

The Revised Book of Order

PART I (F): The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

A. Chapter One (F-1): The Mission of the Church

- F-1.01 God's mission
- F-1.02 Lordship of Christ
- F-1.03 The Calling of the Church
 - Church as the Body of Christ
 - Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic
 - Church called to proclaim the Word, administer the Sacraments, nurture the community of disciples through ecclesiastical discipline
 - Great ends of the Church
- F-1.04 Openness to the Spirit

B. Chapter Two (F-2): The Church and Its Confessions

- Mostly the contents of Chapter II in 2009/2011 Book of Order on the Confessions
- Two additions:
 - Reflection on the confessions as attempts to articulate the truths of the gospel imperiled by their times
 - *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* ("the Church reformed, always being reformed according to God's word")

C. Chapter Three (F-3): Principles of Order and Government

- F-3.01 - Historic Principles Of Church Order (1789)
- F-3.02 - Principles of Presbyterian Government (1797)
- F-3.03 - The Nature of Foundational Statements
- F-3.04 - Contents of the Constitution

PART II (G): The Form of Government

- G-1: The Congregation and Its Members (former concerns of chapters 5 and 7)
- G-2: Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification (formerly chapters 6 and 14)
- G-3: The Councils of the Church (formerly chapters 9-13)
- G-4: The Church and Civil Authority (formerly chapter 8)
- G-5: Ecumenicity and Church Union (formerly chapters 15-17)
- G-6: Interpreting and Amending the Constitution (formerly chapter 18)

(G-1) The Congregation and Its Members

- G-1.0101 - Mission of the Congregation
- G-1.0301 - The Meaning of Membership
- G-1.04 - Categories of Membership
 - No “Inactive Member” category
- G-1.05 - Congregational Meetings

(G-2) Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, & Certification

- Ordered Ministry - replaces “office”
- Deacons: The Ministry of Compassion and Service
- Ruling Elder: The Ministry of Discernment and Governance
- Teaching Elder: The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament
- G-2.0104b = new language of Amendment 10-A, adopted by presbyteries in 2011
- Preparation for Ministry (G-2.06)
- Ordination (G-2.07)
- Ruling Elders Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service (G-2.10)
- Certified Church Service (G-2.11)

(G-3) Councils of the Church

- “Councils” rather than “governing bodies” - the church’s name for the gathering of its leadership to make theological decisions

- Work of Councils organized around Reformed Notes: proclamation, sacraments, covenant community
- Mandates functions, not structures
- 219th GA restored the requirement that councils have a “committee on representation” but did not list a required membership

(G-4) The Church and Civil Authority

- Most of the contents of G-8.0000 in 2009/2011 Book of Order are here.
- G-4.0203 = “Property trust clause” of 2009/2011 Book of Order G-8.0201
- Moved language about mandatory reporting from G-6.0000 in 2009/2011 Book to G-4.03 in 2011/2013 Book

(G-5) Ecumenicity and Church Union

- Definitions of
- “Correspondence” (G-5.0201)
- “Full Communion” (G-5.0202)
- “Ecumenical Statements” (G-5.0203)
- Joint Congregational Witness (G-5.03)
- Union councils (G-5.04)
- Joint congregational witness with other churches (G-5.05) - replaces “union” and “federated”

(G-6) Interpreting and Amending the Constitution

- G-6.02 - Advisory Committee on the Constitution (moved from G-13.0112 in the 2009/2011 Book of Order)
- Process for amending Book of Confessions and Book of Order remains the same

DECISIONS CONGREGATIONS NEED TO MAKE

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

DECISIONS SESSIONS NEED TO MAKE

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

DECISIONS PRESBYTERIES NEED TO MAKE

- What titles and terms shall we use for temporary pastoral relationships? (G-2.0504b)
- Shall the presbytery permit interim/ associate succession?(G-2.0504c)
- Who will preside at presbytery in the absence of the moderator? (G-3.0104)
- What term will the stated clerk serve? (G-3.0104)
- What plan will we use to determine how many commissioners each session should elect?(G-3.0301)
- What mechanisms and processes will we use to serve as pastor, advisor, and counselor to teaching elders and congregations? (G-3.0307)
- What mechanisms and processes will we use to guide, nurture, and oversee the process of preparing to become a teaching elder? (G-3.0307)

THE CHALLENGE: A CHANGE OF MINDSET

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

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