member will serve a four-year term and is eligible to be reelected for an additional term.

**MEETINGS:** The PCCEC meets at least once annually to develop and review the forthcoming examinations and to transact such other business as may be necessary. All members are expected to attend the annual meeting and at least one of the reading groups.

**OFFICERS:** The officers of the PCCEC are a moderator and a secretary, elected annually by the entire committee.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** The Executive Committee is composed of the moderator and secretary of the PCCEC and the chairs of the several task groups responsible for particular examinations. A designated General Assembly staff person is an *ex officio* member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meets in conjunction with the PCCEC annual meeting and at such other times as may be necessary. The Executive Committee may conduct its business through conference calls or other electronic media. Decisions reached electronically need to be confirmed and entered into the minutes of the next face-to-face or conference call meeting.

**TASK GROUPS:** The members of the PCCEC are divided into task groups of approximately equal size. Each task group is responsible for the development of questions and evaluation standards for one or more of the standard ordination examinations. Members are assigned by the Executive Committee based upon personal interest and expertise of each member as well as upon the comparative needs of each task group.

Upon approval of the Executive Committee, volunteer consultants may be invited to augment a particular task group or reading group to provide expertise or capacity needed by that group.

- **Bible Content Specialists:** The Bible task group will be assisted by two Bible specialists with responsibility to create new Bible Content questions and to assemble two forms annually of the Bible Content exam for administration on-line.
- **World Language Specialists:** Appropriate members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be designated to translate the examinations into other languages (e.g., Korean, Spanish) designated by the General Assembly.

**READING GROUPS:** The readers who evaluate the examinations are elected by their presbyteries to serve the wider church (G-3.0302b). Each reading group elects its own leadership (conveners) who are also members of the PCCEC. The process and procedures for conducting the reading groups is described in the *Conveners' Handbook*.

**ELECTIONS:** The officers and chairs of the several task groups will normally be elected at the annual meeting of PCCEC upon nomination by a nominating committee formed of the members of PCCEC who are not eligible for reelection to service on PCCEC. If a vacancy occurs between annual meetings, such vacancy may be filled by an election conducted electronically upon nomination by the Executive Committee. The person so elected will serve until the end of the next annual meeting and is eligible to be elected to the same position through the usual election procedure at the annual meeting.

**FINANCES:** The work of the PCCEC is funded through two sources, the General Assembly *per capita* budget and the fees charged in conjunction with registration for the examinations. The PCCEC will regularly review these fees and decide on appropriate fees for subsequent years.

**PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY:** All meetings of the PCCEC will be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised* except in those cases where the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provides otherwise.

**AMENDMENTS:** These guidelines may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the PCCEC at its annual meeting, except in those areas noted within these guidelines where additional approval is required by the presbyteries acting through their commissioners to a General Assembly. The executive committee, subject to review by the full PCCEC, is empowered to make editorial revisions to assure compliance with changes to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Adopted: April 16, 2010

Revisions: April 7, 2011

Editorial revision for compliance with *2011/2013 Book of Order*, August 2011

February 2012

# THE INTERRELIGIOUS STANCE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

## Introduction

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) long has advocated positive relationships with people of other religious traditions. We have seen these relationships as a specific instance of Christ’s universal command to “... love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:37, 39). This statement affirms that tradition.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) often has fostered a love for people of other religious traditions, but many times we have not. The first is cause for celebration, thanking God for the grace to be faithful. For the second, the church resolves to do better.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has not always agreed on *how* to do better. Disagreements over how to respect people of other religious traditions often have been sharp. Yet as we become increasingly aware of the world’s religious diversity, all areas of the church are called to relate positively to people of other religious traditions.<sup>1</sup>

Many things draw us together in respect for those who have religious commitments different from our own, including the example and person of Jesus Christ, the evident need for religious peace, the necessity of meeting human needs in a world of poverty and want, and the biblical call to solidarity amid our diversity.

Other things, though, work to pull us apart, including our sometimes self-serving theologies (both pluralist and exclusivist), misplaced goals (such as an overemphasis on statistical growth), and triumphalistic attitudes.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) acknowledges that among ourselves we will disagree on how to relate to others even as we strive together to understand Jesus’ commandment amid a world with people of many different religious traditions. The stance offers help to chart the way forward.

## Biblical Backgrounds and Teachings

Interreligious appreciation must arise out of one’s most profound religious beliefs. For Presbyterians it must arise out of interpretation of the Bible, the church’s confessional statements, Reformed theology, and the lived experiences of the church.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites found themselves dwelling with Canaanite, Moabite, Babylonian, and Persian peoples among others and influenced by their religious understandings. The stories of God’s gracious activities through Abraham (Genesis 12–17), Joseph (Genesis 37–50), prophets, matriarchs, and patriarchs toward other peoples of the region are part of a growing understanding of God’s love. God’s love is particularized later to cities such as Nineveh (Jonah 3) and to empires such as Assyria and Egypt (Isaiah 19:23–25). And teachings abound: all humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), all have access to God through God’s covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:8–17), strangers are to be treated with hospitality (Leviticus 19:33–34), and God has province over all the nations (which the Psalms tell us repeatedly, e.g., Psalms 47:8).

As the followers of Jesus spread to the cultures of the Roman Empire, they were challenged and influenced by Greek philosophies, Roman emperor worship, Gnostic teachings, and mystery religions of the day. In this setting the writings of the New Testament made crucial contributions that continue to be our guides. As we have indicated above, Jesus’ Great Commandment sets the standard for all of our relationships; furthermore, the Gospel writers and letter writers all expand on the language of God’s love (e.g., 1 John 3, 5).

Much of what we learn about how to relate to people of other religious traditions comes from the letters of Paul. Paul focused on taking the gospel to *all* people. Paul’s sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17 has provided many with insights helpful to interreligious relationships. As a missionary, Paul encountered a great diversity of religions. Paul took seriously the question: What claims do people of different religions make on one another as they live in

accordance with what they believe to be true? Paul’s answer was to honor both our commitments to Christian conscience and our commitments to Christian hospitality.

These passages come to us in the context of other biblical texts. Not all references are loving. Israelites are instructed to destroy Canaanite religious shrines (Deut. 12:2–3), and Paul uses negative terms to describe religious ideas of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:22). Some Christians use similar statements to condone disrespecting the religions of other people. Overall, however, the biblical intent is clear: God loves all people—and we are to do likewise.

To be sure, not all the religious resources of the Presbyterian tradition were written to address our current interreligious context. Consider, for example, parts of the *Book of Confessions*. As might be expected, little is written in the confessions that acknowledges the religious plurality in which most of us live today. In fact, the confessions contain elements of polemics, even between Christians, that are inappropriate to today’s context. Moreover, The Second Helvetic Confession makes direct negative references to our Jewish and Muslim neighbors, their beliefs and practices (*Book of Confessions*, 5.014, 5.019–5.020, 5.176, 5.225).

To move in a positive direction in our interreligious relationships and dialogue, these particular texts and the perspectives of our religious neighbors must be acknowledged. As God alone is the Lord of the conscience, the church renounces human judgment in favor of repentance over the harm we have caused our religious neighbors. We repent, but we do not forget, lest we perpetuate unhealthy relationships of division among our neighbors and ourselves.

It is important to reject harmful stereotypes of Jews and Muslims. We also must acknowledge the importance of authentic relationships with people of any religion. Although the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to this point has invested most of its interreligious efforts in relationships with Jews and Muslims, the PC(USA) believes in the importance of relationships with people of every religion.

The Confession of 1967 marked a turning point for Presbyterians in their quest to have loving relationships with people of other religions. It discusses the positive engagement of the church with people of other religions. It reminds the church that in its encounter with other religious traditions it may discover “parallels between other religions and his [*sic*] own and must approach all religions with openness and respect” (*Book of Confessions*, 9.42). The confession calls the church to a greater spirit of reconciliation, part of which is an acceptance of human difference.

## Foundations for the Future

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been active in interreligious efforts during at least the past four decades as religious plurality has become an issue of prime importance in North America. The general approach to interreligious relations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has given priority to relationships with people rather than traditions—with Muslims rather than Islam, for example. Statements by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have provided *direction* to church leaders and *guidance* to local congregations.

The guidance and direction these statements offered have been and continue to be supported by an Office of Interfaith Relations, which was established in 1988 and has functioned since as a catalyst and a platform for affirming and commending the efforts of Presbyterians in interreligious engagement. Together these actions of successive General Assemblies have established six basic building blocks that serve as a foundation for today’s interreligious initiatives:

*Building Block #1: The Church. In our pluralistic society, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes that it must work with others because of the sure faith that the church, through the power of the Spirit, is a sign and means of God’s intention for the wholeness and healing of humankind and of all creation.*

In A Brief Statement of Faith (1991) the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirmed, “In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God’s image . . . to live as one community” (*Book of Confessions*, 10.3, Lines 29–32). The ecclesial implications of this affirmation inform one of the “Presbyterian Principles for Interfaith Dialogue” (211th General Assembly [1999]): “We are called to work with others in our

pluralistic society for the well-being of our world and for justice, peace, and the sustainability of creation. We do so in the faith that, through God's Spirit, the Church is a sign and means of God's intention for the wholeness and unity of humankind and of all creation."

At its best, the Christian Church makes God's gift of community visible in human life, recognizing that God is at work in all of God's creation. This requires relationships with people belonging to a multiplicity of faith commitments as well as those belonging to none.

*Building Block #2: Ecumenical and Interfaith. Presbyterians develop relationships with people of various faiths in ecumenical and interfaith contexts wherever possible.*

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s interest in interfaith relations has been intimately related to its ecumenical commitments. The 199th General Assembly (1987) called for engagement with those of other religious traditions through "ecumenical and interfaith channels and organizations whenever possible" (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, p. 494, "A Study on Islam," B.3.e.). This was an extension to interreligious relationships of the historic Lund Principle that churches should do all things together except where differences of conscience require their acting separately.

*Building Block #3: Mission, Dialogue, and Evangelism. Presbyterians approach others in a spirit of openness and trust as they follow Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the freedom of others. Thus the church affirms that dialogical (i.e., mutually interactive) relationships are an authentic and appropriate form of witness in which we share ourselves and our commitments and also listen intently to what others express to us.*

The reuniting 195th General Assembly (1983) affirmed "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation" (from the World Council of Churches, 1982) as a "faithful expression of the basic commitment of [the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)] to mission and evangelism" (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, p. 436). Declaring that "Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and every people" (*Ibid*, p. 551, 7. Witness among People of Living Faiths, 41), it stated that "true witness follows Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the uniqueness and freedom of others" (*Ibid*). A new World Council of Churches document (2013) says this freedom "flows from the dignity of the human person, grounded in the creation of all the human beings in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26)" ("Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes", paragraph 96).

All witness must be led by a discernment born of the Holy Spirit, offering opportunities for both speaking and listening. Allegiance to Christ is not compromised in dialogue when we (1) do not bend or trim our faith in order to reach artificial agreement with doctrines of another; (2) learn from other religions insofar as it enriches our relationship with the God revealed in Christ; and (3) express our faith as a part of authentic dialogue (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, p. 452, "The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective," IX.F., Christians in Interfaith Dialogue).

*Building Block #4: Peace, Justice, and Ecology. Presbyterians are called by God to work with those of other religions for peace, justice, and the sustainability of creation. Experience has taught that the most fruitful interfaith relationships often develop when people of different faiths explore concrete ethical concerns and unite to act on them together.*

In 1987, Presbyterians were counseled that "the most fruitful interreligious relationships are likely to develop where persons of different faiths share concrete ethical concerns and can unite to put them into action, with mutual acknowledgment of the religious motivation for action" (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, p. 452, "The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective," IX.F., Christians in Interfaith Dialogue).

The practical aspects of human well-being have led to a series of recommendations concerning advocacy and action. "Guidelines for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Participation in Interfaith Bodies" (204th General Assembly [1992]) recommended establishment of relationships with multifaith bodies whose "goals, grounded in

spirituality, ... enable common work toward justice, peace, and the integrity of creation” (*Minutes*, 1992, Part I, p. 600, Recommendation 6.c.).

*Building Block #5: Modesty in Witness. Presbyterians urge a humble modesty in witness that recognizes God’s Spirit is at work in ways we often least expect. Whatever the form of witness—mission, dialogue, evangelism, peace, justice, environmental issues—the church affirms that it is not called to respond to others in judgment but in awareness of the limitless grace of God.*

Statements about God’s ways with humankind have urged upon Presbyterians a humble modesty in witness. “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation” (paragraph 43) declared that “... [t]he Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways ... that to us are least expected. ... Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he [*sic*] deals with humanity” (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, p. 551). Yet “The Study Catechism” (answer to question 38), says, “The limits [of] salvation ... are known only to God” (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, p. 613).

A modesty of claims is present in the statement on “Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ” (section on “We Believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ,” 214th General Assembly [2002], *Minutes*, 2002, Part I, p. 525) when it affirms that grace, love, and communion belong to God and are not ours to determine. Modesty leads to rejection of judgmental attitudes toward others. The PC(USA) evangelism document “Turn to the Living God” (section on “People of Many Religions,” 203rd General Assembly [1991]) reads, “As our Christian affirmation meets the faith of others, we are not called to respond in judgment but in awareness of the limitless, saving presence, power, and grace of God” (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, p. 676).

*Building Block #6: Unfinished Conclusions. Presbyterians acknowledge the unfinished nature of our conclusions about relationships with people of different faiths, in recognition of the limits of our knowledge, our sinful nature, and the mystery of God’s workings in human lives.*

Not all questions are humanly answerable. Thus, an element of interreligious relationships has been a commitment to be unfinished in our conclusions.

## Spheres of Relationship

Interreligious interactions are not limited to just one aspect of living. The implications of loving our religious neighbors as ourselves must pervade all areas of our life together. Following are nine spheres of life in which interreligious understandings are challenging us and need to be acted on by the people of God. These spheres and the suggestions offered are areas for attention and reflection as we implement the policy implications of the building blocks. Each sphere ends with actions that can be undertaken by church agencies, congregations, and individuals.

### 1. Human Needs

Human need is everywhere. Often the religions of the world are called on to meet the needs of hunger, natural disasters, poverty, and disease. In meeting human needs around the globe, the religions need one another. We can do more together than we can do apart. How do Presbyterians engage in an interreligious response to human need from our position of historical religious and cultural privilege? How can we collaborate with faith partners to meet these pressing challenges?

#### Actions:

- Engage in self-reflection through education on seminary and college campuses and in congregations to examine breakdowns in existing paradigms of poverty relief.
- Listen to and incorporate the voices of the marginalized and underrepresented, many of whom have led and are leading the way in meeting human needs.
- See ourselves as friends, not competitors, with people and institutions of other religious traditions as we meet human needs around the globe.
- Be willing to be the gracious recipients of humanitarian and spiritual aid from our neighbors of other religious traditions, especially recognizing God’s concern for the poor.



## 2. Social Justice

The search for social justice in the world today is one of the most compelling reasons for interreligious activity. Global challenges—such as forced migration, human rights violations, unjust imprisonment, militarism, and totalitarianism—cannot be solved by any single segment of the world’s people or any single religion. Social justice cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the world’s religions.

Actions:

- Explore interreligious opportunities for truth and reconciliation work, including formal acts of repentance for unjust actions of the church, past and present.
- Participate at all levels in established multireligious groups working toward the common good.
- Encourage all the PC(USA)’s entities to do social justice work on an interreligious basis, as appropriate.
- Remember that those in need of social justice, including those of other religious traditions, often have much to teach us about how the gospel manifests itself in cultures different from our own.

## 3. Mission and Evangelism

Mission and evangelism are central to the Reformed tradition. In our relationships with people of other faiths, dialogical interreligious conversations promote the virtues of mutual respect and mutual understanding. This is an appropriate form of witness in the sense that we are as “living letters” that others can read, which Paul wrote about (2 Cor. 3:1–3). We witness because God, the creator of life in all its diversity, acted first.

As we consider witness through mission, evangelism, and dialogue, we commend for study the 2013 World Council of Churches document, “Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes.” This document states, “Authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action, and in ‘the spirit of dialogue’: ‘an attitude of respect and friendship.’ Evangelism entails not only proclamations of deepest conviction, but also listening to others and being challenged and enriched by others” (“Together Towards Life,” paragraph 95).

In the context of interreligious interactions, we witness to our faith with humility, knowing that what we know about God is limited by our human condition. We accept the challenge of expressing our faith in dialogue, often in spite of the fact that we may not feel as articulate as we would hope, but knowing that peaceful and fruitful relationships with others is surely what God intends as we witness to a truth that is beyond ourselves.

Actions:

- Recognize that the relationship between dialogue and evangelism is not an either/or choice for the church but a both/and requirement.
- Commit to having no hidden agendas in our interactions with people of other religious traditions.
- Have a humble modesty of witness in all our mission and evangelism efforts.

## 4. Conflict

Too many of the world’s conflicts have a religious component. Religion is used by governments and nongovernmental groups alike either to justify war or to motivate people to fight wars, practice religious discrimination, or engage in acts of persecution. Too often religious people stand by and watch their religions being used to justify conflicts that run counter to the values of love and justice that our traditions espouse.

Actions:

- Advocate justice and peace in all levels of human activity, especially involvement in interreligious peacemaking efforts.
- Work for reconciliation, identifying and resisting destructive interreligious conflict wherever possible.
- Recognize that sometimes Christians may be the cause of conflict; such complicity urges us to repent and change.
- Be open to learn from our religious neighbors.
- Stand with and support, where appropriate, those suffering religious persecution.

## 5. Families

Interreligious families are common in many of our communities. Challenges can arise for interreligious

families as they seek meaningful religious expression across multiple narratives and traditions, work through

disagreement and division over religious beliefs, and make choices about how to raise children. Congregations can help families engage issues that likely will arise in their life together.

Actions:

- Engage the whole congregation in important conversations about topics such as: “Families of Origin,” “Life-Cycle Rituals,” “Planning Your Wedding,” “Death and Grief,” “Holiday Observances,” and “Talking with Your Children about God and Values.”
- Draw on spiritual resources to help family members articulate religious values, beliefs, and practices they cherish most and to seek ways to be faithful to them in their family life.

## 6. Education

Challenges for education in contexts of religious plurality are many. Christians must become self-aware about the assumptions they hold and the habits of mind that guide their thinking about religious neighbors. Christians should know more about the history, beliefs, and practices of our neighbors’ religious traditions.

Actions:

- Articulate a broader definition of education that includes and values lived experiences as a way to engage with people of different religions.
- Develop opportunities for multilevel, interreligious engagement. This might include local, area, or regional conferences involving networks of interreligious people.
- Work to make interreligious dialogue less specialized and more normative, integrated into church members’ lives.
- Identify and share examples of churches engaged in doing interreligious interactions well.
- Train congregational leaders in interreligious work as a way to introduce it to congregations.
- Encourage PC(USA)-affiliated seminaries to expand curriculum that prepares students for ministry in a religiously plural world.
- Reflect more deeply on the interrelationships between mission and evangelism and interreligious work.

## 7. Communities

Many neighborhoods and communities across the United States are welcoming of greater religious and cultural pluralism. Many are not. People from non-Christian, non-white, non-Western backgrounds often experience discrimination due to religio-cultural bias. Note especially the rise in Islamophobia. Religiously based violence has risen throughout the United States. This violence divides communities and discourages the neighborliness advocated in Scripture and modeled in the life of Jesus Christ.

Actions:

- Reach across religious borders to create community alliances to address social problems in ways congruent with the church’s identity and mission.
- Promote public education regarding religions and the diversity of religious communities.
- Advocate for the rights, protection, and safety of all.

## 8. Congregations

Even as many congregations are becoming more racially, culturally, and socioeconomically plural, the diversity of the culture at large continues to create challenges: our children develop friendships with their non-Christian acquaintances; our sons and daughters proclaim love for someone from another religious background; our interreligious neighbors invite us and our families to visit their religious services.

In the midst of such opportunities and challenges, the church must make efforts to interact with other religious communities. In the past, we have tended to relate to people of other religions in one-way modes of witness; we now are challenged to forge new relationships of friendship and collegiality that respect our neighbors’ religious search.

Actions:

- Build interreligious relationships not just as a response to crises and conflict, but also as a sign of hospitality and neighborliness.

- Visit our neighbors' houses of worship when invited, even as we invite our neighbors to visit ours.

- Equip members to appropriately engage religious and social situations involving people of different religious traditions and to receive people from these traditions in Christian contexts.
- Explore what it means to be a Christian community in the midst of multiple faith communities.
- Look for ways to be in dialogue and relationships of mutuality.
- Develop a mutual agreement with another religious community that involves concrete ways in which the two congregations will be in relation.
- Recognize that enduring interreligious alliances can be built around social issues and that people of different religious traditions can work together to address them.

## 9. Workplace

The interreligious reality of today's workplace cannot be ignored. Often, the workplace is a space where people for the first time are asked to work across lines of religious difference. Presbyterians have the opportunity to model and express an environment of respect and love for people of other religions in their workplace settings, including respect for holiday observances, time and space for prayer, religious dress, and articles of faith.

### Actions:

- Recognize the importance and validity of individuals' freedom to choose their religious identity and commitments, and advocate that employers work to accommodate the religious practices and observances of employees, knowing that it may not be possible in every case.
- Allow for deeper cooperation and respect among coworkers; education about religious diversity is needed to address much of the prejudice and hatred that exist.

Trust between religious communities is hard-won. In our efforts to build such trust in all these spheres, we will not always see eye-to-eye, especially on issues born from histories of conflict. At times, we may unintentionally misunderstand, disappoint, and hurt one another. Only within a framework of commitment to people of other religious traditions can we remain faithful to these relationships despite such differences and misunderstandings. Following is an affirmation of our commitment to positive interreligious interactions.

## An Affirmation of Interreligious Commitment

We believe the Bible proclaims God's love for all people, that Christ's Great Commandment sets the standard for all of our relationships: "... 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,'" and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, "... 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mt. 22:37, 39).

### We confess

that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has sought to live up to its commitment to love people of other religious traditions, but many times we have not;  
with God's help we resolve to do better;

that self-serving theologies and goals and triumphalistic attitudes pull us apart;  
with God's help we resolve to do better;

that some of our confessions and the dated perspectives of our religious heritage have resulted in patterns of unhealthy relationships with people of other religions;  
with God's help we resolve to do better.

We resolve to do better and not perpetuate divisive relationships among our neighbors and ourselves.

God calls us to have loving relationships with people of other religions.

God calls us to approach others in a spirit of openness and trust as we follow Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the freedom of others.

God calls us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to work with people of other religions for peace, justice, and the sustainability of creation.

Guided on our way by the Holy Spirit, we will  
meet human needs,  
work for social justice,  
participate in mission and evangelism,

pursue peace,  
strengthen families,  
educate for greater understanding,  
nurture diverse communities,  
value hospitality in our congregations, and  
respect one another in our workplaces.

We follow Christ's call to work for God's kingdom; we believe that God will complete what we leave incomplete. To God be the glory!

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Note: Throughout this document, religion and religious practices include organized religions, folk religions, and indigenous religions and spiritualities practiced throughout our world.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was organized on May 21, 1789, in the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia as, “The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.” The Reverend John Witherspoon, the only active member to sign the Declaration of Independence, was the first presiding officer and preached the sermon at the opening service of worship. While the General Assembly was meeting in Philadelphia, the first United States Congress to convene under the new Constitution was also in session in the same city.

Organized Presbyterianism in America had its beginnings with the establishment of “The Presbytery” about 1706. “The Presbytery” remained the most inclusive governing body until 1717. While records of that period are incomplete, there is a record of the presbytery meeting of December 26, 1706. In 1717, with seventeen ministers on its roll, the presbytery transformed itself into a synod, divided into the four presbyteries of Long Island, Philadelphia, New Castle, and Snow Hill.

The Presbyterian church was one of a number of denominations that organized on a national basis following the American Revolution. In 1788, the synod organized a General Assembly with four synods: New York and New Jersey, Philadelphia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The young denomination contained 16 presbyteries, 177 ministers, and 419 congregations. Since its first session in 1789, the General Assembly has met every year.

Twenty-three ministers and eleven elders served as commissioners to the first General Assembly. Today the assembly enrolls approximately 280 elders, 280 ministers, and 140 advisory delegates. The intervening decades have seen both divisions and unions in the life of the Presbyterian family in North America. In 1810, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was formed as a separate denomination. The year 1837 saw the division of the church into Old School and New School factions. The tragedy of the United States’ Civil War had an impact on both groups. In 1861, the Old School presbyteries in the South separated to form the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, renamed the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS) four years later. The southern presbyteries affiliated with the New School had already split off in 1857, and formed the United Synod of the South in 1858.

The forces leading to unity began to grow even before the end of the war, with the United Synod of the South joining with the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States in 1864. Soon after the end of the fighting, the New School presbyteries in the North were reunited. In 1906, a major part of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church returned to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Another part of the family was also moving toward a greater expression of unity. In 1858, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Associate Synod of North America united to form the United Presbyterian Church of North America. That body united with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1958 to form the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA).

In 1983, after several efforts to heal the major split that began in 1861, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. reunited to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the largest and most diverse member of the reformed family of churches on the continent. It incorporated not only the ancestors described above, but also the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church that united with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1920. The reunited church maintains close relationships with the continuing Cumberland Presbyterian Church that shares common roots with churches taking part in the unions listed above, and also with churches established by Christians from different cultural groups in the immigrant population of the nation—the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, Hungarian Reformed Church, and several others. It continues to seek closer relations with other Reformed churches (including several composed of congregations that have left its fellowship to form separate denominations) and with even more diverse denominations that are part of the modern ecumenical movement.

During the two hundred years of the Presbyterian church history, clergy have most often served as Moderators, with thirty-two elders having been elected to the office since 1900. Women and people of color have been elected Moderator nine times in the past twenty-one years. Edler G. Hawkins, an African American, was elected Moderator of the UPCUSA General Assembly in 1964, and the PCUS General Assembly elected an African American Moderator in 1974 when Lawrence Bottoms was chosen. The first women to hold office were

Lois H. Stair, elected Moderator by the 1971 UPCUSA General Assembly, and Sara Bernice Moseley, 1978 Moderator of the PCUS General Assembly. The UPCUSA General Assembly in 1976 chose as its Moderator, an African American, Thelma C.D. Adair. Of the forty-five Stated Clerks who have served the churches that reunited in 1983, all were ministers except two. John Frizzell was elected Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1872, and William P. Thompson was elected Stated Clerk of the UPCUSA General Assembly in 1966. James E. Andrews was elected Stated Clerk in 1984, following the Reunion that formed the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).



# STANDARDS FOR REVIEW OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY PERMANENT, ADVOCACY, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

[As Approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004)]

## A. *Process*

The responsibilities of the committee or commission that are being reviewed

1. A self-study of its work based on the review standards covering the previous six years.
2. The self-study will have to be available by the 120-day deadline before the General Assembly at which it is to be reviewed.
3. Representatives of the committee or commission will need to be available at the assembly to serve as resources for the assembly committee.
4. The committee or commission may include responses in the self-study and additional questions that explore the standards that apply to its particular work.
5. The committee or commission may utilize former members to help develop the self-study.

## B. *The Responsibilities of the Office of the General Assembly in the Review*

1. The Office of the General Assembly (OGA), in consultation with the leadership of the committee or commission, will supervise the development of a survey instrument by the Office of Research Services.
2. Specific training of assembly committee leadership and members as needed to accomplish the evaluation process.
3. Budget for development of self-studies.
4. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the PMA will evaluate the review process after each assembly.

## C. *The Work of the Assembly Committee for Review*

1. The review assignment will be given to a designated assembly committee.
2. The assembly committee's review will be limited to certain questions:

Is the committee or commission fulfilling its mandate (based on self-study, surveys, consultations with committee or commission leadership)?

3. Are there items that need to be referred for further study?
4. The assembly committee will hold hearings, etc.
5. The assembly committee will be in dialogue with representatives of the General Assembly permanent, advocacy, and advisory committees or commissions being reviewed.
6. The assembly committee may break into subgroups to cover each committee or commission being reviewed.
7. The review committee will respect the distinction between a committee and a commission.
8. The assembly committee will make a final report, possibly with recommendations.

## Standards

### A. *Fidelity to Mission and Partnership*

1. Each committee or commission was created by the church and exists to serve and support the church's mission in a particular area. Each committee or commission is expected to exhibit a constant faithfulness to and in fulfillment of its servant role in the life of the PC(USA).

2. The basic process of the committee or commission should demonstrate fidelity to the mission and accountability procedures set forth in its establishing deliverance, charter, or mandate from the assembly. The committee or commission should exhibit leadership in guiding the church in engagement with the work and resources in which the committee or commission acts.

3. The committee or commission should exhibit practical cooperation with the other agencies or committees of the church in areas of overlapping responsibility and opportunity.

4. The committee or commission should provide timely responses to directives and requests from the General Assembly.

### B. *Effectiveness of Services*

The services of the committee or commission are consistent with its assembly or constitutional mandate.

1. The committee or commission has a defined and consistent process for completing its work.

2. The committee or commission has a regular process of self-evaluation of its services.

3. The committee or commission employs a strategy for effective communication with the church-at-large.

4. The committee or commission utilizes current and emerging technologies to enable it to fulfill its mission.

5. The committee or commission has developed a vision and plans for its work in light of its historic mandate and the emerging issues before and context of the PC(USA).

## STANDARDS FOR REVIEW OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGENCIES

### Purpose

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to the understanding that ‘the unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it’ (G-4.0201). The basic principles of Presbyterian polity include the responsibility of a higher governing body to review those ministries for which it is accountable (G.-4.0301f). The purpose of the review process is to provide an equitable evaluation of the ministry of the agencies of the General Assembly. The review will focus on the quality of the relationship of the agencies’ ministry with the mission of the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the agencies’ collaborative efforts with other agencies, and the quality of the agencies’ program based on the standards for review.

### Timing of the Process and Formation of Review Committees

The review process for General Assembly agencies occurs over the cycle of three General Assemblies. In the first assembly of the cycle, a committee will report its review of the work of the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc. In the second assembly of the cycle, a committee will report its review of the work of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, the Office of the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The A Corporation/Administrative Services Group shall be reviewed together with the All Agency Review, including any current service agreements. In the third assembly of the cycle, a committee will report its review of the effectiveness of the six agencies, the A Corporation/Administrative Services Group, and other governing bodies in working collaboratively to implement the General Assembly’s mission directives.

The General Assembly Nominating Committee will nominate to each meeting of the General Assembly for election the appropriate committees and a moderator to conduct the review assigned based on the six-year schedule described above. The agency review committee’s responsibility is to provide an objective report to the General Assembly as to the agency’s compliance to the standards of review. The agency review committee may provide advice on areas of program improvement. The agency review committee’s role will be to examine the agency’s church relations, its policies and practice, history of collaboration with other agencies, and its program effectiveness. It will visit the agency and talk personally with leadership staff and the governing board or committee. The agency review committee is to conduct its work within the context of the General Assembly’s concern for the strong vital connections within the agencies of the General Assembly and the whole church. The governing board of the agency is responsible for the internal management of the agency and its operational details. The agency review committee’s role is to strengthen the bonds of the agencies to the General Assembly, the essential mission of the church, and the basic accountability of the governing board and executive leadership of the agency to the PC(USA). The agency review committee should celebrate with the whole church the successful ministries of the agency it is reviewing, and to consult with the General Assembly Committee on Representation regarding representation of employees. The agency review committee will report to the General Assembly through the General Assembly committee to which the agency reports.

### Staffing and Funding

Staffing will be provided by an agency that is not being reviewed. The funding for the review process will be paid from per capita income.

### Manual

A manual will be maintained to provide guidance in the review process to the agency review committee and the agencies. The manual will contain information on the process for review and the report format for the agency review committee. The format will outline the opportunities for dialogue between the agency review committee and the agency in preparation of the final report. The manual will provide guidance for the whole agency review committee on its organization and the role of individual members in the review process.

### Criteria for Review of Individual Agencies

#### A. *Church Relatedness*

1. Each agency was created by the church, and exists to serve and support the church's mission in a particular area. The agency is expected to have the expertise necessary to accomplish the work it has been assigned, and is also expected to exhibit a constant awareness of its servant role in the life of the PC(USA).
2. The basic work, programs, and services of the agency demonstrate fidelity to the mission and accountability procedures set forth in its establishing deliverance, charter, or mandate from the assembly. The agency should exhibit leadership in guiding the church in its engagement with the work and resources in which the agency acts as the church's expert.
3. When appropriate, printed materials of the agency clearly identify the agency as a part of the PC(USA).
4. The agency honors the policy statements of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) and the Constitution.
5. The agency includes in its administrative officers, and in its governing board in consultation with the General Assembly Nominating Committee, persons who understand and respect the relationship with the PC(USA).
6. The agency provides responses to directives and requests from the General Assembly.
7. The agency is actively working to open wide the doors of the church to God's amazing diversity, welcoming all ages and all expressions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in striving to increase the membership of our denomination and achieve the great ends of the church.

#### B. *Policies and Program Effectiveness*

1. The agency understands that its responsibility is to manage its assets for the good of the whole of the PC(USA).
2. The governing board is properly constituted, clearly identified, and fully conversant with (a) the mission of the agency, (b) the current overall condition of the agency, (c) its specific responsibilities as directors, (d) the legal relationship of the agency to the church, and (e) its relationship to the president or chief officer.
3. The agency exhibits full compliance with all appropriate external regulatory and accrediting agencies, including consultation and review with the General Assembly Committee on Representation regarding principles of participation and representation in the employment of personnel, and conformity with 'A Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action' or subsequent guidelines.
4. An annual audit of the financial affairs of the agency is conducted by qualified and disinterested parties.
5. The governing board of the agency has a process for the selection and review of its chief officer or president.
6. The president or chief officer and the governing board have policies and procedures by which they assure that the agency staff hold the necessary and appropriate skills, licenses, and experience to make it reasonable to anticipate that they can perform their work satisfactorily and a functioning policy with expectations of staff development.
7. The agency has in place and operating a long-range and short-range planning process and a process for measuring its delivery of services and of monitoring the effectiveness of those services with its constituencies.
8. The agency exhibits an effective strategy for producing high-quality communication with its constituencies.
9. The agency is currently structured to face effectively the challenges of the future and demonstrates appropriate attention to current and emerging technologies to enable it to fulfill its mission.

#### C. *Collaboration*

1. The agency presses beyond communication and consultation to genuine collaboration and, where appropriate and/or directed by General Assembly, shares agendas and work with other agencies toward

fulfillment of shared goals.

2. The agency maintains open and regular communication with, and provides timely and appropriate access to information to, other agencies and PC(USA) constituencies, including mid council bodies.

3. The agency has conducted an evaluation of the potential gains and risks associated with collaborative endeavours with other agencies whenever new programs are initiated.

4. The agency seeks pragmatic solutions to operational challenges by relying on the assets, resources, and strengths of other agencies.

D. *Criteria for Review of the Collective Work of the Agencies*

The review of the whole of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its six agencies shall focus broadly on the effectiveness of the six agencies and other councils in working collaboratively to implement the General Assembly's mission directives.

The focus in reviewing the effectiveness of the agencies and other councils with respect to their effectiveness in implementing the General Assembly's mission directives shall be on the following areas:

1. The effectiveness of and obstacles to collaboration between the agencies;
2. The accountability of the agencies to the General Assembly and to one another;
3. The agencies' responses to the General Assembly's mission directives, individually and collectively, in light of the call to a new openness in *Book of Order*, F-1.0404;
4. The stewardship and effective use of resources by the agencies, individually and collectively;
5. Their work to open wide the doors of the church to God's amazing diversity, welcoming all ages and all expressions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in striving to increase the membership of our denomination and achieve the great ends of the church.

*STANDARDS OF ETHICS FOR COMMISSIONERS AND ADVISORY DELEGATES TO  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY*

1. **Foundations.** The standards of ethical conduct for commissioners and advisory delegates to the General Assembly are founded in our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ and the witness of Scripture. Commissioners and advisory delegates to the General Assembly should find particular guidance in the *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. In fulfilling the particular responsibilities of service as commissions and advisory delegates to the General Assembly, particular ethical obligations arise from the nature of the assembly and the role commissioners and advisory delegates play in it. Among the foundational principles of our polity that lead to particular ethical responsibilities for commissioners and advisory delegates are that:

- a. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by presbyters exercising “shared power ... by presbyters gathered in councils” (*Book of Order*, F-3.0208 & F-3.0202).
- b. “Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ” (*Book of Order*, F-3.0204).
- c. “Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern” (*Book of Order*, F-3.0205).

All commissioners and advisory delegates have a responsibility to act in a manner that preserves these principles. These specific aspects of these responsibilities are set forth below.

2. **Independent Judgment.** All commissioners and advisory delegates shall avoid actually or potentially compromising the exercise of their independent judgment in seeking to discern the will of Christ in the decisions made by the General Assembly, and situations that give even the appearance of compromising the exercise of their independent judgment.

**“a. Definition. ‘Compromising independent judgment’ means any situation in which the commissioner or advisory delegate may be influenced or appear to be influenced in decision-making by any motive or desire for personal advantage or obligation to others with an interest in the decisions of the General Assembly. Personal advantage means a financial interest or some other personal interest, whether present or potential, whether direct or indirect. Such situations can arise not only during the meeting of the General Assembly, but at any time after an individual has been selected as a commissioner or advisory delegate.**

**“b. Potential Compromises of Independent Judgment. Any commissioner asked to serve in a committee leadership position shall disclose prior to accepting such an appointment any matters and relationships that have the potential for giving rise to the appearance of compromising his or her independent judgment. All commissioner or advisory delegates are likewise to disclose promptly, in writing, matters and relationships that have the potential for giving rise to the appearance of compromising his or her independent judgment in the business before the General Assembly.**

**Examples include, but are not limited to, financial interests in a decision of the assembly, acceptance of gifts or trips provided by those with an interest in or who are advocating for or against a recommendation or overture before the assembly. All disclosures are to be made promptly in writing to the moderator of the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures. When in doubt, the commissioner or advisory delegate is to assume there might be at least the appearance of a compromise of his or her independent judgment, and should raise the question pursuant to these standards.”**

c. **Gifts and Relationship Building.** To avoid even the appearance of impropriety, any gifts, gratuities, special favors, and hospitality to a commissioner or advisory delegate shall not be accepted by any commissioner or advisory delegate from any person or organization that sells, delivers, or receives

any goods, materials, or services to or from any entity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or from any person or entity who are advocating for or against a recommendation or overture before the General Assembly.

This prohibition includes those persons or organizations that desire to enter into such relationships with any entity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There are four exceptions to this rule:

- (1) Gifts, meals, outings, and relationship-building activities provided by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) churches, middle councils, partner churches or related organizations. Commissioner or advisory delegate shall not accept monetary gifts of any amount.
- (2) Gifts that primarily benefit the General Assembly and not an individual commissioner or advisory delegate, such as gift cards, gifts of complimentary rooms given to the General Assembly by hotels, conventions, and conferences in relation to official General Assembly business.
- (3) Occasional small gifts (less than \$50 in value, such as flowers or foodstuffs) to an individual commissioner or advisory delegate. Where gifts are shared with other commissioner or advisory delegates or other General Assembly participants (e.g., foodstuffs set out for all to partake), then the gift is not deemed to be to an individual commissioner or advisory delegate.
- (4) Luncheons, dinners, outings, and relationship-building activities in connection with General Assembly business may be received. If an activity permitted under this paragraph results in a value of more than \$100 to the commissioner or advisory delegate, the commissioner or advisory delegate shall promptly report this in writing to the General Counsel of the PC(USA) and the moderator of the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures. The written report will include a description of the activity, the dollar value, the name of the person/organization providing it, and the business that person/organization does with an entity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or the recommendation before the General Assembly that the person/organization is advocating for or against. The Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures shall maintain a log that includes all of the written reports submitted under this Section (4).

**d. Process and Resolution.** All disclosures, reports, or questions regarding actions that might actually or potentially compromise a commissioner's or advisory delegate's independent judgment are to be made promptly and in writing to the moderator of the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures. The Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures will consult with the Stated Clerk and with the General Counsel of the General Assembly or designee as appropriate. After consultation, the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures will make a recommendation to the General Assembly. The General Assembly makes the final decision as to whether any action of a commissioner or advisory delegate has compromised a commissioner's or advisory delegate's independent judgment.

**3. Confidentiality of General Assembly Information.** In the rare circumstance in which the General Assembly meets in executive session, commissioners or advisory delegates shall not disclose information disclosed in the course of such a session that is not known outside of the General Assembly or is not known by public means (Standing Rule F.5.g.)

**4. Preservation of the Deliberative Process.** Each commissioner and advisory delegate should act in a manner that preserves the rights of other commissioners and advisory delegates to participate in the deliberative process.

- a. Cellular telephones.** "Use of cellular telephones is prohibited during meetings of the General Assembly and meetings of the assembly committees. During these meetings, pagers may be used only in the silent mode" (Standing Rule F.5.e.).
- b. Demonstrations.** "Spontaneous or planned demonstrations by individuals or groups are prohibited inside the building where the General Assembly meets" (Standing Rule F.11.b.).



- 5. *Violations.*** Allegations of any violation of these standards during the course of a General Assembly shall be brought to the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures. The Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures shall give the accused reasonable opportunity to be heard. If it finds a violation of these standards has occurred after giving the accused due process (RONR §61), the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures may bring to the General Assembly a motion to reprove the accused commissioner or advisory delegate. A decision by the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures not to bring a motion to reprove to the General Assembly is not appealable to the General Assembly. Violation or noncompliance with this policy may also result in discipline by the council with jurisdiction over the commissioner or advisory delegate.
- 6. *Amendments.*** These standards may be amended from time to time. In consultation with the General Counsel of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly is authorized to periodically review this policy and to recommend reasonable and necessary changes to these standards.
- 7. *Designees.*** Where these standards assign a duty to a particular officer or staff position, that officer or staff position may use the General Counsel or its designee to complete the duties.
- 8. *No Waiver by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*** Nothing in these standards shall be construed to waive any claim, assertion, or defense of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to exemption or exclusion from applicability of a statute and/or regulation or lack of jurisdiction of a civil court or governmental agency.
- 9. *Trainings.*** Trainings to familiarize the commissioner or advisory delegates with these standards and its related forms and procedures will be posted on the General Assembly website in advance of each meeting of the General Assembly. Commissioners assigned to the Assembly Committee on Bills & Overtures will receive training regarding their responsibilities under this policy.

# CULTURAL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

## Standards for Review of PC(USA) Agencies

### Short Definition:

**Cultural Proficiency:** The policies and practices of an organization, and the values and behaviors of individuals, that enables an organization or person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment. Cultural proficiency defines diversity as a strength rather than a problem in organizations. It is a process for strategic, intentional organizational transformation that addresses culture, commitments, practices and skills.

Cultural Proficiency is an approach to building organizational capacity to thrive on the strengths of diversity, a process for intentional systemic change. It encompasses a set of tools for change and a vision of community that nurtures the diverse gifts of all its members. Implementing cultural proficiency incorporates both:

- *Policies and practices* within organizations, and
- *Values and behaviors* of individuals.

As a transformational tool, cultural proficiency is an inside-out process that builds on the core values, norms and traditions within the existing organizational structure to equip the organization to live out its vision with integrity. This approach creates a platform for creative, innovative leadership for change.

The Tools of Cultural Proficiency are not strategies or techniques. They provide a framework for assessing organizational practices and individual behaviors with an eye to giving direction to change and setting parameters for developing strategies for change within an organization.

- **The Continuum:** Language for describing both healthy and non-productive policies, practices and individual behaviors.
- **The Essential Elements:** Behavioral standards for measuring, and planning for, growth toward cultural proficiency.
- **The Barriers:** Caveats that assist in responding effectively to resistance to change.
- **The Guiding Principles:** Underlying values of the approach.

The *Continuum* recognizes that change processes are fluid and do not happen uniformly.

There are six points along the cultural proficiency continuum that indicate various ways of perceiving and responding to differences. They provide a vocabulary for assessing policies,

practices and behaviors. Organizations and individuals may have practices at multiple points on the continuum at any time.

- Cultural destructiveness works to eliminate any vestige of culture or difference defined as “other,” practices exclusion or segregation.
- Cultural incapacity works to define culture or difference defined as “other” to be wrong, requires assimilation to the normative culture.
- Cultural indifference refuses to acknowledge the culture of others, treats difference as insignificant, and of no value to the organization.
- Cultural pre-competence accepts difference as normal, reflects an initial awareness of the need to adapt in order to incorporate diversity in a constructive manner in an organization and work effectively as an individual in a diverse environment.

- Cultural competence works to build individual skills and organizational capacity to incorporate cultural diversity in an interactive manner, creates a culture that welcomes cultural difference.
- Cultural proficiency values difference, works to learn from the “other,” nurtures full participation and contributions of diverse cultural and social groups.

*The Essential Elements* of cultural proficiency provide the standards for building individual competencies and organizational practices.

Organizational change begins with individual actions.

- **Assessing Cultural Knowledge:** Aware of one’s own cultural identity and organizational norms, aware of what you know about other’s cultures, about how you react to difference and what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations.
- **Valuing Diversity:** Makes intentional effort and adaptation to be inclusive of people whose cultural perspectives and experiences are different from yours or the normative culture of the organization, in order to enrich the conversation, decision-making and problem-solving processes.
- **Managing the Dynamics of Difference:** develops problem-solving and conflict resolutions strategies that are accessible to everyone and attend to cultural differences as normal processes within the organizational culture.
- **Adapting to Diversity:** Develops habits and ways of being within the organization that facilitate learning about differences of experience and cultural perspectives as normative practices.
- **Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge:** Learning about cultural differences, developing skills for cross- cultural communication and problem-solving become integral to the organizational culture and standards for professional excellence.
- **The Barriers** to cultural proficiency area present in varying degree in any organization. Effective strategies for change will be cognizant of the need to educate and motivate employees to gain support for change. The barriers also point to the importance that each individual plays in effecting change within an organization.
- **Unawareness of the need to adapt (resistance to change):** Persons who are served well by the existing organizational culture may see the pressure to change as unnecessary and respond with indifference or see it as threatening. Resistance can create adversarial relationships within an organization if not addressed.
- **Systems of oppression:** Racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc. are historically embedded in the internal cultures of organizations and the external culture of society. Systems of oppression create barriers for members of non-dominant groups and extend unearned privilege to the members of the dominant group. Being able to recognize these systemic patterns apart from individual behavior is critical to effecting change within an organization, just as recognizing ways that the organization is impacted by external systems is important.
- **The presumption of privilege and entitlement:** When one group is defined as marginal and denied access to rights and privileges within a system, those same rights and privileges accrue to those who are by definition members of the dominant group, through no effort of their own. Failure to recognize this impact of systemic oppression leads to the presumption of privilege and entitlement as normative.

This skewed sense of reality can lead to negative perceptions of persons in marginalized groups and undermines the moral force for organizational transformation. *The Guiding Principles* provide the core values and

assumptions on which cultural proficiency is built. They reflect the significant role of culture in perpetuating systems of oppression, the complexity of attempting deep systemic change, and the potential for culture to be an instrument of change and transformation.

- Culture is a predominant force in people’s lives and in organization’s lives. Within an organization, you cannot NOT participate or be influenced by the organizational culture.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- Acknowledge group identities. People have group identities and personal identities. The group identities that an individual participates in are important to that person as an individual.
- Diversity within cultures is important. Cultural groups are neither homogenous nor monolithic. Persons within a cultural group are unique individuals.
- Respect unique cultural needs. Culture shapes every aspect of life. Members of different cultures bring different needs to organizational life. In a culturally proficient organization, the dominant culture is attentive to the needs of non-dominant groups.

Adapted from: *Cultural Proficiency: Tools for School Leaders*. Nuri-Robins, et al: <https://www.aesa.us/about/Resources/CulturalProficiencyforLeaders.pdf>; and *The Cultural Proficiency Framework*. Nuri-Robins, et al: <http://www.teacherleadershipinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cultural-Proficiency-Framework.pdf>.

### Assessment and Review of Cultural Proficiency or a Comparable Approach of the Six Agencies

The six-year plan drafted by each agency for the implementation of cultural proficiency becomes the document by which an agency is assessed.

The six-year plan shall come into effect once approved by the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC), who will consult with the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Concerns (ACWGC) and the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) before it is approved.

The affirmative action goals for employment and purchasing are established by the 1985 Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action and the 1984 Minority Vendor Policy. These are the church’s policy goals until they are reviewed and/or revised by GACOR in 2014.

The six-year plan shall include:

1. Expression of the commitment of top management, evidenced through:
  - a. A mission and/or vision statement (see *Book of Order*, G-3.0103, F-1.0403),
  - b. Regular discussion in management meetings,
  - c. Training to develop management skills in support of cultural proficiency goals,
  - d. Evaluation of management performance in support of cultural proficiency goals.
2. Training and education strategies to promote employee support for cultural proficiency goals and provide opportunities to enhance skills.
3. A communication strategy to ensure employee awareness and promote the transformation of organizational culture to support the goals of cultural proficiency.

4. Recruitment, training, promotion, and retention strategies to achieve affirmative action employment goals at all levels of the organization, including senior management.
5. Employee education programs to promote employee compliance and support for minority vendor policy and/or supplier diversity goals.
6. Strategies to promote the employment and create a supportive working environment for persons with disabilities.

The six-year plan shall have measurable targets and goals set out in three, two-year cycles.

Each agency is to submit to GACOR biennial reports giving employment data (e.g., salaries, occupations, separations, new hires, promotions, in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender). The GACOR will share this data with REAC and ACWC for purposes of monitoring and assessing cultural proficiency.

Every two years (consistent with the meeting cycle of the General Assembly), REAC will monitor each agency to determine if it is meeting the church-wide benchmarks and to discuss the status of the cultural proficiency goals, allowing for adjustments as appropriate.

The REAC will conduct its detailed assessment of each agency simultaneously with the six-year agency review conducted by the OGA agency review committee.

The REAC will consult with each OGA agency review committee in the early stages of the review process.

# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES

## Policy Application Statement

It is the policy of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [“PC(USA)”] and all entities of the General Assembly (“Entities”) that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and Entities of the church are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This Policy applies to all General Assembly Entity sponsored activities that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## Distribution

Copies of this Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and its Procedures (“Policy”) shall be made available to all agency, council, and entity offices in hard copy or electronically or via the internet. It is intended as guidance for churches, mid councils, and related Entities. This is a Policy of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) and is a Policy of General Assembly agencies and Entities, including the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Administrative Services Group, and the other four agencies of the General Assembly and General Assembly Entities. Other councils and organizations of the PC(USA) may use this Policy as a guide to develop their own policies and procedures related to the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Wherever this Policy indicates that entities shall do something, if a council adopts all or part of this Policy, the council should do likewise.

## Policy Rationale

The implementation and documentation of a Child/Youth/Vulnerable Protection Policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me.” The Church is to be, at all levels of council and in all entities, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ.
- Any type of abuse involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults has lasting and devastating effects on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the Church to be a life-giving entity of Christ’s healing and hope for community and individuals, not an entity that brings harm and hurt.
- The larger Church suffers with the victim/survivor and his or her family when abuse and neglect occurs. The Church is unable to do the full work of Christ, due to the hurt, pain, and distrust that accompanies abuse. Not only does the Church lose its credibility at all levels, it also suffers considerable financial loss and loss of integrity. More importantly, in instances of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse within the Church, there is immeasurable spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical harm perpetrated that woefully hinders God’s call on the Church.
- The *Book of Order* states, “The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life,” and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church’s care, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults (*Book of Order*, W-3.0403).
- Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also co-recipients of the graces and love of God. Jesus exemplified this in the Gospel of Mark 10:15–16 when he urged his followers to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. And he specifically takes up the children into his arms and blesses them. So also the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be

the presence of Christ's love, in the same way taking up all children, youth, and vulnerable adults into its arms and blessing them; providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environments in which to grow in every way.

## Procedures to Follow When Entities Are Providing Care for Minors

When entities provide care and supervision for minors at one of its meetings, events, or conferences (this excludes meetings, events, or conferences for which an Entity reimburses parents or guardians to pay for care for minors), the following procedures shall be utilized.

## Definitions

Each state has its own statutes regarding what is defined as child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse. This Policy advises all entities of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to consider and be familiar with state statutes pertaining to the location of each event/activity.

The following is a comprehensive list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular Policy. For the purpose of this Policy:

**child:** A child is defined as a person between the ages of 0–11.

**youth:** A youth is defined as a person between the ages of 12–17.

**minor:** A minor is defined as any child or youth 0–17 years-old.

**child/youth worker:** Any person, volunteer or paid staff or contractor, who participates at any level at General Assembly Entity sponsored events or activities involving children and/or youth. This includes chaperones who accompany minors to and during meetings, events, and activities covered by this Policy.

**vulnerable adult:** Any person eighteen-years-old or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

**vulnerable adult abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

**child/youth abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, neglect, and or sexual molestation or abuse, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, or exploitation of a child or youth.

**sexual abuse:** In the *Book of Order*, sexual abuse is defined as, “Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position” (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c).

**misuse of technology:** The use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry

**PMA:** Presbyterian Mission Agency.

**OGA:** Office of General Assembly.

**Safe Child Response Team:** The Safe Child Response Team is a team comprised of a minimum of at least three members of or appointed by the Entity of the General Assembly who are specifically trained to respond to allegations and reports of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse at General Assembly Entity sponsored activities. These teams must be readily available to be contacted and used at all General Assembly Entity sponsored events.

**sexual misconduct:** As that is defined in the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures (219th General Assembly (2010)) and revised by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (2013).

Sexual misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

Child sexual abuse; including, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.

Sexual abuse as defined in the *Book of Order*: “Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position” (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c).

Sexual harassment is defined for this policy as follows: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, or their continued status in an institution;
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
- c. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or
- d. an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.

Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.

Sexual conduct is offensive, obsessive, or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.

Sexual malfeasance is defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.

## Screening, Training, and Background Checks

A child/youth worker, whether on a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer basis, shall be subject to:

1. The organizing Entity’s receipt of a completed, signed, and approved application and background check authorization forms, including a signed form verifying the event policy has been read. The application should include a minimum of two references.
2. All child/youth workers must be at least eighteen-years-old and four years older than the oldest youth whom they are serving.
3. The applicant’s consent to a comprehensive background check, including a criminal background check. The Entity must consult with the insurance company through which they have coverage to determine what background checks are appropriate for their particular event. The Entity should cover the costs of the background checks for all child/youth workers. These checks shall be run no more than six (6) months prior to the event. (This time restraint is also at the discretion of the organizing Entity’s insurance



company's requests. Child/Youth workers who participate annually in events may only be required to have one (1) background check per calendar year, depending on insurance company standards.)

4. All child/youth workers, paid, contracted, or volunteer, must participate in training sometime within the year prior to the event. The training is to be provided by the Entity and shall cover the event child/youth protection policy thoroughly as well as methods of abuse prevention and a detailed plan of reporting. The Entity may contract with others to provide these trainings. These trainings shall further cover:

- What constitutes child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect.
- How to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.
- State laws concerning definitions of abuse and reporting.
- Mandatory criminal background checks and the security of those files.
- Explanation of the importance of the application and screening processes.
- Appropriate boundaries with minors, especially regarding adult/child/youth ratios, transportation, and use of technology.
- If an overnight event is planned, discussions of boundaries involving appropriate sleeping arrangements and restroom/shower facilities use shall be discussed.
- The presence of a Safe Child Response Team at each event and how to contact them.
- All paid employees working directly with children or youth at any General Assembly Entity sponsored events must be certified in first aid and CPR.
- Other related topics.

5. No person may serve as a child/youth worker who has a conviction on his/her record of certain felonies or misdemeanors, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Crimes related to the possession, use, or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault;
- Injury to a youth;
- Incest;
- Indecency with a youth;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a youth;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to youth;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a youth;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;

- Public lewdness or indecent exposure; and enticement of a youth;
- Any crime that involves Sexual Misconduct or sexual abuse, particularly if it involves misconduct or abuse with a minor;
- Any crime that involves misuse of technology for sexual purposes, such as collecting or distributing photographs of minors who are naked or in sexual or inappropriate poses (child pornography);
- Any crime that involves the use of force, such as assault or endangerment;
- Any crime that involves abduction and kidnapping;
- Any crime that involves drinking and driving, such as driving while intoxicated.

In addition, if an Council or General Assembly Entity is aware that a child/youth worker has a prior conviction for one of the aforementioned crimes or a related crime, the child/youth worker shall automatically be ineligible to attend a child/youth event in any capacity.

6. No person may act as or be engaged as a child/youth worker if that person has been found guilty of an offense, in local, state or federal court or in an ecclesiastical proceeding, that includes actions that fall under definitions or prohibitions set forth in this Policy.

7. Whenever a General Assembly Entity organizes an event for minors for which the Entity will invite minors from other church Councils who will be supervised by child/youth workers, the Councils who selects the youth workers shall:

- a. Not send a person to act as a child/youth worker whom the Council knows has violated the provisions of the *Book of Order* or policy of a local congregation or presbytery pertaining to Sexual Misconduct or child/youth protection.
- b. Not send a person to act as a child/youth worker for minors when that person is also scheduled to work at the event.
- c. Require Councils at all levels of church life who are assisting in organizing General Assembly Entity events for minors or sending child/youth workers to these events to abide by the same screening, training, and background check standards mandated in this Policy for the General Assembly and its Entities.

8. Whenever a General Assembly Entity organizes an event for minors that invites minors from Councils who will be supervised by child/youth workers, the General Assembly Entity shall:

- a. Provide guidance to the Councils that are sending child/youth workers about best practices for securing child/youth workers and eligibility requirements.
- b. Provide guidance to the Councils that are sending child/youth workers concerning the requirement that the Council perform and pay for background checks for potential child/youth workers and how to evaluate the background check for offenses that would disqualify a person from being a child/youth worker with minors.
- c. Provide guidance to the Councils on when to perform the background checks and with what background check provider.
- d. Identify someone on the organizing committee or staff of the General Assembly Entity to be the designated recipient of background checks from Councils and train that person:
  - i. To review every background check received;
  - ii. To identify criminal convictions on background checks that should disqualify a person

from being a child/youth worker;

iii. To notify a Council if the staffer believes the Council has erred in selecting a child/youth worker whose background check indicates that the person should not act as a child/youth worker;

iv. Report to the General Assembly Entity of the event of each potentially disqualifying background check and related concerns so that a formal decision can be made to inform the Council that the person whose background check is in question is not eligible to attend the event as child/youth worker.

## Confidentiality of Records

The Entity shall maintain all child/youth worker applications, results of background checks, and related information in confidential, secured files.

## Reporting

Each sponsoring General Assembly Entity will publicize a procedure for reporting any prohibited actions and have copies available at all times in a public place at the event. Anyone suspecting or having knowledge of a violation of child abuse may report such violation to any leader of the General Assembly Entity sponsored event. Any child or youth who suspects or has knowledge of any type of minor abuse is invited to share the knowledge with any adult leader of the General Assembly Entity sponsored event. Anyone who has knowledge or suspicion of child/youth abuse should be made aware that state law requires the immediate reporting of such abuse to the civil authorities. Any adult leader should report such violation to any Stated Clerk or Associate or Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly or any other leader designated by the sponsoring General Assembly Entity of the event. Any person receiving information under this paragraph shall share that information immediately with the designated response team.

## Safe Child Response Team

At every meeting, conference, event or activity for minors planned by an Entity of the General Assembly, a Safe Child Response Team must be trained by the sponsoring Entity and be present and available throughout the entire duration of the event. This team should be comprised of at least three members, staff or appointed, selected and sent by the sponsoring Entity. An attorney chosen and secured by the General Assembly Entity shall be on-call for all events. The response team will familiarize itself with the terms of this Policy as well as established procedures under the Rules of Discipline, *Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* for responding to complaint(s) of alleged child/youth abuse against any teaching elder, ruling elder, employee, or volunteer in a leadership position(s) with the sponsoring Entity and any events they may sponsor.

The Safe Child Response Team shall have the following responsibilities in response to allegations of child/youth or vulnerable adult abuse or neglect incurred against any child/youth worker or event participant:

1. Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
2. If the report alleges abuse or harassment of a minor, the response team will:
  - a. immediately ensure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law;
  - b. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the minor;
  - c. notify the insurance company of the allegation and that no investigation has yet occurred.
3. Make immediate decisions concerning the temporary removal of the individual accused from any contact with Minors pending an investigation and/or removal of the accused from the event until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.
4. Notify designated people at the General Assembly Entity immediately of the report of alleged

abuse/neglect including the attorney who is on-call throughout the duration of each event, who has been previously secured by the General Assembly Entity in case of such allegations during each sponsored event. Any possible media requests will be handled by a designated person or office with advice from the on-call attorney, taking care to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

5. Consult the OGA and PMA about resources available for victims of the alleged abuse prior to each event and have those resources readily available at every event. This will provide victims and their families immediate resources that may aid in the particular spiritual, psychological, or emotional needs and trauma that arise from the devastation of abuse.

6. If the report is against a teaching elder, the response team shall send a written statement of allegation to the stated clerk of the presbytery that holds the teaching elder's membership. This written statement of allegation shall trigger the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II*.

7. If the report is against a ruling elder, the response team will notify the clerk of session of membership that an allegation of offense has been received against an elder that triggers the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II*.

8. If the report is against an employee of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, the response team will notify the person(s) or committee responsible for supervision of the employee, Human Resources, and Legal Services. The response team will request a follow-up report from the supervisory body of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.

9. If the report is against an employee of a sponsoring Entity other than Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, the response team will notify the person(s) or committee responsible for supervision of the employee. The response team will request a follow-up report from the supervisory body of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.

10. If the report is against a volunteer, or nonmember of the PC(USA), the response team will request that the General Assembly Entity appoint an investigating committee of three persons to initiate an investigation of the allegations in order to:

- a. gather any statements of abuse from those making the report, including any information from the Safety Response Team, and any party to the abuse;
- b. gather any information from the person who was accused of abuse;
- c. make written determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter including, but not limited to, making recommendations for prevention as well as response.

11. Provide for pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s), accused, family members).

12. A written summary of any proceedings in such cases will be maintained by the General Assembly Entities.

13. Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

### Event Rules For Working With Minors And Vulnerable Adults

The sponsoring Entity of the General Assembly shall ensure that the following measures be in place and actions taken for each event or activity involving Minors and Vulnerable Adults:

1. Child/Youth workers shall:

- a. respond to Minors and Vulnerable Adults with respect and consideration and treat all of them equally, regardless of race/ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, age (40 and over), marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, creed, protected disability status, citizenship status, genetic information, uniformed service or veteran status or religious affiliation; and
- b. act as a positive role model for Minors and Vulnerable Adults by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity.
- c. maintain appropriate boundaries when in positions of power with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- d. not give money or gifts to Minors, except within the context of a group gift given to all participants in the celebration of special events or recognitions.

2. Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of Minors or Vulnerable Adults, for both in person and online gatherings. The only exception is if an emergency situation deems this not immediately possible. All child and youth workers and volunteers must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise.

3. Ratios: The adult to child ratio for all child-related events/activities is 2:10 for both in person and online gatherings. The adult to youth ratio for all youth-related events/activities is 2:17 for both in person and online gatherings. There shall also be one adult of each gender when there is one or more Minors of each gender in a group. Only in emergency situations may the ratios and gender diversity be compromised.

4. View Windows and Open Doors: When Minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times.

5. Adult workers/caregivers should respect the privacy of the Minors and Vulnerable Adults to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations (ex. Taking age-appropriate photographs and movies, not taking photographs of Minors who are not fully clothed). Adults and minors are required at all times to wear appropriate attire. Child/youth workers are not permitted to take photographs of minors or vulnerable adults under their care or at the meeting or event and share them in any way, including on the internet, without the written permission of a parent or guardian of the minor or vulnerable adult.

6. Age appropriate training to Minors should be provided regarding behavior that should be reported to caregiver or leader of the event.

7. Transportation: All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with the organizing Entity. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. No minor under eighty-five pounds may sit in the front seat of any vehicle. All drivers transporting minors and vulnerable adults must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier is contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers. Each vehicle must follow the ratio rules noted in point 2 in this section. Lastly, no minor may be a driver at any event or activity (this includes golf carts at events).

8. Forms: The legal guardians of each minor must provide the appropriate information and medical forms for each activity/event. The information form should include all contacts for legal guardians and the medical form must include a copy of the minor's health insurance card. Further consent forms must be signed by legal guardians for any off-campus events. Any photos at the event that are used in social media or published material by the organizing Entity must be released by a signed consent form from a participant's legal guardian as well as the minor. All such forms must be stored at the event site, in a

secure place with restricted access.

9. Each event/activity must ensure that rules are gone over with participants at each event/activity. These rules shall include but are not limited to a code of conduct specific to the event/activity, as well as a list prohibited and expected behaviors for the specific event/activity. The code of conduct and prohibited and expected behaviors list should be given in written form to each participant and legal guardians, as well as discussed thoroughly at the beginning of the event/activity.

10. Minors and adults must maintain different showering and grooming hours at events in which bathrooms and shower rooms are shared in housing. These hours must be posted on site.

11. Adults should never share sleeping quarters with Minors. The exception to this rule is for the occasional legal caregiver/child situation or parent/child situation. If a Minor requires a caregiver/parent, written permission must be given and kept on record from the Minor's parent/legal guardian.

12. All volunteers and employees at any General Assembly Entity sponsored meetings and events who are responsible to supervise Minors and vulnerable adults must also abide by a code of conduct that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors. Some of these prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:

- a. Display of sexual affection toward a Minor.
- b. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
- c. Discussion of sexual encounters with or around Minors or Vulnerable Adults or in any way involving Minors in personal problems or issues.
- d. Dating or becoming "romantically" involved with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- e. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
- f. Possessing sexually oriented materials—including printed or online pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
- g. Having secrets with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- h. Staring at or commenting on the bodies of Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- i. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- j. Working one-on-one with Minors or Vulnerable Adults in a private setting.
- k. Abusing Minors or Vulnerable Adults in anyway, including (but not limited to) the following:
  - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint.
  - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.
  - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
  - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
  - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter.

- Permit Minors or Vulnerable Adults to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

## Social Media—Electronic Communications

**General Social Media Policy**—No minister, employee, contractor, or volunteer of the General Assembly and its Entities shall create or use a media site (Web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) without the explicit written permission of the General Assembly Entity, or event leadership. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of the General Assembly or its Entities, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official General Assembly Entity sites/channels when they have been made available by the Entity of the General Assembly. These may include Web pages, Facebook, e-mail, and similar means.

### Social Media Communications

Persons who shall create public pages on behalf of General Assembly Entity programs are responsible to monitor communications and to assure that employees and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with Minors and Vulnerable Adults.

Persons having Facebook privileges on behalf of the General Assembly Entity shall treat unsolicited communication or “friending” from Minors and Vulnerable Adults under-age as an unauthorized text message. No reply may be given except to indicate by a posting that accepting a “friend” invitation by under-age Minors and Vulnerable Adults is a violation of the code of conduct.

If Minors and Vulnerable Adults reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the person must report this information in the manner of any “suspected abuse.”

When using Facebook to communicate with Minors and Vulnerable Adults, the authorized minister shall inform parents/guardians of each Minor and Vulnerable Adult that the latter is communicating with the person via Facebook, providing the parent/guardian the opportunity to disapprove or to participate in a group.

### Social Networking Code of Conduct

Each person who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit private messages between employees and volunteers and Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide Minors and Vulnerable Adults, and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their Minors and Vulnerable Adults interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind Minors and Vulnerable Adults how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct.

At the institution of the use of social media, the authorized minister shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to Minors and Vulnerable Adults and parents/guardians.

### Misuse of Technology

No minister, employee, contractor, or volunteer of the General Assembly and its Entities shall misuse technology in the following ways:

- Using technology to send suggestive messages and/or images to a Minor.
- Having contacts by misuse of technology to contact a Minor or vulnerable adult that is not preapproved by the Minor's or vulnerable adult's legal guardian with a signed waiver, unless the contact is on an open public medium, such as a church or Entity website or church or Entity social media program.
- To view pornography or sites (ex. dating websites) that include pornography or naked bodies on the premises of a General Assembly Entity event, activity, or meeting, no matter where it is held or by which Entity it is organized.

### Signing of Policy and Application to Serve

Each adult engaged in the leadership of a General Assembly Entity event shall acknowledge receipt of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures by signing a form verifying they read the Policy. In addition, each person engaged in the leadership of a General Assembly Entity event shall consent to all comprehensive background checks required and shall comply with any consequences of a reported violation of this Policy.

### Procedures to Follow When an Entity Is Providing Care for Minors Outside the U.S.

There are times when a General Assembly Entity may offer care for minors at a meeting, conference, or event to be held outside the United States (ex. a regional meeting of World Mission liaisons and/or mission co-workers). The organizing Entity will take all appropriate actions to comply with this Policy to the extent they can be complied with, considering the venue of the meeting, the resources and facilities available, and the laws of the country of the venue. Exceptions should be discussed and addressed with leadership of the Entity and its legal advisors.

### Process to Revise This Policy and Its Procedures

Between meetings of the General Assembly proposed changes to this Policy and its procedures shall be submitted to the Mid Council Ministries office in the OGA and the Legal Services Office of the Administrative Services Group who will review and present any proposed changes to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board of Directors ("A Corp.") for review and approval, after consultation with the Coordinating Committees of the Board of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. Changes will become effective when approved by the Board of the A Corp. Changes approved by A Corp. that are substantive, and more than mere editorial changes, should be reported by A Corp. Board to the next meetings of the General Assembly after the changes are approved. The General Assembly can receive and accept those changes, but any assembly may revise this Policy with or without a report of changes from the A Corp.



ORGANIZATION FOR MISSION OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) 2024–2026



This document supersedes all previous descriptions of mission program and organization and became operative upon the action of the 226th General Assembly (2024).

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Proposed amendments to the Organization for Mission that are submitted by overture shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

Proposed amendments to the Organization for Mission from related bodies or from within the Presbyterian Mission Agency shall be submitted to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall review these proposed changes and forward those it approves as part of its report to the General Assembly.

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Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Office of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

## Contents

Introduction.....	117
I. History of the Structure for Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) .....	117
A. The Unity of the Church .....	118
B. Commitment to Mission .....	118
C. Diversity and Inclusiveness .....	119
D. Tradition and Flexibility .....	119
E. Partnership .....	119
F. Additional Factors .....	120
II. Mission of the General Assembly.....	120
III. General Assembly Officers and Committees and the Office of the General Assembly.....	121
A. Moderator of the General Assembly.....	121
B. Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.....	123
C. Committees of the General Assembly .....	126
D. Review of Agencies.....	133
E. Meetings.....	134
F. Proposed Amendments to Section III.....	134
IV. The Presbyterian Mission Agency.....	134
A. Policy Responsibility.....	135
B. Planning and Priority Setting .....	135
C. General Assembly Budget.....	135
D. Personnel Responsibilities .....	135
E. Reporting.....	136
F. Elected Leadership.....	136
G. Staff Leadership .....	137
V. Presbyterian Mission Agency Relationships.....	139
A. Advocacy and Advisory Committees.....	139
B. Committee on Theological Education .....	140

VI. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation .....	141
VII. Other General Assembly Corporations .....	141
A. Board of Pensions .....	141
B. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation .....	142
C. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation.....	143
D. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.....	143
VIII. Corporations Related to the General Assembly.....	144
A. Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc .....	144
IX. Amendments .....	144
Appendixes	
A. Financial Issues .....	146
B. List of Documents Related to Various Organizational Structures .....	159

## Introduction

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love (Eph. 4:11-16).<sup>1</sup>

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller. (*Book of Order*, F-3.0203)

### I. History of the Structure for Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [PC(USA)]

The two denominations that came together in 1983 had similar ecclesiastical polity and theological beliefs. They were leaders in the ecumenical movement and in commitment to the unity of the church. Each had been faithful in ministering in Christ's name. Each had been intentional in revising mission policy and program in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit and a changing world context. Within the previous two decades, each had a major reorganization of General Assembly agencies as it attempted to be more effective in mission.

These two denominations also had developed some differences in their styles, structures, and expectations of the various mid councils. Though they were engaged in similar mission programs, the agency structures they formed did not easily fit together.

The uniting General Assembly in 1983 directed that consultations be held to discern the church's understanding of mission before preparing a mission design. "Today Into Tomorrow: A Year of Consultations" was the process followed, and it challenged all parts of the church to examine their understanding of what God required of the church. The result of this process was the "Life and Mission Statement," which was adopted by the 197th General Assembly (1985).

The biblical image of the church as the body of Christ was a major theme in the "Life and Mission Statement" and provided the pattern for the church's life and work. This pattern was marked by interdependence and sensitivity to the needs, experiences, and gifts others brought; by honest communication and courage to risk, and by a global vision of both the church and the world. It called for working in partnerships characterized by enduring commitment, equality, humility, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, and love.

A number of basic principles were significant in the drafting of the Structural Design for Mission, which was approved by the 198th General Assembly (1986), and prescribed the organization for mission from 1986–93. These principles are based on the Reformed interpretation of Scripture represented in the *Book of Confessions*.

The year 1992–93 was devoted to the theme "Discerning the Spirit, Envisioning Our Future." A convocation on this theme manifested a deep sense of the Spirit's stirring among us, creating an excitement and passion for the future ministry of the church. One theme was the resounding emphasis on the importance of the ministries of congregations as they are resources for mission. Another was the yearning for church wide organizational forms that are flexible and innovative, with the ability to let agreed-upon priorities lead our work and so restore confidence in our connectedness. The convocation contributed to a continuing process of discernment and envisioning that reflected a sense of the future.

A new organizational structure for mission was approved by the 205th General Assembly (1993). Several of the specific elements of the new structure derive from the Report of the General Assembly Committee on Review, which reported to the 204th General Assembly (1992). A simpler design called for fewer ministry units and

related bodies, fewer priority goals, and a balanced budget that reflects the mission priorities.

The PC(USA) is committed to working in partnership with other churches in this nation and around the world. Such a mutual ministry is consistent with the denomination's self-image as one part of the body of Christ, as a servant community willing to be poured out on behalf of all people.

The church's mission finds its center in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in witnessing to that gospel. Beneath the variety and complexity of its forms of witness, the church's mission is one—from the congregation to the General Assembly. To share fully in that mission is the task of every Presbyterian and every council. As the most inclusive council, the General Assembly represents the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the PC(USA). Among its other responsibilities, the General Assembly has the power to set policies, objectives, and priorities for mission, to provide the agencies appropriate for that mission, and to superintend their work (*Book of Order*, G-3.0501).

The General Assembly, its entities, the synods, the presbyteries, and the sessions work together in partnership on behalf of the mission of the church. The Organization for Mission places emphasis on the congregation as an instrument of mission and on the mid councils working together to provide resources and services to the congregations.

#### A. *The Unity of the Church*

The unity of the church, with Christ as the Head of the body, is a fundamental principle that affirms the church is called to demonstrate unity, both within a given denomination as well as ecumenically and internationally. Perhaps the strongest image of this unity is the apostolic vision of the body of Christ, in which the many members, though different, work together for mutual health and upbuilding. Recognition of the unity of the whole church carries with it a series of implications for the internal structure of the PC(USA) and for the denomination's ecumenical commitment.

Clear communication is needed among the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board of Directors. These relationships and coordination of program, policy implementation, and support functions give visible expression to unity within the denomination.

While the PC(USA) is called to be the church in and of itself, there is an important sense in which this denomination recognizes that it is one part of the church of Christ. The PC(USA) undertakes its ministry with a full awareness of the global and ecumenical dimensions of Christ's call, and provides a means to share mutual mission, decision making, and resources with partner churches in this nation and around the world.

#### B. *Commitment to Mission*

The church, as the body of Christ, exists to share the love of Christ with the world. The *Book of Order* states the great ends of the church in terms of the call to mission through proclamation, nurture, worship, preservation of truth, promotion of social righteousness, and exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world (F-1.0304). The vitality of the life and mission of the congregation is central to the calling of the church as a whole. As has been noted, the PC(USA) is called to be the church, yet is itself a member of the worldwide body of Christ. Each congregation, too, is called to be the church of Jesus Christ in its own time and place. Furthermore, the responsibilities of the session include: "to [govern] the congregation and [guide] its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world" (G-3.0201).

### C. *Diversity and Inclusiveness*

Within the denomination, the PC(USA) has affirmed the strength of a unity characterized by mutual interdependence in which diversity contributes to wholeness. Various members of this body enrich the whole through the particular qualities they bring:

- As people of color of multicultural constituencies that make visible our rich diversity and offer varied histories and traditions;
- As persons with a variety of physical and mental abilities and disabilities;
- From diverse geographical areas and socio-economic backgrounds;
- As persons of all genders and ages;
- With a variety of theological perspectives within our Reformed tradition;
- With many differing gifts;
- With various histories and traditions within the Reformed family of churches.

Patterns are established to ensure that elected bodies represent the wealth of diverse gifts found in the church and to provide a means to share power and decision making. Similarly, churchwide personnel procedures promote equal employment opportunity.

### D. *Tradition and Flexibility*

The PC(USA) professes a Reformed theology that is solidly grounded in Scripture as the rule of faith and practice. The *Book of Order* affirms: “The Protestant watchwords—grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone—embody principles of understanding that continue to guide and motivate the people of God in the life of faith” (G-2.04). The church has also inherited and continues to affirm a Reformed polity that is representative in nature.

Openness to renewal by God entails a flexibility of structure and openness to growth and change. The PC(USA) recognizes the need for growth and is open to it under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Reformed tradition’s awareness of the fallen nature of humanity and human institutions has led to the development of church government made up of a system of checks and balances. In recent years, these checks have included limited terms and rotation for elected officers, and plans to ensure fair representation of the diverse elements of the church on mid councils.

The PC(USA) shares with all Reformed churches a belief in the priesthood of all believers. For this reason, persons called to leadership positions in the denomination are envisioned by this organizational plan as enabling the whole church to do the work of mission.

### E. *Partnership*

The PC(USA) seeks to develop a system of relationships among mid councils functioning through collaboration rather than competition. Partnership is characterized by enduring commitment, equality, humility, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, and love. More than an end to be attained, partnership is a process or journey that can be undertaken only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consultation is highly valued as part of the process of decision making.

Each council is a primary agent in mission and has two foci: 1) its appropriate role in assisting congregations and other mid councils in the mission of the whole church, and 2) the performance of its own mission as a council in consultation with other mid councils.

### F. *Additional Factors*

Additional factors to guide the structure and style of mission are:

- The need to affirm the centrality of the mission of congregations, and their need and desire for resources from General Assembly entities, as well as from presbyteries and synods;
- The need to recognize demographic realities that bear on the life of the PC(USA);
- The need to be responsive to persons who identify themselves as Presbyterian without actually taking part in a particular congregation’s life and ministry;
- The need for styles that support and enable the momentum of movements rather than styles that create or lead to institutional inertia;
- The need to reverse the trend toward reducing the church’s function and style to that of a regulatory agency, creating instead a more responsive, less bureaucratic reality;
- The need to be more simple yet holistic;
- The need to build hope and trust within the denomination, while maintaining commitments to and safeguards for those historically ignored, excluded, or silenced; and
- The need for an evolutionary design that can be responsive to unfolding changes in the structure and work of the General Assembly, synods and presbyteries.
- The value of shared services in the PC(USA) exists when all agencies, carrying out their respective missions as directed by the General Assembly, collectively best serve the church with excellence, transparency, and efficiency. Simultaneously, sharing any service must be accomplished without harming the safety, soundness, well-being, or missional goals of any individual agency.

## II. Mission of the General Assembly (Book of Order)

### G-3.0501 Composition and Responsibilities

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 PC(USA). It shall consist of equal numbers of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds (F-1.0403 and G-3.0103), to serve as commissioners according to the following proportions:

- 8,000 members or less: 1 ruling elder and 1 minister of the Word and Sacrament
- 8,001–16,000: 2 ruling elders and 2 ministers of the Word and Sacrament
- 16,001–24,000: 3 ruling elders and 3 ministers of the Word and Sacrament
- 24,001–32,000: 4 ruling elders and 4 ministers of the Word and Sacrament
- 32,001–40,000: 5 ruling elders and 5 ministers of the Word and Sacrament
- 40,001–48,000: 6 ruling elders and 6 ministers of the Word and Sacrament
- 48,001 or more: 7 ruling elders and 7 ministers of the Word and Sacrament

Each person elected Moderator shall be enrolled as a member of the General Assembly until a successor is elected and installed.

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



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

- *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include establishing a comprehensive mission strategy and priorities for the church; establishing and maintaining ecumenical relationships and correspondence with other ecclesiastical bodies; uniting with or receiving under its jurisdiction other ecclesiastical bodies consistent with the faith and order of this church, subject to the provisions of G-5.02 and G-5.03; and commissioning, sending, and support of such mission personnel as will spread the good news of the grace of Jesus Christ to the world and foster the growth and development of God's people.
- *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.* This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at meetings of the General Assembly and other events and gatherings under its jurisdiction; authorizing the participation in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in ecumenical gatherings attended by authorized representatives of the General Assembly; and exercising pastoral care throughout the whole church in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the church may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.
- *nurture the covenant community of disciples.* This responsibility shall include providing those services, resources, and programs performed most effectively at a national level; communicating with the whole church on matters of common concern; warning and bearing witness against errors in doctrine or immorality in the church and in the world; providing such services of education and nurture as its presbyteries may require; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to presbyteries in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration; discerning and presenting with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, matters of truth and vision that may inspire, challenge, and educate both church and world; serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline; deciding controversies brought before it and advising and instructing in cases submitted to it, in conformity with this Constitution; authoritatively interpreting the most recent edition of the *Book of Order* in a manner binding on the whole church, in accordance with the provisions of G-6.02 or through a decision of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in a remedial or disciplinary case, with the most recent interpretation of the *Book of Order* being binding; and establishing and maintaining an office of the Stated Clerk.

### III. General Assembly Officers and Committees and the Office of the General Assembly

#### A. Moderator of the General Assembly

The Moderator of the General Assembly is an ecclesiastical officer, along with the Stated Clerk, of the PC(USA). The ministry of the Moderator is grounded in the ministry of baptized persons and in the particular ordained ministry of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

1. The Office of Moderator, with all rights and privileges thereof, may be shared by Co-Moderators. In this case, the Office of Vice Moderator will remain vacant until the next election of a Moderator.
2. The title of the Moderator is "The Moderator of the (number) General Assembly (year) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)."
3. The Moderator of the General Assembly is a commissioner of the General Assembly. When the Moderator presides at the assembly, it is to be a sign of the bond of unity, community, and mission in the life of the church. During the period between assemblies, the Moderator serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church's life and upholding the people of God through prayer.

When the Moderator travels throughout the church, it is for the purpose of strengthening the mission of

congregations and mid councils, encouraging officers and members, and their work. The Moderator listens for the joys and concerns of the church and ascertains the needs of the world and the gifts of the church's mission program.

When the Moderator serves as an ecumenical representative, s/he expresses the concern of Reformed churches for the visible unity of Christ's body and fuller communion among churches.

When the Moderator visits national and international mission sites, s/he encourages mission personnel, brings the prayerful concern of the PC(USA) to sister churches, and helps to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the world.

When the Moderator addresses the church and the society, s/he speaks pastorally and prophetically from within the standards of the PC(USA), preserving the rights and responsibilities outlined in G-2.0105.

a. The Moderator shall preside over the General Assembly that elects him or her, and over the meetings of the next General Assembly until a successor is elected. "The Moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body" (G- 3.0104).

b. The Moderator of the General Assembly is a corresponding member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and a voting member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. The Moderator of the General Assembly may attend and participate without vote in the meetings of all other entities of the General Assembly. When the Office of Moderator is shared by Co-Moderators, at least one shall serve on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, while both Co-Moderators shall serve as voting members of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

c. The Moderator shall be the official representative of the church at gatherings and functions, both civic and ecclesiastical, at which the PC(USA) is invited or expected to be represented, unless otherwise provided by the General Assembly. In the event that the Moderator is unable to attend, the Vice Moderator, or some other person designated by the Moderator in consultation with the Stated Clerk, may represent the church.

d. The Moderator and the Vice Moderator (when filled) shall submit a written report of their work to the session of the General Assembly at which their successors are installed.

#### 4. Enabling the Moderator and Vice Moderator to Serve

a. It is incumbent upon the church to understand, respect, and remain accountable for the balance of the stewardship of time between the ministry of the Moderator and Vice Moderator and the larger vocation of the ones serving in these roles. That balance includes a commitment to respect the need for Sabbath by the Moderator and Vice Moderator of the General Assembly.

The church should expect the Moderator to ordinarily spend no more than half of her/his work time responding to invitations in attending meetings of General Assembly entities, in participating in other opportunities, and attending to constitutional functions. In assisting the Moderator in these activities, the church should expect the Vice Moderator to ordinarily spend no more than a third of her/his work time.

b. The Moderator, the Vice Moderator, and the Office of the General Assembly shall jointly develop a comprehensive plan for their travel based upon the mission of the church and the needs of entities, mid councils, institutions, ecumenical partners, and other constituencies.

Each synod, in consultation with its presbyteries, will be invited to develop a plan for itineration of the Moderator or Vice Moderator. Ordinarily, a single invitation for a visit within a presbytery will be accepted during each term.

c. The Stated Clerk shall request the congregation or employer of the Moderator and Vice Moderator to grant a leave of absence for time appropriate to their commitments to permit the Moderator and Vice Moderator to fulfill the functions of their offices.

No later than three months following the election, the Stated Clerk, in consultation with the Moderator and Vice Moderator and representatives of the congregation or employer they serve, shall conduct an appropriate service of dedication and covenant between these leaders and their faith and/or vocational community, recognizing the unique demands and responsibilities placed upon these officers.

d. To prevent financial sacrifice to these leaders personally, or undue adverse effect upon the work in which they are engaged, the Stated Clerk, in consultation with the Moderator and Vice Moderator, shall propose appropriate financial arrangements to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

e. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall budget for the official travel of the Moderator and Vice Moderator and their spouses, and other expenses incurred in the performance of official duties.

f. An office for the use of the Moderator and Vice Moderator shall be provided within the office suite of the Office of the General Assembly.

## 5. Vice Moderator

a. The Vice Moderator represents the assembly at the request of the Moderator. When the Vice Moderator serves in this capacity, all those duties incumbent on the Moderator shall be expected of him/her.

b. The Vice Moderator shall serve as a corresponding member without vote on the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

c. Should there be a Moderator's Conference, the Vice Moderator participates with the Moderator in planning the Moderator's Conference.

d. The Vice Moderator is expected to itinerate at the request of the Moderator.

e. The Vice Moderator shall consult with the Moderator and the Office of the General Assembly about the special emphasis for the Vice Moderator's itineration.

f. The Moderator may request the Vice Moderator to preside and to assist in the performance of other functions of the Moderator during and following the General Assembly.

## 6. Regular Reporting: Accountability of the Moderator and Vice Moderator

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) shall assist the General Assembly in ensuring the accountability of the Moderator and Vice Moderator of the General Assembly by receiving and reviewing, at each of their stated meetings, a written report from the Moderator and Vice Moderator. The Moderator of the General Assembly shall also report at each stated meeting of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.

## B. *Stated Clerk of the General Assembly*

1. The title of the Stated Clerk is "The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);" and may be used by the incumbent until a successor is elected and takes office.

2. Functions of the Stated Clerk (For functions related to General Assembly meetings, see Standing Rule H.2.)

- a. In partial fulfillment of his/her role as the continuing ecclesial officer and Head of Communion for the PC(USA), the Stated Clerk will offer constitutional and spiritual leadership for the life and witness of the church and exercise pastoral authority over concerns of the church in times of crisis. The Stated Clerk is the PC(USA)'s chief ecumenical officer and its primary representative in national and international interchurch and interfaith organizations and speaks to and for the church in matters of faith and practice in accord with the beliefs, policies, and actions of the PC(USA).
- b. The Stated Clerk shall conduct the general correspondence of the PC(USA). In this connection, all items of correspondence directed to the PC(USA), or to the General Assembly, shall be routed to the Stated Clerk.
- c. As an officer of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall preserve and defend the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall give advisory opinions concerning the meaning of the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and shall give advisory opinions on the meaning of the actions of the General Assembly. When the Stated Clerk deems it necessary, the Stated Clerk may refer to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, any request for authoritative interpretation of the Constitution. When the Stated Clerk deems it necessary, after consulting with appropriate persons or bodies, the Stated Clerk may retain legal counsel and institute or participate in legal proceedings in civil and criminal courts.
- d. The Stated Clerk shall publish the Constitution of the PC(USA), and other materials as may be necessary to help the church understand and be guided by the Constitution. The Stated Clerk shall prepare editorial changes in the *Book of Order*, which should be reviewed by the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, provided the changes do not alter the substance of the text approved by vote of the presbyteries. The Stated Clerk shall be a member ex officio of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, without vote.
- e. On receipt of the certified record and final decision in a case of judicial process from the clerk of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall report the decision to the General Assembly if it is in session, or to its first session thereafter if it is not. When a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission contains an order directed to another council, the Stated Clerk shall obtain from the council a statement of its compliance and make a full report to the next General Assembly.
- f. The Stated Clerk shall provide staff services to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and any other committees established to draft, consider, or amend The Book of Confessions or any of the documents it includes.
- g. As the continuing ecclesial officer of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall be a member of each committee that may be established to undertake discussion regarding organic union with another church or churches.
- h. The Stated Clerk is the permanent ecumenical representative of the General Assembly and shall be a member of each delegation representing the PC(USA) in ecumenical or interchurch bodies or Presbyterian Mission Agency Boards, and in faith and order bodies, including bilateral conversations and dialogues. The Stated Clerk shall be a member of any body responsible for coordinating, formulating, or implementing the ecumenical and interfaith policies and programs of the General Assembly.
- i. The Stated Clerk is the chief executive officer of the Office of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall have available personnel to assist in performing the assigned functions.

j. The Stated Clerk, with the concurrence of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, may nominate to the General Assembly one or more persons to serve as Associate Stated Clerks of the assembly (Standing Rule H.2.d.).

k. The Stated Clerk, after consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, may appoint one or more Assistant Stated Clerks. The term of the appointment shall be four years, subject to reappointment by the Stated Clerk, after consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

l. The Stated Clerk shall submit to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, for its action and recommendation to the General Assembly, a proposed budget. This budget shall provide for the funding of the sessions of the General Assembly, the Office of the General Assembly and all bodies related to it, the funding of the participation of the PC(USA) in ecumenical bodies, and other expenses deemed necessary.

m. The Stated Clerk is responsible for maintaining the archives and records management facilities of the PC(USA), for the supervision of an agency for the preservation of the history of American Presbyterianism, and for the promotion of the study of Presbyterian history. The Stated Clerk shall assure the implementation of a records management program.

n. The Stated Clerk shall promote the harmony and efficiency of the General Assembly and its agencies in cooperation with the Presbyterian Mission Agency and its Executive Director, with special attention to relationships between General Assembly entities, and with synods, presbyteries, and sessions. The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve ex-officio on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII of the Organization for Mission) including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate's name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

o. The Stated Clerk shall receive all resignations from service on General Assembly entities and shall declare the positions vacant in accordance with Paragraph III.C.1. below entitled "Serving on Assembly Entities."

p. Serve as primary spokesperson for General Assembly actions, unless the General Assembly has directed otherwise.

### 3. The Office of the General Assembly

a. The Stated Clerk shall employ and supervise the personnel necessary to do the work of the Office of the General Assembly, and provide oversight of the personnel of all bodies related to the Office of the General Assembly who shall be accountable to the Stated Clerk unless other provisions have been made. Staff vacancies within the Office of the General Assembly (other than the appointment of Assistant Stated Clerks) may be filled by the appropriate supervisor (with the concurrence of the Stated Clerk).

The Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, shall delegate to the Stated Clerk, in coordination with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, subject to the Office of the General Assembly Budget; subject to Section 2.13 of the Bylaws of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation; in consultation with the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corporation; and consistent with the scope of any similar delegation to the President/Executive Director for staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency, authority: (i) to create, implement, and enforce personnel policies and procedures for staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly, (ii) to

prepare, maintain, and amend an Employee Handbook for staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly; (iii) to retain and dismiss staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly; and (iv) to promote, review, increase or decrease compensation, and otherwise manage staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall, in exercising such authority, make use of any human resources record keeping and expertise provided by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation. The Board of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation shall coordinate with the Office of the General Assembly to ensure that an adequate number of staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly have or are delegated appropriate signature authority for relevant contracts and bank accounts related to the work of the Office of the General Assembly.

b. All equal employment opportunity and other uniform policies relating to employment and compensation of the personnel of General Assembly agencies shall apply also to personnel of the Office of the General Assembly and all bodies related thereto. All personnel appointments shall be in accordance with the personnel policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation and the requirements of the *Book of Order*, G-3.0103.

c. The Stated Clerk may designate a member of the staff of the Stated Clerk to be the budget officer of the Office of the General Assembly.

The following will be related to the Office of the General Assembly for staffing and budgeting purposes: Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, Permanent Judicial Commission, Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Committee on Representation, Advisory Committee on

the Constitution, Advisory Committee on Litigation, General Assembly Nominating Committee, Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (staffed in partnership with the Presbyterian Mission Agency), Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates, Educator Certification Committee, and commissions and special committees of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule K.I.).

d. All income received by the Office of the General Assembly from sales, bequests, gifts, or from any other source, shall be transmitted to the treasurer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation. These funds shall be separately accounted for by the treasurer. All payments related to the Office of the General Assembly shall be made by the treasurer upon the receipt of regular vouchered requests, or other adequate documentation, bearing the authorization of the Stated Clerk or a person designated by the Stated Clerk.

e. The Presbyterian Historical Society in the Office of the General Assembly shall be under the direction of a person appointed by the Stated Clerk and headquartered in Philadelphia. The mission of the Presbyterian Historical Society and Records and History shall be carried out from Philadelphia.

## C. *Committees of the General Assembly*

### 1. *Serving on Assembly Entities*

a. Each person nominated shall be an active member in good standing of a congregation, or a minister member in good standing of a presbytery, of the PC(USA), with the exception of nominees for election to the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People.

b. A person may serve as a member-at-large of only one General Assembly entity at a time. Ordinarily, no more than one member-at-large from any one presbytery may serve on the same General Assembly entity at the same time. Members serving by virtue of office, elected to membership on a second entity to fulfill the requirements of the Organization for Mission or other General Assembly actions, or serving on a second entity by virtue of their position on an entity are not affected by this provision.

c. Persons nominated for election by the General Assembly shall ordinarily be eligible to serve

a four-year term and be eligible for election to one additional term. Ordinarily, no person may serve more than two consecutive terms, full or partial. Ordinarily, the terms of those elected to service on General Assembly committees or boards begin at the adjournment of the last meeting of the assembly that elects them, unless otherwise specified in the action taken by the assembly or in the entity's Bylaws or Manual of Operations. At the conclusion of their term of service, a person shall not be eligible for nomination to a General Assembly entity until two years have elapsed.

d. Persons who serve as staff on any of the entities of the General Assembly, committees or commissions of the General Assembly, or persons employed by agencies of the PC(USA) may not serve as elected members of committees, commissions, or special committees and commissions unless otherwise designated by the General Assembly.

e. Consideration shall be given to the full requirements of full participation expressed in the *Book of Order*, G-1.0401, and shall ensure that nominations are made by an entity broadly representative of the constituency of the council, and in conformity with the church's commitment to unity in diversity (F- 1.0403) (see G-3.0111).

f. A member of a General Assembly entity who finds it necessary to resign shall send his or her resignation to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, who shall notify the entity and the nominating committee or other body that originated the person's nomination or election. When any member of an entity of the General Assembly (council, commission, unit, division, committee, task force, or any other body) resigns, ceases to be a member in good standing of a congregation or presbytery, or becomes unable to serve because of chronic or permanent physical or mental illness or disability, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall declare the position vacant.

g. When any member of the board of an entity of the General Assembly, a council, commission, unit, division, committee, task force, or any other body authorized by the General Assembly does not attend two successive sessions of that body and such absence is unexcused, the membership of that person shall be automatically vacated, and that person shall be notified by the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall be notified of the vacancy by the chairperson of the entity, and the Stated Clerk shall announce the vacancy and shall notify the General Assembly Nominating Committee or other body that originated the nomination or election of the person who has been absent without excuse, in order that the vacancy may be filled in the manner by which the same position had been filled originally.

h. If a minister of the Word and Sacrament serving as a member of a General Assembly entity representing a synod or presbytery shall transfer his or her presbytery membership and thereby cease to be under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or synod that nominated her or him to serve on the assembly entity, the position shall be declared vacant by the Stated Clerk. If a member of a particular church serving as a member of a General Assembly entity representing a presbytery or synod shall transfer her or his membership to a particular church that is not under jurisdiction of the presbytery or synod that nominated him or her, the position shall be declared vacant by the Stated Clerk.

i. The Stated Clerk shall also notify appropriate entities and mid councils upon being advised of the death of any person holding membership on an assembly entity or who is unable to serve for any other reason. The Stated Clerk shall also declare vacant a position on any such entity held by a minister of the Word and Sacrament who ceases to be a minister of the Word and Sacrament member of a presbytery of this denomination, or a position held by a member of a particular church who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this denomination.

All such vacancies shall be filled by the same process under which the former incumbent was elected. If a vacancy shall occur during the first term of service of an incumbent, then the original source of the nomination shall propose a nominee for election to complete the unexpired term, and such nominee shall

be eligible for renomination and election to an additional full term. If a vacancy shall occur during the second term of service of an incumbent, and the position vacated is one designated for a representative of a presbytery or synod, then the privilege of proposing a nominee for the unexpired term shall pass to the next appropriate presbytery or synod under any rotation system that may be in use, and the nominee so proposed shall be eligible for nomination and reelection to an additional full term. Any vacancy in a position for which the General Assembly Nominating Committee makes nominations may be filled until the next succeeding General Assembly by appointment of the Moderator of the General Assembly upon advice by the nominating committee that the committee has decided to present the name of the appointee to the next session

## 2. Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

a. The General Assembly shall elect a Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, which shall be empowered to carry out the assembly's oversight of the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly; to assure the accountability of the Stated Clerk to the General Assembly during the interim between sessions of the assembly; and to provide linkage with the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The committee shall consist of fourteen persons elected by the General Assembly in two classes of seven members each. These members of the committee shall serve a four-year term, and be eligible for election to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial.

The Moderator (or Co-Moderator) of the General Assembly will serve as an ex officio member with vote during his or her moderatorial service. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall designate a member to serve a two-year term without vote in consultation with the General Assembly Nominating Committee. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Vice Moderator of the General Assembly (if the position is filled), and the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency will serve as corresponding members of the committee without vote.

b. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall elect its own officers and determine its structure, including any subcommittees (see Standing Rule I.4.a. for exception).

c. The committee shall be funded from the per capita apportionment and its financial activity shall be reported through a separate line in the General Assembly per capita budget. The proposed budgets of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall be submitted to the General Assembly.

d. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have the responsibility to do the following:

(1) Assist the General Assembly in assuring the accountability of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and of the Office of the General Assembly by reporting to each session of the General Assembly, including a report or summary of any evaluation of the work of the Stated Clerk and of the Office of the General Assembly that has been completed since the last session of the assembly.

(2) Review annually the work of the Stated Clerk and be responsible for an end-of-term evaluation (see Standing Rule H.2.b.(3)(f)) or exit interview.

(3) Review the budget requests submitted by the Stated Clerk for that portion of the per capita budget administered by the Stated Clerk, and to forward the requests to the Administrative Services Group with the comments of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will also be responsible for approving proposed changes in the staffing design of the Office of the General Assembly presented by the Stated Clerk.

(4) Consult with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly regarding any proposals to



the General Assembly concerning persons being recommended for election to the office of Associate Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, and any proposals concerning the appointment of persons to the office of Assistant Stated Clerk (see Standing Rule H.2.d.).

(5) Meet annually with the Coordinating Committee of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board to discuss items of concern and common interest.

(6) Be available to the Stated Clerk for consultation on all proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and that such consultation shall occur prior to the Stated Clerk proposing any amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule L.1.).

(7) Review the work of special committees and report to each session of the General Assembly a summary of the work being carried out by special committees, including recommendations to transfer the work assigned to a special committee elsewhere or to dismiss the committee (see Standing Rule K.1.e.).

(8) Review the evaluation of each General Assembly session secured by the Stated Clerk.

(9) Outline the programs for future General Assemblies sufficiently in advance to ensure an orderly progression of themes and emphases and to ensure the appointment of significant speakers and other program participants.

(10) Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk's proposed docket for the next session of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule C.4.a.).

(11) Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk's proposed referral of each item of business to an appropriate assembly committee (see Standing Rule C.3.).

(12) Assist the Moderator regarding the appointment of a commissioner to be the moderator of each assembly committee and a commissioner to serve as vice moderator of each assembly committee (see Standing Rule C.1.c.).

(13) Consult with the Moderator regarding the planning of all worship at the General Assembly (see Standing Rule G.a.).

(14) Coordinate the programmatic aspects of each General Assembly session, ensuring that adequate time is provided for the business that must be transacted.

(15) Review requests from entities of the General Assembly, mid councils, other entities related to the PC(USA) in any way, or coalitions in which this denomination or any of its entities participate to schedule meetings, briefings, hearings, or other events of any kind during those hours when the General Assembly or its committees are in session.

(16) Prepare a report, including recommendations on the docket and the referral of assembly business, to be printed and distributed with other materials provided to commissioners.

(17) Review and present to the General Assembly for its action the date and place of meeting six years hence and any changes in dates and places of meetings previously set (see Standing Rule I.1.a.).

(18) Review the recommendation of the Stated Clerk and set the amount of per

diem for sessions of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule I.3.).

(19) On behalf of the General Assembly, bring forward according to G-6.02 any such questions requiring an interpretation of the Constitution that may arise from the work of the General Assembly.

### 3. Advisory Committee on the Constitution

a. The *Book of Order*, G-6.02, provides for the establishment of an Advisory Committee on the Constitution. The committee is composed of nine (9) voting members who shall be stated clerks or former stated clerks of synods or presbyteries, former members of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly, polity professors, or other qualified persons with knowledge of and experience with the Constitution and polity of the church.

b. Except as otherwise specified in the *Book of Order*, the committee shall be funded through the per capita budget of the Office of the General Assembly and receive staff services as provided by the Stated Clerk.

### 4. Advisory Committee on Litigation

a. The Advisory Committee on Litigation shall advise the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly in connection with instituting or participating in legal proceedings (see Functions of the Stated Clerk earlier in this section).

b. The members of the committee shall ordinarily be attorneys, and the members shall be experienced in fields related to issues that may be the subject of legal proceedings in which the church is, or may become, interested. The committee shall be composed of six persons, elected by the General Assembly upon nomination by the General Assembly Nominating Committee. The advisory committee may invite other persons with special competency related to particular cases or situations to participate in the consideration of particular cases or issues. The members shall be evenly divided into three classes, shall serve six-year terms, and shall be eligible for election to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial. Members of this committee are exempted from the prohibition against service on more than one entity of the assembly set forth in Section III.C.1.c. above.

c. The committee shall elect its own moderator and ordinarily shall meet at the call of the Stated Clerk. The committee may carry on its work by correspondence, telephone consultation (including conference telephone calls), or meetings.

d. The committee shall advise the Stated Clerk regarding participation in litigation related to matters of civil and religious liberty, relations between church and state, and any other matters related to the mission and interest of the church. The Advisory Committee on Litigation shall advise the Stated Clerk regarding the establishment and maintenance of a resource file of legal documents as a means of assisting the mid councils and agencies of the church in initiating or participating in litigation in the areas within the concerns of the committee.

e. The committee shall be funded through the per capita budget of the Office of the General Assembly, receive staff services as provided by the Stated Clerk, and designate a representative to the annual session of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule B.3.).

f. The committee shall report to each session of the General Assembly.

### 5. General Assembly Committee on Representation

a. As provided for in the *Book of Order*, G-3.0103, council above the session shall establish committees on representation to fulfill the following function: to advise the council regarding the

implementation of principles of unity and diversity, to advocate for diversity in leadership, and to consult with the council on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403.

b. The committee shall

- (1) Advise the assembly and all entities created by and accountable to the General Assembly with regard to diversity and inclusiveness in its elected and employed leadership.
- (2) Reflect in its membership the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403.
- (3) Assist the Moderator regarding the appointment of a commissioner to be the moderator of each assembly committee and a commissioner to serve as vice moderator of each assembly committee (see Standing Rule C.1.c).
- (4) Evaluate each General Assembly session and share that evaluation with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
- (5) Participate in any review and/or revision of the Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action.
- (6) Make recommendations to the assembly regarding inclusion of leaders for emerging communities and concerns as well as methods of decision-making that increase participation and representation, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403.
- (7) Review the work and impact of committees on representation at councils below the General Assembly in accordance with the functions and commitments assigned in the *Book of Order*, G- 3.0103.
- (8) Assist the church to build an ethos of inclusion and involvement of all persons in the decision-making, sharing power across differences.

#### 6. General Assembly Nominating Committee

There shall be a General Assembly Nominating Committee responsible for nominating persons to serve in positions requiring election by the General Assembly. The Moderator of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the General Assembly Nominating Committee, shall appoint persons to serve on special commissions and special committees. These nominations and/or appointments shall be made in accordance with the *Book of Order*, G-3.0111 and F-1.0403.

#### 7. Board of Directors for the Presbyterian Historical Society

a. The board of directors exists to assure that the mission of the Presbyterian Historical Society—to collect, preserve, and share our history—is achieved in the most effective and efficient manner, in faithfulness to God’s call and in support of the mission of the PC(USA).

b. The board of directors shall be composed of a minimum of eight and a maximum of twenty-four persons. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall elect and the General Assembly shall confirm the board. The members of the board of directors shall serve a four-year term and shall be eligible to serve one additional full or partial term.

c. The budget for the Presbyterian Historical Society shall be submitted as part of the Office of the General Assembly’s regular budget process.

d. The responsibilities of the board of directors shall include:

- (1) Establishing the strategic direction for the Presbyterian Historical Society with the concurrence of the Stated Clerk.
- (2) Providing oversight of and accountability for the Presbyterian Historical Society to the church at large.
- (3) Ensuring the financial stability of the Presbyterian Historical Society.
- (4) Advocating for and promoting the work of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

8. Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

a. The Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations shall function to give a high profile to the vision of the ecumenical and interreligious involvement and work as central to the gospel and key to the life of the church; plan and coordinate, in consultation with the agencies and councils of the church, the involvement of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in ecumenical and interreligious relations and work; connect the ecumenical and interreligious efforts of all council levels of the church; provide a common point for all ecumenical and interreligious efforts connecting us with those outside our church; keep a unity of vision that includes the ecclesiastical, programmatic, ecumenical, and denominational (organizational) parts of our ministries and commitments; articulate the Reformed and Presbyterian identity in the midst of our ecumenical commitments; and promote awareness of the role of the unity of all humankind in the search for the unity of the church; and promote the unity of the church as an exhibition of the kingdom to the world.

b. The Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations shall be composed of twenty members. Twelve shall be members of the PC(USA) nominated for at-large positions by the General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC) and elected by the General Assembly in as nearly equal classes as possible. Four shall be members of four churches invited by the Stated Clerk to appoint one member each from their communion to serve as voting members of the committee. One of the four churches shall be one of our ecumenical church partners. The other three shall be our full communion partners. One member shall be appointed by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. One member shall be appointed by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. The other members of the committee shall be the Stated Clerk or the Associate Stated Clerk for Ecumenical Relations and the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency or designee.

In addition, the following PMA persons may be corresponding members: the President/Executive Director and up to three ministry directors appointed by the President/Executive Director.

c. Elected members of the committee shall be elected to a four-year term, and be eligible for election to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial. Appointed members from ecumenical church partners shall serve for four years and be eligible for appointment to one additional term.

d. The Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations will meet twice annually and shall have the responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Envision, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how the PC(USA) leads and participates in the search for the unity of Christ's Church within this nation and worldwide, and propose appropriate strategies to the General Assembly, its agencies, and other mid councils;
- (2) Provide oversight to the implementation of the responsibilities given to the General Assembly in Book of Order, Form of Government, Chapter XV. Relationships, G-5.02; G-5.03;

G- 5.05;

(3) Act on and process recommendations and proposals addressing ecclesiastical ecumenical work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);

(4) Propose to the General Assembly, for election, PC(USA) members to serve on ecumenical delegations to the National Council of Churches of Christ (USA), the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Caribbean and North American Area Council assemblies;

(5) Represent the PC(USA) in negotiation and coordination of the search for Christian unity with other communions as authorized by the General Assembly;

(6) Select PC(USA) representatives to serve on ecumenical dialogues, ecumenical negotiations on church unions, multilateral and bilateral dialogues, and representatives from the PC(USA) serving as PC(USA) ecumenical representatives to other church assemblies;

(7) Oversee the implementation of “A Formula of Agreement” (Full Communion) with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Churches of Christ, and represent the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in planning and coordinating structures to carry this out;

(8) Give guidance to the nurturing of unity among Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the U.S.A., with one another and with the PC(USA);

(9) Empower all agencies of the General Assembly and mid councils to carry out their mission program with an ecumenical consciousness and in close coordination with one another and to model this consciousness in their own work;

(10) Propose and advocate to appropriate bodies of the PC(USA) that they share in funding ecumenical and conciliar ministry;

(11) Propose to the General Assembly names of churches to be invited to send ecumenical advisory delegates to the General Assembly meeting (see Standing Rule B.2.g.);

(12) Select three religious traditions to be invited to send representatives to the General Assembly as interfaith observers (see Standing Rule B.2.f.);

(13) Give guidance to the Stated Clerk and General Assembly agencies on ecclesial (church-to- church) ecumenical relations, helping to carry out the General Assembly’s G-3.0501c responsibilities;

(14) Give guidance to General Assembly agencies on new opportunities to strengthen the relationships with other faith communities and on strategies for fulfilling the General Assembly mandates on interreligious relationships;

(15) Give guidance to the Mission Agency on ecumenical mission opportunities in partnership with churches in the United States and around the world; and

(16) Give guidance to program entities on ecumenical formation of Presbyterians, both ministers of the Word and Sacrament and lay members.

e. The committee shall be funded through the per capita budget of the Office of the General Assembly. The co-chairs of the Ecumenical Staff Team will have primary staffing responsibilities. The Ecumenical Staff Team shall be a staff resource to the committee.

#### D. *Review of Agencies*

Based on a six-year schedule, the agencies of the General Assembly will be reviewed to evaluate the relationship of their individual ministry with the mission of the whole PC(USA). On nomination of the General Assembly Nominating Committee, the General Assembly will elect three committees in the first year of the rotation, three committees in the second year of the rotation, and one committee in the third year of the rotation, each to review the work of an assigned agency/entity of the General Assembly. Each review committee of the individual agencies will be composed of eight at-large members. The All Agency/ASG review will be composed of 10 at-large members. Special consideration should be given to include commissioners of the last three assemblies and individuals who understand the work of the six agencies. The committee(s) will use the Standards for Review of General Assembly Agencies in the Guidelines and Policies of the General Assembly. The committees shall be granted access to all relevant information regarding their work including, but not limited to, policies, financials, and race and equity audits. The committee will report to the Stated Clerk who will present the report, along with any additional recommendations from the Stated Clerk, to the next General Assembly following its election the results of the review and make recommendations based on its findings.

#### E. *Meetings*

Meetings of commissions, committees, and task forces of the General Assembly may be conducted by means of electronic communications equipment, by gathering at a central location, or both, when authorized by the entity or its leadership. The technology shall enable all persons participating in the meeting who are authorized to do so to have simultaneous aural communication.

#### F. *Proposed Amendments to Section III*

Proposed amendments to this Section III of the Organization for Mission from related bodies or from within the Office of the General Assembly, shall be submitted to the Committee on the General Assembly (COGA). The COGA shall review these proposed changes and forward those it approves as part of its report to the General Assembly.

### IV. *The Presbyterian Mission Agency*

Mission, God's mission, is at the heart of the work to which God calls us. As the *Book of Order* reminds us:

... In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, calling all people to discipleship in Christ (F-1.01).

The Presbyterian Mission Agency is the body of the General Assembly in which are lodged the following responsibilities to implement the mission of the General Assembly domestically and internationally:<sup>2</sup>

- To cultivate and promote the spiritual welfare of the whole church;
- To provide resources to support equal employment opportunity and affirmative action for members of people of color groups, for women, for various age groups, for persons regardless of marital condition (married, single, widowed, or divorced), and for persons with disabilities;
- To develop and propose a Mission Work Plan for the Presbyterian Mission Agency consisting of the mission directions, goals, objectives, and priorities of the Presbyterian Mission Agency; doing so by taking into account the mission work being done by sessions, presbyteries, and synods, and to propose for General Assembly approval a comprehensive Presbyterian Mission Agency Budget and program, including a budget to implement the Mission Work Plan;
- To act in those specific matters assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency by the

General Assembly or the Constitution, acting always according to previously enacted General Assembly policies, reporting fully to each subsequent General Assembly its actions;

- To perform such additional responsibilities and duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly.

In service to the Presbyterian Mission Agency as it fulfills its place in this, the Church's calling, the primary purpose of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board is to lead and coordinate the mission program of the General Assembly. In order to steward this function, the Board and the Agency shall understand this mission based on the Constitution and General Assembly actions, an accounting of denominational resources, and the interpretation of our times and national context.

Standing between the General Assembly and the staff of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Board's work is to advise the General Assembly regarding mission priorities, programs and strategies; to lead the Agency in implementing the directives of the General Assembly; and then to report back to the General Assembly with results and additional advice. It is the Board's responsibility to make the vision for mission become reality, helping to manage the practical problems those visions and dreams might face.

The Board's work will move in a flow from General Assembly to General Assembly. It begins by advising the General Assembly on mission priorities, programs, and strategies. At a General Assembly, the Board receives guidance and direction. The Board then leads staff in the agency to fulfill those General Assembly directives. The Board oversees and aligns assets toward the fulfillment of those directives in the context for mission, discerning potential shifts in God's calling. The Board then responds to General Assembly directives, providing advice on revised priorities at the next General Assembly. This process is inclusive, multi-layered and cyclical, continuing from each General Assembly to the next. The Board should engage a broad array of stakeholders to strengthen the PC(USA)'s ability to respond faithfully to the Holy Spirit and align its life with God's mission. Setting strategy and guiding policy in this way necessitates that the Board employ theological, intercultural, corporate, and legal knowledge all enveloped in prayer.

In performing this role, the Presbyterian Mission Agency shall report directly to the General Assembly. (See also Rule A.2. of the Standing Rules of the General Assembly.)

#### A. *Policy Responsibility*

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board may recommend churchwide policies to the General Assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall establish overall procedures for the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency to implement the policies established by the General Assembly.

#### B. *Planning and Priority Setting*

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board is responsible for carrying out mission planning and priority-setting processes. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board is responsible for instituting ongoing mission review processes.

#### C. *General Assembly Budget*

It is the responsibility of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board to recommend to the General Assembly a comprehensive General Assembly mission budget and program. The Board develops the General Assembly mission budget, which includes a budget to implement the Mission Work Plan as well as a budget for all other costs and expenses of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. In preparing these budgets, the Board has the responsibility for approving its own revenue and expense projections, after consulting with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation in doing so. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly jointly have responsibility for developing a per capita budget and apportionment recommendation to the Assembly.

All income received by the Presbyterian Mission Agency from sales, bequests, gifts, or from any other source, shall be transmitted to the Treasurer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, as is income received by

the Office of the General Assembly pursuant to Section III.B.3.d. of this Organization for Mission. These funds shall be separately accounted for by the Treasurer. All payments related to the Presbyterian Mission Agency shall be made by the Treasurer only upon the receipt of regular vouchered requests, or other adequate documentation, consistent with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Budget and bearing the authorization of the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency or a person designated by the President/Executive Director. All restricted and unrestricted funds (principal or income) that support the programs or functions for which the Presbyterian Mission Agency is responsible, are allocated by the Presbyterian Mission Agency pursuant to budget and other procedures established by the General Assembly including those arrangements with respect to funds held by the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Foundation.

*D. Personnel Responsibilities*

Regarding the staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, shall, subject to Section 2.13 of the Bylaws of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, delegate to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board responsibility for the following:



1. The President/Executive Director shall employ and supervise the personnel necessary to do the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and provide oversight of the personnel of all bodies related to the Presbyterian Mission Agency who shall be accountable to the President/Executive Director unless other provisions have been made. Staff vacancies within the Presbyterian Mission Agency may be filled by the appropriate supervisor.

2. All equal employment opportunity and other uniform policies relating to employment and compensation of the personnel of General Assembly agencies shall apply also to personnel of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and all bodies related thereto. All personnel appointments shall be in accordance with the personnel policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation and the requirements of the *Book of Order*, G-3.0103.

a. Approval of personnel procedures.

b. Annual performance reviews of the President/Executive Director as specified in the Presbyterian Mission Agency Manual of Operations, and in concurrence with the Presbyterian Mission Agency personnel policies.

c. Approval and monitoring of the “Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action.”

d. Approval of compensation guidelines recommended by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, within which salaries may be administered by the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Members of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board are not eligible for election or selection as staff during the period of their term of service.

#### E. *Reporting*

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board is responsible for submitting a report to the General Assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency will report regularly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, keeping the Board fully informed about its work. Matters that involve an exception or a proposed change in Presbyterian Mission Agency procedures, a major shift in program emphasis, or a major budget adjustment, require action by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. Issues of social witness policy, advocacy for people of color and women’s concerns, and those related to Presbyterian theological institutions are reported to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and General Assembly. To support this reporting requirement, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board has the right to full access to all information related to the Presbyterian Mission Agency maintained for it by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, including the accounting and financial records of the Presbyterian Mission Agency; information about donors, funds, and fund restrictions for funds that have been designated to support the programs or functions for which the Presbyterian Mission Agency is responsible; external audit reports with respect to such funds and the Presbyterian Mission Agency itself; and, to the same extent as any other agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), access to the corporate minutes of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.

#### F. *Elected Leadership*

##### 1. Organization of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board

The work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency is a direct expression of the planning and mission understanding of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, which is accountable to the General Assembly in this regard. Direction and oversight of the Presbyterian Mission Agency is accomplished by Presbyterian Mission Agency Board members as specified in its Manual of Operations.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board ensures advocacy functions for women and people of color, and advisory functions for social witness policy by providing direct access to the Presbyterian Mission Agency

Board and General Assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board also provides for the development of social witness policy.

The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve as ex-officio on the of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII of the Organization for Mission) including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate’s name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board ensures the continuation of the Committee on Theological Education (COTE) as a committee that includes representatives of each theological institution identified as in institutional or covenant relationships with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The purpose of the Committee on Theological Education is to attend to the relationship between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [PC(USA)] and those theological institutions that are formally related to the PC(USA) either by historic relationship and governance commitments (‘Institutional’ relationships), or by covenant commitments and shared concern for the training of ministry leaders and members of this denomination (‘Covenant’ relationships). COTE has direct access to the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.

## 2. Membership of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board

The membership, terms of office, and officers of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall be provided for in the Manual of Operations of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and approved by the General Assembly.

## G. Staff Leadership

### 1. President/Executive Director

**Election and Review**—The President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency is elected by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The President/Executive Director is accountable to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. Upon election, the President/Executive Director serves with the full authority of the office until confirmed by the next General Assembly following election. Should the General Assembly refuse to confirm any President/Executive Director, the position becomes vacant immediately. Periodic in-depth reviews of the President/Executive Director are the responsibility of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. The President/Executive Director is elected for a term of four years and may be reelected for additional terms. Initial four-year terms start on the date that work commences following election. Subsequent four-year terms commence on the day following expiration of the prior term. The President/Executive Director may be dismissed by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board in conformity with the relevant Employee Handbook and then-current personnel policies and procedures.

The responsibilities of the President/Executive Director include:

- a. Enabling the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board to fulfill its responsibilities to the General Assembly;
- b. Nurturing relationships between the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the other General Assembly agencies, mid councils, and people of color caucuses (see Covenant of Understanding);

- c. Directing the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency;
- d. Providing leadership to, and administrative oversight of, the staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency;
- e. Leading the personnel decision-making processes of the Presbyterian Mission Agency delegated by the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, including but not limited to implementing policies and procedures related to inclusiveness, affirmative action, and equal employment opportunity;
- f. Coordinating, with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the budget planning process of the Presbyterian Mission Agency;
- g. Serving a major role in all Presbyterian Mission Agency efforts, including funds development; and
- h. Serving as primary spokesperson for Presbyterian Mission Agency program and policies.
- i. When resolution of a particular legal dispute has been delegated by the Board of Directors of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, the President/Executive Director may, after consulting with appropriate persons or bodies, retain legal counsel and institute or participate in legal proceedings in civil and criminal courts.

## 2. Staff

All staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency are accountable to the President/Executive Director. Mission personnel have shared accountability both to the overseas partner church to which they are assigned and to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, shall delegate to the President/Executive Director, subject to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Budget; subject to Section 2.13 of the Bylaws of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation; in consultation with the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation; and consistent with the scope of any similar delegation to the Stated Clerk for staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly, authority:

- a. To implement and enforce personnel policies and procedures for staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency;
- b. To maintain and recommend amendments to an employee handbook for staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency;
- c. To retain and dismiss staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency; and
- d. To promote, demote, review, increase or decrease compensation, and otherwise manage staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The President/Executive Director shall, in exercising such authority, make use of any human resources recordkeeping and expertise provided by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.

The Board of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corporation shall coordinate with the Presbyterian Mission Agency to ensure that an adequate number of staff assigned to the Presbyterian Mission Agency have or are delegated appropriate signature authority for relevant contracts and bank accounts related to the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

### 3. Board Meetings

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board holds regular meetings with the appropriate and invited Presbyterian Mission Agency staff in order to build collaboration, collegiality, coordination, and trust, while also discussing finances, investment results, and any pertinent legal matters.

## V. Presbyterian Mission Agency Relationships

The Presbyterian Mission Agency works in partnership with synods, presbyteries, and sessions to enable the various councils to join together in churchwide expression of the life and mission of the PC(USA). This means that, as is the case with all agencies of the church, that the Presbyterian Mission Agency, its officers, directors, board members, and staff, must consider in all matters the church as a whole ahead of any individual benefit or detriment to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will cooperate in the preparation and presentation of the per capita budget and apportionment and other opportunities for joint endeavors.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency is responsible for carrying out the mission program for the General Assembly. The ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency are linked together and with the church on behalf of that part of the mission entrusted by God to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The principal legal corporation that provides direct support to the Presbyterian Mission Agency is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, which receives, holds, and transfers property, and facilitates the management of the church's corporate affairs. Its role with respect to the Presbyterian Mission Agency is to work with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Mission Agency in support of its mission as directed by the General Assembly.

Both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation and the Presbyterian Mission Agency are subordinate to the General Assembly. Thus, the Presbyterian Mission Agency is not subordinate to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, with regard to the mission directives of the General Assembly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, is not subordinate to the Presbyterian Mission Agency with respect to the matters for which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, is authorized by its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. As both organizations and their leaders recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that none of them has any authority but in Him, they are charged to work together to realize the mission and great ends of his church in this and all respects. Consistent with this, the Board of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, delegates specific authority, as set forth in its Bylaws, this Organization for Mission, and resolutions of its Board of Directors, to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board or the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency with respect to personnel, contracting, finance, and legal issues so that the Presbyterian Mission Agency may better accomplish the mission goals of the General Assembly. As the disbursing agent under the 1986 Deliverance of the General Assembly that authorized the Plan of Division for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, it also disburses for the Presbyterian Mission Agency the amounts authorized by the General Assembly in the Presbyterian Mission Agency Budget and the Per Capita Budget for mission. It therefore defers to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board's mission decisions to the fullest extent permitted by those budgets, fund restrictions, and applicable law.

Other relationships include the following committees:

#### A. *Advocacy and Advisory Committees*

The Executive Director has the responsibility for the advocacy and advisory committees. All three groups have direct access to the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.

1. The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) shall assist the PC(USA) to give full expression

of the rich diversity of its membership as specified in the *Book of Order*, F-1.0403. The committee shall be a prophetic voice for involving people of color in the formation of public policy, particularly where race is a factor that negatively impacts the quality of life of people of color. The committee will also monitor the implementation of policies adopted by the church that impact the quality of life of people of color in the church and in the world.

2. The Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice shall assist the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to give full expression of the rich diversity of its membership as specified in the *Book of Order*,

F-1.0403. The committee shall monitor and evaluate policies, procedures, programs, and resources regarding the way in which they impact the status and position of women in the church and the world; and shall advocate for full inclusiveness and equity in all areas of the life and work of the church in society as a whole.

3. The LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee shall assist the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to give full expression of the rich diversity of its membership as specified in the *Book of Order*, F-1.0403. The committee shall monitor and evaluate policies, procedures, programs, and resources regarding the way in which they impact the status and position of LGBTQIA+ persons in the church and the world; and shall advocate for full inclusiveness and equity in all areas of the life and work of the church in society as a whole.

4. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in consultation with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, is responsible for the process of developing and recommending social witness policy to the General Assembly. The term “social witness policy” refers to the positions adopted by the General Assembly to express its stance on and guide response to issues in the public order, including their relation to the church’s own life and mission. These positions may take the form of policy statements, resolutions, study papers, or social involvement reports, as defined in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, p. 65, Forming Social Policy, 2.a.

#### B. *Committee on Theological Education*

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (PMAB) ensures the continuation of the Committee on Theological Education (COTE) as a committee that includes representatives of each theological institution identified as in institutional or covenant relationships with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as set forth below. COTE has direct access to the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. Its work is coordinated through the Theology, Formation, and Evangelism ministry area, with staff accountability to the director of the Theology, Formation, and Evangelism ministry area. Access shall be in the form of resolutions, a biennial narrative report, comments on issues before the assembly, and other appropriate correspondence. The biennial narrative report shall be forwarded to the PMAB for possible comment.

The purpose of the Committee on Theological Education is to attend to the relationship between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [PC(USA)] and those theological institutions that are formally related to the PC(USA) either by historic relationship and governance commitments (“Institutional” relationships), or by covenant commitments and shared concern for the training of ministry leaders and members of this denomination (“Covenant” relationships).

“Institutional” relationships require that the theological institution meet the following criteria: (1) The institution must have a historic relationship to the PC(USA), seen in its having been founded with the purpose of training pastoral leaders for the PC(USA) and its predecessor denominations, and in a history of significant financial support from Presbyterian denominations that have merged into the PC(USA); (2) The institution must have a continuing relationship to the PC(USA), which is articulated in its governing documents (as used herein, governing documents shall mean charter, articles of incorporation, or constitution required by its state of incorporation); (3) The institution must agree to abide by the reporting and confirmation policies prescribed by COTE for those in institutional relationship with the PC(USA).

These include the following provisions approved by the General Assembly: (a) The institution shall report to the General Assembly through the Committee on Theological Education; (b) Presidents/executive officers and trustees/directors elected under the various charter provisions shall be presented to the General Assembly for confirmation [Note: This confirmation vote, while recognizing the autonomy of each institution’s governing board, allows the denomination to note and affirm the leadership of its theological institutions]; and (c) Material changes in governing documents shall be reported to the General Assembly; (4) Where degrees are offered, the degree programs offered by the institution shall be accredited through the accreditation procedures of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

Providers of theological education who have significant and long-lasting relationship to the PC(USA) may enter into a formal covenant relationship with the PC(USA). “Covenant” relationships require that the theological institution meet the following criteria, and will be elaborated in the covenant document, which may include additional commitments between the parties: (1) Its mission in relation to the Presbyterian theological education enterprise is evident and substantive. It shall provide clear evidence that it intends to partner in mission with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); (2) It shall report the names of its president/executive officer and board to the General Assembly as part of COTE’s biennial report to General Assembly; (3) It demonstrably supports the teaching of Presbyterian and Reformed ecclesiastical and theological material.

The number of COTE institutional members shall be at least one more than the number of covenant members with vote.

The Standing Rules of the General Assembly provide for the presidents/executive officers (or their designee) of the theological institutions in institutional or covenant relationship with the PC(USA) to be corresponding members of the General Assembly.

## VI. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation is a corporate entity of the General Assembly. It holds funds and title to property in accordance with the 1986 Deliverance of the General Assembly, its Articles of Incorporation, and its Bylaws. Among other things, it provides accounting, reporting, and financial services for the General Assembly and its entities, and employs the staff assigned to the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. It is funded, subject to overall budget approval by the General Assembly, from unrestricted funds held by it; from restricted funds designated to it; from the portion of the various budgets of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly needed for employees, facilities, and services provided by it; from management fees; and from other fees with respect to its activities and services. The Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly shall maintain ongoing service agreements with the Administrative Services Group that will govern the provision of services.

With the exception of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly, no other agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), unless otherwise directed by the General Assembly, and with exception of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly, is obligated to purchase or use any facilities or services provided by or through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, unless otherwise directed by the General Assembly. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, shall work together and with the other entities of the PC(USA) to help determine what facilities and services the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, may best offer or cease to offer to the church and its entities in the future. If the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation is not able to provide services that are desired/required by entities requiring service, they may procure services from another vendor.

The officers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, their terms, and their election are defined in its Bylaws. The Treasurer of the corporation shall commission the preparation of an audit report or reports by an independent public accountant of the financial position and operations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and, to the extent not otherwise separately commissioned and prepared, the financial position and operations of the General Assembly and its other entities.

## VII. Other General Assembly Corporations

### A. Board of Pensions

The Board of Pensions is the legally responsible corporate body established under a civil charter for the purpose of administering the pension and benefits program of the PC(USA). It is required by law to administer these programs for the sole and exclusive benefit of its participants and members.

The relationship between the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Mission Agency is set forth in an official Memorandum of Understanding to provide the necessary and desirable cooperation between these bodies, while respecting and reflecting the special needs of the Board of Pensions as it carries out its ministry to the PC(USA) within an ecclesiastical structure.

The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve as ex-officio on the of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII of the Organization for Mission) including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate's name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

In view of the close relationship between compensation, benefits, pensions, and financial assistance, there is need for a close continuing relationship between the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Board of Pensions. Consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Board of Pensions, the chairperson of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (or designee) serves as a corresponding member of the Board of Pensions. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board proposes to the General Assembly

Nominating Committee one of its members to be elected to the Board of Pensions. This person also represents the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board in regard to churchwide personnel and compensation policies. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the President of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation has privilege of the floor at the meetings of the Board of Pensions without vote. At the staff level, the Board of Pensions' president has the privilege of the floor at the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meetings but without vote. The Board of Pensions reports directly and is accountable to the General Assembly.

### B. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation (the Foundation) is a corporate entity that acts as a "fiduciary" for the General Assembly, providing investment services, holding title on behalf of the church to the investment assets of the church, providing a deferred giving and wills emphasis program, and otherwise assuring that there is strict adherence to the wishes and restrictions of donors and others who have entrusted funds to its care. The Foundation holds title to property in accordance with the 1986 Deliverance. In addition to its work on behalf of the General Assembly, the Foundation offers similar services to churches and church organizations as well as to individuals who wish to use such programs as an expression of their Christian faith and stewardship. The board of the Foundation is elected by the General Assembly through the normal nominating processes. It reports to the General Assembly with a definitive copy to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, which may comment on the report. The Foundation provides information about its work to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Committee on the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation on a regular basis. The total budget of the Foundation is made available for review by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Committee on the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation. The Foundation reports directly and is accountable to the General Assembly.

In view of the close relationship between stewardship, mission funding, and deferred giving, there is need for a close continuing relationship between the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Foundation. A future appendix will define such a relationship. The joint report of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Foundation, as reported to the 208th General Assembly (1996), provides agreements and understandings regarding restricted

funds. The chairperson of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (or designee) sits with the trustees of the Foundation with voice and without vote, for purposes of coordination. The President of the Foundation serves on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board as a corresponding member.

The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve as ex-officio on the of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII. of the Organization for Mission) including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate's name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

At the staff level, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency are trustees of the Foundation.<sup>3</sup> The Foundation's president has the privilege of the floor at Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meetings, but without vote. In addition, the Foundation's president is included as part of the Expanded Staff Leadership Team through the Office of the Executive Director. The President of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation has privilege of the floor at the meetings of the Board of Pensions without vote.

### C. *Presbyterian Publishing Corporation*

The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation is a legally independent, self-supporting corporation dedicated to the mission of the PC(USA). It is responsible for publishing books and educational materials for the PC(USA) and for a broad ecumenical audience around the world. The publishing program strives to extend the mission of the church to the widest possible audience, representing a wide range of religious, social, and cultural points of view.

In view of the dynamic interrelationship between the printed word and the mission of our church, there is need for a close continuing relationship between the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. The corporation is governed by its board of directors, which includes the corporation's President and Publisher, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, and the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency as ex-officio members without vote.<sup>4</sup> The President of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation has privilege of the floor at the meetings of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation without vote. The remaining directors are nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly for four-year terms and shall be eligible for reelection to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial. The board of directors elects officers of the corporation in accordance with its corporate bylaws.

The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve as ex-officio on the of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII of the Organization for Mission) including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate's name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

The chairperson of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation is a corresponding member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board with voice and without vote. At the staff level, the president and publisher of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation has the privilege of the floor at the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meetings but without vote. The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation reports directly and is accountable to the General Assembly.

### D. *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.*

The PC(USA) is a great commission community. It tells and retells the story of salvation in Jesus Christ to



successive generations. It does so in buildings that are shaped to meet the needs of worshipping, witnessing, serving congregations. Generating capital to build and rebuild church buildings is the work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc., (the Program) is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Program offers unsecured, interest-bearing investments in various states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. In general, any individual and any organization related to the PC(USA) may invest. The funds generated by investments become mortgage loans that are used by congregations, mid councils, and related entities for building church buildings and rebuilding existing facilities.

Close relationships of cooperation exist among the Program, Foundation, and Presbyterian Mission Agency. Both the Foundation and Presbyterian Mission Agency have significant investments commitments with the Program.

The Board of Directors consist of fifteen members. All members are elected by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board elects two members from among its membership. The General Assembly Nominating Committee nominates six at-large members, one member from among the synods, and one member from among the presbyteries. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation nominates two members and the Corporation's Personnel/Nominating Committee nominates three at-large members.<sup>5</sup> The President of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation has privilege of the floor at the meetings of the Program without vote. The Program reports to the General Assembly through the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board<sup>6</sup> and is accountable to the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.<sup>7</sup>

The Stated Clerk shall have membership on or relationship to appropriate committees and commissions, and agencies of the General Assembly as it shall determine from time to time. The Stated Clerk shall serve as ex-officio on the of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, and other agencies (identified in Chapter VII of the Organization for Mission), including voice but not vote at all meetings while in either open or closed session. Furthermore, the Stated Clerk shall be consulted about any candidate before the candidate's name is brought to a board for election as the agency or entity executive (chief officer) or interim agency or entity executive (other than for a replacement for the Stated Clerk position).

The President and Chief Executive Officer have privilege of the floor without vote at Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meetings. In addition, the President participates in the Synod Executives Forum.

### VIII. Corporations Related to the General Assembly

#### A. *Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc.*

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. (PW), is organized and operated to be an inclusive, caring community of women, forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, that strengthens the PC(USA) (the Church) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom by nurturing faith through prayer and Bible study, supporting the mission of the Church worldwide, and working for justice and peace. Members of Presbyterian Women are first and foremost members of the Church. The organization is structured at the congregation, presbytery, synod, and national levels in order to support the Church at each level.

PW is an integrated auxiliary of the PC(USA). PW is not subordinate to the General Assembly. PW's Certificate of Incorporation includes a Statement of Faith which provides that PW holds to the doctrines and principles of the Reformed tradition as expressed in the Church's Constitution. PW is related to the Presbyterian Mission Agency through an agreement that is reviewed and approved by the General Assembly every four years.

### IX. Amendments

Proposed amendments to the Organization for Mission from General Assembly corporations or entities shall be submitted to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall review these proposed changes and forward those it approves as part of its report to the General Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture references in this document are New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>2</sup>These responsibilities were part of the *Book of Order* until 2011, when the new Form of Government was approved and they were moved to the Organization for Mission.

<sup>3</sup>1986 Deliverance, Section 3.(b)(2)

<sup>4</sup>2006 Deliverance, Section 2.(e)

<sup>5</sup>1995 Deliverance, Section 2.(b)

<sup>6</sup>1995 Deliverance, Section 2.(g)

<sup>7</sup>1995 Deliverance, Section 2.(a)

APPENDIX A  
**Financial Issues**

Approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008)

I. Glossary of Terms Related to Financial Issues

II. Values Statement

III. Churchwide Mission Support

- A. Forms of Giving in Churchwide Mission Support
- B. Roles and Responsibilities of Mid Councils
- C. Special Offerings and Other Specific Appeals
- D. Validation of Mission
- E. Accounting Definitions and Standards: Designated, Restricted, and Unrestricted
- F. Collection, Reporting, and Audits

IV. General Assembly Budget Development

- A. Budget Cycle
- B. Budget Scope
- C. The General Assembly Per Capita Budget
- D. Basic Budget Design
- E. The Administrative Services Group Budget
- F. The General Assembly
- G. Roles and Responsibilities in Developing Budgets

V. Administrative Services

## I. Glossary of Terms Related to Financial Issues

**adopted budget:** The formally approved budget of a session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly.

**consultations:** Ordinarily, face-to-face experiences between duly selected representatives of mid councils to exchange information, perspectives, opinions, and advice regarding mission planning, funding, and personnel staffing for the health of the whole church.

**contributor:** An individual, agency, or council that transfers control of a gift to another tax-exempt agency or council; see *donor*.

**designations:** Budget categories as described or determined by a council. Only mid councils may make designations; see *restricted giving*.

**division of committed dollars:** Agreements among mid councils giving concrete expression to the sharing of mission support commitments for the church's mission.

**donor:** An individual or other taxable entity (e.g., an estate or trust) making a gift for charitable purposes eligible for favorable tax treatment. When mid councils are nontaxable entities, they cannot be donors. See *contributor*.

**emergency appeals:** Properly authorized and approved calls for an immediate response to emergency needs through an Emergency Relief Alert.

**equalization:** The use of unrestricted funds to fulfill the commitments and/or agreements that have been made by a council.

**funding for general mission:** Gifts and contributions received with no restrictions for the overall support of the adopted budgets of mid councils.

**funding for specific mission:** A form of restricted giving for designated budget categories or projects within adopted budgets.

**ministry areas:** The primary areas of work within the Presbyterian Mission Agency staff structure.

**mission:** For the purposes of Appendix A, *mission* is understood in its broadest sense, as in proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

**mission support commitment:** A specific dollar figure or a percentage of total dollars adopted by a council to be given in a specified year to support the mission and ministry of other councils.

**mission support consultation:** A face-to-face event among duly selected representatives of mid councils to establish shared ownership of the church's total mission, advocate recommendations of mission support goals, and agree upon means for the division of committed mission dollars.

**mission support goals:** Specific dollar figures for mission support projected as goals for some subsequent year or years.

**other specific appeals:** Requests for support of specific validated mission projects or programs, which may not be included in adopted budgets.

**per capita apportionment:** A means for all members to share in the costs of coordinating and evaluating mission, and performing the ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**projects beyond the budget:** Approved projects not included in the adopted budgets.

**restricted giving:** Gifts that are restricted by a contributor or donor for use in support of a validated project, budget category, or appeal. The processing of restricted gifts will comply with the standards established by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB).

special offerings: Planned, organized, and approved supplemental offerings for specified causes that may or may not be included in approved budgets.

taxable entity: For the purposes of Appendix A, individuals, partnerships, estates and trusts, or corporations who may be taxpayers under the federal income tax law.

unrestricted giving: Unrestricted gifts received for the overall support of the adopted budget of a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly.

validated mission: Any project or program within the bounds of and approved by formal action of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly, whether or not it is funded from the adopted budget of the council.

## II. Values Statement

The funding of the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) rests on the following principles:

**Faithfulness to Jesus Christ:** Because God loves the world and Christ gave his life, we are called, as individuals and groups, to respond with our lives and resources.

**Flexibility:** Because we believe that the Holy Spirit informs the missional instincts of all God's people honoring the promises of the past and preparing the promise of the future, we will accommodate regional differences, historical practices, and changing realities.

**Respect:** Because we seek to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, who looked not to his own interests but to the interest of others (Phil. 2:4-5), we will acknowledge the passion of donors through accountable systems and transparently open, informed, and inclusive decision making, acknowledging the many views of mission designed and enacted in every part of the church. We recognize the tension that exists between respecting the passions of donors and encouraging support of our connectional nature, but confess that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Ps. 24:1-2).

**Communication:** Because we are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), we will commit ourselves to frequent interaction with mid councils and individuals, for the purpose of mutual clarification and unity of experience and hope across diverse boundaries.

Therefore, a design for funding Christ's work throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be consistent with the following core values:

1. A design for funding Christ's work will recognize stewardship as integral to Christian discipleship:
  - promoting the biblical concept of tithing,
  - encouraging stewardship education that is understood as the faithful response of discipleship to God's gifts in all of life,
  - requiring the development of stewardship education materials that are creative, attractive, clear, and affordable.
2. A design for funding Christ's work will appeal to the passions and values of members, pastors, mid councils, and benefactors:
  - communicating to the head and heart of the people of God
  - engaging the donor in the mission of the church
  - recognizing that everyone is a beneficiary of God's grace, and everyone benefits from joyful stewardship.
3. A design for funding Christ's work will be transparent and accountable:
  - honoring donor intent,
  - offering easily understood opportunities for giving,
  - meeting clear standards of accountability for pastors, sessions, and potential donors.

4. A design for funding Christ's work will utilize our connectionalism, recognize our interdependence, and demonstrate our partnership in mission:
  - emphasizing the value of interpersonal relationships,
  - encouraging the more inclusive council to facilitate the mission of its constituent members,
  - encouraging the less inclusive council to participate in the mission of the church beyond its bounds,
  - encouraging mutual investment of time and resources among mid councils and constituent members recognizing that Presbyterians are the primary base of support for Presbyterian missions, and affirming the importance and priority of funding Presbyterian validated mission.
  
5. A design for funding Christ's work will emphasize information sharing between mid councils leading to a dynamic mission and vision:
  - placing mid councils in structural and interactive relationships,
  - valuing the wisdom of other mid councils,
  - recognizing the need for consultation prior to engaging in ministries beyond one's bounds.
  
6. A design for funding Christ's work will encourage two-way communications:
  - welcoming and encouraging a flow of information and feedback,
  - recognizing that information sharing benefits the whole church,
  - encouraging face-to-face communication when possible.
  
7. A design for funding Christ's work will honor historic relationships:
  - recognizing that previous funding systems had value and may continue to inform the development of new funding systems,
  - requiring careful investigation of current funding partnerships before altering or eliminating those partnerships.
  
8. A design for funding Christ's work will affirm the unity of purpose of General Assembly agencies and entities:
  - Sharing resources to foster the mission, ecclesiastical, and administrative ministries of the whole church,
  - Respecting the authority of the General Assembly to hold its entities accountable (G-3.0106),
  - Promoting transparency by providing members of the church clear information about the structures and systems and how they are funded, and
  - Orienting the whole church to the call to "a new openness to the sovereign activity of God in the Church and in the world, to a more radical obedience to Christ, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work" (F-1.0404).

### III. Churchwide Mission Support

#### A. Forms of Giving in Churchwide Mission Support

Churchwide Mission Support is the funding system used by all mid councils to plan and implement the mission of the whole church, with three overall forms of giving.

##### 1. Basic Mission Support

- a. Funding for General Mission: gifts, with no restrictions, for the overall support of the adopted budgets of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly.
- b. Funding for Specific Mission: gifts, with restrictions, for use within the adopted budgets of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly.

2. Churchwide Special Offerings: gifts, with restrictions, for General Assembly planned, organized, and approved offerings for specified purposes that may be included in approved budgets.

3. Other Specific Appeals: gifts, with restrictions, for specific use in support of validated mission that ordinarily are not included in the budget of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly. Such appeals may be ongoing, time-limited, or responsive to emergency needs.

There are additional forms of giving that are distinct from Churchwide Mission Support. These include giving through Presbyterian Women, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, Validated Mission Support Groups, and other organizations. Some of these gifts may be applied to adopted budgets. These gifts are and may be increasingly important to support the work of the church.

## B. Roles and Responsibilities of Councils

To encourage openness and accountability in all financial matters, the following roles and responsibilities will be observed.

### 1. Roles Held in Common by All Councils

- a. Select representatives who will participate in inter-council consultations on mission support goals and the division of Mission Support Commitments.
- b. Share mission priorities, budget projections, funding needs, and mission support goals.
- c. Provide information for, support of, and participation in an annual season of interpretation
- d. Consider other councils' mission priorities and funding needs.
- e. Adopt mission support commitments and honor these commitments in budgets for which the council is directly responsible.
- f. When changes in mission support commitment are contemplated, promptly communicate with other affected councils.
- g. Thank leaders and donors.
- h. Hold receiving sites accountable to accepted churchwide standards.
- i. Provide full financial reports annually to other councils and congregations on the receipt and expenditure of funds and of a council's assets, and liabilities.
- j. Collect and transmit mission support from donors, congregations, and organizations within 60 calendar days from the date of receipt.
- k. Provide General Assembly, and as appropriate, synods and constituent presbyteries, a regular accounting of church-by-church giving and any relevant data requested by a council, while maintaining the right to privacy by individual donors.

### 2. Role of the General Assembly

- a. Assist the development of mission support goals at every council level.
- b. Adopt a mission budget and a per
- c. Annually provide full financial reports and program assessments to sessions, presbyteries, and synods.
- d. Disseminate industry standards in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and in compliance with applicable accounting pronouncements and

regulations specific to the not-for-profit industry as best practices for council treasurers and financial officers.

- e. Approve the purposes and beneficiaries of the four churchwide special offerings, upon recommendation of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.

## C. Special Offerings and Other Specific Appeals

### 1. Churchwide Special Offerings

#### a. Criteria for Receiving Special Offerings Funds

The Special Offerings provide important bonds for the connectional church, and are a critical resource for the long-term mission of the whole church. The following criteria outline ways of discerning whether a particular ministry is eligible for funding by one of these special offerings.

(1) Special Offerings ministries will provide valuable mission interpretation opportunities within the overall funds development and communications strategy of the whole church.

(2) Special Offerings ministries will enable the church to meet historical and ongoing needs in relationship to the total mission priorities of the church, always proclaiming the name of Jesus.

(3) Special Offerings ministries will have potential for churchwide donor support.

(4) Special Offerings ministries will specify the needs to be met, provide plans for ministry implementation, set measurable goals, and demonstrate impact, effectiveness, and accountability to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

#### b. Operating Guidelines for Special Offerings

The following principles and practices will guide the churchwide special offerings of the PC(USA):

##### (1) Review

a) On an annual basis, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Executive Director, or designee, will review Special Offerings ministries' impact, effectiveness, and accountability against stated goals. The review will also include the appropriateness of Special Offerings ministries' reserves. Funds development expense and staffing will also be reviewed annually with respect to goals, effectiveness, and strategies. All review findings will be forwarded to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

b) On a four-year cycle, the Presbyterian Mission Agency will provide a task force for the review and evaluation of the Special Offerings and the recipient ministries and the consideration of new Special Offerings purposes in light of established criteria, for recommendation to the General Assembly.

(2) When allocating funds, the Presbyterian Mission Agency will align Special Offerings ministries with its strategic vision and mission.

(3) Each Presbyterian Mission Agency Special Offerings ministry will maintain financial reserves of not more than two years of that ministry's annual budget. Understanding the particularity

of Presbyterian disaster response ministries, with commitment to long-term recovery, it is understood



that disaster response funds are exempt from this requirement, provided that the Presbyterian Mission Agency has approved and annually reviews a plan for disbursement.

(4) Churchwide Special Offerings promotions will occur in the Presbyterian Mission Agency Funds Development ministry area rather than within programmatic entities.

(5) Costs of promoting and receiving each churchwide Special Offerings will be paid from receipts of the offering. After deducting each offering's costs from total receipts, restricted and unrestricted, of that offering, all receipts will then be considered permanently restricted to the purpose of the Offering. Each Offering's costs will be determined by the Presbyterian Mission Agency through its regular budget process.

(6) Start-up costs for new or significantly revised Special Offerings will be expensed as incurred.

(7) Promotion materials for a Special Offerings will relate to the liturgical season in which the Offering is received.

(8) Any change in the pattern of distribution of a churchwide Special Offerings will allow for an eighteen-month time period before becoming effective to allow adequate time for development and distribution of interpretive and promotional materials.

(9) There will be no more than four churchwide Special Offerings in any given calendar year. The General Assembly will identify times for the promotion and receipt of offerings.

(10) The ministries receiving churchwide Special Offerings funds will prepare an annual report concerning the receipt and distribution of those Special Offerings funds for review by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. This report will be made available to churches and other councils.

(11) All ministries receiving funds from churchwide Special Offerings will work with Communications staff and Funds Development staff to identify and develop networks of interpreters throughout the church.

(12) All churchwide Special Offerings will develop interpretive materials that are well-grounded in Reformed theology and appropriate to the offering's recommended liturgical season.

(13) To advance mission and acknowledge generosity, congregations are asked to submit Special Offerings receipts directly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency and presbytery as designated by each offering. The Presbyterian Mission Agency will record and notify presbyteries of congregational donations and thank congregations in a timely manner.

## 2. Other Specific Appeals

a. Other specific appeals include the Theological Education Fund, special campaigns or gifts (national, regional, or local), Emergency Relief Alerts (national, regional, or local), and additional giving opportunities.

(1) The Theological Education Fund is a unique type of an annual specific appeal to sessions through the 1% Plan as approved by the 198th General Assembly (1986).

(2) Special time-limited campaigns approved by one or more councils are essential for meeting capital needs and achieving other mission purposes. These require council approval and may include needs across council lines with advance concurrence of other appropriate councils. In the case of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board may

approve time-limited campaigns between sessions of the General Assembly.

(3) Emergency Relief Alerts enable persons to respond compassionately to emergency needs, such as natural disasters of large proportion or other crises. The Presbyterian Mission Agency will authorize a process for issuing national Emergency Relief Alerts, providing timely information indicating how church funds are being used to meet the emergency and how individuals and sessions may contribute additional funds to meet such needs. There may be occasions when sessions, presbyteries, or synods will issue Emergency Relief Alerts in response to more localized emergencies.

(4) Additional giving opportunities provide a way for contributors or donors to support mission not funded by adopted budgets.

a) A validation process that maintains the integrity of the church's mission will be used to identify such opportunities. Whenever possible, such opportunities will be promoted jointly by mid councils beyond the session through a program of additional giving opportunities.

b) Contributors or donors desiring to support validated mission beyond established budgets may do so through additional giving opportunities up to whatever limits have been set by a more inclusive council. Concurrence in the purpose of the gift by the receiving council or agency is required.

c) An effective additional giving program depends on significant sharing of information about adopted budgets and additional giving opportunities.

b. All campaigns for other specific appeals shall identify in advance the anticipated administrative costs that may be charged to receipts. A council that designates an other specific appeal may apply a charge, not to exceed an agreed upon percentage, against other specific appeals receipts to cover actual costs of promoting, receiving, and disbursing funds. Contributors and donors will be informed of the actual percentage. The Presbyterian Mission Agency shall determine the cost of communicating national Emergency Relief Alerts and may authorize a charge against receipts with this charge being reported for each specific appeal.

c. Acknowledgment of receipt of gifts to all validated projects or agencies will be made to the contributor or donor by the receiving council or validating agency in a timely manner, including concurrence in the purpose of the gift (see further at Appendix A, Churchwide Mission Support, Item E.2.).

d. All recipients of validated mission funds are responsible for reporting all gifts received directly from Presbyterian contributors or donors to the validating council.

#### D. Validation of Mission

1. Validated mission is any project or program within the bounds of and approved by formal action of a session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly that is consistent with the responsibilities assigned by the Form of Government, whether or not it is funded from the adopted budget of the council. Validated mission should cohere with the great ends of the Church (F-1.0304) and is determined in accord with the following provisions of the *Book of Order*:

- a. F-1.00 The Mission of the Church
- b. G-3.0106 Administration of Mission
- c. G-3.0113 Finances
- d. G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities (Sessions)
- e. G-3.0301 Presbytery Responsibilities
- f. G-3.0401 Synod Responsibilities

## g. G-3.0501 General Assembly Responsibilities

2. Each and all councils serve the mission of the whole church and thereby appropriately validate mission. Such validated mission may be commended to others but does not require their concurrence or support.

3. Validated mission may be within or beyond council budgets.

a. Validated Within Budget: Projects or programs included in the adopted budget of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly, including projects that will be funded with Funding for General Mission and Funding for Specific Mission.

b. Validated Beyond Budget: Projects or programs not included in adopted budgets, but validated by action of a session, presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly. The validating council may specify dollar and/or time limitations.

## E. Accounting Definitions and Standards: Designated, Restricted, and Unrestricted Giving

1. For accounting purposes, the following definitions of designators, contributors, and donors are observed.

a. Designations may be made only by councils. A designator has received funds from a contributor or donor and applies such funds to designated categories or items. A designator must be a council.

b. Contributors can be donors, councils, or other sources of income. Contributors may make unrestricted or restricted gifts.

c. The term donor applies to persons or entities whose gifts are eligible for a tax deduction. Donors may make restricted gifts consistent with IRS regulations and acceptable to the receiving entity. Restrictions must be agreed to prior to the completion of the gift.

2. For accounting purposes, unrestricted giving and restricted giving are defined as follows:

Restricted giving refers to gifts with restrictions by a contributor or donor for use in support of a particular project, budget category, or appeal. The processing of restricted gifts will comply with the standards established by the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Internal Revenue Service regulations. Unrestricted giving refers to gifts made without restriction and subject to the use and discretion of the receiving council.

a. Unrestricted giving remains foundational in the System of Giving. Through unrestricted giving, individuals and councils share in support of the whole mission and ministry in which the church engages.

b. Restricted giving, such as churchwide special offerings and other specific appeals, is a valuable and important method of adding to unrestricted giving. Contributors wishing to use restricted giving are encouraged first to choose projects or categories within adopted budgets. Special offerings and other specific appeals are always restricted by their stated purpose.

(1) Each council must handle funds according to the donor's intention in giving the gift. If the intent cannot be honored, the gift must be returned.

(2) Clarity in this regard may on occasion require conversation and/or negotiation with donors even beyond the council where the gift is first received.

c. Restrictions on the use of gifts may come from a donor or a council making the gift but

always require concurrence by the council or validated not-for-profit agency receiving the gift.

(1) A donor must relinquish control of a gift or it does not qualify for tax preference treatment and the receiving organization jeopardizes its tax-exempt status.

(2) When restricted gifts are accepted, they will always be used for the restricted purpose within designations approved by the council.

3. The obligations of designators are to:

a. Honor restrictions that have been accepted or to consider permitting additional support of a project beyond its approved budget;

b. Ensure conformity with all applicable civil law;

c. Report back to all donors and contributors;

d. Contact all donors or contributors if restricted giving cannot be used according to its restrictions—if restrictions cannot be met and the donors or contributors do not agree to the use of funds for other purposes, the gifts are to be returned to the donor.

4. Budgeting and Equalization

a. Funding of approved budgets is accomplished as follows:

(1) First, restricted funds are applied to the appropriate budget items.

(2) Then, unrestricted funds are applied toward fulfilment of all budget items.

(3) This use of unrestricted funds provides for equalization within a council's budget. This process supports the orderly planning and budgeting decisions of councils while honoring appropriate restrictions and designations.

b. Sessions are encouraged to follow the division of mission support commitments adopted by their presbyteries. If a session does not follow these division agreements, a presbytery may seek to fulfill agreements through use of unrestricted funds—provided that such a policy is communicated to its sessions. This use of unrestricted funds provides for equalization among councils. Churchwide special offerings and other specific appeals shall not be used to fulfill mission support commitments and are not subject to equalization.

F. Collection, Reporting, and Audits

1. Collection and Transmittal of Funds

a. The General Assembly will maintain financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and in compliance with all applicable accounting pronouncements and regulations specific to the not-for-profit industry. Software and systems will be appropriate to support compliance with the requirements stated above.

b. The General Assembly will observe the following minimum standards for its operations. It is expected that presbyteries and synods will also adopt and adhere to these same standards:

(1) Provide a detailed receipt to a contributor or congregation for all money received.

(2) Close monthly.

(3) Utilize the Federal Reserve system to expedite the transfer of funds whenever and wherever possible.

(4) Use a standardized, detailed transmittal format for transmitting data and funds electronically between presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly.

(5) Establish and follow cash management policies and procedures that are designed to maximize cash management earnings.

## 2. Reporting

The General Assembly will provide financial information quarterly for receipt of funds from all sources, and this information will be posted to the PC(USA) Web site on the financial page.

a. Each presbytery and synod will be responsible for obtaining with remittances the detailed information required for disbursement.

b. Each presbytery and synod will report all giving on an approved information transmittal form to the General Assembly site no later than sixty days after receipt of funds.

c. The General Assembly will furnish to every presbytery and synod an annual information report on a church-by-church basis. This annual report will provide information for churches within a synod or presbytery bounds on all funds received by it for presbytery, synod, and General Assembly.

d. The General Assembly will furnish, in cooperation with the presbyteries, at least quarterly and not more often than monthly, an information report to every presbytery showing the agreed upon distribution of dollars (including the presbytery's mission support commitments) between the presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly as compared to the actual funds received. Should discrepancies exist, the General Assembly site will work with the reporting site to clarify and to effect the necessary changes and/or corrections.

## 3. Internal Audit

The Presbyterian Mission Agency will establish an internal audit function involving a broad variety of audit services. Included among these are:

a. Reviewing the reliability and integrity of financial information and how that information is identified, measured, classified, and reported;

b. Reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of particular financial management functions;

c. Reviewing established internal control systems for efficiency and compliance;

d. Reviewing compliance with internal policies and procedures;

e. Reviewing financial statements contained in the annual report with management and the independent auditors to determine that the independent auditors are satisfied with the disclosure and content of the financial statements;

f. Reviewing and recommending to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Audit Committee, the independent auditors to be selected to audit the financial statements of the corporation; and

g. Reporting directly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Audit Committee.

## IV. General Assembly Budget Development

## A. Budget Cycle

The General Assembly Budget refers to the combined Mission, Per Capita, Administrative Services Group, and Designated Budgets. The Unified General Assembly Budget will be developed in budget cycles. Each budget cycle will consist of two consecutive calendar years, where the first year is the year following a biennial General Assembly meeting (e.g., 2022 General Assembly, 2023/2024 budget cycle). Each cycle, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall propose a unified budget using a process approved by those three boards. The proposed budget shall reflect the priorities established by the General Assembly in the Mission Work Plan of the Presbyterian Mission Agency as well as the other actions as approved by the General Assembly. The proposed budget shall reflect the unique work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Office of the General Assembly, and the Administrative Services Group, further the unity of purpose of General Assembly agencies and entities, and promote the value of sharing resources to build up the ministry of the whole church.

## B. Approving the Unified General Assembly Budget

The appropriate assembly committee of the General Assembly will recommend a balanced budget for each year in the budget cycle, incorporating work from the proposed budget and overtures, commissioners' resolutions, and other actions of the General Assembly, for approval as the outline of work for the budget cycle. The General Assembly may take actions to add or subtract any element to or from proposed budgets. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board, and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will then make appropriate adjustments after the Assembly within the approved budget constraints.

## C. Budget Monitoring

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation will monitor the appropriate expenditure of funds throughout the budget cycle and report to each biennial General Assembly on the financial results of each year and other information related to the financial condition of the church. The report will cover the financial results of the previous two budget years (e.g., 2022 General Assembly for budget years 2020 and 2021). These two budget years will not be within the same budget cycle.

## V. Administrative Services

Administrative Services is accountable to the President of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.

### A. Provides accounting and reporting services for the following entities:

1. Presbyterian Mission Agency, its ministry areas, and certain related bodies and committees.
2. Office of the General Assembly.
3. Other entities as requested on a fee-for-service basis.
4. Synod, presbytery, and session finance officers, as appropriate.

### B. Performs and establishes policies and procedures for the following functions:

1. Controller/financial accounting controls, general ledger maintenance, general accounting, financial reporting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, church and student loans, payroll, budgeting, fixed asset management, overseas accounting, inventory control, and project accounting.
2. Treasury/central receiving service, bank relations and services, overseas treasury service (as appropriate), foreign exchange, short-term investments, working capital/cash management, and endowment and revenue accounting.

3. Financial planning, capital planning and economic forecasting, and financial modeling.
  4. Property maintenance and management including acquisitions, gifts, leases, and dispositions, purchasing and print services, and mail services.
  5. Establishing standards for receiving sites throughout the church in consultation with other parts of the church.
  6. Distribution management services, including order processing, customer services, warehousing, and shipping.
- C. Ensures that no payment of any expenditure is made in excess of the total budget approved by the management of entities of A Corporation. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each entity to ensure that expenditures for their respective areas are within the approved budget before commitments are made.
- D. Maintains all financial records and prepares quarterly reports to the entities.
- E. Prepares and presents the annual report of the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets, and Statement of Cash Flows of the General Assembly that will be audited by a certified public accountant and presented to the General Assembly.

## APPENDIX B

**List of Documents Related to Various Organizational Structures**

(The following documents related to various organizational structures can be viewed at <http://www.presbyterianmission.org>. These were formerly Appendixes B-J.)

- B. 198th General Assembly (1986) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Deliverance Implementing a Design for the Corporate Structure of Certain Agencies of the General Assembly [Adopted June 17, 1986, modified by the 199th General Assembly (1987)\* and the 214th General Assembly (2002)]
- C. Deliverance Concerning Corporate Structure of Certain Agencies of the Presbyterian Mission Agency
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation
  - The Publishing Corporation - Amended by 217th General Assembly (2006)
- D. Memorandum Defining the Relationship Between the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Mission Agency
- E. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program, Inc. Establishment of a Corporation and Related Matters [(Approved by the 207th General Assembly (1995) and amended by the 209th General Assembly (1997)]
- F. Joint Report—Presbyterian Mission Agency and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 617–18)
- G. Ratification of Establishment of New Covenant Trust Company, N.A. A Subsidiary of The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation and Related Matters [Approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999), amended by the 212th General Assembly (2000) and the 214th General Assembly (2002).] [*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 492–94; *Minutes*, 2001, Part I, p. 339]
- H. Establishment of New Covenant Annuity Insurance Company and Related Matters [Approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999).] [*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 500–502]
- I. Ratification of Foundation Participation in Formation of New Covenant Funds [Approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999).] [*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 505]
- J. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Mortgage Corporation [Approved by the 213th General Assembly (2001).] [*Minutes*, 2001, Part I, pp. 173–75]

\*From Structural Design for Mission