

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ORDER

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Workshop for Clerks of Session
February 2, 2008

Part I. THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Chapter 1. Preliminary Principles

Note the eight “historic principles of church order” set forth by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788 (G-1.0300).

Note four “radical principles of Presbyterian church government” set forth by the General Assembly in 1797 (G-1.0400).

Chapter 2. The Church and its Confessions

In what sense are confessional statements “subordinate” standards? (G-2.0200).

Note the three circles of faith that our confessions affirm (G-2.0300, 0400, 0500).

Chapter 3. The Church and its Mission

This chapter is an excellent biblical and theological statement about the overall mission of the church.

Chapter 4. The Church and its Unity

What is the relation between the universal church and the particular church? (4.0100)

Note the “basic principles of Presbyterian polity” listed in G-4.0300.

Why is there such an emphasis on diversity and inclusiveness? (G-4.0400)

Chapter 5. The Church and its Members

What is required to become a member of the church? (G-5.0101a)

In what three ways can persons be received into church membership? (G-5.0101b-f)

Note the high expectations for church members. (G-5.0102)

How does the principle of inclusiveness affect requirements for church membership? (G-5.0103)

List and describe the four categories of membership in a Presbyterian church. (G-5.0200)

What role does the session have in preparing people to become church members? (G-5.0400)

Chapter 6. The Church and its Officers

How do ordained officers differ from other members of the church? (G-6.0102)

Note the eligibility of both women and men for all offices in the church. (G-6.0105)

Note the controversial section G-6.0106b (added to the Book of Order in 1996).

Note the emphasis of the people’s right to elect their own officers. (G-6.0107)

What limits are placed on freedom of conscience? (G-6.0108)

What are the “permanent pastoral offices” ministers may hold? (G-6.0202b).

What else can ministers do? (G-6.0203)

What are the requirements for pastoral confidentiality? (G-6.0204)

What are the responsibilities of elders? (G-6.0302, 0304)

What are the responsibilities of deacons? (G-6.0402)

How is the board of deacons related to the session? (G-6.0404)
Does a church have to have deacons? (G-6.0407)
How can the relationship of an elder or deacon to the session/board be dissolved? (G-6.0500)
How are officers released from (or restored to) the exercise of ordained office? (G-6.0600)
What is meant by renouncing jurisdiction? (G-6.0700)

Chapter 7. The Particular Church

How is the particular church governed? (G-7.0103)
Note the steps for organizing a new church. (G-7.0200)
Who is entitled to vote at a congregational meeting? Who cannot vote? (G-7.0301)
What is the purpose of the annual meeting of the congregation? (G-7.0302a)
What is special about special meetings? (G-7.0302b)
Who can call a congregational meeting? (G-7.0303a)
What notice is required for congregational meetings? (G-7.0303b)
What are the five categories of business that a meeting of the congregation can consider? (G-7.0304)
What is the quorum for a congregational meeting? (G-7.0305)
Who moderates a congregational meeting? (G-7.0306)
Who takes the minutes? How are they approved? (G-7.0307)
Can a minister vote in a congregational meeting? Why or why not? (G-7.0308)
Why should a church be incorporated? Who are the trustees of the corporation? (G7.0401)

Chapter 8. The Church and its Property

Who owns church property? For what purpose? (G-8.0201)
What if a church stops functioning as a PCUSA church? (G-8.0301)
What happens to the property of a church that is dissolved? (G-8.0401)
What are the restrictions on buying and selling church property? (G-8.0501)
What if a congregation splits—who gets the property? (G-8.0600)

Chapter 9. Governing Bodies

Note that in the Presbyterian system, the acts of each governing body are subject to review by the next higher governing body. (G-9.0103)
What is a committee on representation? Explain its make-up and responsibilities. (G-9.0105)
Who are the two principal officers of a governing body? (G-9.0201)
What are the basic functions of the clerk? (G-9.0203a)
Who is eligible to serve as clerk of session? For how long? (G-9.0203b)
How are all governing body meetings to be opened and closed? (G-9.0301b)
What guide do Presbyterians use for parliamentary procedure? (G-9.0302)
What's the difference between a "dissent" and a "protest"? (G-9.0303, 0304)
Why do presbyteries have a Manual of Operations? (G-9.0405)
What should be done with minutes and records that are no longer used? (G-9.0406)
What is the difference between general administrative review and special administrative review? (G-9.0407, 0408)
Who reviews whose minutes? (G-9.0407d)
What does a reviewer look for when reviewing minutes? (G-9.0409a)
What action is taken by the higher governing body? (G-9.0410)
What's the difference between a committee and a commission? (G-9.0501, 0502)
What's the difference between an administrative commission and a judicial commission? (G-9.0503)
Define the membership requirements of commissions at the presbytery level. (G-9.0504b)
Can an administrative commission dissolve a pastoral relationship? (G-9.0505b)
What is an executive presbyter? Must a presbytery have one? (G-9.0701)

What committees/commissions is a presbytery required to have? (G-9.0902a)

Chapter 10. The Session

Who are the members that make up the session? Which are entitled to vote? (G-10.0101)

What are the responsibilities and powers of the session? (G-10.0102)

Who is the moderator of the session? Who else can moderate session meetings? (G-10.0103)

How often should the session meet? (G-10.0201)

What constitutes a quorum? (G-10.0202)

What needs to be included in session minutes? (G-10.0301) *Note: minutes are a record of actions taken!*

What membership rolls are required? (G-10.0302a)

Under what circumstances can names be deleted? (G-10.0302b)

What registers must be maintained? (G-10.0302c)

How is the church treasurer chosen and for what term? (G-10.0401)

What minimum standards of financial procedure are required? (G-10.0401a-c)

What is a full financial review? How often is it required? (G-10.0401d)

Chapter 11. The Presbytery

Note the definition in G-11.0101.

How are churches represented? What other elders are members of presbytery? (G-11.0101)

What are the responsibilities of the presbytery? (G-11.0103)

What's the difference between *stated* meetings and *special* meetings? (G-11.0201)

How can special meetings be called? (G-11.0201)

What is the quorum for a presbytery meeting? (G-11.0202)

What are corresponding members? (G-11.0203)

Why do we have to submit the annual statistical reports to General Assembly? (G-11.0305)

Note the "full financial review" requirement. (G-11.0307)

What insurance coverage is required? (G-11.0308)

What if ministers want to work outside the bounds of their own presbytery? (G-11.0401)

What sort of examination is required for a minister coming into a presbytery? (G-11.0402)

Why are ministers called "continuing members" of presbytery?

What are the criteria for a validated ministry? (G-11.0403)

How can a minister of another denomination be received into the Presbyterian Church? (G-11.0404)

How does a minister of another denomination become a temporary member of presbytery? (G-11.0405)

What are the three categories of membership in presbytery? (G-11.0406)

Note the four types of validated ministry that qualify for active membership. (G-11.0408-0412)

What is the nature, membership, and quorum of the committee on ministry? (G-11.0501)

What are the responsibilities of the committee on ministry? (G-11.0502)

Who has access to COM? (G-11.0503)

Chapter 12. The Synod

Aside from its *program* activities, the key *polity* responsibilities of the synod are its role in the judicial process (G-12.0102i) and its review of presbytery records (G-12.0102n).

Chapter 13. The General Assembly

Note the opening statement in G-13.0101.

How are the presbyteries represented in the General Assembly? (G-13.0102)

What are the responsibilities of the General Assembly? (G-13.0103)

Note the new requirement for calling a special meeting of the GA. (G-13.0104)

What is the role of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution? (G-13.0112)

What does the General Assembly Council do? (G-13.0201d)

Chapter 14. Ordination, Certification, and Commissioning

NOTE: This chapter has been extensively revised in the 2007-09 edition; previous editions of the Book of Order are now obsolete!

G-14.0200 Preparation for the Office of Elder and Deacon

What is the status of elders not currently serving on the session? (G-14.0210)

What are the term limits for serving on the session (or the board of deacons)? (G-14.0222)

Who serves on the church nominating committee to nominate church officers? (G-14.0223)

What is required for a small church nominating committee? (G-14.0226b)

What must always be allowed at the congregational meeting for electing officers? (G-14.0232)

Note: In the new Book of Order, the “constitutional questions” for the ordination/installation of elders and deacons have been moved from the Form of Government (G) to the Directory for Worship (W); they are now found at W-4.4000.

G-14.0400 Preparation for the Office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament

What presbytery committee is responsible for this area? (G-14.0401)

Into what two phases is the period of preparation divided? (G-14.0401)

Much of the material on the inquiry/candidacy process has been moved to an advisory handbook. (G-14.0402)

What is the session’s role in the inquiry/candidacy process? (G-14.0413)

What is the annual consultation required of each inquirer/candidate? (G-14.0421)

What are the standard ordination examinations? (G-14.0430)

What are the requirements to be certified as “ready for examination for ordination, pending a call”? (G-14.0450)

How can an inquirer/candidate be removed from the roll? (G-14.0460)

How can exceptions be made to the examination requirements? (G-14.0470)

Who examines the candidate and who ordains? (G-14.0480; see also G-14.0484)

How is a candidate for ordination examined on the floor of presbytery? (G-14.0482)

Note: In the new Book of Order, the service for the ordination (and/or installation) of ministers is covered in the Directory for Worship (W-4.4000).

G-14.0500 Pastoral Relations

What are the various relations a minister can have with a church? (G-14.0501)

Who are the parties to the call of a pastor? (G-14.0511)

What can’t an associate pastor do? (G-14.0513)

What is a designated pastor? What special provisions apply? (G-14.0520)

When can the process of calling a new pastor begin? (G-14.0530)

What is the first step in calling a new pastor? (G-14.0531)

What does the pastor nominating committee (PNC) do? (G-14.0532)

What happens at the congregational meeting to elect a pastor? (G-14.0533)

What must be included in the call? (G-14.0534)

What temporary pastoral relations are available if there is no pastor? (G-14.0550)

When can the session begin seeking an interim pastor? (G-14.0553)

What is a commissioned lay pastor? What can a CLP do? (G-14.0560)

What is a parish associate (not to be confused with an associate pastor)? (G-14.0570)

G-14.0600 Dissolution of Installed Pastoral Relationships

Who dissolves the pastoral relationship? (G-14.0610)

What are the steps in the process of dissolution if the minister requests it? (G-16.0611)

What are the steps in the process of dissolution if the congregation requests it? (G-16.0612)
What is a pastor emeritus? How is the relationship established? What are its limits? (G-14.0620)
How are former pastors (and other ministers) limited? (G-14.0630)

G-14.0700 Persons Called to Certified Ministry

How are Christian educators certified? (G-14.0710, 0720)
What are the presbytery's responsibilities toward certified Christian educators? (G-14.0730)
What are the provisions for other certified lay employees? (G-14.0740)

Chapter 15. Relationships

In its relations with other denominations, the PCUSA is in "full communion" with four other churches: the United Church of Christ (UCC), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This relationship was established by the "Formula of Agreement" approved in 1997-98 (see text in Appendix C). (G-15.0201a)
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is "in correspondence with" other churches. (G-15.0201b)
What is a "union church"? What is a "federated church"? (G-15.0204)

Chapter 16. Union Churches

Note the provisions for establishing a union church (e.g. PCUSA-UCC). (G-16.0200)

Chapter 17. Union Governing Bodies

Never mind.

Chapter 18. Amendments

This chapter lists the requirements for amending the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
What is the process for amending the Book of Confessions? (G-18.0200)
What are the steps in amending the Book of Order? (G-18.0300).

Part II. THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

What are the different responsibilities of the pastor and the session? (W-1.4004, 4005, 4006)

Note the session's responsibilities in connection with baptism. (W-2.0312)

What is required of parents presenting children for baptism? (W-2.0314)

What are the session's responsibilities regarding the Lord's Supper? (W-2.4012, W-3.3611, W-3.3616d)

What are the "constitutional questions" for the ordination and/or installation of officers—ministers, elders, and deacons? (W4.4003)

What questions does the congregation answer for ordination/installation of elders/deacons? (W-4.4004)

What questions does the congregation answer for the installation of a minister? (W-4.4006)

Note the procedure for the ordination (W-4.4005) or installation (W-4.4006) of a minister.

Part III. THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

Note the definitions of key terms. (D-2.0000)

Note who has jurisdiction over whom. (D-3.0101)

Remedial cases. D-6.0000 describes the procedure for a remedial case, and the details for trying a remedial case are in D-7.0000.

Disciplinary cases. D-10.0000 covers the procedure for a disciplinary case.

How does a disciplinary case begin? (D-10.0100)

What is the role of the investigating committee? (D-10.0200)

What is the time limit for filing charges? (D-10.0401)

Procedures for trial of a disciplinary case are set forth in D-11.0000.

What are the four degrees of censure in a disciplinary case? (D-12.0100)

How can a person be restored? (D-12-0200)