

Previous

Form of Government

for

Transitional Manuals



The following text is from the
Book of Order 2009/2011

**THE
FORM OF GOVERNMENT
[TEXT]**

FORM OF GOVERNMENT¹

CHAPTER I

G-1.0000

PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES

G-1.0100

1. The Head of the Church

Christ Is Head of the Church

a. All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.^a God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body.^b

Christ Calls the Church Into Being

b. Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission to the world, for its building up, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. It belongs to Christ alone to rule, to teach, to call, and to use the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of his Kingdom.

Christ Gives the Church Its Faith and Life

c. Christ gives to his Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its officers and ordinances. Insofar as Christ’s will for the Church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Christ Is the Church’s Authority

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

G-1.0200

2. The Great Ends of the Church

The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of

¹ The following abbreviations are used throughout:

- G—Form of Government
- W—Directory for Worship
- D—Rules of Discipline.

divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.²

G-1.0300

3. The Historic Principles of Church Order³

Historic Principles of Church Order

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

G-1.0301
Right of Judgment

(1) (a) That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men⁴ which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”⁵

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

² This statement of the great ends of the Church, slightly edited here, came from the United Presbyterian Church of North America, which united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1958. The statement was then made a part of the Constitution of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as the united body was called. This now classic statement was adopted by the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1910, following various actions between 1904 and 1910 looking forward to the revision of the church’s Constitution.

³ This section, with the exception of the first paragraph, was first drawn up by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, and prefixed to the Form of Government as published by that body in 1788. In that year, the synod was divided into four synods and gave place to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which held its first meeting the following year. The four synods formed were the Synod of New York and New Jersey, the Synod of Philadelphia, the Synod of Virginia, and the Synod of the Carolinas. The presbyteries of these four synods were represented in the first General Assembly, which met in Philadelphia on May 21, 1789. The general plan drawn up in 1788 became that by which the Presbyterian Church in the United States and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America were subsequently governed.

⁴ The words “men” and “man’s” throughout this quotation from the eighteenth century should be understood as applying to all persons.

⁵ This quotation may be found in The Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.109, in *The Book of Confessions*.

G-1.0302
Corporate Judgment

(2) That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

G-1.0303
Officers

(3) That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.

G-1.0304
Truth and Goodness

(4) That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior's rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

G-1.0305
Differences of Views

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

G-1.0306
Election by the People

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

G-1.0307
Church Power

(7) That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated

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

G-1.0308
Church Discipline

(8) Lastly, that if the preceding scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any church. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object,^d and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church universal.

G-1.0400

Historic Principles of
Church Government

4. The Historic Principles of Church Government

The radical^{6,e} principles of Presbyterian church government and discipline are:

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

⁶ The text of this section was adopted in 1797 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. In this quotation, the word “radical” is used in its primary meaning of “fundamental and basic,” and the word “appeals” is used in a general sense rather than with reference to a case involved in judicial process.

G-1.0500

Definition of the
Constitution

G-1.0501

5. The Constitution Defined

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

The Book of Confessions includes:

The Nicene Creed

The Apostles' Creed

The Scots Confession

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Second Helvetic Confession

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Larger Catechism

The Shorter Catechism

The Theological Declaration of Barmen

The Confession of 1967

A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

G-1.0502

The Book of Order includes:

Form of Government

Directory for Worship

Rules of Discipline.

CHAPTER II

G-2.0000

THE CHURCH AND ITS CONFESSIONS

G-2.0100
Purpose of
Confessional
Statements

a. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states its faith and bears witness to God’s grace in Jesus Christ in the creeds and confessions in *The Book of Confessions*. In these confessional statements the church declares to its members and to the world

who and what it is,

what it believes,

what it resolves to do.

Church as Community

b. These statements identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church for its work of proclamation.

G-2.0200
Confessional
Statements as
Subordinate Standards

These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church,^a subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nonetheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed. The church is prepared to counsel with or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions. Moreover, a more exacting amendment process is required to change the confessions of the church than is required to change the Constitution in matters of government, worship, or discipline. Yet the church, in obedience to Jesus Christ, is open to the reform of its standards of doctrine as well as of governance. The church affirms “*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*,” that is, “The church reformed, always reforming,”⁷ according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit.

G-2.0300
Faith of the
Church Catholic

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives witness to the faith of the Church catholic. The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church^b in the recognition of canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the

⁷An alternate translation for “*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*” is “The church reformed, always to be reformed.”

Nicene and Apostles' Creeds with their definitions of the mystery of the triune God and of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ.

G-2.0400
Faith of the
Protestant
Reformation

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

G-2.0500
Faith of the
Reformed Tradition

a. In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed tradition. Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty,^f holiness,^g and providence of God^h who creates,ⁱ sustains,^j rules,^k and redeems^l the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love.^m Related to this central affirmation of God's sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:

(1) The electionⁿ of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;^o

(2) Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;

(3) A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation;

(4) The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry^p and tyranny,^q which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Reflect a
Particular Stance

b. Thus, the creeds and confessions of this church reflect a particular stance within the history of God's people. They are the result of prayer, thought, and experience within a living tradition. They serve to strengthen personal commitment and the life and witness of the community of believers.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

G-3.0000

G-3.0100
Form

The mission of the Church is given form by God's activity in the world as told in the Bible and understood by faith.

G-3.0101
God's Activity

a. God created the heavens and the earth and made human beings in God's image, charging them to care for all that lives; God made men and women to live in community, responding to their Creator with grateful obedience. Even when the human race broke community with its Maker and with one another, God did not forsake it, but out of grace chose one family for the sake of all, to be pilgrims of promise, God's own Israel.

God's Covenant

b. God liberated the people of Israel from oppression; God covenanted with Israel to be their God and they to be God's people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord; God confronted Israel with the responsibilities of this covenant, judging the people for their unfaithfulness while sustaining them by divine grace.

G-3.0102
God in Christ

God was incarnate in Jesus Christ, who announced good news to the poor, proclaimed release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, let the broken victims go free, and proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; in his life and death for others God's redeeming love for all people was made visible; and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is the assurance of God's victory over sin and death and the promise of God's continuing presence in the world.

G-3.0103
The Holy Spirit

God's redeeming and reconciling activity in the world continues through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who confronts individuals and societies with Christ's Lordship of life and calls them to repentance and to obedience to the will of God.

G-3.0200
The Church as the
Body of Christ

The Church of Jesus Christ is the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity.

a. The Church is called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ.

b. The new reality revealed in Jesus Christ is the new humanity, a new creation, a new beginning for human life in the world:

- (1) Sin is forgiven.
- (2) Reconciliation is accomplished.
- (3) The dividing walls of hostility are torn down.

c. The Church is the body of Christ^a both in its corporate life and in the lives of its individual members, and is called to give shape and substance to this truth.

G-3.0300
The Church's Calling

a. The Church is called to tell the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord, proclaiming in Word and Sacrament that

- (1) the new age has dawned.
- (2) God who creates life, frees those in bondage, forgives sin, reconciles brokenness, makes all things new, is still at work in the world.

Present Claims
of Christ

b. The Church is called to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of him as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples.

Christ's Faithful
Evangelist

c. The Church is called to be Christ's faithful evangelist

- (1) going into the world, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all he has commanded;
- (2) demonstrating by the love of its members for one another and by the quality of its common life the new reality in Christ; sharing in worship, fellowship, and nurture, practicing a deepened life of prayer and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- (3) participating in God's activity in the world through its life for others by
 - (a) healing and reconciling and binding up wounds,
 - (b) ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,
 - (c) engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,
 - (d) giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer,

(e) sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world.

G-3.0400
Called to Risk
and Trust

The Church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ.

G-3.0401
Called to Openness

The Church is called

a. to a new openness to the presence of God in the Church and in the world, to more fundamental obedience, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;

b. to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity;

c. to a new openness to the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God's activity in the world;

d. to a new openness to God's continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be a more effective instrument of mission in the world.

CHAPTER IV

G-4.0000

THE CHURCH AND ITS UNITY

G-4.0100

1. The Church—Universal and Particular

G-4.0101
Universal Church

The Church universal consists of all persons in every nation, together with their children, who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commit themselves to live in a fellowship under his rule.^a

G-4.0102
Universal and
Particular

Since this whole company cannot meet together in one place to worship and to serve, it is reasonable that it should be divided into particular congregations.^b The particular church is, therefore, understood as a local expression of the universal Church.

G-4.0103
Particular Church

A particular church consists of those persons in a particular place, along with their children, who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who have been gathered for the service of God as set forth in Scripture,^c subject to a particular form of church government.^d

G-4.0104
A Particular
Presbyterian Church

Each particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. Its officers are ministers of the Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. Its government and guidance are the responsibility of the session. It shall fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.

G-4.0200

2. The Unity of the Church

G-4.0201
Unity in Mission

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. The Church is a fellowship of believers which seeks the enlargement of the circle of faith to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone.

G-4.0202
Oneness

There is one Church. As the Bible speaks of the one body which is the Church living under the one Spirit of God known through Christ, it reminds us that we have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.” (Ephesians 4:5–6)

G-4.0203
Visible Oneness

Visible oneness, by which a diversity of persons, gifts, and understandings is brought together, is an important sign of the unity of God’s people. It is also a means by which that unity is achieved. Further, while divisions into different denominations do not destroy this unity, they do obscure it for both the Church and the world. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity and is willing to seek and to maintain communion and community with all other branches of the one, catholic Church. (G-15.0000)^e

G-4.0300

3. Principles of Presbyterian Government

G-4.0301
Presbyterian Polity

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

- a. The particular churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church;
- b. This church shall be governed by presbyters (elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament, traditionally called ruling and teaching elders);
- c. These presbyters shall come together in governing bodies (traditionally called judicatories or courts) in regular gradation;
- d. Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ;
- e. Decisions shall be reached in governing bodies by vote, following opportunity for discussion, and a majority shall govern;
- f. A higher governing body shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal;
- g. Presbyters are ordained only by the authority of a governing body;
- h. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in governing bodies;
- i. Governing bodies possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church.

CHAPTER V

G-5.0000

THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS

G-5.0100

1. The Meaning of Membership

G-5.0101
Membership
Through Faith

a. The incarnation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives to the church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership. One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life.^a Baptism and a public profession of faith in Jesus as Lord are the visible signs of entrance into the active membership of the church.

Into Active
Membership

b. Persons may enter into active church membership in the following ways: by profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or transfer of certificate from some other church.

Baptized Previously

c. When persons baptized as infants reach an age when they are ready to make public their profession of faith and accept their responsibility in the life of the church, the session should invite, encourage, and help them prepare for their responsibility as active church members. The age at which young persons should make such public profession is not precisely fixed. It is left to the prudence of the session to judge, after careful examination, the readiness of those who apply for active membership.

Not Baptized
Previously

d. When persons who have not been baptized desire to profess their faith in Christ and be incorporated in the life of the church as believers, they shall do so by making public their profession of faith and receiving baptism after appropriate instruction and examination by the session.

Certificate of
Transfer

e. Persons who have made a profession of faith and have been received into membership in a particular church may be received by the session upon receipt of a certificate of transfer from the church in which they have been most recently a member.

Reaffirmation of
Faith

f. It is sometimes the case that persons who previously made a profession of faith and became active members in a particular church are unable to secure a certificate of transfer or other evidence of church membership. After instruction and examination by the session, these persons shall reaffirm publicly their profession of faith and their acceptance of responsibility in the life of the church.

G-5.0102
Membership as
Ministry

A faithful member accepts Christ’s call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church. Such involvement includes

- a. proclaiming the good news,
- b. taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church,
- c. praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church,
- d. supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- e. participating in the governing responsibilities of the church,
- f. demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- g. responding to God’s activity in the world through service to others,
- h. living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- i. working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.

G-5.0103
Inclusiveness

The congregation shall welcome all persons who respond in trust and obedience to God’s grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the membership and ministry of his Church. No persons shall be denied membership because of race, ethnic origin, worldly condition, or any other reason not related to profession of faith. Each member must seek the grace of openness in extending the fellowship of Christ to all persons. (G-9.0104) Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the gospel.

G-5.0200

2. Membership Vows

After new members are examined, affirming their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and are received by the session, whether by profession of faith, certificate of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith, they shall be presented to and welcomed by the congregation during a service of worship where they shall make a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as do confirmands (W-4.2003a, b, and c).

G-5.0300

3. Categories of Membership

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

G-5.0301
Baptized Member

A baptized member of a particular church is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members are entitled to the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and to participation in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

G-5.0302
Active Member

An active member of a particular church is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government^b of this church, and participates in the church’s work and worship. An active member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church, including the right to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, to present children for baptism, to take part in meetings of the congregation, and to vote and hold office. Other conditions of active membership that meet the needs of the particular church and are consistent with the order and confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may be adopted by the session after careful study and discussion with the congregation.

G-5.0303
Inactive Member

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

G-5.0304
Affiliate Member

An affiliate member of a particular church is an active member of another church of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the church of active membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate governing body of that church, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of an active member except the right to vote and hold office.

G-5.0400

4. Nonmember Privileges

G-5.0401
Nonmember
Privileges

Persons not members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are entitled to the following privileges:

a. All persons are welcome to participate in the life and worship of this church.

b. All baptized persons, whether children or adults, even though they have made no profession of their faith in Christ, are entitled to participation in the Lord’s Supper, to pastoral care and instruction of the church.

c. Confessing members of other Christian churches may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper and may present children for baptism.

G-5.0500

5. Preparation for Membership

G-5.0501
Session’s Duty

The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become members of the congregation.

G-5.0502
Profession by
Children

a. While the preparation is a part of the continuing nurture of the congregation, particular care shall be taken to prepare children of members for public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Instruction shall be given in the meaning of this profession, the responsibilities of membership, and the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Profession by Adults

b. Similar instruction shall be given to others who make a profession of faith. The session shall determine whether this instruction shall be given before or after the public profession.

G-5.0503
Reaffirmation,
Transfer

Appropriate instruction shall be offered to those who unite with a particular congregation by reaffirmation of faith or by transfer of certificate of church membership.

G-5.0600

6. Review of Membership

G-5.0601
By the Member

Accepting the privilege and responsibility of membership in the church is a commitment to Jesus Christ that binds the individual to fulfillment of the obligations of membership. Members shall, when encouraged by the session, regularly review and evaluate the integrity with which they are involved in the ministry of the church and consider ways in which their participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

G-5.0602
By the Session

The session shall review the roll of members at least annually, and shall counsel with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership.

CHAPTER VI

G-6.0000

CHAPTER VI. THE CHURCH AND ITS OFFICERS

G-6.0100

1. Offices of Ministry

G-6.0101
Christ's Ministry

All ministry in the Church is a gift from Jesus Christ. Members and officers alike serve mutually under the mandate of Christ who is the chief minister of all. His ministry is the basis of all ministries; the standard for all offices is the pattern of the one who came “not to be served but to serve.” (Matt. 20:28)

G-6.0102
Offices of Ministry

One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. The existence of these offices in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. These ordained officers differ from other members in function only.

G-6.0103
Offices Named

The Church offices mentioned in the New Testament which this church has maintained include those of presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament^a and elders^b) and deacons.^c

G-6.0104
Variety of Forms

While the ministry is one, specific forms of ministry may emphasize special tasks and skills and the ordering of the offices of ministry shall reflect this variety. There may be forms of ministry in which primary emphasis is given to proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, forms that stress deeds of love and mercy, forms that are primarily educational, administrative, legislative, or judicial, and forms that are primarily prophetic.

G-6.0105
Called to Ministry

Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God's providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the Church.

G-6.0106
Gifts and
Requirements

a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of

Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church.

b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

G-6.0107
Election by the
People

The government of this church is representative, and the right of God’s people to elect their officers is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any permanent office in a congregation or governing body of the church except by election of that body.

G-6.0108
Freedom of
Conscience—
Individual and
Corporate

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

Within Certain
Bounds

b. It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves. (G-1.0301; G-1.0302)⁸

⁸Very early in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, even before the General Assembly was established, the plan of reunion of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia contained the following sentences: “That when any matter is determined by a major

Candidates for
Ministry

c. Persons seeking to be received as candidates for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall have their attention drawn to the constitutional documents of the church including its statement on freedom of conscience. (G-14.0405)

G-6.0200

2. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

G-6.0201
Ministers and
Presbytery

As the Lord has set aside through calling and training certain members to perform a special ministry of the Word and Sacrament and has committed to them a variety of work to do, the church through the presbytery calls them to the responsibility and office of ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Such ministers shall be members of presbytery which shall designate them to such work as may be helpful to the church in mission, in the performance of which they shall be accountable to the presbytery. They shall be responsible for participation in the larger ministry of the church in addition to the duties to which they are called and designated by the presbytery. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament have membership in presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and maintain their membership in accordance with G-11.0000.

G-6.0202
Names Expressive of
Duties

a. The person who fulfills this responsibility has, in Scripture, obtained different names expressive of his or her various duties. As he or she has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he or she is termed bishop.^d As he or she feeds them with spiritual food, he or she is termed pastor.^c As a servant of Christ in the Church, the term minister^f is given. As it is his or her duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he or she is termed presbyter or elder.^g As he or she is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God, through Christ, he or she is termed ambassador.^h And as he or she dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he or she is termed steward of the mysteries of God.ⁱ Both men and women may be called to this office.⁹

vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination; or if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceably withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism. Provided always that this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government.” (Hist. Dig. (P) p. 1310.) (Plan of Union of 1758, par. II.)

⁹The 213th General Assembly (2001) restored this language (paragraph “a”) traceable to the 1789 Form of Government, affirming our Presbyterian heritage regarding pastoral office.

Pastors, Associate Pastors

b. The permanent pastoral offices of ministers of the Word and Sacrament are pastors and associate pastors. When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice. The pastor is responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for praying with and for the congregation. With the elders, the pastor is to encourage the people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision making of the church, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons the pastor is to share in the ministries of **compassion**, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, he or she is responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in the governing bodies above the session and in ecumenical relationships.

Co-Pastors

c. A particular church, with the consent of presbytery, may elect pastors to serve as co-pastors in exercising the responsibility of minister of the Word and Sacrament for the congregation.

G-6.0203
Teachers, Chaplains,
and Others

When ministers are designated as educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, partners in mission, evangelists, administrators, social workers, consultants, or in other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church, they shall evidence a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible and shall seek to fulfill their ministry by serving Christ and their fellow men and women, strengthening the church and equipping it for concern and service to the life of the human community. In addition to fulfilling the particular responsibilities to which they are called, they shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships, and shall be eligible for election to the higher governing bodies of the church and to the boards and agencies of those governing bodies.

G-6.0204
Information Held in
Confidence

a. In the exercise of pastoral care, ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a minister of the Word and Sacrament may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.

Duty to Report

b. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-6.0204a; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

G-6.0300

3. Elders

G-6.0301
Scriptural Practice

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament Church provided persons with particular gifts to share in governing and ministry.^j

G-6.0302
Governmental
Responsibilities

Elders are chosen by the people. Together with ministers of the Word and Sacrament, they exercise leadership, government, and discipline^k and have responsibilities for the life of a particular church as well as the church at large, including ecumenical relationships. They shall serve faithfully as members of the session. (G-10.0102) When elected commissioners to higher governing bodies, elders participate and vote with the same authority as ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and they are eligible for any office.

G-6.0303
Gifts and
Requirements

Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world. (G-6.0106)

G-6.0304
Specific
Responsibilities

a. It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. Together with the pastor, they should

encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equip and renew them for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world, visit and comfort and care for the people, with special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed. They should inform the pastor and session of those persons and structures which may need special attention. They should assist in worship. (See W-1.4003, W-2.3011-.3012, W-3.1003, W-3.3616, and W-4.4003.) They should cultivate their ability to teach the Bible and may be authorized to supply places which are without the regular ministry of the Word and Sacrament. In specific circumstances and with proper instruction, specific elders may be authorized by the presbytery to administer the Lord’s Supper in accord with G-11.0103z. Those duties which all Christians are bound to perform by the law of love are especially incumbent upon elders because of their calling to office and are to be fulfilled by them as official responsibilities.

Duty to Report

b. An elder shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

G-6.0400

4. Deacons

G-6.0401
The Ministry and
Gifts of Deacons

The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture^l is one of **compassion**, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, **sincere compassion**, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office.

G-6.0402
Responsibilities

a. It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith.^m They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session, such as leading the people in worship through prayers of intercession, reading the Scriptures, presenting the gifts of the people,ⁿ and assisting with the Lord’s Supper. (See W-3.3616.)

Duty to Report b. A deacon shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

G-6.0403 The deacons of a particular church shall be organized in one
Organization or both of the following ways.

As a Board a. They may be organized as a board, of which the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors shall be advisory members. The board of deacons shall elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members. The secretary shall keep a record of the board's proceedings.

Individually b. They may be individually commissioned by the session
Commissioned to particular tasks consistent with the responsibility of their office. (See G-6.0402.) The session shall ordinarily conduct an annual review of their service, at which time their commission may be renewed, altered, or terminated.

G-6.0404 As the whole church is under the jurisdiction of the session,
Supervised by the board of deacons shall be under its supervision and
Session authority. The records of the board of deacons shall be submitted to the session at least annually and at other times upon the request of the session. The session may void or amend any action of the board of deacons, or direct the board to reconsider such action.

G-6.0405 The board shall meet regularly, or upon the call of its
Meetings moderator, or when directed to meet by the session, but it shall meet at least quarterly. The board shall determine its own quorum. A joint meeting of the session and board of deacons shall be held at least annually to confer on matters of common interest, with the moderator of the session presiding. No binding decision may be reached in such joint meeting, but the session and the board may act separately on matters committed to their care.

G-6.0406 Deacons may be appointed by governing bodies to serve on
Related Service committees or as trustees. The session may select and appoint other members of the congregation to assist the deacons in their ministry of compassion.

G-6.0407
Decision Not to Use
Deacons

A congregation by a majority vote may elect not to use the office of deacon. In such a case, or in the case where deacons cannot be secured, the function of the office shall always be preserved and shall devolve upon the elders and the session.

G-6.0500

5. Dissolution of Relationship

G-6.0501
Dissolution of
Relationship

An elder or deacon may resign from the session or board of deacons for good cause, with the session’s consent. On ceasing to be an active member of a particular church, an elder or deacon ceases to be a member of its session or board. When an elder or deacon, because of change of residence or disability, is unable to perform the duties of the office for a period of one year, the active relationship shall be dissolved by the session unless there is good reason not to do so, which reason shall be recorded.

G-6.0600

6. Release from the Exercise of Ordained Office

Release from the
Exercise of
Ordained Office

a. If a minister, elder, or deacon against whom no inquiry has been initiated pursuant to D-10.0101 and D-10.0201, against whom no charges have been filed, and who otherwise is in good standing, shall make application to the governing body in which he or she holds membership to be released from the exercise of the ordained office, the governing body, upon granting the release, shall delete that person’s name from the appropriate roll. No judgment or failure on the part of the officer is implied in this action.

Discontinuance of
Functions

b. Release from the exercise of the ordained office of minister, elder, or deacon requires a discontinuance of all functions of that office. The designation of minister, elder, or deacon shall not be used. The status of a minister, elder, or deacon so released shall be the same as any church member.

Desire to Be Restored

c. A person released under this section who desires to be restored to the ordained office shall make application to the governing body that granted the release, or to the presbytery if the church has been dissolved, and upon approval of that governing body, the person shall be restored to the exercise of the ordained office without reordination.

G-6.0700

7. Renunciation of Jurisdiction

G-6.0701
Renunciation of
Jurisdiction

When a church officer, whether a minister of the Word and Sacrament, elder, or deacon, renounces the jurisdiction of this church in writing to the clerk or stated clerk of the governing

body of jurisdiction, the renunciation shall be effective upon receipt. Renunciation of jurisdiction shall remove the officer from membership and ordained office and shall terminate the exercise of office.

G-6.0702
Persistence in
Disapproved Work

When a church officer, after consultation and notice, persists in a work disapproved by the governing body having jurisdiction, the governing body may presume that the officer has renounced the jurisdiction of this church.

G-6.0703
Effect of
Renunciation

The renunciation shall be reported by the clerk or stated clerk at the next meeting of the governing body, which shall record the renunciation, delete the officer's name from the appropriate roll, and take such other actions of an administrative character as may be required by the Constitution.

CHAPTER VII

G-7.0000

THE PARTICULAR CHURCH

G-7.0100

1. Organization, Mission, and Government

G-7.0101
Organized by
Presbytery as Part of
the Whole

The church is both catholic and particular. Both characteristics are to be found in a particular church. A particular church in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be organized only by the authority of a presbytery and shall function under the provisions of this Constitution.

G-7.0102
Ministry

The particular church carries a vital responsibility in the mission of the church. There God's people perform especially the ministries of worship, proclamation, sharing the Sacraments^a, evangelism, nurture, counseling, personal and social healing, and service. Without this basic ministry to persons, neighborhoods, and communities, and the support given at the congregational level through prayer, personnel, and money, any other significant ministry of the church becomes impossible. Congregations serve as essential mission arms of the presbytery and of the larger church.

G-7.0103
Government

The members of a particular church voluntarily put themselves under the leadership of their officers, whom they elect. The session, which consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service, is the governing body in a particular church. The law and government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presuppose the fellowship of women and men with their children in voluntary covenanted relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ. The organization rests upon the fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love.

G-7.0200

2. Organizing a Particular Church

G-7.0201
Constituting
Covenant

In organizing a particular church, presbytery, proceeding directly or through a commission, shall receive applications for membership in the church—whether by profession of faith, reaffirmation, or transfer of membership—from persons wishing to unite in forming a new congregation. These persons shall covenant together as follows:

We, the undersigned, in response to the grace of God, desire to be constituted and organized as a church to be known as _____ . We promise and covenant to live together in unity and to work

together in ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ, bound to him and to one another as a part of the body of Christ in this place according to the principles of faith, mission, and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

(Signatures)

G-7.0202
Presbytery
Relationship

a. They shall be declared a constituted congregation of the presbytery and shall proceed to the election of elders and deacons, making provision in cooperation with the presbytery for their preparation, examination, ordination, and installation.

b. Presbytery shall continue to work closely with the congregation in securing pastoral leadership, in plans for the service and witness of the particular church, in coordinating its work with other churches, in counseling concerning bylaws for the congregation conforming to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and in giving other forms of support and encouragement that will strengthen the mission of the congregation in the larger life of the denomination.

G-7.0300

3. Meetings of the Congregation

G-7.0301
Congregation

The congregation is made up of all members on the active roll of a particular church. All such members who are present at a congregational meeting are entitled to vote.

G-7.0302
Annual Meetings

a. The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold other meetings as necessary. The annual meeting may consider such business as electing officers, hearing reports of the session along with plans for the coming year, hearing reports from the board of deacons and other organizations of the church, and transacting other business as is appropriate. It shall review the adequacy of the compensation of the pastor or pastors upon report of the prior review by the session. (G-10.0102n) Public notice of the meeting shall be given on two successive Sundays.

Special Meetings

b. Special meetings may be called for any or all of the purposes appropriate to an annual meeting or to conduct such other business as may be proper for congregational consideration. (G-7.0304) The business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting.

Parliamentary
Authority

c. All meetings of the congregation shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Roberts Rules of Order*, or a comparable parliamentary authority adopted by the congregation, except in those cases where this Constitution provides otherwise.

G-7.0303
How Meetings Are
Called

- a. Meetings of the congregation shall be called
 - (1) by the session whenever it determines such a meeting is necessary,
 - (2) by the presbytery whenever it determines such a meeting is necessary,
 - (3) by the session when requested in writing by one fourth of the members on the active roll of the particular church.

Notice

- b. Public notice of the meeting shall be given on two successive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday.

G-7.0304
Business

- a. Business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall include the following:
 - (1) matters related to the electing of elders, deacons, and trustees;
 - (2) matters related to the calling of a pastor or pastors;
 - (3) matters related to the pastoral relationship, such as changing the call, or requesting or consenting or declining to consent to dissolution;
 - (4) matters related to buying, mortgaging, or selling real property (G-8.0500);
 - (5) matters related to the permissive powers of a congregation, such as the desire to lodge all administrative responsibility in the session, or the request to presbytery for exemption from one or more requirements because of limited size.

Limitations

- b. Business at congregational meetings shall be limited to the foregoing matters (1) through (5). Whenever permitted by civil law, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting.

G-7.0305
Quorum

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be not less than one tenth of the members unless the particular church upon application to the presbytery shall obtain the consent of the presbytery to a provision for a smaller quorum. A congregation by its own vote may fix a higher quorum. No meeting of fewer than three members shall be considered a congregational meeting.

G-7.0306
Moderator

The pastor shall be the moderator of all meetings of the congregation. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they

shall, when present, alternately preside at meetings. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery shall preside at all congregational meetings. If it is impractical for the pastor or the moderator of session appointed by presbytery to preside, he or she shall invite, with the concurrence of the session, another minister of the presbytery to preside. A presbytery may appoint a lay pastor as moderator of session to the church to which she or he is commissioned. The person assigned to the commissioned lay pastor as mentor and supervisor shall also supervise his or her work as moderator. In addition, the moderator of the session of a church with a vacant pulpit may request an elder who is, or has been, a member of that presbytery’s committee on ministry, the stated clerk, executive presbyter, or associate executive presbyter, to preside; such elder may not moderate the meeting of a congregation of which that elder is a member. When this is not expedient, and when both the pastor or the moderator of the session and the session concur, a member of the session may be invited to preside.

G-7.0307
Secretary

The clerk of the session shall be secretary of meetings of the congregation. If the congregation does not approve the minutes of a congregational meeting before adjournment, the session shall read, correct, and approve the minutes of that congregational meeting at its next scheduled meeting and shall enter them into the permanent record. At the next meeting of the congregation, the clerk shall have the minutes available and shall report the session’s action. The congregation may ask to have them read and may make additions or corrections by vote. If the clerk is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary. The minutes of each meeting of the congregation shall be attested by the moderator and the secretary and shall be entered in the minute book of the session.

G-7.0308
In Case of a Tie

Since a minister is not a member of the congregation, she or he may not vote in the meeting of the congregation. When there is a tie vote, a minister presiding shall put the question a second time. If there is a tie vote again, the motion is lost.

G-7.0400

4. Incorporation and Trustees

G-7.0401
Incorporation and
Trustees

Whenever permitted by civil law, each particular church shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained. Only members on the active roll of the particular church shall be members of the corporation and eligible for election as trustees. The elders in active service in a church who are eligible under

the civil law shall, by reason of their office, be the trustees of such corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees. Any such alternate method shall provide for a nominating committee elected by the corporation, and for terms for trustees the same as are provided for elders. Any particular church which is not incorporated may select trustees from the members on the active roll of the church. The power and duties of such trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or of the board of deacons. (G-10.0102, G-6.0402)

G-7.0402
Powers

The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the church; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the church, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), provided further that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation granted in a duly constituted meeting. (G-8.0500)

G-7.0403
Separate Corporate
Meetings

Where civil law requires that corporate business be conducted in a separate corporate meeting of the congregation, the provisions of G-7.0300 shall apply, except:

- a. Such a meeting shall be called by the trustees at their discretion, or when directed by the session or by the presbytery.
- b. Unless the civil law provides otherwise, the trustees shall designate from among members on the active roll of the particular church a presiding officer and a secretary for such meeting.
- c. The minutes of each such meeting shall be attested by the presiding officer and the secretary and shall be entered in the minute book of the trustees.

G-7.0404
Vote by Proxy

Voting by proxy shall be permitted with respect to a corporate matter only where civil law specifically requires that voting by proxy shall be permitted as to that particular corporate matter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH AND ITS PROPERTY

G-8.0000

G-8.0100

G-8.0101
Decisions Regarding
Property

1. Decisions Pertaining to Property

The provisions of G-1.0400^a and other provisions of this Constitution prescribing the manner in which decisions are made, reviewed, and corrected within this church are applicable to all matters pertaining to property.

G-8.0200

G-8.0201
Property Is Held in
Trust

2. All Property Held in Trust

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

G-8.0202
Incorporation and
Trustees

Whenever permitted by civil law, each presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained. The council of the governing body shall constitute the Board of Trustees of the corporation unless the governing body shall determine an alternative method to constitute the Board of Trustees.

G-8.0300

G-8.0301
Property Used
Contrary to
Constitution

3. Property Used Contrary to Constitution

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

G-8.0400

G-8.0401
Property of Church
Dissolved or Extinct

4. Property of Church Dissolved or Extinct

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

G-8.0500

G-8.0501
Selling or
Encumbering Church
Property

5. Selling, Encumbering, or Leasing Church Property

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

G-8.0502
Leasing Church
Property

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

G-8.0600

G-8.0601
Property of Church
in Schism

6. Property of Church in Schism

The relationship to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of a particular church can be severed only by constitutional action on the part of the presbytery. (G-11.0103i) If there is a schism within the membership of a particular church and the presbytery is unable to effect a reconciliation or a division into separate churches within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the presbytery shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property because it is identified by the presbytery as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote within the particular church at the time of the schism.

G-8.0700

G-8.0701
Exceptions

7. Exceptions

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

CHAPTER IX

GOVERNING BODIES

G-9.0000

G-9.0100

1. General

G-9.0101
Definition

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by representative bodies composed of presbyters, both elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. These governing bodies shall be called

- session
- presbytery
- synod
- General Assembly.

G-9.0102
Distinct from
Government of
the State

a. Governing bodies of the church are distinct from the government of the state and have no civil jurisdiction or power to impose civil penalties.^a They have only ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the purpose of serving Jesus Christ and declaring and obeying his will in relation to truth and service, order and discipline.

Ecclesiastical
Jurisdiction

b. They may frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in life, resolve questions of doctrine and of discipline, give counsel in matters of conscience, and decide issues properly brought before them under the provisions of the *Book of Order*. They may authorize the serving of the Lord’s Supper in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship. (W-2.4012, W-3.6204). They have power to establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ. They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church which is under their jurisdiction.

G-9.0103
Unity of
Governing Bodies

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

G-9.0104
Participation and
Representation

a. Governing bodies of the church shall be responsible for implementing the church’s commitment to inclusiveness and participation as stated in G-4.0403. All governing bodies shall work to become more open and inclusive and shall pursue affirmative action hiring procedures aiming at correcting patterns of discrimination on the basis of the categories listed in G-4.0403.

Implementation

b. In implementing this commitment, consideration should be given to the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-6.0106) in persons elected or appointed to particular offices or tasks, and to the right of the people to elect their officers. (G-6.0107)

G-9.0105
Committee on
Representation

a. Each governing body above the session shall elect a committee on representation, whose membership shall consist of equal numbers of men and women. A majority of the members shall be selected from the racial ethnic groups (such as Presbyterians of African, Hispanic, and Asian descent and Native Americans) within the governing body, and the total membership shall include persons from each of the following categories:

- (1) majority male membership
- (2) majority female membership
- (3) racial ethnic male membership
- (4) racial ethnic female membership
- (5) youth male and female membership
- (6) persons with disabilities.

Advise Regarding
Membership

b. Its main function shall be to advise the governing bodies with respect to their membership and to that of their committees, boards, agencies, and other units in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure fair and effective representation in the decision making of the church.

Advocate and
Resource

c. The committee on representation shall serve both as an advocate for the representation of racial ethnic members, women, different age groups, and persons with disabilities, and as a continuing resource to the particular governing body in these areas. The committee on representation shall review the performance of its own governing body in these matters and shall report annually to it and to the next higher governing body with recommendations for any needed corrective action. The committee on representation shall consult with the nominating committee of its own governing body.

Consult with Racial Ethnic Membership

d. Prior to nomination or appointment of racial ethnic members to committees, boards, agencies, or other units, the committee on representation shall consult with the appropriate racial ethnic membership through a person or persons designated by that racial ethnic membership. In situations where racial ethnic membership is low, the committee on representation of each governing body shall consult with racial ethnic members, sessions, nominating committees, and persons designated by national racial ethnic membership to discover potential racial ethnic members of such body and to determine achievable representation. Prior to nomination or appointment of women to the above agencies, the committee on representation shall consult with the appropriate constituencies of women through a person or persons designated by those constituencies.

Employment of Personnel

e. The committee on representation shall advise the governing body on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of participation and representation (G-4.0403), and in conformity with a churchwide plan for equal employment opportunity. (G-13.0201b)

f. The committee on representation shall not, in any governing body, be merged with any other committee or designated as a subcommittee of any other committee.

G-9.0106 Exceptions

a. Exceptions to the provisions of G-9.0105a requiring a majority of the members to be selected from racial ethnic groups shall be allowed by a governing or electing body only if it is unable to secure the participation or representation of the necessary persons, and this fact shall be made a part of the official record of the governing, electing, or appointing body. No exception is permitted to the requirement that each governing body above the session elect a committee on representation.

b. An exception under G-9.0106a may be allowed for up to one year by governing body action at a meeting. The approval of such exception shall be promptly reported by the stated clerk to the next higher governing body through its stated clerk and committee on representation, which committee shall monitor the lower governing body and its committee on representation during the period of the exception.

G-9.0200

2. Officers

G-9.0201 Officers

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

G-9.0202
Moderator and
Meeting

a. The moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the governing body. He or she shall convene and adjourn the governing body in accordance with its own action. The moderator may, in an emergency, convene the governing body by written notice at a time and place different from that previously designated by the body.

Moderator of
Congregation and
Governing Bodies

b. The pastor of a particular church shall be the moderator of the session of that church. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session. The moderator of a presbytery shall be elected for such term as the presbytery may determine, not exceeding one year. The moderator of a synod shall be elected for such term as the synod may determine, not less than one year and not exceeding two years. The Moderator of the General Assembly shall be elected at each stated meeting. At the time of election, the moderator of a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly must be a continuing member of, or a commissioner to, the governing body over which he or she is elected to preside.

G-9.0203
Clerk and Meeting

a. The clerk shall record the transactions of the governing body, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, preserve its records carefully, and furnish extracts from them when required by another governing body of the church. Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any governing body of the church.

Clerk and
Stated Clerk of
Congregations and
Governing Bodies

b. The clerk of the session shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the governing body for a definite term as it may determine, and must be eligible for membership in the governing body. **A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-9.0705.**

G-9.0300

3. Meetings

G-9.0301
Opening of Meetings

a. The moderator of a governing body beyond the session shall open all stated meetings during his or her term of office and shall preside until a new moderator is elected. Governing bodies beyond the session may provide by rule who shall preside in the absence of the moderator.

Opened and Closed
with Prayer

b. All meetings of governing bodies shall be opened and closed with prayer.^b Presbyteries and synods that meet more often than annually shall designate one stated meeting each year,

which shall include preaching the Word and sharing the Lord’s Supper. Stated meetings of synods that meet annually or biennially and the General Assembly shall include a time for the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

G-9.0302
Parliamentary
Procedure

Meetings of governing bodies, commissions, and committees shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order*, except in those cases where this Constitution provides otherwise.

G-9.0303
Dissent

A dissent is a declaration expressing disagreement with the action or decision of a governing body. A dissent shall be made at the particular session of the governing body during which the action or decision dissented from is taken. The name or names of the members dissenting shall be recorded.

G-9.0304
Protest

A protest is a written declaration, supported by reasons, expressing disagreement with what is believed by one or more members of a governing body to be an irregularity or a delinquency.

Notice

a. Written notice of the protest shall be given at the particular session of the governing body during which it arose. The protest shall be filed with the clerk or stated clerk before adjournment.

Minutes

b. If a protest is expressed in decorous and respectful language, the governing body shall enter it in its minutes in recognition of the person’s right of conscience. That entry does not justify disobedience.

Response

c. A governing body against which a protest is taken may prepare an answer that shall be entered in its minutes. This shall terminate the protest.

G-9.0305
Who May Dissent
or Protest

Only a person who voted against the decision, except the moderator if unable to vote, shall be allowed to dissent or protest.

G-9.0306
Judicial Decision

When a case has been decided by a permanent judicial commission, any member of the governing body to which the decision is reported may enter a dissent or protest.

G-9.0307
Effect

A dissent or a protest does not initiate or prevent judicial process.

G-9.0308
Expenses

The expenses of elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament attending governing bodies ordinarily shall be defrayed either by the governing body which elects them or by

that which they are attending, to the extent of the expenses incurred within the bounds of that governing body. The General Assembly shall pay the expenses of commissioners who are elected by the presbyteries to attend the meetings of the General Assembly. Per capita funds may be used by each governing body to pay such expenses.

G-9.0400

4. Principles of Administration

G-9.0401
Definition of
Administration

Administration is the process by which a governing body implements decisions. It involves working with and through persons to accomplish goals and includes developing leadership, planning, communicating, organizing, budgeting, supervising, and evaluating.

G-9.0402
Structure of
Administration

a. Mission determines the form of structure and administration. All structures should enable the church to give effective witness to the Lordship of Christ in the contemporary world.

Governing Body
Nearest the
Congregation

b. The administration of mission should be performed by the governing body that can most effectively and efficiently accomplish it at the level of jurisdiction nearest the congregation.

Change

c. All structures shall be open to the possibility of change and new forms of ecumenical cooperation.

G-9.0403
Accountability to
Governing Body

A governing body may delegate particular aspects of its task to councils, boards, agencies, commissions, and committees, but always on the basis of accountability to the governing body.

G-9.0404
Nature of
Presbyterian Polity

In order to give meaning to the interdependent nature of Presbyterian polity:

a. Each governing body shall participate through its representatives in the planning and administration of the next higher body.

b. Each governing body shall consult through appropriate representatives with governing bodies below and above it concerning mission priorities, program, budgeting, the establishment of administrative staff positions, equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices.

c. Each governing body shall recruit, train, and employ its staff in accordance with the principles of inclusiveness and affirmative action found in G-9.0104.

d. Each governing body above the session shall prepare a budget for its operating expenses, including administrative personnel, and may fund it with a per capita apportionment among the particular churches within its bounds. The presbyteries shall be responsible for raising their own per capita funds, and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and to the General Assembly. The presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to the sessions of the churches within their bounds.

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

G-9.0405
Manual of
Operations

Each governing body above the session shall, in consultation with the governing body above and below it, develop a manual of administrative operations. In order to provide effective guidance in the ordination, certification, commissioning, and oversight of the work of ministry, the General Assembly shall offer, through its appropriate agencies, advisory handbooks containing suggested models for procedure that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to fit local circumstances. These handbooks shall be developed and updated as needed by the appropriate General Assembly agencies, in consultation with the Office of the General Assembly and middle governing bodies, to ensure conformity with the *Book of Order* and practicality of use.

G-9.0406
Ownership of
Records

Minutes and all other official records of church sessions, presbyteries, synods, and General Assemblies are the property in perpetuity of said governing bodies or their legal successors. When congregations, synods, or presbyteries are dissolved, their records are held for them by the next higher governing body within whose bounds they were before dissolution. All minutes and other official records of existing and dissolved sessions, minutes and other official records of existing and dissolved presbyteries and synods that are no longer required for frequent reference, are to be deposited for preserving and servicing with the Department of History or in a temperature and humidity controlled environment of a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is the responsibility of the clerk of each governing body to make recommendation to that governing body for the permanent safekeeping of the governing body's records. All governing bodies are strongly encouraged to microfilm their official records.

G-9.0407
 General
 Administrative
 Review

a. The congregation of a particular church and the committees, bodies, and organizations of that church shall report annually all proceedings and actions to the session, which shall review and summarize them and incorporate the summary in its minutes.

Annual Reporting

b. The moderator, the stated clerk, the councils, commissions, committees, boards, agencies, and organizations of presbyteries and synods shall report annually all proceedings and actions to that governing body, which shall review them.

Review of Records

c. The moderator, stated clerk, the councils, commissions, committees, boards, agencies, and organizations of the General Assembly shall report at least biennially all proceedings and actions to the General Assembly, which shall review them.

d. Every governing body above a session shall review the records of the proceedings of the next lower governing body.

(1) Presbyteries shall review the records of sessions annually. If a session shall fail to submit its records for this purpose, the presbytery shall order them to be produced at a specific time.

(2) Synods shall review the records of presbyteries annually. If a presbytery shall fail to submit its records for this purpose, the synod shall order them to be produced at a specific time.

(3) The General Assembly shall review the records of synods at least biennially. If a synod shall fail to submit its records for this purpose, the General Assembly shall order them to be produced at a specific time.

G-9.0408
 Special
 Administrative
 Review

If a higher governing body learns at any time of any irregularity or delinquency by a lower governing body, it may require the governing body to produce any records and take appropriate action. (G-12.0102n, G-12.0304, G-13.0103k,n)

G-9.0409
 Manner of
 Review

a. In reviewing the proceedings of a lower governing body, the higher governing body shall determine, either from the records of those proceedings or from any other information as may come to its attention, whether:

- (1) The proceedings have been correctly recorded;
- (2) The proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;^c
- (3) The proceedings have been prudent and equitable;

(4) The proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church;

(5) The lawful injunctions of a higher governing body have been obeyed.

Who May Not Vote

b. When the proceedings of a lower governing body are being reviewed by a higher governing body, the members of the higher governing body who are also members of the lower governing body may participate in discussion but shall not vote.

G-9.0410
Action of Higher Governing Body

It is ordinarily sufficient for the higher governing body to record in its own proceedings, and in those under review, its approval, disapproval, or correction. If necessary, the higher governing body may direct the lower governing body to reconsider and correct an irregularity or cure a delinquency.

G-9.0411
Review and Correction by Judicial Process

In addition to administrative review, review and correction of a lower governing body and of a council or an agency of the General Assembly may be obtained by judicial process by one or more persons or governing bodies filing a complaint in accordance with the provisions of D-6.0000.

G-9.0500

5. Committees and Commissions

G-9.0501
Committee

a. A committee is appointed either to study and recommend appropriate action or to carry out directions or decisions already made by a governing body. It shall make a full report to the governing body that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by the governing body.

Membership

b. Committees of governing bodies above the session shall consist of laypersons and ministers of the Word and Sacrament with at least one half the members being laypersons.

G-9.0502
Commission

A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a governing body. The appointing body shall state specifically the scope of power given to a commission. A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted to its governing body to be incorporated in its minutes and to be regarded as the actions of the governing body itself.

G-9.0503
Administrative and Judicial

a. Commissions appointed by sessions, presbyteries, synods, or the General Assembly may be either administrative or judicial, except in the case of sessions, which may appoint only administrative commissions. The functions ordinarily entrusted to an administrative commission are:

(1) to ordain ministers of the Word and Sacrament and to install them in permanent pastoral relations;

(2) to organize churches. When such commissions are appointed by a presbytery to organize new congregations (G-11.0103h), the presbytery may authorize that commission to assume any or all powers and responsibilities of a session (G-10.0102) for the benefit and ministry of the new congregation. The presbytery may authorize the commission to delegate such powers and responsibilities to a committee of the new congregation;

(a) For immigrant fellowships with roots in the Reformed tradition, if the presbytery determines (1) that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it and (2) that the chosen lay leadership of the immigrant fellowship is equivalent to elders and session, then the presbytery or its administrative commission may recognize that status as equivalent and proceed to recognize those leaders as elders. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0300.

(b) For immigrant fellowships the presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it, grant designated leader(s) of a fellowship voice and vote in the meetings of presbytery on an annual basis.

(3) to merge churches;

(4) to visit particular churches, governing bodies, or other organizations of the church reported to be affected with disorder,^d and to inquire into and settle the difficulties therein, except that no commission shall have the power to dissolve a pastoral relationship unless such power has been specifically delegated to it by the appointing body;

(5) to receive candidates under the care of presbytery (G-14.0401);

(6) in the case of administrative commissions appointed by sessions, to ordain and install elders and deacons, and to visit organizations within a particular church and settle differences therein.

(7) To make pastoral inquiry in the event that jurisdiction in a judicial proceeding is ended as a result of the death of, or renunciation of jurisdiction by, the person accused of the disciplinary offense of “sexual abuse of another person.” (D-10.0401b) The inquiry shall:

- (a) not be a part of the church’s judicial proceedings;
- (b) be empowered to receive witnesses and to consider evidence; and
- (c) reach a determination of truth related to the accusation and make a full report to the governing body who appointed it, including recommendations for appropriate action.

Judicial

b. The functions of a judicial commission are to consider and decide a case of process for the governing body according to the Rules of Discipline. (See D-5.0000 on Permanent Judicial Commissions.)

Additional Duties

c. A commission may be assigned additional duties as a committee, the reporting of which shall be handled as is a committee’s report.

G-9.0504
Membership

a. An administrative commission of a session shall consist of at least two elders and the moderator of the session or other minister of the Word and Sacrament installed in a permanent relationship within the particular church governed by the session.

Equal Number of
Ministers and Elders

b. Administrative and judicial commissions of presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly shall be composed of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either an elder or a minister of the Word and Sacrament. The minimum number and distribution of members shall be:

General Assembly

(1) for the General Assembly, not fewer than fifteen members with at least one member from each of its constituent synods;

- Synod (2) for a synod, not fewer than eleven members with, insofar as practicable, not more than one member from any one of its constituent presbyteries;
- Presbytery (3) for a presbytery, not fewer than seven members, with not more than one of its elder members from any one of its constituent churches. For the performance of functions set forth in G-9.0503a(1), a presbytery may reduce the number to five members with not more than one of the elders from any one church.
- Quorum c. The quorum of an administrative commission shall be a majority of the members, unless the appointing governing body fixes the quorum at a higher number. The quorum of a judicial commission shall be a majority of the members. (D-5.0204)
- G-9.0505 Decisions a. The decision of an administrative commission shall be the action of the appointing governing body from the time of its completion by the commission and the announcement, where relevant, of the action to parties affected by it. Such decision shall be transmitted in writing to the stated clerk of the governing body, who shall report it to the governing body at its next meeting. A governing body may rescind or amend an action of an administrative commission in the same way actions of the governing body may be modified.
- Hearings and Fair Procedures b. (1) When an administrative commission has been appointed to settle differences within a church, a governing body, or an organization of the church, it shall, before making its final decision, afford to all persons to be affected by the decision fair notice and an opportunity to be heard on the matters at issue. (See G-9.0503a(4), a(6), G-9.0505b–d) Fair notice shall consist of a short and plain statement of the matters at issue as identified by the commission and of the time and place for a hearing upon the matters at issue. The hearing shall include at least an opportunity for all persons in interest to have their positions on the matters at issue stated orally.

(2) Whenever the administrative commission has been empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship and the administrative commission chooses to exercise that power, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation at which the commission shall hear the positions of the pastor and the members if they choose to speak. The pastor shall be accorded the right to hear

the concerns expressed by members in the meeting and to have reasonable time to respond during the meeting. (See G-14.0610, G-14.0611, G-14.0612, G-11.0103o).

Additional
Procedural
Process

c. In its absolute discretion, a commission may, in particular proceedings, afford additional procedural process such as that afforded in cases of judicial process, either upon motion of persons in interest or on its own motion.

d. In any case where allegations or assertions concerning individuals are allegations of an offense, the procedures in the Rules of Discipline for a disciplinary case shall be followed.

G-9.0600

6. Mediation Provisions

G-9.0601
Mediation or
Conciliation

Governing bodies may establish a system of mediation or conciliation for remedial matters that may be used prior to or during judicial process. In such a system, care must be taken to observe the provisions of the Rules of Discipline.

G-9.0602
Participation

Participation in this process of mediation or conciliation may not be required of any party.

[Historical Note: The original text of G-9.0600–.0601 was stricken by action of the 203rd General Assembly (1991). The original text of G-9.0602 was stricken by action of the 201st General Assembly (1989).]

G-9.0700

7. Administrative Staff

G-9.0701
Executives

a. The executives of the presbyteries and synods shall be the administrators of those governing bodies, accountable to the governing bodies, through their councils, for the implementation of decisions and matters of strategy, program, and resources. They shall also provide staff services for the agencies and committees of the governing bodies. Additional responsibilities, along with the process of calling, the method of annual review of work, and the matter of reelection or termination of employment, shall be set forth clearly in the manuals called for in G-9.0405, above.

Election of
Executives

b. Each presbytery may elect an executive presbyter in consultation with synod council, or other unit designated by the synod when there is no council, and may do so jointly with other presbyteries if program and resources make that necessary. Each synod may elect an executive in consultation with the General Assembly Mission Council.

G-9.0702
Other
Administrative
Staff

Other administrative staff positions in presbyteries may be authorized by the presbytery in consultation with the synod council or other unit designated by the synod when there is no council. Other administrative staff positions in synod may be authorized by the synod in consultation with the General Assembly Mission Council.

G-9.0703
General Assembly
Agency Staff

General Assembly agencies shall elect an executive or executives, subject, however, to confirmation by the General Assembly.

G-9.0704
Participation and
Representation

All executive and administrative staff positions in all governing bodies above the session shall be filled in accordance with the principles of participation and representation found in G-9.0104 and with the requirement that a representative search committee for these positions be set forth clearly in the manuals called for in G-9.0405.

G-9.0705
Termination of Synod
and Presbytery Staff

The relationship between executives or other administrative staff of presbyteries and synods and their respective governing bodies may be dissolved by majority vote of the electing governing body on request of the staff member or on recommendation of the council or a special committee or commission of the electing governing body. When the council, committee, or commission has decided to prepare a recommendation to terminate, it shall notify the person in writing, stating the reasons for proposing to terminate, and offering the staff member an opportunity to resign or to request a hearing before the recommendations are adopted and reported by the council, committee, or commission to the governing body for action. The hearing shall be one in which the staff person may appear personally with counsel (D-7.0301, D-11.0301) to respond to the findings of the committee or commission and present reasons and evidence why the relationship should not be terminated. The hearing shall afford safeguards as in cases of process, following the rules of evidence in the Rules of Discipline, Chapter XIV (D-14.0000). A record shall be made of the hearing, which shall become a part of the record filed under D-6.0304 in the event of a judicial complaint following the final action of the governing body.

G-9.0706
Temporary
Administrative
Staff

When a presbytery, synod, or General Assembly executive or administrative staff position is vacant, or when the incumbent is unable to perform her or his duties, the presbytery, synod, or General Assembly agency may secure the services of a temporary executive or administrative staff person. Temporary

administrative positions include acting or interim presbytery, synod, or General Assembly agency executives and administrative staff persons. No one serving in a temporary position may be hired to fulfill that same position on a permanent basis as the next permanent executive or administrative staff person, except by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery, synod, or General Assembly agency, provided the original search process for such temporary staff position was conducted in full compliance with the provisions of G-9.0704.

G-9.0707
Emeritus/Emerita

When any executive or associate executive of a presbytery or synod retires, and that governing body is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called meeting of the governing body, elect him or her as executive emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no authority or duty. This action may take effect after the formal dissolution of the executive relationship or anytime thereafter.

G-9.0800

8. Nominating Committee

G-9.0801
Nominating
Committee

a. Each presbytery and synod shall elect a nominating committee broadly representative of the member churches of the presbytery or presbyteries, with a membership of ministers of the Word and Sacrament, **and elders, women and men, in numbers as nearly equal as possible.** The nominating committee shall consist of three classes, each serving for a three-year term except where initial classes of one- and two-year terms are necessary to establish regular rotation.

Responsibility

b. The nominating committee shall nominate persons to fill all vacancies on continuing committees (except the nominating committee), councils, boards, and other bodies that require election by the presbytery or synod. Consideration shall be given to the nomination of equal numbers of ministers of the Word and Sacrament, laymen, and laywomen (i.e., one third each), except that women elders and men elders shall be nominated to the committee on ministry to which presbytery functions may be delegated. (G-11.0501, G-12.0102d, G-13.0111, G-13.0202)

c. The nominating committee shall consult, at least annually, with the committee on representation of its own governing body. If the committee on representation of that governing body has been granted an exception under the provisions of G-9.0106, the committee on representation of the

next higher governing body shall be invited to participate in that consultation.

Relevant Provisions

d. In nominating persons to particular responsibilities the nominating committee shall observe the relevant provisions of G-6.0106, G-9.0104, G-11.0103d, G-11.0302, G-12.0102d, G-13.0108, and G-13.0202.

G-9.0900

9. Summary of Structures

G-9.0901
Councils,
Commissions,
Committees

Within this Constitution, it has been assumed that the governing bodies beyond the session will delegate particular aspects of their task to councils, commissions, and committees. The references made to such agencies are for clarification of organizing for mission, of establishing offices, and of administering the program of the church. Reference to these is given without formally entitling them wherever possible so that governing bodies may have freedom in structuring themselves and in naming their agencies. In several instances—such as the committees on representation, the General Assembly Mission Council, and the presbytery’s committee on ministry—definite titles are given in order to regularize the procedures that shall enable the governing bodies to work together in joint mission. Reference to such agencies, designated by functions or by formal titles, is not intended to limit the governing bodies to these structures but to describe those which will expedite the mutual work of the whole church.

G-9.0902
Structures Listed

Structures specified within this Constitution are:

Presbyteries

a. In the Presbytery

A council for the coordination of mission and program (G-11.0103v)

Committee on Representation (G-9.0105, G-11.0302)

Committee on Ministry (G-11.0500, G-14.0530)

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (G-14.0400)

Nominating Committee (G-9.0800, G-11.0103w)

Permanent Judicial Commission (D-5.0000)

Synod

b. In the Synod

A council for the coordination of mission and program. (G-12.0102r) (The only exception to this requirement shall be when a synod chooses to retain the coordinating function for itself.)

Committee on Representation (G-9.0105, G-12.0301)
Nominating Committee (G-9.0800, G-12.0102s)
Permanent Judicial Commission (D-5.0000)

General Assembly

c. In the General Assembly

General Assembly Mission Council (G-13.0200)
Committee on Representation (G-9.0105, G-13.0108)
Nominating Committee (G-13.0111)
Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-13.0112)
Board responsible for pensions (G-14.0534, G-16.0201t, G-17.0201j)
Permanent Judicial Commission (D-5.0000)

CHAPTER X
THE SESSION

G-10.0000

G-10.0100

1. General

G-10.0101
Membership

The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service.^a All members of the session, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote.

G-10.0102
Responsibilities

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.^b It therefore has the responsibility and power

a. to provide opportunities for evangelism to be learned and practiced in and by the church, that members may be better equipped to articulate their faith, to witness in word and deed to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and to invite persons into a new life in Christ, in accordance with G-3.0300;

b. to receive members into the church upon profession of faith,^c upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon satisfactory certification of transfer of church membership, provided that membership shall not be denied any person because of race, economic or social circumstances, or any other reason not related to profession of faith;

c. to lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole Church in the world, in accordance with G-3.0000;

d. to provide for the worship of the people of God, including the preaching of the Word, the sharing of the Sacraments, and for the music program, in keeping with the principles in the Directory for Worship, and to appeal to the presbytery for a duly trained and authorized elder under the provisions of G-11.0103 in those extenuating circumstances where an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament is not available to meet the needs for the administration of the Lord's Supper;

e. to provide for the growth of its members and for their equipment for ministry through personal and pastoral care, educational programs including the church school, sharing in fellowship and mutual support, and opportunities for witness and service in the world;

f. to develop and supervise the church school and the educational program of the church;

g. to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness;

h. to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship of money and time and talents, developing effective ways for encouraging and gathering the offerings of the people and assuring that all offerings are distributed to the objects toward which they were contributed;

i. to establish the annual budget, determine the distribution of the church's benevolences, and order offerings for Christian purposes, providing full information to the congregation of its decisions in such matters;

j. to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God;

k. to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session;

l. to instruct, examine, ordain, install, and welcome into common ministry elders and deacons on their election by the congregation and to inquire into their faithfulness in fulfilling their responsibilities;

m. to delegate and to supervise the work of the board of deacons and the board of trustees and all other organizations and task forces within the congregation, providing for support, report, review, and control;

n. to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including employment of nonordained staff, with concern for equal employment opportunity, fair employment practices, personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff, including all employees;

o. to provide for the management of the property of the church, including determination of the appropriate use of church buildings and facilities, and to obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect the facilities, programs, and officers, including members of the session, staff, board of trustees, and deacons;

p. to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the higher governing bodies of the church, including

(1) electing commissioners to presbytery^d and receiving their reports; sessions are encouraged to elect commissioners to the presbytery for at least one year, preferably two or three;

- (2) nominating to presbytery elders who may be considered for election to synod or General Assembly;
- (3) in both the above responsibilities, implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure fair representation in the decision making of the church;
- (4) observing and carrying out the instructions of the higher governing bodies consistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- (5) welcoming representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- (6) proposing to the presbytery and, through it, to the synod and the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;
- (7) sending annually to the stated clerk of the presbytery statistical and other information according to the requirements of the presbytery.

q. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships necessary for the life and mission of the church in its locality;

r. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;^c

s. to keep an accurate roll of the membership of the church, in accordance with G-10.0302, and to grant certificates of transfer to other churches, which when issued for parents shall include the names of their children specifying whether they have been baptized, and which when issued for an elder or deacon shall include the record of ordination.

G-10.0103
Moderator

a. The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of the session and the session shall not meet without the pastor except as hereunder provided. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session. When it may appear advisable for prudential reasons that some minister other than the pastor should preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the session, invite a minister of the same presbytery to do so. A presbytery may appoint a lay pastor as moderator of session to the church to which she or he is commissioned. The person assigned to the commissioned lay pastor as mentor and supervisor shall also supervise his or her work as moderator. In addition, the

moderator of the session of a church with a vacant pulpit may request an elder who is a member of the presbytery’s committee on ministry, the stated clerk, executive presbyter, or associate executive presbyter, to preside; such elder may not moderate the session of the church of which that elder is a member. In the case of the sickness or absence of the pastor the same expedient may be adopted; or the session, after having obtained the approval of the pastor, may convene and elect another of its own members to preside.

When Without a Pastor

b. When a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the session shall be the minister appointed for that purpose by the presbytery, or a minister of the same presbytery invited by the session to preside on a particular occasion. When it is impossible for such a minister to attend, the session may elect one of its own members to preside.

Judicial Cases

c. In all judicial cases, the moderator of the session shall be a minister of the presbytery to which the church belongs.

G-10.0200

2. Meetings

G-10.0201 Meetings

The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. The moderator^f of the session may call a special meeting of the session when he or she judges it necessary and shall do so when requested in writing by any two members of the session. The session shall also meet when directed to do so by presbytery. Reasonable notice of all special meetings must be given when other than routine business is to be transacted. The session may invite members of the congregation to attend and observe its meetings if it so desires, without restricting its right to meet in executive session whenever circumstances indicate the wisdom of doing so.

G-10.0202 Quorum

A quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders but no fewer than two, except for the reception and dismissal of members, when the quorum shall be the moderator and two members of the session. The session may fix its own quorum at any higher number.

G-10.0300

3. Minutes and Records

G-10.0301 Minutes

Each session shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings which shall be submitted at least once each year to the presbytery for its general review and control. (G-11.0103x,

G-9.0407–.0411) The minutes shall state the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men, age groups, and persons with disabilities, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. Minutes and other official records of the session, which shall include minutes of congregational meetings and records of the board of deacons and the board of trustees of the particular church, are the property of the session, and the clerk shall be responsible for their preservation. They shall be available to the presbytery upon request and may be stored with the denomination’s historical agency.

G-10.0302
Rolls and Registers

Every session shall maintain rolls of members as defined by G-5.0300, and registers as provided below.

a. Membership Rolls. The names of the members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the session whenever the session is fully satisfied that such action is justified.

Baptized Members

(1) Baptized Members’ Roll. The baptized members’ roll shall list the names of those persons baptized in the particular church who have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and children of active members or of ministers of the Word and Sacrament related to the particular church, when such children have been baptized elsewhere.

Active Members

(2) (a) Active Members’ Roll. The active members’ roll shall list the names of those who have been received into the membership of the church and who are active in the church’s work and worship. The number of members on this roll shall be reported to the General Assembly annually.

Affiliate Members
Certified

(b) An active member who has temporarily moved from the community may become an affiliate member of another church of this denomination or of a denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly, in which case the session may issue a certificate of good standing. (G-15.0201) The certificate shall be directed to a particular church named therein, shall commend the member to its pastoral care, and shall be valid for two years. Upon the issuance of the certificate, the session shall retain the name of the member on the active roll of the church until the person is received into membership in the other church.

When Active
Members Move

(c) When a member moves and can no longer be active in the work and worship of the church of membership, it shall be that person's duty to become an active member of a church in the community where that person is living. The session of the church of membership shall inform the person of this duty as soon as practicable and shall notify a church in the new community and request it to provide pastoral care with a view to membership. In addition, notice shall be sent to either the presbytery office or to the stated clerk of the presbytery, or both.

Inactive Members

(3) (a) Inactive Members' Roll. The inactive members' roll shall list the names of those who have been removed from the active members' roll because of their failure, in the judgment of the session, to participate in the church's work and worship. No member shall be transferred from the active to the inactive roll until that member shall have failed intentionally to participate in the work and worship of the church for a period of one year and until the session shall have made diligent effort to discover the cause of the member's nonparticipation and to restore the member to activity in the church's work and worship. Any member whose name is so transferred shall be notified of this action.

Nonresident
Member

(b) A nonresident member to whom the notice required above has been given may after one year be placed on the inactive members' roll. The session shall then advise the person at the last known address to request a certificate of transfer to a Christian church in the community of residence.

Affiliate Members
Received

(4) Affiliate Members' Roll. The affiliate members' roll shall list the names of those who have been received into affiliate membership by the session and who are active in the church's work and worship. Affiliate membership must be renewed every two years.

Deletion from Rolls

b. The session may delete names from the rolls of the church in the following circumstances:

Certificate of Transfer

(1) When requested, the session shall issue a certificate of transfer to a particular church setting forth the membership status of the person. The church receiving the certificate shall determine whether to

	<p>receive the person as a member and the conditions upon which that person shall be received. When a certificate of transfer has been issued, the name of the member shall be retained on the appropriate roll by the church issuing the certificate until the person is received into membership in the other church. As soon as the person is received, the receiving church shall notify the session issuing the certificate of the member's reception, whereupon the session shall delete the name.</p>
When Church Is Dissolved	<p>(2) When a church is dissolved, the presbytery of jurisdiction shall take possession of its records, have jurisdiction over its members, and grant them certificates of transfer to other churches.</p>
Request Termination	<p>(3) When a member, whether active or inactive, requests that membership be terminated, the session, after making diligent effort to persuade the member to retain membership, may delete that person's name from the active or inactive roll.</p>
Joins Another Church	<p>(4) When a member joins another church without a regular transfer or renounces the jurisdiction of this church, the session shall delete the member's name from any rolls on which it has been listed.</p>
Nonresident Member Inactive	<p>(5) When a nonresident member has been given the notices required above, and that member's name has been on the inactive roll for one year, the session may delete that person's name from the roll without further notice.</p>
Moved and Unknown	<p>(6) When a member moves and the session is unable, after due and diligent search, to ascertain the member's place of residence, the session, after one year of absence, may delete that person's name from any roll on which it has been listed.</p>
Inactive Roll for Two Years	<p>(7) When a resident church member has been transferred from the active to the inactive roll, it shall be the duty of the session to provide that member pastoral care. If pastoral care for a period of two years fails to accomplish that person's restoration as an active member, the session may without further notice delete the person's name from the roll.</p>
Member Dies	<p>(8) When a member dies, the session shall record the date of death and delete the name from the roll.</p>

Registers of
Marriages, Baptisms,
Officers

- c. Registers. The session shall keep complete registers of
 - (1) Marriages, including marriages of all members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property;
 - (2) Baptisms
 - (a) Infant Baptisms. Include name, parents’ names, and date of birth of those being baptized and the names of persons presenting the children for Baptism.
 - (b) Adult Baptisms. Include name, parents’ names, and date of birth of those being baptized.
 - (3) Elders, with the name of the church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and the record of removals;
 - (4) Deacons, with the name of the church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and the record of removals;
 - (5) Pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.

G-10.0400

4. Church Finances

G-10.0401
Finances

The treasurer shall be elected annually by the session, if permitted by the state in which the church is located, and his or her work shall be supervised by the session, or by specific assignment to the board of deacons or trustees. Those in charge of the various funds in the church shall report at least annually to the session, and more often when requested. The following minimum standards of financial procedure shall be observed:

- a. The counting and recording of all offerings by at least two duly appointed persons, or a fidelity bonded person;
- b. The keeping of adequate books and records to reflect all financial transactions, open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;
- c. Periodic reporting of the financial activities to the board or boards vested with financial oversight at least annually, preferably more often;

d. A full financial review of all books and records relating to finances once each year by a public accountant or public accounting firm or a committee of members versed in accounting procedures. Such auditors should not be related to the treasurer (or treasurers). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRESBYTERY

G-11.0000

G-11.0100

G-11.0101
Membership

1. General

Presbytery is a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches^a and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within a certain district. When a presbytery meets, each church shall be represented by an elder^b commissioned by the session with the following additional provisions:

a. Churches with membership over 500 shall be represented as follows:

- 501–1000—2 elders
- 1001–1500—3 elders
- 1501–2000—4 elders
- 2001–3000—5 elders

From 3,001 members there shall be an additional elder representative for each 1,000 additional active members or major fraction thereof.

b. When the number of resident ministers entitled to vote in the presbytery is greater than the number of elders so entitled, it shall redress this imbalance annually by providing for the election, appointment, or selection of additional elders, paying special attention to the concerns of G-9.0104. Presbyteries facing an imbalance due to a large number of resident honorably retired minister members may, by presbytery rule, use active participation of honorably retired members as a criterion in determining balance.

c. Each elder elected moderator shall be enrolled as a member of the presbytery for the term of office, whether or not commissioned by his or her session. Each elder elected an officer (other than moderator), a chairperson of a standing committee, or a member of the council of presbytery may be enrolled as a member of the presbytery for the term of office, whether or not commissioned by his or her session. Each elder elected by a presbytery as executive presbyter, associate executive presbyter, or other exempt staff position, may be enrolled as a member of the presbytery for the duration of service in such staff position, whether or not commissioned by his or her session.

G-11.0102
Minimum

In each presbytery the minimum number of ministers shall be ten and the minimum number of churches with duly constituted sessions (G-7.0202a) shall likewise be ten. In an

isolated area, upon recommendation of the synod, the General Assembly may permit a presbytery to be organized with fewer than these minimums, provided that there shall be at least five ministers in each presbytery.

G-11.0103
Responsibilities

The presbytery is responsible for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical district. It therefore has the responsibility and power

a. to develop strategy for the mission of the church in its area consistent with G-3.0000;

b. to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility;

c. to initiate mission through a variety of forms in light of the larger strategy of the synod and the General Assembly;

d. to implement, consistent with G-9.0104, the principles of participation, inclusiveness, and affirmative action in employing its personnel and in establishing the membership of its committees, councils, boards, and other policy-making and policy-recommending bodies, in order to assure fair representation in its decision making and in the election of commissioners to synod and the General Assembly. Its committee on representation shall report directly to the presbytery, and shall be empowered to make recommendations to correct situations of unbalanced representation, including the recommendation that the nominating committee reconsider its nominations;

e. to counsel with a particular church where the various constituencies of the congregation are not represented on a session;

f. to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of leadership development, church officer training, worship, nurture, witness, service, stewardship, equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;

g. to provide pastoral care for the churches and members of presbytery, visiting sessions and ministers on a regular basis (G-11.0502c);

h. to organize new churches and to receive and unite churches in consultation with their members. When two or more churches of a presbytery unite, the pastor or pastors of the former churches may continue as or become pastor or pastors of the united church if the uniting churches agree and specify those relationships in the plan of union, with the concurrence of the presbytery;

- i. to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members;
- j. to control the location of new churches and of churches desiring to move;
- k. to take special oversight of churches without pastors, including the authority to select, train, examine, and commission lay pastors and may authorize them to administer the Lord's Supper (G-14.0562a);
- l. to enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament by enrolling them as inquirers, to receive inquirers as candidates, and to certify candidates as ready for examination for ordination;^d
- m. to elect elder and minister readers of examinations for candidates for ordination at the request of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates;
- n. to ordain, receive, dismiss, install, remove, and discipline ministers,^e to plan for the integration of new ministers into the life and work of presbytery, to establish minimum compensation and benefit requirements for all pastoral calls (G-14.0534) and for all calls to Certified Christian Educators and guidelines for compensation and benefits for Certified Associate Christian Educators employed by the churches of the presbytery (G-14.0730b), to provide services of recognition for Certified Christian Educators (G-14.0731), and to find in order, approve, and record in the presbytery minutes the full terms of all calls, and changes of calls approved by the presbytery;
- o. to establish the pastoral relationship and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or when it finds that the church's mission under the Word imperatively demands it;
- p. to designate ministers to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Such ministers may administer the Sacraments at times and places approved by a governing body, or in conformity to other conditions specified by a governing body. The applicable provisions of W-2.3000, W-2.4000, and W-3.3600 shall be followed;
- q. to receive under its care persons preparing for professional service in the church, and to commission them when appropriate (G-14.0140);
- r. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;

s. to assume original jurisdiction in any case in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. Whenever, after a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session in question, the presbytery of jurisdiction shall determine that the session of a particular church is unable or unwilling to manage wisely the affairs of its church, the presbytery may appoint an administrative commission (G-9.0503) with the full power of a session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct;

t. to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the higher governing bodies of the church, including

(1) electing commissioners to the synod and to the General Assembly and receiving their reports,

(2) seeing that the orders of higher governing bodies are observed and carried out,

(3) proposing to the synod or the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;^f

u. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships which will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its district;

v. to establish and superintend the agencies necessary for its work, including a presbytery council, providing for the regular review of the functional relationship between presbytery's structure and its mission. The presbytery may, by its own established rules, assign to its council responsibility for action between meetings of presbytery on such specific areas of its responsibilities as it shall deem appropriate, assign to its committee on ministry those powers specified in G-11.0502h, and assign to its committee on preparation for ministry authority to dismiss candidates, enroll inquirers, and certify candidates as ready for examination for ordination; with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery (G-9.0403, 14.0450);

w. to establish a nominating committee composed of equal numbers of ministers, laymen, and laywomen (i.e., one third each);

x. to review session minutes and records at least once each year;

y. to consider and act upon requests from congregations for permission to take the actions regarding real property as described in G-8.0000;

- z. to authorize specific elders for periods not exceeding one year at a time, to administer or preside at the Lord’s Supper in specific circumstances and with proper instruction by presbytery in the doctrine and administration of the Lord’s Supper, when it deems it necessary to meet the needs for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper that cannot otherwise be met;
- aa. to deal with prevailing, emerging, and emergency issues of racism, racial violence, and racial injustices, as well as with any ideology that promotes racial oppression in the church and in the surrounding political and social contexts.

G-11.0200

2. Meetings

G-11.0201
Meetings

The presbytery shall hold stated meetings at least twice each year. The moderator shall call a special meeting at the request, or with the concurrence, of two ministers and two elders, the elders being of different churches. Should the moderator be unable to act, the stated clerk shall, under the same conditions, issue the call. If both moderator and stated clerk are unable to act, any three ministers and three elders, the elders being of different churches, may call a special meeting. The synod may direct the presbytery to convene a special meeting for the transaction of designated business. Notice of a special meeting shall be sent not less than ten days in advance to each minister and to the session of every church. The notice shall set out the purpose of the meeting, and no other business than that listed in the notice shall be transacted.

G-11.0202
Quorum

A quorum of the presbytery shall be any three minister members and the elder members present, provided that at least three churches are represented by elders. The presbytery may fix its own quorum at any higher number.^g

G-11.0203
Corresponding
Members

Presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament or elders) in good standing in other governing bodies of this church or in any other Christian church, who are present at any meeting of the presbytery, may be invited to sit as corresponding members, with voice but without vote. A presbytery may invite ministers of other presbyteries who are laboring within its bounds to sit as corresponding members with voice but without vote for the period of their service.

G-11.0300

3. Other Provisions

G-11.0301
Participation

In electing members to its council and permanent committees, the presbytery shall adhere to the principle of participation and representation expressed in G-9.0104, et seq.

G-11.0302
Committee on
Representation

The presbytery's committee on representation shall advise presbytery's nominating committee of any need for nominations in particular categories needing increased representation and shall regularly inform the presbytery of its progress toward fair representation of the categories of persons listed in G-4.0403.

G-11.0303
Staff

The presbytery may authorize the administrative staff services of an executive presbyter and other staff as needed. For purposes of coordination, the presbytery shall consult through its council (or other appropriate committee or representative) with the synod (or its council or other committee or representative) concerning the overall mission needs of synod, as well as the need for financial assistance in maintaining presbytery staff services. (G-12.0302) In the employment of all personnel, including administrative staff, the presbytery shall observe the practice of consultation set forth in G-9.0404, and the provisions of the churchwide plan for affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. (G-13.0201b)

G-11.0304
Budget

The presbytery shall have a presbytery general mission budget to support the church's mission within its area. As the presbytery raises and expends these funds, it shall do so in light of the priorities of the whole church. The presbytery shall make its plans and determine its general mission budget after receiving recommendations from the synod and in light of the comprehensive strategy of the whole church as represented in the synod and the General Assembly.

G-11.0305
Records

a. The presbytery shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted at least once each year to the synod for its general review and control. It shall report to the synod and to the General Assembly every year the condition and progress of the church within its bounds during the year and all important changes which have taken place including ordinations; certifications of Christian educators; the receiving, dismissing, and deaths of ministers; and the organizing, uniting, dividing, or dissolving of churches.

Property of
Presbytery

b. Minutes and other official records of the presbytery are the property of the presbytery, and the stated clerk is responsible for their preservation.

G-11.0306
Annual Report

The presbytery shall send annually to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly lists of its ministers, Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators, and churches and statistical and other information according to the requirements of the General Assembly.

G-11.0307
Audit

The presbytery shall have a full financial review of all books and records relating to finances once a year by a public accountant or public accounting firm or a committee of church members versed in accounting procedures. Such auditors should not be related to the treasurer (or treasurers). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.

G-11.0308
Insurance

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

G-11.0400

4. Minister Members

G-11.0401
Membership of
Ministers

a. Every minister shall ordinarily be a member of the presbytery where his or her work is situated. A minister called to work not under the jurisdiction of a presbytery may apply for reception to the presbytery in which he or she will be resident, or to another presbytery, or retain membership in the presbytery where he or she is currently a member. The presbytery may grant a minister permission to engage in work which is outside its geographic bounds or which is not under its jurisdiction, but no presbytery shall permit a minister to engage in work which is within the geographic bounds of another presbytery and which is properly within the responsibility of another presbytery without consent of that presbytery. Such permission and consent shall be reviewed and renewed annually. The stated clerk of the presbytery shall inform ministers who seek permission to labor outside the bounds of the presbytery of their membership that they must first seek permission to labor within the bounds of the other presbytery. In January of each year the stated clerk of the presbytery of which the ministers are members shall correspond with those other presbyteries in which such ministers labor, informing them of the ministers' addresses. A minister who is serving as a minister in a church outside the United States may, with the approval of presbytery, accept ministerial membership in that church for the period of such service without affecting his or her membership in the presbytery of this church. (G-11.0411)

Authority to
Labor

b. The authority for granting permission to labor within or outside the bounds of the presbytery may be delegated by presbytery to its council or committee on ministry, with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery.

G-11.0402
Minister Seeking
Membership

The presbytery, through its appropriate committee, shall examine each minister or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church, except as provided in G-14.0481. Every minister seeking membership in a presbytery shall have a call to a pastoral relation within the presbytery, or from a governing body or agency as defined in G-11.0410, or be entering a work defined in G-11.0411, for which the receiving presbytery shall give its permission, or shall be honorably retired as defined in G-11.0412.

G-11.0403
Criteria for
Ministry of
Continuing
Members

A presbytery shall determine the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200 and the following standards:

- a. The ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order* of this church.
- b. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.
- c. The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0482.
- d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions.
- e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation.

G-11.0404
Ministers of Other
Denominations

Ministers of other denominations may be received by the presbytery as follows:

- a. Ministers of other denominations, when applying for membership in a presbytery, shall furnish credentials and evidence of good standing acceptable to the presbytery or its appropriate committee, and also submit satisfactory evidence of possessing the qualifications of character and scholarship required of candidates of this church. They shall

(1) present a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and a theological degree from an institution acceptable to the presbytery;

(2) answer satisfactorily the questions on the examinations required of candidates for ordination;

(3) articulate their Christian faith and demonstrate an acceptable knowledge of theology and of the government of this church.

b. The presbytery shall not waive any of the foregoing requirements except in extraordinary cases, in which the presbytery shall follow the same procedure required in G-14.0470–.0473, for extraordinary circumstances, except that, for ministers of other Reformed churches ordained for five or more years, the exemption for some or all of the examinations required of candidates for ordination shall be by two-thirds vote of presbytery.

c. Upon report from the appropriate committee of their compliance with the above provisions, such ministers shall then be examined by the presbytery in their Christian faith, in theology, and in the system of government of this church, and at the discretion of the presbytery in other subjects, and shall answer in the affirmative questions a. to i. contained in the ordination and installation service.

d. A minister shall be required to have been called to appropriate work in this church.

Enrollment

e. When a minister of another denomination seeks membership in a presbytery of this church, that person shall, before being enrolled, furnish the presbytery with satisfactory evidence of having been removed from the roll of ministers of any and all other denominations with which the minister has previously been associated.

f. In the case of ministers for new immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it, recognize the ordination of (G-15.0202) and enroll a new immigrant minister furnishing evidence of good standing in a denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly as a member of the presbytery, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required by G-14.0450b–d. In the case of such a minister lacking such preparation, the presbytery shall undertake an evaluation of the minister’s understanding of and proficiency in Bible, Reformed

Theology, Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. If the presbytery is satisfied as to the minister’s preparation in and understanding of those areas, the presbytery may, by a three-quarters vote of those present, enroll that minister as a minister of the presbytery. Any presbytery taking such an action shall provide that minister with educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent to the presbytery for that minister’s successful ministry within the bounds of that presbytery. This section, when utilized, may result in exceptions to the procedures and requirements described in G-11.0403c, G-11.0404, G-14.0450a–d, and G-14.0470–.0473.

G-11.0405
In Correspondence
With

a. A minister of the Word and Sacrament of another denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly, whose ecclesiastical relations have been certified by that denomination, who is serving a Presbyterian congregation in a temporary, non-installed pastoral relationship (G-14.0550) other than organizing pastor, who has become a minister of a congregation or larger parish composed of denominational units, at least one of which is associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or who has become a minister serving a cooperative specialized ministry in which this church shares the sponsorship, or who has been jointly called to an administrative office by more than one denomination, one of which is this church, or a minister of a church outside the United States that is in correspondence with the General Assembly who is serving in a ministerial capacity in this church, may be enrolled for the period of this service as a member of a presbytery and have temporarily the rights and privileges of membership.

In Full
Communion

b. A minister of another denomination, with whom the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion (G-15.0201), may be called, examined, approved and installed as pastor or may serve in another ministerial capacity in this denomination and may be enrolled for the period of this service as a member of a presbytery with the rights and privileges of membership. The minister shall participate in the benefits plan of one of the denominations. If the minister is already participating in one plan, membership in that plan shall be retained. If the minister is not a member of any plan, one or another of the churches plans shall be chosen by the minister. The congregation or other employing body shall pay the fees, dues, or premiums required by the plan to which the minister belongs.

Ministers of
Other Churches

c. Ordained ministers of other Christian churches may be employed by the session of a particular church in a temporary

pastoral relationship, provided that such ministers present to the presbytery credentials of good standing in the ecclesiastical body to which they belong, and provided that presbytery gives its approval to the temporary pastoral relationship.

G-11.0406
Continuing
Members

The ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of a presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) include active members, members-at-large, and inactive members.

Active Member

a. An active member is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has been admitted to the presbytery in accordance with G-11.0401, and is now engaged in ministry that complies with all of the criteria in G-11.0403 without exception. An active member may be engaged in a validated ministry within congregations of the church (G-11.0409), in a validated ministry in other service of this church (G-11.0410), in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of this church (G-11.0411), or may be honorably retired (G-11.0412). An active member is entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery and to speak, vote, and hold office.

Member-at-Large

b. A member-at-large is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has previously been admitted to the presbytery or another presbytery as an active member, and who now, without intentional abandonment of the exercise of ministry, is no longer engaged in a ministry that complies with all the criteria in G-11.0403. A minister may be designated a member-at-large because he or she is limited in his or her ability to engage in a ministry fulfilling all of the criteria for a validated ministry because of family responsibilities or other individual circumstances which presbytery recognizes as important. A member-at-large shall comply with as many of the criteria in G-11.0403 as possible and shall be encouraged to become a parish associate in a congregation. A member-at-large is entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery and to speak, vote, and hold office. The status of each member-at-large may be granted by the presbytery upon the minister's application and shall be reviewed annually.

Inactive Member

c. An inactive member is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has previously been admitted to the presbytery or another presbytery as an active member, but is now voluntarily engaged in an occupation that does not comply with all of the criteria in G-11.0403. The presbytery may, at the minister's request or on its own initiative after notifying the minister in person or by certified mail at the last known address, determine that the minister's category of membership is that of inactive member. An inactive member is not entitled to take part in the

meetings of the presbytery or to speak, vote, hold office, or serve on committees, except that the inactive member may speak when the matter under consideration concerns that minister. The continued status of each inactive member shall be reviewed annually up to three years. If at the end of three years the minister has not been restored to active membership or membership-at-large, the presbytery shall delete that person’s name from the appropriate roll of presbytery and may give that person a certificate of membership to a particular church. (G-6.0600)

G-11.0407
Rolls

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

G-11.0408
Validated
Ministries

a. A minister of the Word and Sacrament who is an active member of presbytery may be engaged (1) in a validated ministry within congregations of this church, (2) in a validated ministry in other service of this church, (3) in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of this church, or may be (4) honorably retired.

Validated Ministry:
Call, Installation,
Recognition

b. A call to a validated ministry in other service of this church (G-11.0410) or in service beyond the jurisdiction of the church (G-11.0411) shall ordinarily be in a form which includes a description of the goals and working relationships, financial

terms, and the signatures of the minister, a representative of the presbytery, and where possible, a representative of the employing agency.

Service

c. It is appropriate for presbytery to conduct a service of installation similar to that found in W-4.4006, or a service of recognition, at the inauguration of this ministry.

G-11.0409
Service in
Congregations of
This Church

An active member engaged in a validated ministry within congregations of this church shall serve a particular church or churches as pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, stated supply, temporary supply, interim pastor, or interim associate pastor, as provided in G-6.0202 and G-14.0550.

G-11.0410
In Other Service
of This Church

An active member engaged in a validated ministry in other service of this church shall serve as a staff member of a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly of this church or of an organization related to one of these governing bodies; as a minister serving an organization sponsored by two or more denominations, one of which is this church, such as a federated church, a specialized ministry, an administrative office, or an interdenominational agency; as a partner in mission in connection with a church outside the United States of America. Before entering upon such service, the minister shall request and obtain the approval of the presbytery of membership. Changes in the terms of the call or dissolution of the relationship shall be reported to the presbytery.

G-11.0411
In Service Beyond
the Jurisdiction of
the Church

An active member engaged in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the church may be engaged in a ministerial calling consonant with the mission of the presbytery in an organization, agency, or institution in which this church has no official participation or may serve temporarily as pastor or in some other capacity in another denomination, and may, with the approval of presbytery, accept ministerial membership in that church for the period of such service without forfeiting his or her membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbytery in which he or she holds membership. Before entering upon such service the minister shall request permission of the presbytery of membership. The committee on ministry of the presbytery shall make a thorough review of the proposed ministerial function and report its recommendations to the presbytery. The committee shall determine and report whether the service complies with all of the criteria enumerated in G-11.0403, without exception. If the presbytery grants the permission requested, such permission shall be subject to review and renewal annually.

G-11.0412
Honorably Retired

a. A presbytery may designate an active minister as an honorably retired minister if that minister is in good and regular standing, or is granted the status of being in good and regular standing, at the time the minister is designated as an honorably retired minister. The status of being an honorably retired minister may be granted because of physical or mental disability, or age. The procedure for electing a new pastor is set out in G-14.0530--.0534. Presbytery may also grant the status of being an honorably retired minister to a minister member who has been granted retirement by an agency described in G-11.0410 or G-11.0411, or upon the completion of twenty years of cumulative service as an active and (or) at-large member.

Presbytery
Membership of
Honorably Retired
Ministers

b. Honorably retired ministers are encouraged to transfer their membership to the presbytery in which they live and the presbytery is encouraged to receive them. Presbyteries should encourage honorably retired ministers to use their experience and skills in creative and meaningful ways. Those who are able and willing to reengage in ministry and service to others should relate to a particular church or presbytery. For those who do not or cannot, the presbytery should provide nurture and support.

G-11.0413
Members-at-Large
and Inactive
Members

Members-at-large and inactive members remain under the care, oversight, and discipline of the presbytery. They may be transferred in their current category of membership to another presbytery with the permission of both presbyteries. All of the minister's records shall be transmitted to the receiving presbytery. The committee on ministry shall confer with each member-at-large and inactive member annually and make a recommendation to the presbytery as to whether the member should continue in the present category, be assigned another category, or be released from the exercise of ordained office. Such action may be initiated by the presbytery or at the request of the minister.

G-11.0414

[This section was stricken by action of the 217th General Assembly (2006) and can be found at G-6.0600.]

G-11.0415
Minister to Be
Placed on
Inactive Roll

a. If a minister shall be absent from the sessions of the presbytery of membership for a period of one year and shall neglect to report to that presbytery concerning residence and work, the presbytery, after making an effort to locate and counsel with the minister, shall then, without prejudice to the minister, place that minister's name on the inactive roll.

Within Other
Bounds

b. A minister of the Word and Sacrament who has received permission to labor outside the bounds of the presbytery of membership but has not received permission to labor within the bounds of the presbytery of labor shall, after a period of two years, be placed on the inactive roll.

G-11.0416
Minister Joining
Another
Denomination

When a minister of this church continues or accepts membership of any character in another denomination, except as provided in G-11.0411, the presbytery shall record the fact, delete the minister's name from the roll, and take such other action of an administrative character as may be required by the Constitution.

G-11.0500
G-11.0501
Nature and
Membership

5. Committee on Ministry

a. Each presbytery shall elect a committee on ministry to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient.

Membership,
Term and
Quorum

b. This committee shall consist of equal numbers of elders and ministers with a membership of at least six. Its quorum shall be set by presbytery and shall be at least a majority of the membership of the committee. No member shall be elected for a term of more than three years, nor shall a member serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A member having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection for at least one year.

G-11.0502
Responsibilities

The committee shall serve the presbytery in the following ways:

a. It shall visit regularly and consult with each minister of the presbytery. It shall report to the presbytery annually the type of work in which each minister of the presbytery is engaged. It shall require an annual report from every minister performing work which is not under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or a higher governing body of the church.

b. It shall make recommendations to presbytery regarding calls for the services of its ministers. Every call for the services of a minister or candidate in a pastoral relationship shall be placed in its hands and presented by it to the presbytery, with a report as to the call being in order and recommendation as to whether the call shall be placed in the hands of the minister or candidate. Every request by a minister or candidate for the presbytery's approval of a task appropriate to the ministry, though not a pastoral relationship to a particular church, shall be made by the minister or candidate through the committee and shall be reported by it to the presbytery with recommendation for presbytery's action.

c. It shall visit with each session of the presbytery at least once every three years, discussing with them the mission and ministry of the particular church and encouraging the full

participation of each session and congregation in the life and work of presbytery and of the larger church. (W-1.4002)

d. It shall counsel with churches regarding calls for permanent pastoral relations, visiting and counseling with every committee elected to nominate a pastor or associate pastor. It shall advise with the committee regarding the merits, availability, and suitability of any candidate or minister whose name is contemplated for nomination to the congregation, and shall have the privilege of suggesting names to the committee. No call to a permanent pastoral relationship shall be in order for consideration by the presbytery unless the church has received and considered the committee's counsel before action is taken to issue a call. (G-14.0530, G-14.0532) A call to a permanent pastoral relationship shall not be issued until it has been approved by the presbytery. In the case of a church receiving aid in supporting a pastor, it shall confer with both the church and that agency of presbytery charged with arranging such aid before it shall recommend to the presbytery that a call to such a church be placed in the hands of a minister. The proper agency of the presbytery shall present to the committee a statement of the presbytery's anticipated support of a pastor, which shall be attached to the call of the church.

e. It shall counsel with churches regarding the advisability of calling a designated pastor as defined in G-14.0520-.0523.

f. It shall counsel with sessions regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor, and it shall provide lists of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by the presbytery to supply vacant pulpits. Concurrence of the presbytery through its committee on ministry is required when a session invites an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor as provided for in G-14.0553.

g. It shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for ministers and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, or disability. In the case of each call, it shall report to the presbytery the steps in this implementation taken by the calling group.

h. It may be given authority by the presbytery to find in order calls issued by churches, to approve and present calls for services of ministers, to approve the examination of ministers

transferring from other presbyteries required by G-11.0402, to dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur, to grant permission to labor within or outside the bounds of the presbytery, and to dismiss ministers to other presbyteries, with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery. (G-9.0403)

i. It shall serve as an instrument of presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations between ministers and churches. Its purpose shall be to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that the difficulties may be corrected by the session of the church if possible, that the welfare of the particular church may be strengthened, that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest.

j. It shall exercise wise discretion in determining when to take cognizance of information concerning difficulties within a church, proceeding with the following steps:

(1) It may take the initiative to bring the information which has come to it to the attention of the session of the church involved, counseling with the session as to the appropriate actions to be taken in correcting the reported difficulties.

(2) It may offer its help as a mediator in case the session either finds itself unable to settle the problems peaceably or takes no steps toward settlement.

(3) It may act to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the parties concerned, or if this authority is granted by the presbytery for the specific case. When so doing, the committee shall always hold hearings which afford procedural safeguards as in cases of process, following the procedures outlined in the Rules of Discipline.

G-11.0503
Open
Communication

The committee shall be open to communication at all times with the ministers, elders who are commissioned as lay pastors, elders who are members of sessions, sessions of the presbytery, and Certified Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery.

G-11.0504
Synod and
General Assembly
Agencies

a. The presbytery’s committee on ministry may look to synod and the General Assembly for information and assistance in the matter of ministers and pastoral relations. Synods shall create the necessary agency to coordinate the work of presbytery committees. The General Assembly shall create the necessary agency to facilitate and support the work of the presbyteries and the synods in this matter.

b. The advisory handbook for committees on ministry developed by the appropriate General Assembly entity, in consultation with the Office of the General Assembly and middle governing bodies, shall provide guidance in the ordination, certification, commissioning, and oversight of the work of ministry through suggested models for procedures that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to establish their own requirements to fit local circumstances.

CHAPTER XII
THE SYNOD^a

G-12.0000

G-12.0100

1. General

G-12.0101
Membership

Synod is the unit of the church's life and mission which consists of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specific geographic region.

a. When a synod meets it shall be composed of commissioners elected by the presbyteries. The synod shall determine, with the consent of a majority of its presbyteries, the basis of election and the ratio of commissioners to members represented in the presbyteries, as well as its method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in G-9.0104 and G-9.0105. The commissioners from each presbytery shall be divided equally between elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

b. When a synod meets, in addition to commissioners elected by the presbyteries, the officers of the synod and other individuals as determined by the governing documents of the synod may be enrolled during their respective terms of office so long as the balance of elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament is maintained in the voting members of the body.

G-12.0102
Responsibilities

Synod is the intermediate governmental unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its region. It therefore has the responsibility and power

a. to develop, in conjunction with its presbyteries, a broad strategy for the mission of the church within its bounds in accord with G-3.0000;

b. to initiate mission through a variety of forms in light of the larger strategy of the General Assembly;

c. to develop, in conjunction with its presbyteries, joint plans and objectives for the fulfillment of mission, providing encouragement and guidance to its presbyteries and overseeing their work;

d. to implement, consistent with G-9.0104, the principles of participation and inclusiveness in employing its personnel and in establishing the membership of its committees, councils, boards, and other policy-making and policy-recommending bodies, in order to ensure fair representation in its decision making;

e. to develop and provide resources as needed to facilitate the mission of its presbyteries, as well as guidelines and criteria for evaluation;

f. to consult with its member presbyteries with regard to their general mission budgets, the establishment of administrative staff positions, equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;

g. to coordinate the work of presbyteries' committees on ministry and assist its member presbyteries in matters related to the calling, ordaining, and placement of ministers;

h. to facilitate communication among its presbyteries and between its presbyteries and the General Assembly;

i. to facilitate joint action in mission with other denominations and agencies in its region;

j. to provide services and programs for presbyteries, sessions, congregations, and members within its area that can be performed more effectively from a broad regional base;

k. to organize new presbyteries, to divide, unite, or otherwise combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries previously existing, and, with the concurrence of existing presbyteries, to create nongeographic presbyteries in order to meet the mission needs (G-11.0103a; G-12.0102a) of identified racial ethnic or immigrant congregations; subject to the approval of the General Assembly. Such presbyteries shall be formed in compliance with the requirements of G-7.0201 and G-11.0102 and be accountable to the synod within which they were created. When such mission needs arise inside a congregation that lies within a synod lacking such a nongeographic presbytery, that synod may permit, with the approval of the General Assembly and unless some legal or ecclesiastical issue would prohibit, that congregation to join a nongeographic presbytery inside the bounds of another synod with the consent of that other synod, the geographic presbytery, and the nongeographic presbytery; such presbyteries should be formed only on the basis of language, and there should be a sunset clause (end date) added at the formation of each nongeographic presbytery.

l. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;

m. to warn or bear witness against error in doctrine or immorality in practice in the area of its jurisdiction;

n. to review the records of its presbyteries and to take care that they observe the Constitution of the church;

o. to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the General Assembly, including

(1) seeing that the orders and instructions of the General Assembly are observed and carried out,

(2) proposing to the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;

p. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships which will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its region;

q. to provide a system of administrative services to fulfill its objectives and programs;

r. to establish and superintend the agencies and task forces necessary for its work, including a synod council when the synod deems one is necessary to provide for the regular review of the functional relationship between synod’s structure and its mission;

s. to establish a nominating committee composed of equal numbers of ministers, laywomen, and laymen (i.e., one third each). (G-9.0801, G-11.0501, G-12.0102d, G-13.0111, G-13.0202)

t. to deal with prevailing, emerging, and emergency issues of racism, racial violence, and racial injustices, as well as with any ideology that promotes racial oppression in the church and in the surrounding political and social contexts.

**G-12.0103
Function May Be
Reduced**

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

**G-12.0104
Sharing
Administrative
Services**

Two or more synods sharing common boundaries, with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries in each of the synods, may share administrative services.

G-12.0200

2. Meetings

G-12.0201
Meetings

The synod shall hold a stated meeting at least biennially. The moderator shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of three ministers and three elders, representing at least three presbyteries, all of whom must have been commissioners to the last preceding stated meeting of the synod. The synod may fix its own higher number. Should the moderator be unable to act, the stated clerk shall, under the same conditions, issue the call. If both the moderator and the stated clerk are unable to act, the most recent moderator shall, under the same conditions, issue the call. The General Assembly may direct the synod to convene a special meeting for the transaction of designated business. Commissioners to the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to the last preceding stated meeting of the synod or their alternates. A presbytery may, however, elect a commissioner or alternate to replace one who has died or changed presbytery membership. Notice of a special meeting shall be sent not less than fifteen days in advance to each commissioner elected to the last preceding stated meeting of the synod and to the stated clerk of each presbytery. The notice shall set out the purpose of the meeting and no other business than that listed in the notice shall be transacted.

G-12.0202
Quorum

A quorum of the synod shall be determined by the synod. The quorum shall include an equal number of elders and ministers, representing at least three presbyteries or one-third of its presbyteries, whichever is larger.

G-12.0203
Corresponding
Members

Presbyters in good standing in other governing bodies of this church or in any other Christian church, who are present at any meeting of the synod, may be invited by the synod to sit as corresponding members, with voice but without vote.

G-12.0204
Participation

Each presbytery shall participate in the synod’s responsibility and service through its elected commissioners to the synod. Each presbytery shall elect at least one elder and one minister to serve as commissioners to synod. The synod council, if there is one, shall be elected by the synod from the commissioners and non-commissioner ministers and elders from the presbyteries of the synod. The synod shall devise a process of rotation of members on synod council from among the presbyteries to ensure compliance with the provisions of G-9.0104 and G-4.0403. The synod shall provide a process for assuring balance on committees so that all presbyteries are fairly represented and for assuring attention to the principles of participation and representation expressed in G-9.0104.

G-12.0300**3. Other Provisions**

G-12.0301
Committee on
Representation

Each synod shall establish a committee on representation, as required by G-9.0105, which shall advise synod's nominating committee of any need for nominations in particular categories needing increased representation. The committee on representation shall report at least biennially to synod progress toward fair representation of the categories of persons listed in G-4.0403.

G-12.0302
Staff

The synod may authorize the administrative staff services of a synod executive and may establish other staff positions as needed. The executive shall be nominated to the synod by its council or by a special representative nominating committee elected for that purpose. In the employment of all personnel, including administrative staff, the synod shall observe the principles of fair representation and consultation set forth in G-9.0404, and the provisions of the churchwide plan for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. (G-13.0201b) The synod may authorize synod administrative staff services for a presbytery at the request of the presbytery. (G-11.0303)

G-12.0303
General Mission
Budget

The synod shall have a synod general mission budget to support the church's mission within its region. As the synod raises and expends those funds, it shall do so in the light of the priorities of the whole church. The synod shall make its plans and determine its general mission budget after receiving recommendations from the General Assembly and in light of the comprehensive strategy of the whole church.

G-12.0304
Records

The synod shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings which shall be submitted to the next succeeding meeting of the General Assembly for its general review and control. It shall report to the General Assembly the number of its presbyteries and, in general, all important changes that have occurred within its bounds.

G-12.0305
Audit

The synod shall have a full financial review of all books and records relating to finances once a year by a public accountant or public accounting firm. Such auditors should not be related to the treasurer (or treasurers). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.

G-12.0306
Insurance

The synod shall obtain property and liability insurance to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

G-13.0000

G-13.0100

1. The General Assembly

G-13.0101
Definition

The General Assembly^a is the highest governing body of this church and is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

G-13.0102
Membership

a. When the General Assembly meets annually, it shall consist of equal numbers of elders and ministers from each presbytery, in the following proportion: Each presbytery consisting of not more than 10,000 members shall elect one elder and one minister; and each presbytery consisting of more than 10,000 members shall elect one elder and one minister for each additional 10,000 members, or for each additional fractional number of members not less than 5,000; and these persons, so elected, shall be called commissioners to the General Assembly.

b. When the General Assembly meets biennially, it shall consist of equal numbers of elders and ministers from each presbytery, in the following proportion: Each presbytery consisting of not more than 8,000 members shall elect one elder and one minister. Presbyteries consisting of more than 8,000 members shall elect one additional elder and one additional minister for each additional 8,000 members, so that:

Presbyteries of 8,001 to 16,000 members shall elect 2 elders and 2 ministers;

Presbyteries of 16,001 to 24,000 members shall elect 3 elders and 3 ministers;

Presbyteries of 24,001 to 32,000 members shall elect 4 elders and 4 ministers;

Presbyteries of 32,001 to 40,000 members shall elect 5 elders and 5 ministers;

Presbyteries of 40,001 to 48,000 members shall elect 6 elders and 6 ministers;

Presbyteries of 48,001 to 56,000 members shall elect 7 elders and 7 ministers.

These persons, so elected, shall be called commissioners to the General Assembly.

[Editor's Note: This wording was removed following the 217th General Assembly (2006): [Note: The provisions of this amendment would not take effect until the adjournment of the 217th General Assembly (2006).]

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

G-13.0103
Responsibilities

The General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and governing bodies. It therefore has the responsibility and power

a. to set priorities for the work of the church in keeping with the church's mission under Christ as described in G-3.0000;

b. to develop overall objectives for mission and a comprehensive strategy to guide the church at every level of its life;

c. to provide the essential program functions that are appropriate for overall balance and diversity within the mission of the church;

d. to establish and administer national and worldwide ministries of witness, service, growth, and development;

e. to provide a system of administrative services to fulfill its objectives and program;

f. to provide services for the whole church that can be performed more effectively from a national base;

g. to establish and maintain an office of the General Assembly;

h. to establish and superintend the agencies and task forces necessary for its work, including a General Assembly Mission Council, providing for the regular review of the functional relationship between the General Assembly's structure and its mission;

i. to adopt the comprehensive budget of the General Assembly, providing full information to the whole church of its decision in such matters;

j. to provide for communication within the church;

k. to oversee the work of the synods and to facilitate their participation in the mission of the church;

l. to review the records of the synods and to take care that they observe the Constitution of the church;

m. to organize new synods and to divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing;

n. to approve the organization, division, uniting, or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods;

o. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;

p. to warn or bear witness against error in doctrine or immorality in practice in or outside the church;

q. to decide controversies brought before it and to give advice and instruction in cases submitted to it, in conformity with the Constitution;

r. to provide authoritative interpretation of the *Book of Order* which shall be binding on the governing bodies of the church when rendered in accord with G-13.0112 or through a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission in a remedial or disciplinary case. The most recent interpretation of a provision of the *Book of Order* shall be binding;

s. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church;

t. to correspond with other churches;

u. to receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of two thirds of the presbyteries, other ecclesiastical bodies whose life is consistent with the faith and order of this church;

v. to authorize synods to exercise similar power in receiving ecclesiastical bodies suited to become constituents of those governing bodies and lying within their geographic bounds;

w. to unite with other churches in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Constitution. (G-15.0300)

x. to review the work of the Office of the General Assembly in consultation with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

G-13.0104
Meetings

The General Assembly shall hold a stated meeting at least biennially. The Moderator shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of at least one fourth of the elder commissioners and one fourth of the minister commissioners to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly representing at least fifteen presbyteries,

under the jurisdiction of at least five synods. Should the Moderator be unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall, under the same conditions, issue the call. If both the Moderator and the Stated Clerk are unable to act, the most recent Moderator shall, under the same conditions, issue the call. Commissioners to the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly or their alternates. A presbytery may, however, elect a commissioner or alternate instead of one who has died or changed presbytery membership. Notice of a special meeting shall be sent not less than sixty days in advance to each commissioner elected to the last preceding stated meeting of the General Assembly and to the stated clerk of each presbytery. The notice shall set out the purpose of the meeting and no other business than that listed in the notice shall be transacted.

G-13.0105
Quorum

A quorum of the General Assembly shall be one hundred commissioners, fifty of whom shall be elders and fifty of whom shall be ministers, representing presbyteries of at least one fourth of its synods.

G-13.0106
Corresponding
Members

The General Assembly may by its own rules determine whom it will invite to sit as corresponding members.

G-13.0107

[This section was stricken by action of the 218th General Assembly (2008).]

G-13.0108
Committee on
Representation

The General Assembly shall establish a permanent Committee on Representation as required by G-9.0105, which shall advise the General Assembly Nominating Committee of any need for nominations in particular categories needing increased representation. The Committee on Representation shall report to each meeting of the General Assembly (other than special or adjourned meetings) regarding progress toward fair representation of the categories of persons listed in G-4.0403. The committee shall consist of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are **ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers nearly as equal as possible.**

G-13.0109
Staff

Executive or administrative staff positions of the agencies of the General Assembly shall be established and filled in accordance with the provisions of G-9.0404, G-9.0703, and G-9.0704, and those of the churchwide plan for equal employment opportunity. (G-13.0201b) Provision shall be made for the regular review of each administrative staff member.

G-13.0110
Records

The General Assembly shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings.

G-13.0111
General Assembly
Nominating
Committee

a. To ensure careful nomination of members of such boards, agencies, and committees as the General Assembly shall from time to time designate, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall propose nominees to the General Assembly for such bodies. Consideration shall be given to the nomination of equal numbers of ministers **and church members** (both women and men). The committee shall consist of members equal in number to the synods of the church, each member resident in a different synod, and members distributed so that there are **ministers and elders (both women and men) in numbers nearly as equal as possible**. (G-9.0801, G-11.0501, G-12.0102d, G-13.0202) Members shall be elected by the General Assembly for a term of six years, and the terms shall be so arranged as to provide that one third of the members shall complete their service at the conclusion of each regular meeting of the General Assembly. Within thirty days prior to the regular meeting of the General Assembly, the Moderator of the preceding General Assembly shall nominate persons for election by the General Assembly to fill the vacancies occurring at the adjournment of the ensuing General Assembly. The Moderator shall also appoint persons to fill, until the next succeeding General Assembly, vacancies during the year caused by death, resignation, or inability to act. These appointments shall be in consultation with the synod through its regular nominating process and shall reflect the commitment of the inclusive policies of the General Assembly. Such appointments shall not prevent election of the same person to a full term. No person who has served a full term of six years on the committee shall be eligible for reelection or for appointment or nomination to a body for which the committee has submitted nominations to the General Assembly during that person's term until four years have passed since the expiration of the person's term on the committee.

Election of
Officers

b. The committee shall elect its own officers at the last meeting prior to the regular meeting of the General Assembly. The existence of this committee shall not limit or abridge the right of any commissioner to the General Assembly to nominate any eligible person in addition to the nominees presented by the committee.

G-13.0112
Advisory Committee
on the Constitution

a. The General Assembly shall establish an Advisory Committee on the Constitution composed of nine persons, ministers and elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. The

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall be a member ex officio without vote. The nine voting members shall be former members of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly, stated clerks or former stated clerks of synods or presbyteries, or other qualified persons with knowledge of and experience with the Constitution and polity of the church. Voting members shall be nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly and shall serve a term of six years in three classes. No person who has served on the Advisory Committee on the Constitution for a full term of six years shall be eligible for reelection until four years have elapsed after the expired six-year term.

Meet Prior to
General Assembly

b. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution shall meet prior to each session of the General Assembly and shall submit its report and recommendations no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.

Questions 120
Days Prior to
General Assembly

c. All questions requiring an interpretation by the General Assembly of the *Book of Order* arising from governing bodies of the church or from individuals shall be communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.

Pending Before
Judicial
Commissions

d. The Stated Clerk shall refer all such questions of interpretation to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, except those pertaining to matters pending before a judicial commission. The Advisory Committee shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations. Such recommendations may include proposals for constitutional change. The General Assembly shall vote on the recommendations, and may amend or decline to approve them.

At General
Assembly

e. At least three members of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, appointed by the moderator of the committee, shall be present at the session of the General Assembly. All items introduced as new business that touch upon constitutional matters, including requesting rulings by the Moderator on questions of order involving constitutional matters, shall be referred in writing to these persons. They shall act as the full committee and shall consider each matter referred to them and make recommendations directly to the General Assembly through the Moderator.

G-13.0200

2. General Assembly Mission Council

G-13.0201
Responsibilities

The General Assembly shall create an Assembly Council which shall have the following responsibilities:

a. to cultivate and promote the spiritual welfare of the whole church;

b. to provide resources to support equal employment opportunity and affirmative action for members of racial ethnic groups, for women, for various age groups, for persons regardless of marital condition (married, single, widowed, or divorced), and for persons with disabilities;

c. to develop and propose, for General Assembly approval, the mission directions, goals, objectives, and priorities of the General Assembly Mission Council, doing so by taking into account the mission work being done by sessions, presbyteries, and synods, and to propose for General Assembly approval an accompanying budget that will implement the mission work plan of the General Assembly Mission Council;

d. to act in those specific matters assigned to the General Assembly Mission Council by the General Assembly or this Constitution, acting always according to previously enacted General Assembly policies, reporting fully to each subsequent General Assembly its actions;

e. to perform such additional responsibilities and duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly.

G-13.0202
Manual of Operations
of the General
Assembly Mission
Council

a. The membership, terms of office, and officers of the General Assembly Mission Council shall be approved by the General Assembly as provided for in the *Manual of Operations* of the General Assembly Mission Council. The Council shall include members from each of the synods of the church.

Nominating
Committee of
General Assembly

b. In the nominating process, the General Assembly Nominating Committee shall consult with the General Assembly Mission Council to identify needed skills, and shall provide for diversity and inclusiveness in accordance with G-4.0403. It will maintain a goal of at least twenty percent racial ethnic membership for the General Assembly Mission Council. It will also follow the provisions of G-9.0104, G-9.0105, and G-13.0111 and shall ensure that, exclusive of the Moderator and predecessor Moderators, **ministers and elders (both women and men) are in numbers nearly as equal as possible**. The committee will also provide that members be nominated in such

a manner as to provide three classes of approximately equal size. Any vacancy occurring during a term shall be filled pursuant to General Assembly policies.

G-13.0203
Manual of
Operations

The council shall develop, in consultation with the synods, a manual of operations that shall include design for administrative staff and provisions for size, and for specific representation of council membership, providing for diversity and inclusiveness. (G-9.0104) The manual shall be approved by the General Assembly.

CHAPTER XIV

G-14.0000 **ORDINATION, CERTIFICATION, AND COMMISSIONING**

G-14.0100 **Leadership in the Church**

G-14.0110 **Servant Style**

The purpose and pattern of leadership in the church in all its forms of ministry shall be understood not in terms of power but of service, after the manner of the servant ministry of Jesus Christ.

G-14.0120 **Ordained Ministry**

Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons to be presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament or elders) or deacons, and is accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands. Ordination to the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the presbytery. Ordination to the offices of elder and deacon is an act of the session, except that when a new church is organized, the presbytery may examine, ordain, and install the officers. (G-7.0202)

G-14.0130 **Certified Ministry**

Persons called to particular service in the church may be certified by recognized agencies affiliated with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as having achieved proficiency in their field of expertise. The congregation and presbytery, in appropriate services, may recognize such certification. (See G-14.0700.)

G-14.0140 **Commissioned Ministry**

In the life of the Christian community God calls people to particular acts of discipleship to use their personal gifts for service in the Church and in the world. These specific acts may be strengthened and confirmed by formal recognition and commissioning in worship. (W-4.3000)

G-14.0200 **Preparation for the Office of Elder and Deacon**

G-14.0210 **The Office of Elder or Deacon**

The office of elder or deacon is perpetual and no one can lay it aside at pleasure or be divested of it except as provided in this Form of Government or the Rules of Discipline. Elders or deacons are not divested of office when rotating out of active service on the session or board of deacons, or by ceasing to be a member of that church. Elders shall be entitled to be

commissioners to presbytery from the particular church of which they are members if appointed by its session and to serve as a commissioner to the synod or the General Assembly when duly elected, whether or not they are in active service on the session.

G-14.0220 Election Provisions

G-14.0221 Fair Representation Every congregation shall elect men and women from among its active members, giving fair representation to persons of all ages and of all racial ethnic backgrounds and to persons with disabilities who are members of that congregation, to the office of elder and to the office of deacon (if used in the congregation).

G-14.0222 Terms An elder serving on session, or a deacon on a board of deacons, shall be elected for a term of no more than three years, and service in consecutive terms, either full or partial, shall be limited to six years. An elder or deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the same board for a period of at least one year. A particular church may provide for a period of ineligibility after one full term. Elders or deacons shall be elected in two or three classes as nearly equal in number as possible, of which only one shall expire each year. Terms of elders or deacons shall expire when their successors have been ordained and installed.

G-14.0223 Nominating Committee Nominations shall be made by a representative nominating committee of active members of the church. The committee shall itself include both women and men, giving fair representation to persons of all age groups, of all racial ethnic members, and of persons with disabilities who are members of that congregation. At least two members of this committee shall be elders designated by the session, one of whom shall be currently on the session and serve as moderator of the committee. At least one member of this committee shall be designated by and from the board of deacons, if the church has deacons. Other members of the committee, in sufficient number to constitute a majority thereof (exclusive of the pastor), shall be chosen by the congregation or by such organizations within the church as the congregation may designate, none of whom may be in active service on the session or in active service on the board of deacons. The pastor shall be a member of this committee, serving ex officio and without vote.

G-14.0224 Elected Annually The nominating committee shall be elected by the congregation annually and no member of the committee shall serve more than three years consecutively.

G-14.0225 Nominating Procedures All nominating procedures shall be subject to the principles of participation and representation as stated in G-4.0403 and G-9.0104.

G-14.0226 Exemptions for Certain Congregations The presbytery may approve requests by congregations for exemption from certain of these rules, subject to review periodically by the presbytery, which may grant or revoke its approval:

a. When a particular church is unable to conform to the provisions of G-14.0221, it shall request of presbytery a waiver, stating the reasons for noncompliance and shall outline a plan for steps to compliance. Presbytery may grant the waiver of G-14.0221 by three-fourths vote and for not more than three years, subject to renewal by a three-fourths vote and to revocation by a majority vote.

b. Any congregation of fewer than seventy members, at a regular congregational meeting, may request approval from the presbytery to elect a small church nominating committee, which shall consist of one member of the session, appointed by the session to be the moderator, and at least two members of the congregation not in active service on the session. The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote. Other provisions of fair representation and length of service continue to apply.

c. If in any church it is impossible because of limited membership to provide for the rotation of terms, the congregation may request a waiver of the limitations on reelection after six years. The presbytery may grant the exemption by majority vote for three years at a time, subject to renewal or revocation at any time by majority vote.

G-14.0230 Congregational Meeting

The election of elders and deacons shall take place at a meeting of the congregation called for that purpose by the session (G-7.0302).

G-14.0231 Purpose of the Meeting The moderator shall explain the purpose of the meeting.

G-14.0232 Nominations from the Floor Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nominations by any active member of the church present at the meeting. Persons to be nominated from the floor shall have given prior permission to be nominated and declared assent to serve if elected, or, if present, shall be asked to declare willingness to serve.

G-14.0233
Ballots

When the number of nominees equals the number of elders and deacons to be elected, the congregation may vote by voice vote or show of hands. When the number of nominees is greater than the number of elders and deacons to be elected, the congregation shall vote by secret ballot. A majority of all the voters present and voting shall be required to elect.

G-14.0240

Preparation and Examination for Office

When persons have been elected to the office of elder or deacon, the session shall confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the office. The session shall provide for a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine the officers-elect as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the office. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation (see W-4.4000). If the examination is not approved for one or more elected officers, the session shall report its action to the congregation’s nominating committee, which shall bring nomination(s) to a meeting of the congregation for any office(s) not filled.

G-14.0300

Ordination as Officers of the Church

Ordination, installation, and commissioning questions and service information are found at W-4.4000.

G-14.0400

Preparation for the Office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament

G-14.0401
Presbytery
Responsibility for
Inquiry and
Candidacy

It is important that those who are to be ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the committee on preparation for ministry. (G-9.0902) For this purpose, presbyteries shall enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy.

G-14.0402
Advisory
Handbook

The process and requirements for the inquiry and the candidacy phases shall be provided in an advisory handbook developed and updated as needed by the appropriate General Assembly agencies in consultation with the Office of the General Assembly, which the presbytery may adopt or modify to establish its own mandatory procedures. (G-9.0405)

G-14.0403
Time Requirements

An inquirer shall have been a member of the sponsoring congregation for at least six months prior to the inquirer phase. The inquirer and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate.

G-14.0404
Inquiry Phase

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together in such a way that the decision regarding the inquirer's suitability for ministry of the Word and Sacrament will be based on knowledge and experience of one another.

G-14.0405
Candidacy Phase

The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. This shall be accomplished through the guidance and evaluation of candidates, using learning contacts within the context of supportive relationships.

G-14.0410

Duties of Presbytery and Session

The presbytery, through a committee on preparation for ministry, shall seek to instruct sessions on their role in the inquiry and candidacy process. Particular direction shall be given a session that has endorsed an inquirer or candidate.

G-14.0411
Oversight

During the phases of inquiry and candidacy, the individual continues to be an active member of his or her particular church and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is under the oversight of the presbytery through the committee on preparation for ministry.

G-14.0412
Presbytery
Responsibility

The presbytery shall exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates, to support them with an understanding and sympathetic interest, and to give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education including the choice of institutions, field education, and the inquirer's or candidate's financial need. The presbytery shall also seek to give guidance and instruction to the inquirer or candidate in the faith and polity of the church (G-6.0108).

G-14.0413
Session
Responsibility

The session shall function in a supportive role during the phases of inquiry and candidacy to ensure that care is provided on a continuous basis. The session shall appoint an elder from the church to be a liaison with the inquirer or candidate and the appropriate presbytery committee. The session should consider the provision of financial support for the inquirer or candidate.

G-14.0420

Service in Covenant Relationship

The committee on preparation for ministry shall monitor the covenant among presbytery and inquirers and candidates and the session. Inquirers and candidates shall be encouraged to engage

in some form of supervised service to the church. The advisory handbook for committees on preparation for ministry shall provide guidance for supervision, evaluation, and reports on the service and preparation for ministry of inquirers and candidates. No inquirer or candidate who has not been previously ordained as an elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage service. An inquirer or candidate previously ordained as an elder may be authorized to administer the Lord’s Supper. (See G-6.0304, G-7.0306, G-10.0103, G-11.0103z, and G-14.0562.)

G-14.0421
Annual Reports

The presbytery shall require the inquirer or candidate to submit an annual written report on progress in studies and service to the church. The seminary or institution of theological education shall make an annual report on the progress of the inquirer or candidate toward preparation for ministry. The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidate. In no case shall an inquirer or candidate be excused from these annual consultations.

G-14.0430

Examinations

G-14.0431
Five Ordination
Exams

Inquirers and candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. The other four examinations shall ordinarily be taken by inquirers or candidates only after completion of two full years of theological education, or its equivalent, and shall be taken only upon approval by the committee on preparation for ministry of the inquirer’s or candidate’s presbytery, which shall first attest that the inquirer or candidate has completed adequate academic preparation in each examination area and adequate supervised experience in the practice of pastoral ministry. The areas of examinations are:

- a. Bible Content.
- b. Open Book Bible Exegesis.
- c. Theological Competence.
- d. Worship and Sacraments.
- e. Church Polity.

G-14.0432
Grading the Exams

The examinations required in the five specified areas shall be graded by representatives of the presbyteries under the supervision of the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates as provided in G-11.0103m. Descriptions of the examinations, the subjects, the schedule, and

the procedures for their administration shall be prepared by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee and approved by the General Assembly.

G-14.0440 Negotiation for Service

A candidate who has completed two full years of theological education or its equivalent, who has had an annual consultation within the previous year, and who has successfully completed all ordination examinations or has received presbytery's certification of readiness according to G-14.0472 may, with approval of the committee on preparation for ministry (CPM) and the appropriate committee on ministry, enter into negotiation for his or her ministerial service. For candidates who have not yet completed the two years of theological education or successfully completed all ordination examinations, the presbytery of care may, by three-fourths vote, permit a candidate to proceed to negotiate for service prior to certification of readiness to receive a call.

G-14.0450 Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry

In the final year of theological education or when a candidate has satisfied all of the requirements of this section, and before the candidate has received a call, the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate's presbytery shall conduct a final assessment of the candidate's readiness to begin ordained ministry. A summary of this assessment shall be reported to the presbytery and shall be transmitted to a calling presbytery when requested. The committee on preparation for ministry shall report to the presbytery when it has certified a candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. This consultation shall focus on the outcomes of inquiry and candidacy and shall include each of the following requirements of certification:

- a. demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament as required to fulfill the candidacy phase of preparation;
- b. presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma;
- c. presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts;

d. presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.

G-14.0460**Transfer of or Removal from Covenant Relationship**

G-14.0461
Transfer of
Relationship

A presbytery may transfer the covenant relationship of an inquirer or candidate to another presbytery, but only with the approval of the receiving presbytery and the inquirer or candidate. An inquirer or candidate shall not transfer her or his membership to a particular church under the jurisdiction of another presbytery without the approval of the presbytery responsible for the person's preparation for ministry. Whenever a presbytery approves such a transfer, it shall send to the other presbytery a certificate of its approval, its records concerning the individual, and the reasons for the request for transfer. Failure of an inquirer or candidate to follow this procedure shall result in the forfeiture of standing as an inquirer or candidate. No presbytery may restore the candidate's status except by beginning again at the inquiry phase.

G-14.0462
Another Reformed
Body

When a candidate is called to work under the jurisdiction of some other Reformed body, he or she may be dismissed as a candidate by certification. Likewise, candidates may be received for this purpose from other Reformed bodies by transfer of certificate.

G-14.0463
Removal from
Relationship

An inquirer or candidate may, after consultation with the session and the committee on preparation for ministry, withdraw from covenant relationship. A presbytery may also, for sufficient reasons, remove an individual's name from the roll of inquirers or candidates, reporting this action and the reasons to the session, to the individual, and, if appropriate, to the educational institution in which the individual is enrolled. In both instances, prior to final action, the committee on preparation for ministry shall make a reasonable attempt to give the inquirer or candidate and other parties of interest an opportunity to be heard by that committee.

G-14.0470**Extraordinary Circumstances**

All of the requirements for final assessment shall be met except in the following extraordinary circumstances:

G-14.0471
Educational
Requirements

If the inquirer's or candidate's presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why certain of the educational requirements should not be met by an inquirer or candidate, it shall make an exception only by three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present. A full account of the reasons for

such an exception shall be included in the minutes of presbytery and shall be communicated to the presbytery to which the inquirer or candidate may be transferred. The successful completion of the course of study specified in such an exception shall fulfill the requirements for the final assessment of readiness to begin ministry.

G-14.0472
Examination
Requirements

The examination requirements of G-14.0431 shall not be waived until an inquirer or candidate has failed on two attempts to receive a satisfactory grade, unless the inquirer or candidate has a disability, documented by a person or persons of the presbytery's choice, which disability affects the individual's test-taking ability. If the presbytery believes that the person should be certified as ready for examination for ordination, pending a call, it shall authorize an exception only by a three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present, and must determine an alternate means whereby it will satisfy itself of competence in the area(s) of difficulty. When the individual successfully completes the alternate pattern, the presbytery may certify readiness in the usual manner. The minutes of presbytery shall contain a full record of the reasons for the exception and the alternate pattern for determining competence.

G-14.0473
Time Requirements

The time requirements of the inquiry phase shall not be waived unless the presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why the time requirement should not be met by an inquirer or candidate. It shall make an exception only by three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present. A full account of the reasons for such an exception shall be included in the minutes of presbytery and shall be communicated to the presbytery to which the inquirer or candidate may be transferred. Under no circumstances shall the time requirement be less than one year.

G-14.0474
If Transferred

The foregoing exceptions shall hold if the presbytery has received the inquirer or candidate from another presbytery that approved the exemption of any of these requirements, the reception of the candidate having confirmed the action of the dismissing presbytery.

G-14.0480

Ordination an Act of the Whole Church

Ordination for the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

- G-14.0481
Place of
Examination and
Ordination
- The presbytery placing the call to a candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine and, contingent upon the candidate's successful completion of that examination and all requirements in G-14.0450, the presbytery responsible for the candidate's preparation for ministry shall ordinarily ordain the candidate.
- G-14.0482
Examination for
Ordination
- The candidate shall appear before the presbytery and shall make a brief statement of personal faith and of commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The presbytery shall receive the report of its appropriate committee that the candidate has completed all requirements, and has been certified ready for ordination pending approval of the call. The report shall include a summary of waivers and exceptions of requirements granted. The presbytery may conduct further examination of the candidate's Christian faith and views in theology, the Bible, the Sacraments, and the government of the church as it deems necessary. If the presbytery is fully satisfied of the candidate's qualifications, it shall approve the call and vote to proceed to his or her ordination and installation.
- G-14.0483
Presbytery of Call
- The presbytery of call shall certify to the presbytery responsible for the candidate's preparation for ministry that the candidate has been approved for ordination and installation. Ordinarily, the presbytery responsible for the candidate's preparation for ministry shall ordain the candidate. (See W-4.4000.) Following the ordination, the stated clerk of the ordaining presbytery shall record the action, notify the session of the particular church of which the candidate has been a member so that the session may record the fact that the candidate is now ordained and has been transferred to the roll of the presbytery, and issue a letter of dismissal to the calling presbytery, which shall enroll the minister and proceed to install the minister.
- G-14.0484
Agreement on
Place of Ordination
- The presbyteries and the candidate may agree that the ordination take place in the calling presbytery, in which case the presbytery may ordain and install the candidate at the same time at a service of worship in the presence of the calling congregation.
- G-14.0485
Recording the
Ordination
- The presbytery shall record the ordination and installation as a part of its official records along with the acceptance and subscription of the new minister to the obligations undertaken in the ordination vows. It shall also be the duty of the stated clerk of the presbytery to enroll the newly ordained minister as a member of the presbytery and to report these actions to the Office of the General Assembly.

G-14.0490 Ordination of Minister of the Word and Sacrament

Ordination questions and installation service information may be found at W-4.4000.

G-14.0500 Pastoral Relations

G-14.0501
Installed or
Temporary
Relations

Every church should have the pastoral services of a minister of the Word and Sacrament. The pastoral relations that may exist between a particular church and a minister of the Word and Sacrament are installed (permanent or designated) or temporary relations (see G-14.0550).

G-14.0510 Installed Pastoral Relations

G-14.0511
Permanent Pastoral
Relations

A permanent pastoral relationship of pastor or associate pastor, full or part-time, is established by vote of the presbytery or its committee on ministry to approve the call to a minister of the Word and Sacrament elected by vote of the congregation. A pastor or associate pastor is installed by the presbytery and is a member of the session. The call approved by the presbytery cannot be changed or dissolved except by consent of the presbytery, at the request of the pastor or associate pastor, at the request of the church by action of the congregation, or when the presbytery, after consultation with the minister and the congregation, finds that the church’s mission under the Word imperatively demands it.

G-14.0512
Co-Pastors

A congregation may call more than one minister to serve as pastor or associate pastor, sharing duties within the congregation as agreed upon by the session and approved by the presbytery, using co-pastor or co-associate pastor or other suitable titles. When there are co-pastors, the presbytery, the ministers, and the session shall agree on a schedule for sharing the times each will moderate. When a particular church has two pastors serving as co-pastors and the relationship of one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor of the church.

G-14.0513
Succession and
Extraordinary
Circumstances

The official relationship of an associate pastor to a church is not dependent upon that of a pastor, but an associate pastor is not eligible to be the next installed pastor in a church that they have served together, or to be called as pastor to serve as co-pastor of that church, except in churches that currently have a co-pastor model in place which has been in effect for at least three years and the congregation desires to continue such a model. An associate pastor shall be directed in his or her work by the pastor in consultation with the session.

G-14.0520 Designated Pastoral Relations

G-14.0521
Calling a
Designated Pastor

A designated pastoral relationship, full or part-time, is a call to a minister of the Word and Sacrament established by the presbytery for a term of not less than two nor more than four years. The congregation and the minister must both have agreed to be considered for a designated relationship. The congregation’s pastoral nominating committee shall nominate to the congregation for its consideration and vote, only from among those ministers designated to it by the presbytery’s committee on ministry. The minister is installed by the presbytery and is a member of the session.

G-14.0522
Renewing or
Ending the Call

The call approved by the presbytery is renewable anytime during the last six months of the term, and cannot be changed or dissolved except by consent of the presbytery, at the request of the pastor or at the request of the church by action of the congregation, when the presbytery, after consultation with the minister and the congregation finds that the church’s mission under the Word imperatively demands it, or when the term specified in the call expires without action having been taken to renew the call. The presbytery may designate and the congregation may call more than one minister to serve as designated pastor, sharing duties within the congregation as agreed upon by the session and approved by the presbytery. When there is more than one pastor, the ministers and the session shall agree on a schedule for sharing the times each will moderate.

G-14.0523
Designated Pastor
to Pastor

If there has been an open search process conducted by the committee on ministry and after at least two years of the designated pastor relationship, upon the concurrence of the committee on ministry, the designated pastor, and the session, acting in place of the pastor nominating committee for the single purpose of calling the designated pastor as pastor, a congregational meeting may be held to call the designated pastor as pastor. The session, with the concurrence of the committee on ministry, may call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee to conduct a full pastoral search or to prosecute the call to the designated pastor to become pastor. The action of the congregation shall be reported to the presbytery. If the congregational action is affirmative, the presbytery, after voting to approve the new pastoral relationship, shall install the designated pastor as pastor.

G-14.0530 Election of a Pastor or Associate Pastor

When a church is without a pastor, or has a vacancy in an associate pastor position, or after the effective date of the

dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the committee on ministry (G-11.0502d), proceed to elect a pastor or associate pastor in the following manner.

G-14.0531
Pastor Nominating
Committee

The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee, which shall be representative of the whole congregation. This committee’s duty shall be to nominate a minister to the congregation for election as pastor or associate pastor. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting to elect the pastor nominating committee shall be given in accord with G-7.0303b.

G-14.0532
Confer with
Committee on
Ministry

The pastor nominating committee shall confer with the committee on ministry as provided in G-11.0502d. When the committee is ready to report to the congregation, it shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting in accord with G-7.0303b. The action of the congregation, if favorable, shall be presented to the presbytery for its concurrence.

G-14.0533
Signing the Call

Persons shall be elected by the vote of the congregation to sign the call and to present and prosecute the call before the presbytery. The moderator of the meeting shall certify to the presbytery that those signing the call were properly elected and that the call was in all other respects prepared as constitutionally required.

G-14.0534
Terms of the Call

The presbytery shall ensure that the call meets the requirements of federal and state tax laws and fully discloses the compensation of the minister. If the minister is obligated to fulfill military commitments during a period of pastoral service, an agreement should be added to the terms of call for that obligation and potential mobilization. If the call is for less than full time, the precise terms of the contract should be indicated. The terms of call shall always provide for compensation that meets or exceeds any minimum requirements of the presbytery in effect when the call is made, and the congregation’s obligation to review the adequacy of the minister’s compensation and adjust the compensation to meet changes in the presbytery’s requirements as amended from time to time. The call shall include participation in the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.

G-14.0540 Installation of Minister

Ordination questions and installation service information may be found at W-4.4000.

G-14.0550 Temporary Pastoral Relations

All temporary relationships of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, full-time or part-time, are established by the session or commission of the presbytery with the approval of the presbytery through its committee on ministry. These temporary relationships have titles appropriate to the ministerial tasks to which the minister is called, such as stated supply, temporary supply, organizing pastor, interim pastor, and others. A minister serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is called for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the committee on ministry. A written agreement, covenant, or terms of call signed by the minister, the clerk of session or presbytery commission, and a representative of the committee on ministry shall specify the pastoral functions, compensation, and any special skills or training required for the ministry. A temporary pastor is not installed and is not a member of the session. The presbytery shall appoint a moderator of the session who may be the temporary pastor.

G-14.0551
May Not Become
Next Installed
Pastor

A minister serving in a temporary pastoral relationship other than organizing pastor is not eligible to serve that church in the next permanent or designated pastoral relationship. A presbytery may choose to allow a temporary supply to become the next installed pastor by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery.

G-14.0552
Organizing Pastors

An organizing pastor is a minister or commissioned lay pastor appointed by the presbytery to serve as pastor to a group of people who are in the process of organizing a new Presbyterian church. This relationship as organizing pastor shall terminate when the new church is formally organized by the presbytery. At that time the new church may, with the approval of the committee on ministry and the presbytery, call the organizing pastor to be its pastor without being required to elect a pastor nominating committee and conduct a pastoral search, or it may choose to elect a pastor nominating committee and conduct a full pastoral search as provided in the Form of Government.

G-14.0553
Interim Pastoral
Relations

When a presbytery and session determine that an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is necessary and helpful, the session may consult the committee on ministry and seek an interim minister as soon as a date certain for departure has been announced by a pastor or associate pastor planning to leave. An interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is not eligible to serve that church as the next permanent or designated pastor.

G-14.0560 Commissioned Lay Pastor

The commissioned lay pastor is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who is granted a local commission by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service. This commission is valid only in one or more congregations, new church development, or other validated ministries of the presbytery designated by the presbytery. Such an elder is selected by and receives training approved by the presbytery. The elder shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. The elder shall be examined by the appropriate committee of presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction mentioned previously. An elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions of a commissioned lay pastor again until appointed to a particular congregation by the presbytery.

G-14.0561
Period Valid

The commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as determined by the presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery. Presbytery shall regularly provide resources for the person’s spiritual and intellectual development. A review of the work of the commissioned lay pastor shall be conducted annually. Presbytery shall revoke the commission of any lay pastor who does not abide by these provisions or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation or the presbytery.

G-14.0562
Authorization to
Perform Functions

When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in a.–e. below.

- a. Administer the Lord’s Supper.
- b. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
- c. Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery, or when appointed by presbytery as moderator.

d. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.

e. Have a voice and vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as an elder commissioner for purposes of parity).

G-14.0563
Pastoral Care and Confidentiality

Those serving as commissioned lay pastors shall be bound by the same standards of trust and confidentiality as ministers of the Word and Sacrament (G-6.0204).

G-14.0564
Supervision

The commissioned lay pastor shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the committee on ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.

G-14.0565
Questions Asked

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of an applicant, it shall ask the applicant the constitutional questions in W-4.4003, using these words for Question i: Will you be a faithful commissioned lay pastor, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

G-14.0570

Parish Associate Relationship

A parish associate is a minister who serves in some validated ministry other than the local parish, or is a member-at-large, or is retired, but who wishes to maintain a relationship with a particular church or churches in keeping with ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. Such persons, already qualified as continuing members of presbytery, may serve as parish associates. The relation shall be established, upon nomination by the pastor, between the parish associate, the session, and the presbytery. The parish associate shall be responsible to the pastor, as head of staff, on an “as needed, as available” basis and with or without remuneration.

G-14.0571
May Not Be Next Installed Pastor

A parish associate may not be called to be the next installed pastor or associate pastor of a church served as parish associate, unless at least six months have elapsed since the end of the parish associate relationship.

G-14.0572
Presbytery Oversight

The presbytery shall adopt policies and procedures for oversight by the committee on ministry of the parish associate relationships of its minister members and the churches under its care, including annual review.

G-14.0573
Termination of the Relationship

The agreement between the session, the parish associate, and the presbytery shall terminate when the call to the installed pastor is dissolved. The presbytery may dissolve the relationship with the parish associate upon the recommendation of the committee on ministry.

G-14.0600 Dissolution of Installed Pastoral Relationships

G-14.0610 Dissolved by Presbytery

The pastoral relationship between a pastor, associate pastor, and a church may be dissolved only by presbytery. Whether the minister or the church or the presbytery initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to request, or consent, or decline to consent to dissolution, as provided in G-7.0304a(3).

G-14.0611
Minister Requests

The minister may request the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The minister must also state her or his intention to the session. The session shall call a congregational meeting to act upon the request and to make recommendations to presbytery. The presbytery may grant authority to its committee on ministry to dissolve the pastoral relationship and to inform the presbytery in cases in which the congregation and the pastor concur. If the congregation does not concur, the presbytery shall hear from the church, through the congregation's elected commissioners, the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the request of the minister may be granted and the pastoral relationship dissolved.

G-14.0612
Congregation Requests

If any church desires the pastoral relationship to be dissolved, a similar procedure shall be observed. A congregation, after a duly called congregational meeting, may request presbytery to dissolve its relationship with its pastor. The pastor shall moderate the congregational meeting (in accordance with G-7.0306) unless he or she deems it to be impractical. The presbytery may grant authority to its committee on ministry to dissolve the relationship and to inform the presbytery in cases in which the pastor and the congregation concur. If the pastor does not concur, the presbytery shall hear from him or her the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the relationship. If the pastor fails to appear, or if the reasons for maintaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the relationship may be dissolved.

G-14.0613
Presbytery Action

The presbytery, through its committee on ministry or an administrative commission, may inquire into reported difficulties in a congregation and may dissolve the pastoral relationship if, after consultation with the minister, the session, and the congregation (G-7.0304a(3)), it finds the church's mission under the Word imperatively demands it.

G-14.0620 **Pastor Emeritus, Emerita**

When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after consultation with the committee on ministry of the presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter.

G-14.0630 **Officiate by Invitation Only**

Former pastors, associate pastors, and ministers who do not have a pastoral relationship with the particular church as defined in this chapter may officiate at services for members of the church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.

G-14.0700 **Persons Called to Certified Ministry****G-14.0710** **Christian Educators**

Christian educators are persons called by God to a ministry of education who demonstrate their faith in and love for Jesus Christ, are dedicated to the life of faith and are serious in purpose, honest in character, and joyful in service. Christian educators serving particular congregations are accountable to the session and under the supervision of the pastor, sharing with them the responsibility of providing for the spiritual growth of members for their ministry, teaching the Bible, recommending curriculum materials and resources, training and supporting lay workers, planning and administering the educational program of their congregations, and other tasks.

G-14.0711
Training

It is expected that Christian educators be persons with skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, human development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or prepare to meet, the accrediting requirements defined in this section.

G-14.0720

Certification for Christian Educators

In order to provide effective guidance for educational ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the General Assembly shall offer a handbook containing the training and continuing education process for Christian Educators, which shall be administered and certification granted by the Educator Certification Council on behalf of the General Assembly Mission Council. The handbook shall also provide suggested models for support and accountability that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to fit local circumstances.

G-14.0721
Accrediting
Process

The handbook shall provide an accrediting process that evaluates the educator's academic preparation and work experience and examines competency in the following knowledge and skill areas:

- Biblical Interpretation
- Reformed Theology
- Human Development
- Religious Education Theory and Practice
- Polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Program and Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Worship and Sacraments

G-14.0722
Educator
Certification
Council

The Educator Certification Council shall establish certification standards, designate Educator Certification Advisors in consultation with presbyteries, evaluate certification examinations, and grant certificates and report to the General Assembly Mission Council.

G-14.0730

Presbytery and Certified Christian Educators

The presbytery shall

- a. support the certification process by encouraging educators to seek certification, providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor, and encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification; and

b. provide the following support to the Certified Christian Educators: service of recognition that shall include the constitutional questions at W-4.4003 (G-11.0103n); establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits (G-11.0103n); and access to the committee on ministry (G-11.0503).

In accordance with G-11.0407, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ordained elders, voice and vote during the term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery.

G-14.0731
Service of
Recognition

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of an applicant for a certified education position in ministry in the church, a service of recognition shall be provided that shall include the constitutional questions (W-4.4003), using these words for Question i: Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

G-14.0732
Duty to Report

Certified Christian educators shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) he or she reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

G-14.0740 Other Certified Persons

Other certified persons have been called to service within particular churches, governing bodies, and church-related entities. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication.

G-14.0741
Organized
Associations

To that end, groups of professionals have organized for community, support, and professional development. Several of these associations have entered into formal liaison relationships with General Assembly entities. These groups include the Administrative Personnel Association, the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, and the Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association and others.

G-14.0742
Certification

Certification is overseen and granted by the individual associations; the requirements for certification are reported to the appropriate body of the General Assembly Mission Council.

a. Members of the Administrative Personnel Association (APA) include secretaries, administrative assistants, bookkeepers, and support staff in church-related settings.

b. Members of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians (PAM) include choir directors, organists, ministers, and other persons interested in the quality and integrity of music in the worship experience.

c. Members of the Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association include pastors and lay persons serving primarily as administrators in particular churches and church-related entities.

G-14.0743
Notification of
Status

Names of those who have earned certification through these associations shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly Mission Council, which will forward them to the Office of the General Assembly and to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.

G-14.0744
Recognition by
Presbytery

a. The presbytery shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing for recognition at presbytery at the time of their certification, asking them the constitutional questions in W-4.4003, and by inviting these employees to presbytery meetings, granting them the privilege of the floor.

b. When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of an applicant for a certified position in ministry in the church, a service of recognition shall be provided that shall include the constitutional questions (W-4.4003), using these words for Question i: Will you be a faithful Certified _____, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER XV

RELATIONSHIPS

G-15.0000

G-15.0100

1. Ecumenical Commitment

G-15.0101

Openness

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to manifest more visibly the unity of the church of Jesus Christ and will be open to opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and action with other ecclesiastical bodies and secular groups.

G-15.0102

Other Christian
Bodies

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek to initiate, maintain, and strengthen its relations to, and to engage in mission with, other Presbyterian and Reformed bodies and with other Christian churches, alliances, councils, and consortia.

G-15.0103

All Levels

All governing bodies of the church, in consultation with the next higher governing body, shall be authorized to work with other Christian denominations in the creation and strengthening of effective ecumenical agencies for common mission.^a

G-15.0104

Non-Christian
Religious Bodies

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek new opportunities for conversation and understanding with non-Christian religious bodies in order that interests and concerns may be shared and common action undertaken where compatible means and aims exist.

G-15.0105

Secular Groups

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will initiate and respond to approaches for conversation and common action with movements, organizations, and agencies of the business, educational, cultural, and civic communities that give promise of assistance toward accomplishing the mission of the Church in the world.

G-15.0200

2. Relations with Other Denominations

G-15.0201

Churches in
Correspondence

a. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion with those churches so recognized by ecumenical agreements approved by the General Assembly.

b. The General Assembly is in correspondence with the highest governing body:

(1) of those churches with which it has had historical relations outside the United States,

(2) of those churches that are members of the ecumenical bodies in which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) holds membership, and

(3) of those churches with which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has formal ecumenical dialogue approved by the General Assembly.

G-15.0202
Recognition of
Ordination

When a minister of another Christian denomination is called to a work properly under the jurisdiction of a presbytery, the presbytery, after the constitutional conditions (G-11.0404–.0405) have been met, shall recognize the minister’s previous ordination to the office of the ministry. Similar procedures shall be followed in dismissing a minister from this denomination to another.

G-15.0203
Reception and
Dismissal of
Churches

a. When a particular church of another denomination requests that it be received by a presbytery of this denomination, the presbytery shall verify that the church has been regularly dismissed by the governing body of jurisdiction, and the advice of the highest governing body of that denomination dealing with relations between denominations has been received, and shall then receive the church in accord with its responsibilities and powers. (G-11.0103h.)

Dismissal of
Churches

b. Similar procedures shall be followed in dismissing a particular church from this denomination to another. (G-11.0103i)

G-15.0204
Federated or
Union Churches

a. A presbytery may authorize a particular church to form a federated or union church with a church or churches of another denomination or denominations, or may organize a federated or union church acting in concert with a comparable governing body of another denomination or denominations. For the formation of a union church see G-16.0000.

Federated Church

b. A federated church shall conduct its life and work under a plan of agreement between the presbytery and the other governing body or bodies. This plan shall follow provisions of G-16.0000 as clearly as is practicable, and it shall be subject to the constitutions (disciplines or other organic documents) of each church involved. Whenever the constitutions differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Whenever there are conflicting mandatory provisions, petition shall be made to the appropriate governing bodies of the denominations to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.

3. Church Union

G-15.0300
G-15.0301
Organic Union

Full organic union of this church with any other ecclesiastical body can be effected in the following manner:

- a. the approval of the proposed union by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;
- b. the approval in writing of two thirds of the presbyteries;
- c. the approval and consummation by the next ensuing General Assembly, or other General Assembly specified in the proposed plan of union.

G-15.0302
Ecumenical
Statements

a. In the search for the unity of Christ’s Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may from time to time receive for guidance statements of ecumenical consensus that regularly chosen representatives of this church have helped to formulate. The purpose of receiving such ecumenical statements shall be to guide the particular churches and governing bodies of this church as they share in joint action with other ecclesiastical bodies seeking ways to express the unity of the Church and to discover its possible future form.

Approved by
General Assembly

b. Such an ecumenical statement shall be approved by the General Assembly as a guide for such shared action and shall be submitted to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes together with a statement of the specific purpose and the effect of approving it. When the next ensuing General Assembly shall have received written advice that an ecumenical statement has received the affirmative vote of a majority of the presbyteries, that statement shall serve as guidance for participation in ecumenical activity.

Received
Ecumenical
Statements

c. Ecumenical statements which have been approved by the General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries in the manner described in the preceding paragraphs shall be published as “Received Ecumenical Statements of Guidance.” Such statements shall not be part of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as defined in G-1.0500 unless adopted as amendments pursuant to Chapter XVIII, “Amendments.” Ecumenical activity under the guidance of such received ecumenical statements may be conducted only under provisions of the Constitution thereof.

d. Governing bodies are encouraged and permitted to discover and engage in opportunities to minister together in mutual affirmation and admonition with churches with whom the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion.

CHAPTER XVI

UNION CHURCHES

G-16.0000

G-16.0100

1. Particular Churches of Reformed Churches

G-16.0101
Union with Other
Reformed Bodies

A particular church of this church may unite to form a union church with one or more particular churches which are members of other Reformed churches.

G-16.0200

2. Plan of Union

G-16.0201
Plan of Union
General

These provisions shall be included in the Plan of Union with such churches:

a. The following Plan of Union is adopted by the _____
_____ Presbyterian Church _____ of
_____ and the _____ Church of
_____ effective as of the date when each of
the congregations has approved the plan by a two-thirds
majority of those present at a regularly called congregational
meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by the
Constitution of each church, and when the presbytery (or
comparable governing body) of each church has approved the
particular union and this Plan of Union.

Purpose

b. The purpose of this union is to provide for the worship
of Almighty God, instruction in the Christian religion, and
participation in the mission of the church in the world, by a
union congregation which will share the property, real and
personal, of the uniting churches and provide for the services of
a minister or ministers for the union church.

Name

c. The union church shall be known as the
_____ church of _____.

Subjection

d. The union church shall be subject to the Constitution of
each church involved as set forth in subsections r, s, u, and v
below.

Review of
Records

e. The session (or comparable governing body) shall
submit its records annually, and whenever requested, to each
governing body of jurisdiction.

Membership

f. The membership of the union church shall consist of
those who were members of the uniting churches, plus those
received by the session of the union church.

Report of
Membership

g. The session of the union church shall report an equal
share of the total membership to each governing body of

jurisdiction and such membership shall be published in the *Minutes* of the General Assembly (or comparable governing body) with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union church, and with an indication of the total actual membership. A similar report of church school members, baptisms, etc., and financial expenditures shall be made by the session and noted by each General Assembly in its *Minutes*.

Officers

h. Initially the officers of the union church, elders and deacons, shall be those officers in active service of the uniting churches who will undertake to perform their ordination responsibilities under the Constitution of each church as indicated in subsections d above and r, s, u, and v below.

Election of Officers

i. At the first annual meeting subsequent to the effective date of the union, new classes of officers, to replace the officers noted in subsection h above, shall be elected by the union congregation according to the constitutional procedures in force as a consequence of subsection v below.

Ministers of Union Churches

j. The pastoral relations of the ministers of the uniting churches shall be dissolved automatically by the action of the presbytery in approving this plan, but they may be eligible to be ministers (pastors, or associate pastors) of the union church according to the will of the union church and subject to the approval of the governing bodies.

Full Members

k. The minister or ministers of the union church shall be full and responsible members of each governing body of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided below in subsection s.

Incorporation

l. The union church shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state where permissible. That corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of subsections b, c, and d above.

Property

m. All property of the uniting churches, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in subsection l above. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting churches, and it shall be bound to administer any trust, property, or moneys received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the uniting churches shall be liabilities of the union church. In any state where a church corporation is forbidden, the purposes of this paragraph shall be achieved in harmony with the law of the state.

- Trustees n. Trustees of the corporation (or the unincorporated body) shall be elected in harmony with civil law according to the constitutional provisions outlined in subsection d interpreted by subsection v below.
- Benevolences o. While recognizing the basic right of any giver to designate the cause or causes to which personal gifts shall go, the session of the union church shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the session shall decide in response to the requests of the higher governing bodies.
- Per Capita
Apportionments p. Per capita apportionments or assessments shall be paid to each governing body of jurisdiction on the basis of the total active membership of the union church, equally divided among the denominations involved.
- Session q. All members of the union church shall be under the discipline of the session according to rules agreed upon in harmony with the Constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the Constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the session where they may be contradictory.
- Appeals or
Complaints r. Appeals or complaints against the actions of the session shall be made to one higher governing body only (presbytery or comparable governing body) at the choice of the members and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the governing bodies of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the session and on the member.
- Judicial Cases s. The minister or ministers shall be subject to the discipline of the presbyteries or comparable governing body provided that when either shall begin an action it shall invite a committee from the others to join the commissioner, prosecutor, or prosecuting committee in formulating and pressing the charges. In the event of appeal the case shall be finally decided by the highest governing body to which the appeal is taken in the church which commenced the action, and that decision shall be equally binding on the governing bodies of jurisdiction.
- Pension t. The minister or ministers shall participate in the denominational pension plan of one of the churches. If the minister is already participating in one plan, membership in that plan shall be retained. If the minister is not a member of any plan, one or the other of the churches' plans shall be chosen.

Administrative
Complaints

u. Complaints against the administrative acts of the session may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant, and once being complained to one higher governing body, no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same manner.

Conflict of
Constitutions

v. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in subsection q above), the session of the union church shall petition the next higher governing bodies to overture their highest governing bodies to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.

Dissolution

w. A union church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings, held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the governing bodies involved. In case of dissolution of a union church, all property of the union church, real and personal, shall be divided equally between the next higher governing bodies.

Dismissal

x. After consultation with the union congregation, in accordance with G-11.0103i, and the next higher governing body of the other denomination involved, a presbytery may dismiss the congregation from membership in the presbytery. All property, real or personal, of the congregation may be retained by the congregation or divided between the congregation and the presbytery by agreement among the parties involved, subject to any restrictions on transfer of ownership that may exist in deeds.

G-16.0300

3. Particular Churches of Other Christian Bodies

G-16.0301
Union with
Other Christian
Churches

With the approval of the presbytery, and the consent of the General Assembly, particular churches of this church may unite to form union churches with one or more particular churches of churches other than those of the Reformed faith but which recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, accept the authority of Scripture, and observe the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.^a

G-16.0400

4. Plan of Union

G-16.0401
Plan of Union
General

The following Plan of Union shall be adopted by the union church so formed:

a. The union church shall be subject to the constitutions of each church involved, as set forth in subparagraphs l, m, o, and p below.

- Government of Church b. The union church shall be governed by a representative body elected by the congregation from among its members. This governing body shall have the powers of the session. The members of the governing body need not be elders, but if the Plan of Union provides for elders, the governing body shall consist of elders.
- Membership c. Members of the governing body of the union church shall be eligible to membership and office in the higher governing bodies.
- Report an Equal Share d. The governing body of the union church shall report an equal share of the total membership to each governing body of jurisdiction, and such membership shall be published in the minutes of each church involved with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union church, and with an indication of the total actual membership. A similar report of church school members, baptisms, etc., and financial expenditures shall be made by the governing body and noted by each involved church in its minutes.
- Ministers e. The minister or ministers of the union church shall be full and responsible members of each governing body of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided below in subparagraph m.
- Incorporation f. The union church shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state where permissible. That corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of subparagraph a above.
- Property g. All property of the uniting churches, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in subparagraph f above. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting churches, and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or moneys received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the uniting churches shall be liabilities of the union church. In any state where a church corporation is forbidden, the purposes of this subparagraph shall be achieved in harmony with the law of that state.
- Trustees h. Trustees of the corporation (or the unincorporated body) shall be elected in harmony with civil law according to constitutional provisions outlined in subparagraph a above as interpreted by subparagraph p below.
- Benevolences i. While recognizing the basic right of any giver to designate the cause or causes to which a personal gift shall go, the governing body of the union church shall annually propose

to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the governing body shall decide in response to the requests of the higher governing bodies.

Per Capita Apportionments

j. Per capita apportionments or assessments shall be paid to each governing body of jurisdiction on the basis of the total active membership of the union church, equally divided among the denominations involved.

Discipline

k. All members of the union church shall be under the discipline of the governing body according to rules agreed upon in harmony with the Constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the Constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the governing body where they may be contradictory.

Appeals or Complaints

l. Appeals or complaints against the actions of the governing body shall be made to one higher governing body only at the choice of the members and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the governing bodies of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the governing body and on the members.

Judicial Cases

m. The minister or ministers shall be subject to the discipline of the governing body of jurisdiction provided that when one shall begin an action, it shall invite a committee from the others to join the commissioner, prosecutor, or prosecuting committee in formulating and pressing the charges. In the event of appeal the case shall be finally decided by the highest governing body to which the appeal is taken in the church which commenced the action and that decision shall be equally binding on the governing bodies of jurisdiction.

Pension

n. The minister or ministers shall participate in the denominational pension plan of one of the several churches. If the minister is already participating in one plan, membership in that plan shall be retained. If the minister is not a member of any plan, one or the other of the churches' plans shall be chosen.

Administrative Complaints

o. Complaints against the administrative acts of the governing body may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant, and once being complained to one denomination, no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same matter.

Conflict of
Constitutions

p. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in subparagraph k above), the governing body of the union church shall petition the governing bodies of immediate jurisdiction to overture their highest governing bodies to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.

Dissolution

q. A union church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings, held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the governing bodies involved. In case of dissolution of a union church, all property of the union church, real and personal, shall be divided equally between the governing bodies of jurisdiction.

Dismissal

r. After consultation with the union congregation, in accordance with G-11.0103i, and the next higher governing body of the other denomination involved, a presbytery may dismiss the congregation from membership in the presbytery. All property, real or personal, of the congregation may be retained by the congregation or divided between the congregation and the presbytery by agreement among the parties involved, subject to any restrictions on transfer of ownership that may exist in deeds.

G-16.0500

5. Exception

G-16.0501
No Change in
Constitution

No provision in Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4 above shall be construed as modifying or amending the Constitution of this church in its application to any but union churches organized under this chapter, their members, officers, or ministers.

CHAPTER XVII

UNION GOVERNING BODIES

G-17.0000

G-17.0100

1. Authorization

G-17.0101

A presbytery of this church may unite to form a union presbytery with one or more comparable governing bodies^a, each of which is a member of another Reformed body, with the approval of the synod or comparable governing body of which each is a part.

G-17.0200

2. Plan of Union

G-17.0201

Plan of Union

The following Plan of Union shall be adopted by each presbytery (or comparable governing body) involved:

General

a. This plan of union is adopted by the Presbytery of _____ and the Presbytery of _____ effective as of _____ (date), the presbyteries having each approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a stated meeting of the presbytery, the matter having been published beforehand on its docket and the union and this plan having been approved by the synod (or comparable governing body) of jurisdiction over each.

Purpose

b. The purpose of the union shall be the furtherance of a united witness and mission, the administration of a single program of nurture, sustenance, and growth of the church within the union presbytery, and the oversight of all churches within its bounds by a union presbytery that will hold title to the properties of the uniting governing bodies and provide the functions and fulfill the duties of a presbytery as specified in the Constitution of each church.

Constitutional Requirements

c. The union presbytery shall be subject to the Constitution of each denomination as set forth below:

Records

(1) The presbytery shall submit its records annually and whenever requested to each synod (or comparable governing body) of jurisdiction.

Benevolences

(2) The presbytery shall be fully and equally responsible to each church. The presbytery shall adjust its benevolence or general mission askings of the particular churches annually, to the end that the presbytery shall equitably support the program of each denomination.

Per Capita

Apportionments

(3) Per capita apportionments or assessments shall be paid to each governing body of jurisdiction on the basis of the

active member strength of the union presbytery, equally divided among the denominations involved. In the event that such a procedure proves inequitable, an alternative basis may be adopted subject to approval by the governing body of jurisdiction of each denomination. Such an alternative if adopted shall be subject to periodic review.

Standing Rules

(4) The union presbytery shall be under the discipline of the synods and General Assemblies (or comparable governing bodies) according to standing rules agreed upon in harmony with the constitutions of the denominations where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the laws of each church where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the presbytery where they may be contradictory.

Appeals or Complaints

(5) Appeals or complaints against the actions of the presbytery shall be made only to the synod of one denomination. That denomination shall be determined by the presbytery, and all subsequent appeals or complaints in the same action shall be in the governing bodies of the original determination, and decisions so reached shall be binding on all the parties to such action.

Administrative Complaints

(6) Complaints against administrative acts of the presbytery may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the determination of the presbytery; and, once being complained to one governing body, governing bodies of the other denomination may not accept jurisdiction in the same matter.

Conflict of Constitutions

(7) Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, any mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases where the others are permissive. Where there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in (4) above), the union presbytery shall overture the highest governing body of the denominations involved to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretation or by constitutional amendment.

Exemption

(8) The provision of G-8.0500 of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall apply only to a union church organized subsequent to the formation of a union presbytery, and to a union church entering the union governing body, which church had previously been under a similar explicit constitutional provision.

Membership of Union Presbytery

d. The membership of the union presbytery shall consist of all minister members of each uniting presbytery and all the churches (elder or lay representatives thereof) of the uniting presbyteries, plus all others received by the union presbytery, subsequent to the effective date of this union. When the

constitutions of the churches vary as to elder or lay representation, that provision which confers the largest representation shall apply.

Membership

e. The churches of a union presbytery shall be considered union churches belonging to each denomination. Each particular church shall be reported to each General Assembly and synod of jurisdiction on the basis of an equal division of its total membership, with a notation to the effect that this has been done.

Ministers

f. Ministers of the union presbytery shall be full and responsible members of each denomination. They shall be subject to the jurisdiction and discipline of the denominations as provided in this plan. Ministers and elders or lay delegates shall be eligible to serve as commissioners to any General Assembly, as provided in the Constitution of each denomination. Commissioners to the General Assembly shall be elected on the basis of an equal division of the total active membership of the presbytery.

General Mission
Benevolence

g. The union presbytery shall be responsible to propose to all its churches a general mission and benevolence program which it judges to be an adequate and equitable response to the requests of the General Assemblies, the synods, and to its own needs. Each session shall give the members of its congregation opportunity to support this general mission and benevolence program.

Incorporation

h. The union presbytery shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state. This corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of subsections b and c above. All property of the uniting presbyteries, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation or corporations formed under this section. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting presbyteries and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or moneys received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of each uniting presbytery shall be the liabilities of the union presbytery. In any state where a church corporation is forbidden, the purpose of this paragraph shall be achieved in harmony with the laws of the state.

Standing Rules

i. The union presbytery shall draw up standing rules which shall define the operation of presbytery in such a manner as to fulfill all the functions of a presbytery, as defined in the Constitution of each denomination. (G-17.0201c(4))

Pension Plan

j. Each minister who may be subject to the call of presbytery or any of its constituent churches in the exercise of

that minister’s vocation, or who may be an employee of presbytery, shall participate in the denominational pension plan of one of the churches. If the minister is already participating in one plan, membership shall be retained in that plan. If the minister is not a member of any plan, membership shall be chosen in one of the churches’ plans.

Dissolution

k. A union presbytery may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote at two stated meetings of presbytery, not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the synods involved.

(1) In case of dissolution of a union presbytery, all the property, real and personal, of the union presbytery shall be divided between the denominations or their governing bodies of jurisdiction on the basis of the origin of the property, if such is determinable. If the origin is not determinable, then the property shall be divided equally between the denominations or their governing bodies of jurisdiction, as may be proper.

(2) The particular churches within the dissolved union presbytery shall retain their status as union churches, unless they vote to change that status under the provisions of G-16.0201w.

G-17.0300

3. Exception

G-17.0301
No Change in
Constitution

No provision in this plan of union shall be construed as modifying or amending the Constitution of this church in its application to any but union presbyteries organized under this chapter, their churches, or ministers.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMENDMENTS

G-18.0000

G-18.0100

G-18.0101

Reform by
Amendment**1. Reform**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would be faithful to the Lordship of Christ and to its historic tradition of the Church reformed always reforming, by the Spirit of God. In this faith, amendment procedures are understood as a means to faithfulness as God breaks forth yet more light from God's Word.

G-18.0200

G-18.0201

Amendments to
Confessional
Documents**2. Confessional Documents**

a. Amendments to the confessional documents^a of this church may be made only in the following manner:

(1) The approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;

(2) The approval in writing of two thirds of the presbyteries;

(3) The approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

Special
Committee

b. Before such amendments to the confessional documents shall be transmitted to the presbyteries, the General Assembly shall appoint a committee of elders and ministers, numbering not less than fifteen, to consider the proposal, of whom not more than two shall be from any one synod. This committee shall consult with the committee or governing body (or in the latter case an agent thereof) in which the amendment originated, and report its recommendation to the next ensuing General Assembly.

G-18.0300

G-18.0301

Amendments to the
*Book of Order***3. *Book of Order***

Amendments to the *Book of Order* may be made only in the following manner:

a. All proposals requesting amendment of the *Book of Order* shall be communicated in writing to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the next session of the General Assembly.

b. The Stated Clerk shall refer all such proposed amendments to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (G-13.0112), which shall examine the proposed amendment for clarity and consistency of language and for compatibility with

other provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The advisory committee shall report its findings to the General Assembly along with its recommendations, which may include an amended version of any proposed constitutional changes as well as advice to accept or decline the proposals referred to the committee. The General Assembly shall not consider any amendment until it has considered the report and any recommendation from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution.

c. Proposed amendments must be approved by the General Assembly and transmitted to the presbyteries for their vote. Presbyteries shall transmit their votes to the Stated Clerk by the next ensuing stated meeting of the General Assembly, but no later than one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendments.

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

G-18.0302
Provisions Not to
Be Amended

The following paragraph of the Form of Government may not be amended:

G-8.0701.

G-18.0400

4. Amending the Special Provisions

G-18.0401
Amending the
Special Provisions

The special provisions for amending the confessional documents and for effecting full organic union (G-15.0300) can be amended only by the same method which they prescribe.