

# **The Standing Rules of NORTH TEXAS PRESBYTERY**

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# **1 PURPOSE**

These Standing Rules shall serve to direct the work of the North Texas Presbytery, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as “Presbytery”). The ultimate authority of any court of the church rests in God alone as revealed in His Word. It is the responsibility and privilege of elders in His church to submit to Him and His Word in the work of Presbytery.

## **2 GENERAL RULES**

### **2-1 Parliamentary Procedure**

*Robert’s Rules of Order* (most recent edition) shall govern all meetings of Presbytery in all cases to which they apply, and in which they are not inconsistent with the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America (“BCO”) or these Standing Rules (“SR”).

### **2-2 Amendments**

These Standing Rules may be amended only if the amendment is first proposed in writing at a stated meeting of Presbytery. The amendment must be distributed in writing with the material for the next stated meeting of Presbytery and must appear on the docket for a vote. Approval of any amendment requires a two-thirds majority.

### **2-3 Suspension of the Standing Rules**

These Standing Rules, or any portion thereof, except Section 2-2, may be suspended by a three-fourths vote of the members present at any meeting of Presbytery, which affirmative vote shall be no less than 50% of the enrollment at that meeting. Such suspension shall be effective only for that meeting of Presbytery.

### **2-4 Relation to Corporate Bylaws**

Presbytery shall operate under the “Bylaws, Presbyterian Church in America, North Texas Presbytery, a Nonprofit Corporation” (hereinafter referred to as “Bylaws”). These Bylaws state, “These Bylaws shall be read and interpreted to be consistent with the Standing Rules of Presbytery. In the event of conflict or ambiguity, expressed or implied, between the Bylaws and the Standing Rules, the Standing Rules shall prevail. Every reasonable effort shall be made to apply the Standing Rules and Bylaws in harmony.” In addition, Presbytery shall operate in accordance with the BCO, which is incorporated herein by reference.

### **2-5 Quorum**

A quorum shall be eight (8) ruling elder commissioners from at least eight (8) different churches, and eight (8) teaching elders.

### **2-6 Attendance at Meetings**

#### **2-6.1 Presence During Meetings**

Every teaching elder shall attend every stated meeting and every called meeting of Presbytery, unless providentially hindered, and all churches shall be represented by ruling elder commissioners at every stated meeting and every called meeting of Presbytery, unless providentially hindered. Members of Presbytery shall arrive on time and attend all sessions of Presbytery unless specifically excused by Presbytery. Every teaching elder and ruling elder commissioner shall register upon arriving at every stated meeting and every called meeting of Presbytery. All guests are invited to register and be seated as visiting brothers or corresponding members.

#### **2-6.2 Absence From Meetings**

When providentially hindered from such attendance, a teaching elder or a ruling elder commissioner shall request Presbytery to excuse him, stating the reason he is unable to attend.

## **2-7 Financial Management**

### **2-7.1 Contributions**

Monies intended to support the work of Presbytery, including any of its committees or commissions, shall be sent to the treasurer. The treasurer shall apply the gifts as follows: undesignated gifts to the budget of Presbytery and designated gifts as directed by the donor, subject to the approval of the Administrative Committee.

### **2-7.2 Direct Financial Support**

- A.** Presbytery shall fund the work assigned to it by BCO through its annual operating budget (SR 2-11).
- B.** The Presbytery directly funds the work of church planters and campus ministers within its bounds because the Presbytery is responsible for these ministry efforts (BCO 13-9.g). The Presbytery may fund ministry from its annual operating budget that is outside its geographical bounds, provided that it is in support of Teaching Elders who are members of the Presbytery, or MTW missionaries who are members of churches which are part of the Presbytery. Additionally, Campus Ministers (RUF) shall be supported within the Presbytery and may also be supported throughout the southwestern states (OK, TX, NM, and AZ). It is the responsibility of the church at every court level to promote the fulfillment of the Great Commission (BCO 14-1.2).

### **2-7.3 Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of Presbytery shall be July 1 – June 30.

## **2-8 Official Communications**

The stated clerk shall serve as the sole spokesman for Presbytery and only as directed by Presbytery, and shall represent Presbytery, whether in public or in private, to the media, at any church in Presbytery or at any other church.

## **2-9 Guest Presentations at Meetings**

Each committee shall be limited to three informational presentations by its guests, unless additional presentations are approved by a simple majority vote of Presbytery when the docket is approved. Each informational presentation shall be limited to ten minutes. The time limit for any presentation may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

## **2-10 Committee Reports (Appendix D)**

Each committee chairman shall ensure that his committee's report is delivered to the stated clerk no later than 18 days prior to each stated meeting of Presbytery. All reports to Presbytery shall be distributed in writing with the docket (SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.). Otherwise, a report may only be presented if a committee representative first explains the delay and then, without debate, Presbytery, by a simple majority vote, agrees to hear the report.

## **2-11 Committee Plans**

After the annual Presbytery committee elections in February, the convener of each committee (SR 4-1.2.A.ii.f.) shall convene a meeting before March 15th to elect a chairman for the new year, elect a clerk for the new year and prepare an action plan and budget request for the next fiscal year. (Each committee shall consult the Standing Rules job description for the committee; previous plans and budgets; BCO 13, 14-1, and other sections; the Scriptures and other sources as appropriate.) Each new committee chairman shall submit the action plan and budget request in writing to the Administrative Committee chairman by the next April 1st.

## **2-12 Nominations**

Whenever the nominations clerk nominates a man, additional nominations for the same position may come from the floor of Presbytery. Whenever a vacancy occurs on any of the Permanent Committees of Presbytery, the Chairman of that committee shall report it to the nominations clerk.

# **3 MEETINGS**

## **3-1 Stated Meetings**

### **3-1.1 General**

Presbytery shall meet on the first Friday and Saturday of February, May and November and the second Friday and Saturday of August. The time and place shall normally be fixed during a previous meeting of Presbytery. Presbytery shall normally convene on Friday at 7:00 P.M. and recess at 10:00 P.M., then reconvene on Saturday at 8:00 A.M. and adjourn at 12:00 P.M. Such times may be changed at the discretion of the moderator or the court. The Friday meeting may be preceded by a meal provided by the host church. It is appropriate for a fee to be charged to defray the cost of the meal.

### **3-1.2 Arrangements**

#### **A. Location**

Invitations from churches desiring to host a stated meeting of Presbytery in the upcoming calendar year shall be submitted to the Administrative Committee by October 1. At each November stated meeting the Administrative Committee shall recommend churches to host the next four stated meetings (SR 3-1.1). If an invitation for any of these four meetings is not received by October 1, the stated clerk shall secure such invitation(s). When a church designated to host a meeting is unable to do so, the stated clerk shall immediately arrange for another church to host that meeting. Three of the four stated meetings each calendar year shall be in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

#### **B. Expenses**

The expenses of teaching elders and ruling elders attending Presbytery shall be defrayed by the bodies that they respectively represent (BCO 10-6). The host church may offer housing to those who otherwise would be unable to attend due to the expense of lodging.

#### **C. Worship Services**

Each Stated Meeting of Presbytery shall begin with a worship service not to exceed one hour. The Saturday morning session shall begin with a brief (approximately 20 minute) exposition of God's Word. The moderator shall designate the speaker(s). The Friday evening sermon and/or Saturday morning exposition may be used to satisfy BCO 19-2.d, 21-4.d and SR 8-6.3.

#### **D. Time of Prayer**

Presbytery shall engage in a time of mutual encouragement and prayer during each Stated Meeting, according to a format which the moderator determines will best promote those ends (SR Appendix C).

## **3-2 Called Meetings**

Called Meetings shall be in accordance with BCO 13-12.

## 4 OFFICERS

Presbytery acts harmoniously in both an ecclesiastical capacity through its ecclesiastical officers and in a corporate capacity through its corporate officers.

### 4-1 Ecclesiastical

#### 4-1.1 Membership

The ecclesiastical officers of Presbytery shall be the moderator, the stated clerk, the treasurer and the nominations clerk. Each officer shall be elected by a majority of the court.

#### 4-1.2 Election and Duties

##### A. Moderator

##### i) Election

The moderator shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of one year at the February meeting of Presbytery and shall assume office at the conclusion of that meeting. Nominations shall come from the floor of Presbytery. The office shall alternate between a teaching elder in the Presbytery and a ruling elder of a church which is a member in Presbytery. He may be re-elected to a succeeding one-year term, but may serve no more than two successive terms. If the moderator is a ruling elder, then the stated clerk of Presbytery shall notify the Clerk of the Session of the church of which that ruling elder is a member, and request that he be designated a commissioner from that Session for the term to which he has been elected.

In the absence of the moderator, the stated clerk shall convene the court and immediately preside over the election of an acting moderator. The acting moderator, immediately upon his election, shall assume the function of the moderator only for that meeting of Presbytery or until the moderator arrives. When both the moderator and the stated clerk are absent from a meeting of Presbytery, the most recent former moderator in attendance at that meeting of Presbytery shall convene the court and immediately preside over the election of the acting moderator.

##### ii) Duties

The moderator shall:

- a. Prepare the docket for each Presbytery meeting in coordination with the stated clerk (SR Appendix C),
- b. Arrange for the worship services in coordination with the host church and ensure that these worship services can be conducted within the one hour limit (SR 3-1.2.C),
- c. Designate men to preach at Presbytery (SR 3-1.2.C),
- d. Convene each meeting of Presbytery and preside according to parliamentary procedure (SR 2-1),
- e. Appoint the Resolution of Thanks Committee and ad hoc committees created by Presbytery,
- f. Appoint conveners for Permanent Committees, ad hoc committees and commissions,
- g. Appoint other members of Presbytery to help him preside over the meeting (for example, a parliamentarian, a timekeeper, etc.),
- h. Encourage committee chairmen to ensure that the work of their committee is done well,
- i. Serve as an *ex officio* member of all Presbytery committees, (although his presence cannot count toward a quorum) and
- j. Appoint commissions to ordain and/or install each teaching elder received by Presbytery.

## **B. Stated Clerk**

### **i) Election**

The stated clerk shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of three years at the February meeting of Presbytery and shall assume office at the conclusion of that meeting. Nominations shall come from the floor of Presbytery. The stated clerk shall be a teaching elder in Presbytery or a ruling elder of a church which is a member in Presbytery. If the stated clerk is a ruling elder, and he is not the representative from his church, then he shall have the privilege of the floor, but without a vote. The stated clerk may be re-elected to additional three-year terms. The stated clerk shall receive an annual stipend determined by Presbytery.

### **ii) Duties**

The stated clerk shall:

- a. Record and preserve the minutes of all meetings of Presbytery, and present them for approval by Presbytery at the next stated meeting,
- b. Distribute the minutes of the immediate past meeting of Presbytery to all teaching elders, clerks of Session, Presbytery officers and chairmen of committees within 30 days following Presbytery,
- c. Prepare the docket of each meeting, in cooperation with the Moderator, and distribute it to all teaching elders and clerks of Session at least 14 days prior to the meeting,
- d. Handle Presbytery's correspondence and records, forwarding information as appropriate to the committees of Presbytery,
- e. Report to Presbytery all requests for excused absences,
- f. Forward attendance records for all teaching elders and churches to the Minister and Church Relations Committee, indicating excused or unexcused absences.
- g. Serve as the sole spokesman for Presbytery (SR 2-8),
- h. Serve as a member of the Administrative Committee,
- i. Request data for, and publish at the May meeting, a directory of churches, teaching elders and Presbytery committees, listing the names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of all churches (both particular and mission), teaching elders, clerks of Session and Presbytery committee members and trustees and
- j. Act for the treasurer during those times that the treasurer cannot perform the duties of his office.

## **C. Treasurer**

### **i) Election**

The treasurer shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of three years at the February meeting of Presbytery and shall assume office at the conclusion of that meeting. Nominations shall come from the floor of Presbytery. The treasurer shall be a teaching elder in Presbytery, or a ruling elder or a deacon who is a member of a church in Presbytery. The treasurer may be re-elected to additional three-year terms.

### **ii) Duties**

The treasurer shall:

- a. Receive and deposit funds as directed by Presbytery,
- b. Disburse funds as directed by Presbytery as directed by the chairmen of the Permanent Committees, commissions and ad hoc committees of Presbytery in compliance with the budget of that Permanent Committee, commission or ad hoc committee,
- c. Comply with fiscal internal controls and operating procedures established by the



- Administrative Committee (SR 6-3.2),
- d. Prepare, or have prepared, reports of the financial condition of Presbytery for the February and August meetings, and present these reports, either in person or by a person he designates to report in his place and
  - e. Serve as a member of the Administrative Committee unless he is a deacon, in which case he will be a non-voting member.

#### **D. Nominations Clerk**

##### **i) Election**

The nominations clerk shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of three years at the February meeting of Presbytery and shall assume office at the conclusion of the May meeting. He shall be nominated by the Administrative Committee. The nominations clerk may be re-elected to additional three-year terms. The Nominations Clerk shall be a teaching elder in Presbytery or a ruling elder who is a member of a church in Presbytery. Upon election, he shall attend all meetings of the Administrative Committee in order to ensure a smooth transition into his new office.

##### **ii) Duties**

Each year the nominations clerk shall nominate one man for each available position for the annual elections to various General Assembly Permanent Committees, the General Assembly Committees of Commissioners and all vacancies on Permanent Committees of Presbytery (SR 2-12). He shall submit these nominations to Presbytery for approval as outlined in SR Appendix B. He shall ensure that all biographical data and required forms are sent to the stated clerk of the General Assembly by the required deadlines. In the case of Committees of Commissioners, the nominations clerk shall appoint members to serve on those Committees of Commissioners for which no representative was elected at the February meeting of Presbytery.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on any of the Permanent Committees of Presbytery, the nominations clerk shall nominate one man for each vacant position at the next stated meeting of Presbytery to fulfill the unexpired term (SR 2-12). He shall nominate these men as outlined in SR Appendix B.

## **4-2 Corporate**

### **4-2.1 Membership**

The corporate officers, or trustees, of Presbytery shall be the chairman of the Administrative Committee, the moderator, the stated clerk and the treasurer, who shall serve as president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, respectively.

### **4-2.2 Duties**

The corporate officers shall:

- A.** Have those powers specified in the Bylaws, subject in all respects to BCO, which powers and duties shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the ecclesiastical officers of Presbytery,
- B.** Act for Presbytery only on the instruction of Presbytery in the following matters:
  - i)** Buying, selling and mortgaging of property,
  - ii)** Acquiring and conveying title to such property, and holding and defending title to the same and
  - iii)** Managing any permanent special funds entrusted to them and
- C.** Inform Presbytery of all legal matters pertaining to Presbytery and retain legal counsel, should the need arise.



## **5 COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS**

### **5-1 Permanent Committees**

The Permanent Committees of Presbytery are:

- A.** Administrative Committee
- B.** Candidates Committee
- C.** Theological Examining Committee
- D.** Minister and Church Relations Committee
- E.** Mission to the World Committee
- F.** Mission to North America Committee
- G.** Campus Ministries Committee
- H.** Christian Education Committee
- I.** Sessional Records Committee

### **5-2 Commissions and Ad Hoc Committees**

#### **5-2.1 Composition and Quorum**

The Moderator may appoint a commission(s) and/or ad hoc committee(s) as directed by Presbytery (SR 4-1.2.A.ii.f.). Each member of a commission or ad hoc committee shall be a teaching elder in Presbytery or a ruling elder who is a member of a church of Presbytery. In the event of a vacancy(ies), the moderator (or, in his absence the stated clerk) may appoint a substitute (s). In the event of a vacancy (ies) on a commission to ordain and/or install a teaching elder, the chairman (or the convener if a chairman has yet to be elected) may also appoint any teaching elder in Presbytery and/or a ruling elder who is a member of a church of Presbytery as a substitute (s).

A quorum for a commission, with the exception of a commission appointed to act as an interim Session (BCO 15-2), shall be two teaching elders and two ruling elders.

A quorum for an ad hoc committee shall be set by the moderator at the time the ad hoc committee is appointed.

**5-2.2** In the interim between stated meetings, the moderator shall have the authority to appoint judicial commissions as he judges necessary for the efficient operation of the presbytery and its churches. All churches and teaching elders of the Presbytery shall be electronically notified by the stated clerk of such an intention. The notification shall include a clear statement of the purpose and composition of the commission. In the event one teaching elder and one ruling elder from different churches object to the appointment of the commission the commission shall not be appointed and, if necessary, steps to call a meeting of the presbytery shall be taken.

#### **5-2.3 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected by the members of the commission or ad hoc Committee.

#### **5-2.4 Duties**

Commissions and ad-hoc committees shall perform those duties assigned to them by Presbytery, including but not limited to drafting a “Resolution of Thanks” to the host church, responding to an overture, etc.

#### **5-2.5 Budget**

Budget allocations for commissions and ad hoc committees shall be requested

from Presbytery through the Administrative Committee.

### **5-3 Reimbursement**

Presbytery shall reimburse, pursuant to SR 4-1.2.C.ii.b., reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by members of Permanent Committees, commissions and ad hoc committees in the performance of their duties. Any member seeking reimbursement shall submit a request to the treasurer within 60 days of the expenditure. The request must include receipts or other supporting documents and direction from the chairman of the Permanent Committee, commission or ad hoc committee to the treasurer to reimburse the expense.

## **6 ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE**

### **6-1 Composition and Quorum**

The Administrative Committee shall consist of its chairman (SR 6-2), the chairman of each of the Permanent Committees (or a member of any Permanent Committee[s] designated by the chairman of that respective Permanent Committee[s], the moderator, the stated clerk, the treasurer and the nominations clerk and the executive director of the Southwest Church Planting Network . The treasurer, if a Deacon and the executive director of the Southwest Church Planting Network may not vote.

A quorum shall be four members.

### **6-2 Chairman**

The Chairman shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of one year at the February meeting of Presbytery and shall assume office at the conclusion of that meeting. Nominations for the chairman of the Administrative Committee shall come from the floor of Presbytery. He may be re-elected to a succeeding one-year term, but may serve no more than two successive terms. He may be a member of a Permanent Committee, but may not be an ecclesiastical officer of Presbytery or the chairman of a Permanent Committee.

### **6-3 Duties**

This committee shall:

**6-3.1** Submit a budget for the approval of Presbytery at the May meeting,

**6-3.2** Ensure that fiscal internal controls and operating procedures are established and functioning as designed,

**6-3.3** Devise measures to encourage each member church to:

**A.** Participate fully in the General Assembly's Partnership Shares and **B.** Support the Presbytery financially at the rate of at least .75% of that church's previous year's general fund receipts,

**6-3.4** Formulate long-range plans for Presbytery,

**6-3.5** Receive invitations from, and recommend churches to, host the Stated Meetings of Presbytery (SR 3-1.2.A.),

**6-3.6** Receive all complaints, appeals and references and:

**A.** Recommend appropriate action to the Presbytery, including whether to establish a committee or commission, in which case the Administrative Committee may recommend elders it considers best suited to serve thereon or

- B.** May act as a commission to dispose of a complaint or respond to a reference in those cases deemed extraordinary by a two-thirds majority of the voting membership of the committee, not merely of those members present, in which case this committee shall report its actions as a commission at the next stated meeting of presbytery.

**6-3.7** Nominate men for the following positions:

**A.** Nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.) and

**B.** General Assembly Overtures Committee, (one teaching elder and one ruling elder) at the February meeting of Presbytery, either of whom may be opposed by nominations from the floor,

**6-3.8** Receive all matters for which no other Permanent Committee has responsibility and

**6-3.9** Act as liaison between Presbytery and the General Assembly Administrative Committee, PCA Foundation and Retirement & Benefits, Inc., and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of these three General Assembly organizations.

**6-3.10** The Committee shall be the Standing Judicial Business Committee of the Presbytery. As such it shall receive all Judicial Communications as comprehended in Part II of the BCO. It shall review those communications in a timely manner and make their recommendation to the moderator.

## **7 CANDIDATES COMMITTEE**

### **7-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of nine elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be five members and must include two teaching elders and two ruling elders.

### **7-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

### **7-3 Candidates Under Care**

#### **7-3.1 Overview**

This committee shall receive all applications from men seeking to become candidates under the care of Presbytery, examine them in accordance with BCO 18-2 and 18-3 and, if approved, recommend they be received by Presbytery.

#### **7-3.2 Application**

Each man's application, consisting of the written endorsement of his Session (BCO 18-2), must be in the hands of the stated clerk at least one month before the Presbytery meeting at which the applicant requests to become a candidate under care.

#### **7-3.3 Session Endorsement**

The Session's (SR 7-3.2) written endorsement (BCO 18-2) shall state that the Session met with the man (and his wife, if married) and shall reflect the Session's view of the applicant in the

following areas:

- A. Household management (including, but not limited to, his wife's support of his calling, his children's behavior, his Christian leadership in the home and his financial management),
- B. Christian character (as required in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1) and
- C. Prospect of usefulness in the ministry, and the activities of ministry in which the applicant has participated, accompanied by a brief evaluation (BCO 18-2).

#### **7-3.4 Examination**

This committee shall lead the examination of prospective candidates on the floor of Presbytery. The entire examination of each candidate before Presbytery (BCO 18-3) shall not exceed five minutes. The time limit may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

#### **7-3.5 General Care and Oversight**

In order to provide for the general care and oversight of Presbytery's candidates, this committee shall:

- A. Give each candidate counsel and guidance in regard to his studies, his practical training and the institutions of learning he should attend (BCO 18-4),
- B. Include in the committee's report to be distributed with the docket (SR 2-10, SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.) one or two sentences describing the current status and progress of each candidate under care,
- C. Secure from his instructors annual reports concerning each candidate's deportment, diligence and progress in study (BCO 18-6) and review these reports for the purpose of assessing the candidate's progress,
- D. Receive a brief written report from each candidate and distribute it to Presbytery at the August meeting (BCO 18-6) and
- E. Recommend candidates eligible for scholarships and loans from funds administered by Presbytery or a seminary.

#### **7-3.6 Transfer**

This committee may act as a commission of Presbytery when Presbytery has received a request from a candidate to be given a certificate of dismission to another presbytery in accordance with all of the stipulations of BCO 18-7, in which case the Candidates Committee shall submit a report of its actions at the next stated Meeting of Presbytery.

### **7-4 Internship**

#### **7-4.1 Overview**

This committee shall oversee interns as described in BCO 19-7 through 19-16.

#### **7-4.2 Process**

This committee shall:

- A. Receive applications from any candidate under care of Presbytery to begin a period of internship closely supervised by Presbytery in accordance with BCO 19-7 through 19-16,
- B. Review each candidate's internship application consisting of the following:
  - i. A written and/or an oral statement (at the discretion of Presbytery) of his inward call to the ministry of the Word and
  - ii. A written proposal for his one-year internship program (minimum length required by the BCO), including a teaching elder of Presbytery designated as his internship program mentor,
- C. Recommend to Presbytery qualified applicants to begin a period of internship,
- D. Include in the committee's report to be distributed with the docket (SR 2-10, SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.), one or two sentences describing the current status and progress of every Presbytery intern (BCO 19-12),
- E. Receive a brief written report from each intern and distribute it to Presbytery at the August

meeting (BCO 19-12) and

- F. Evaluate, at the end of the period of internship, whether the requirements for internship have been satisfied and submit a recommendation to Presbytery (BCO 19-13).

#### **7-5 Liaison**

This committee shall act as the liaison between Presbytery and Covenant Theological Seminary, and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of that General Assembly organization.

## **8 THEOLOGICAL EXAMINING COMMITTEE**

#### **8-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of nine elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the Nominations Clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be five members and must include two teaching elders and two ruling elders.

#### **8-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

#### **8-3 Prerequisite of an Approved Call**

*This committee shall not proceed with the required examination unless a candidate for ordination or transferring teaching elder presents a written copy of his call with verification of receipt, review and recommendation by the Minister and Church Relations Committee.*

#### **8-4 Scope of Oversight**

This committee shall receive all applications and examine the applicant's qualifications for licensure, ordination, or membership in Presbytery by transfer from another PCA Presbytery, or by transfer from another denomination.

#### **8-5 Report of Examination**

This committee shall administer a careful oral examination of the applicant, either in person or by video conference, in all areas required by the BCO. This committee shall report to Presbytery concerning the length of time spent in committee examining the applicant. Ordinarily, this committee shall administer this examination at least two weeks prior to the stated meeting of Presbytery and this committee's recommendations shall be included in their written report. Nevertheless, the committee is permitted to report on examinations administered within two weeks prior to the meeting of Presbytery without requesting an exception to SR 2-10. In addition, this committee shall distribute to Presbytery as part of its report (SR 2-10, SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.) notice of any written assignments or examinations submitted to this committee by the applicant. These assignments or examinations shall be made available upon request.

This committee shall make a recommendation to Presbytery regarding men in receipt of a call that they have examined. This recommendation may be challenged by any member of Presbytery. This committee is not required to make a recommendation to Presbytery regarding men whom they have examined for licensure.

**8-6 Licensure (BCO 19-1 thru 19-6)**

**8-6.1 Examination on the Floor of Presbytery**

This committee shall lead the examination of applicants for licensure in the following areas:

- A.** Christian experience and inward call,
- B.** Basic knowledge of Biblical doctrine,
- C.** Practical knowledge of Bible content and
- D.** Basic knowledge of the government of the Presbyterian Church in America.

**8-6.2 Time Limits on the Examination**

This committee's designated examiner will be allowed to examine the applicant for up to ten minutes in each area. All other members of Presbytery will be allowed to examine the applicant from the floor for up to five minutes in each area. The time limit for any area may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

**8-6.3 Sermons**

This committee shall arrange for the applicant to preach a sermon before Presbytery. Presbytery may divide into groups so that more than one sermon may be heard simultaneously by Presbytery (SR 3-1.2.C). A member of each group shall be designated by the moderator to report to the full Presbytery, including a recommendation whether the sermon should be approved.

**8-7 Ordination (BCO 21)**

**8-7.1 Examination on the Floor of Presbytery**

This committee shall lead the examination of applicants for ordination in the following areas:

- A.** Experiential religion, personal character and family management,
- B.** Bible content,
- C.** Theology,
- D.** The Sacraments,
- E.** Church history, and the history of the Presbyterian Church in America and
- F.** Principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.

**8-7.2 Time Limits on the Examination**

This committee's designated examiner will be allowed to examine the applicant for up to ten minutes in each area. All other members of Presbytery will be allowed to examine the applicant from the floor for up to five minutes in each area. The time limit for any area may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

**8-8 Admission From Another PCA Presbytery (BCO 13-5 and 13-6)**

**8-8.1 Examination on the Floor of Presbytery**

This committee shall lead the examination of teaching elders seeking admission into Presbytery from another Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America in the following areas:

- A.** Christian experience,
- B.** The applicant view's in theology,
- C.** The Sacraments and
- D.** Church Government.

**8-8.2 Written Statement**

This committee shall establish, maintain and revise a list of not more than five specific topics of pastoral and/or theological interest to Presbytery. They shall require each applicant to submit a brief written statement (2-3 sentences per topic) of his views on each topic, which shall be distributed with the docket (SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.).

**8-8.3 Time Limits on the Examination**



This committee's designated examiner will be allowed to examine the applicant for up to five minutes in each area. All other members of Presbytery will be allowed to examine the applicant from the floor for up to five minutes in each area. The time limit for any area may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

#### **8-8.4 Permission to Move to the Field**

Subsequent to the successful completion of this committee's examination, this committee may, in cases it deems extraordinary (BCO 21-1) by the unanimous vote of those present, act as a commission and grant permission for an ordained minister in good standing from another presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America to move on to the field to which he has been called before he is examined and received by Presbytery.

### **8-9 Admission From Another Denomination (BCO 13-6)**

#### **8-9.1 Examination on the Floor of Presbytery**

This committee shall lead the examination regarding the knowledge and views of applicants seeking admission into Presbytery from another denomination in the following areas:

- A.** Experiential religion, personal character and family management,
- B.** Bible content,
- C.** Theology,
- D.** The Sacraments,
- E.** Church history, and the history of the Presbyterian Church in America and
- F.** Principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.

#### **8-9.2 Written Statement**

This committee shall establish, maintain and revise a list of not more than five specific topics of pastoral and/or theological interest to Presbytery. They shall require each applicant to submit a brief written statement (2-3 sentences per topic) of his views on each topic, which shall be distributed with the docket (SR 4-1.2.B.ii.c.).

#### **8-9.3 Time Limits on the Examination**

This committee's designated examiner will be allowed to examine the applicant for up to ten minutes in each area. All other members of Presbytery will be allowed to examine the applicant from the floor for up to five minutes in each area. The time limit for any area may be extended for additional five-minute periods by a simple majority vote of Presbytery.

## **9 MINISTER AND CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

### **9-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of nine elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be five members and must include two teaching elders and two ruling elders.

### **9-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

### **9-3 Overview**



This committee shall consider and make recommendations regarding all matters referred to it by Presbytery concerning the work and responsibilities of teaching elders and their official relationship to the calling church or court. Because these matters are spiritual and theological in nature, nothing contained herein shall affect the discretion of Presbytery in admitting any teaching elder into Presbytery, nor shall anything contained herein be interpreted to create a civil right or remedy.

#### **9-4 Calls to Teaching Elders (Appendix H)**

##### **9-4.1 Review Prior to Examination**

This committee shall review the form and content (terms) of all calls (BCO 20-6) and immediately forward their recommendation(s) to the Theological Examining Committee. The Minister and Church Relations Committee shall recommend one of the following to Presbytery: approval, rejection, or modification of the terms of the call.

##### **9-4.2 General Acceptability of Applicants**

This committee shall investigate all men seeking membership in Presbytery. This investigation shall include, though not necessarily be not limited to, the following areas:

- A.** Physical and emotional health,
- B.** Marriage and family life,
- C.** Financial needs and problems,
- D.** Gifts for ministry,
- E.** History of ministry experience,
- F.** Spiritual maturity and
- G.** General ability to edify the church.

Because these areas are subjective in nature, this committee shall consult with some member(s) of Presbytery(ies) and churches or organizations in which the applicant has previously served. This committee shall draw conclusions about the general acceptability of the man for the church, and shall report its findings or concerns to Presbytery in accordance with BCO 21-1.

#### **9-5 Pastoral Relationships To The Churches of Presbytery**

**9-5.1** This committee shall consider and make recommendations to Presbytery  
concerning the following:

- A.** All requests for dissolution of pastoral relations (BCO 23),
- B.** All requests for honorable retirement (BCO 23),
- C.** All requests for divestiture without censure (BCO 38-2) and
- D.** Any teaching elder who shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of the Presbyterian Church in America by affiliating with some other branch of the visible church (BCO 38-3).

**9-5.2** This committee may act as a commission of Presbytery when Presbytery has received a request to dissolve the pastoral relation (BCO 23-1, see Appendix K). Such power shall be exercised only if both of the following conditions are met:

- A.** There has been an uncontested request from either the teaching elder or the congregation to dissolve the pastoral relation and
- B.** The teaching elder is in good standing, with no charges pending or problems known that might warrant future disciplinary action.

This committee shall submit a report of its actions at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

**9-5.3** This committee shall, as directed by Presbytery, or at the request of a Session or a teaching elder investigate problems within their church (BCO 13-9.f.). Where possible, this committee shall give counsel and advice to resolve such problems; and, if necessary, report and recommend to

Presbytery suitable action to protect the honor of Christ, the reputation of the church and the dignity of the office of teaching elder (BCO 31-2,7; 32-2 and 33-1).

**9-6 Changes in Theological Views**

This committee shall meet with any teaching elder who reports a change in his views related to ordination vow #2 (BCO 21-5.2) and shall report and make recommendations to Presbytery.

**9-7 Churches without Ministers**

This committee shall (BCO 22-5, 6):

**9-7.1** Contact any church which is a member of Presbytery and which has no teaching elder in order to offer assistance securing a man to preach regularly,

**9-7.2** Contact any church which is a member of Presbytery and which has no senior pastor in order to offer assistance securing a senior pastor,

**9-7.3** Consider and make recommendations to Presbytery concerning all requests for Stated Supply (BCO 22-5, 6).

**9-8 Teaching Elders without Call, Laboring out of Bounds or Honorably Retired**

**9-8.1** This committee shall:

- A.** Consult with teaching elders without call at least quarterly and report to, and prepare recommendations for, Presbytery concerning their status (BCO 13-2, 9 and 34-10; SR Appendix J),
- B.** Consult with teaching elders laboring out of bounds at least annually and report to, and prepare recommendations for, Presbytery concerning their status,
- C.** Receive requests and make recommendations concerning teaching elders who desire to labor outside the geographical bounds, or in a work not under the jurisdiction of, Presbytery (BCO 13-2) and
- D.** Report to Presbytery annually regarding the general well-being of each of its honorably retired teaching elders, which report shall include the following:
  - i.** The teaching elder's spiritual health and connection to the body of Christ,
  - ii.** His physical, emotional and financial well-being and
  - iii.** Any recommendations for appropriate administrative actions relevant to such teaching elders and the presbyteries within which they live or labor.

**9-8.2** At each August Stated Meeting, teaching elders without call or laboring outside the bounds of Presbytery shall report to Presbytery concerning their location and activities. Teaching elders who are honorably retired or permanently disabled are exempt from this requirement, but are encouraged to attend the meetings of Presbytery.

**9-9 Attendance of Presbyters at Meetings**

This committee shall make recommendations concerning any case of habitual absence from stated meetings of Presbytery whether by a teaching elder or a church through its ruling elder representative(s) (SR 2-6).

**9-10 Pastor At Large**

**9-10.1 Qualifications**

The Pastor at Large (PAL) shall be at least fifty years old, have significant experience as a teaching elder in the PCA, be familiar with the teaching elders and churches of Presbytery and demonstrate the ability to be a pastor to pastors.

**9-10.2 Election and Terms of Call**

The Administrative Committee, in consultation with the Minister and Church Relations

Committee, shall nominate a candidate for the position of PAL and draw up the terms of the call. The PAL may be a full or part time position. Presbytery shall compensate the PAL from its operating budget and/or designated contributions. Presbytery's goal shall be to support the PAL fully from the operating budget; however, the PAL may raise designated contributions. The Administrative Committee shall determine the PAL's compensation. The candidate and the call are subject to the approval of Presbytery.

### **9-10.3 Duties**

The PAL shall support and encourage the teaching elders, including those without call, and their families by:

- A.** Visiting the teaching elders and their families,
- B.** Providing counsel, encouragement and discipling for teaching elders in order to encourage their spiritual and professional development,
- C.** Facilitating informal gatherings of the teaching elders of Presbytery for mutual support and fellowship and
- D.** Consulting with Sessions on a limited basis, if invited to do so.

The PAL shall report to the Minister and Church Relations Committee any concerns he has regarding any Teaching Elder.

### **9-10.4 Supervision**

The Minister and Church Relations Committee shall supervise the PAL. This committee shall annually evaluate the ministry of the PAL and forward a copy of the evaluation to the Administrative Committee. The criteria for the coming year's evaluation shall be mutually agreed upon by the Minister and Church Relations Committee and the PAL and shall be submitted to the Administrative Committee for review and comment.

### **9-10.5 Limit of Authority**

The PAL shall not speak for, or represent, Presbytery in public or in private, at any church in Presbytery or at any other church unless specifically authorized by Presbytery (SR 2-8, 4-1.2.B.ii.f.).

### **9-10.6 Role in Matters of Discipline**

Communications between the PAL and the teaching elders of Presbytery and their family members or churches shall be considered confidential, unless disclosure is required by Scripture, the constitution of the PCA or local, state or federal law.

If the PAL encounters a situation which, in his judgment, requires investigation or discipline, he shall refer it to the appropriate committee of Presbytery. In such matters, the PAL shall neither act as prosecutor nor direct the investigation, although he may be required to testify.

## **10 MISSION TO THE WORLD COMMITTEE**

### **10-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of six elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be three members, including one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

## **10-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

## **10-3 Duties**

### **10-3.1 Overview**

This committee shall encourage and promote the cause of world missions in the Presbytery and the churches of the Presbytery in obedience to our Lord's command to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; BCO 14-1.1, 14-1.2).

### **10-3.2 Relationship to the Churches**

This committee shall encourage the Presbytery and its churches to:

- A.** Become true sending churches, i.e. churches that recruit, train, shepherd, qualify, financially support and pray for their Presbytery and home church Mission to the World missionaries (BCO 14-1.1, 14-1.2, 14-1.4),
- B.** Support Mission to the World missionaries, especially those from the Presbytery itself and churches of the Presbytery (BCO 14-1.4 and SR 2-7.2),
- C.** Give to the support of and participate in Border Evangelism And Mercy Ministries along the Texas/Mexico border (BCO 14-1.4),
- D.** Provide information about their mission conferences and programs to other churches and
- E.** Send their teaching elders and ruling elders (especially Senior Pastors) on Mission to the World Vision Trips.
- F.** The Committee may disburse funds from its budget in support of the above activities.

### **10-3.3 Relationship to Missionaries**

This committee shall support and encourage all Mission to the World missionaries sent out by the Presbytery and the churches in the Presbytery by:

- A.** Helping them contact churches in Presbytery,
- B.** Advising them regarding how best to raise support in Presbytery,
- C.** Praying for them,
- D.** Communicating with them in order to be informed of their ongoing needs,
- E.** Giving them opportunity to speak at meetings of Presbytery and
- F.** Considering a one-time gift to encourage them as they begin raising their support (SR 2-7.2.B.).

### **10-3.4 Reports Regarding Missionaries**

This committee shall provide to Presbytery, at each Stated Meeting, current information about Mission to the World missionaries who are members of Presbytery or a church of Presbytery and are serving with Mission to the World.

### **10-3.5 Liaison**

This committee shall act as the liaison between Presbytery and the General Assembly Committee on Mission to the World, and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of that committee.

## **11 MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA COMMITTEE**

### **11-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of eight elders in four classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a four-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be four members, including one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

### **11-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

### **11-3 Duties**

#### **11-3.1 New Church Development**

This committee shall:

- A.** Oversee all new churches funded by Presbytery and cooperate in the oversight of churches started within the bounds of Presbytery by a local church Session(s) (SR Appendix I), the Southwest Church Planting Network (BCO 5-2) or General Assembly,
- B.** Ensure that each mission church has an appropriate temporary system of government, that the governing role is properly fulfilled (BCO 5-3) and that appropriate records are maintained,
- C.** Oversee the work of evangelists (BCO 5-3.1 and 8-6) and ensure that their powers are renewed when required,
- D.** Raise the necessary funds to support church development and receive donations for the work of church development (SR 2-7.2),
- E.** Identify potential candidates, recommend such men and extend calls to teaching elders to start churches under the auspices of Presbytery and
- F.** Develop strategies to promote and advance the work of church development by Presbytery and its local churches.

**11-3.2** This committee shall ensure that mission churches are organized into particular churches in an orderly and timely manner and assist them in the process of organization (BCO 5-8 through 5-11).

**11-3.3** This committee shall oversee the process of receiving churches wishing to join Presbytery (BCO 13-8).

**11-3.4** This committee shall promote and coordinate Presbytery's efforts in evangelism, as well as the promotion of the name and distinctives of the Presbyterian Church in America within our bounds.

**11-3.5** This committee shall coordinate Presbytery's disaster relief efforts.

**11-3.6** This committee shall act as the liaison between Presbytery and the General Assembly Committee on Mission to North America and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of that committee.

## **12 Campus Ministries Committee**

### **12-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of eight elders in four classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a four-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be four members, including one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

This committee's members shall serve as Presbytery's representatives on the Southwest Joint Committee on Campus Ministries.

## **12-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

## **12-3 Duties**

### **12-3.1 Campus Ministry Development**

This committee shall:

- A.** Oversee all new campus ministries initiated by Presbytery and cooperate in the oversight of campus ministries started within the bounds of Presbytery by a local church, the Southwest Church Planting Network (analogous to BCO 5-2) or General Assembly, ensuring that these ministries are conducted according to the principles and policy set forth in the Manual for Campus Ministries, Presbyterian Church in America,
- B.** Raise the necessary funds to initiate new campus ministry development and receive donations for the work of campus ministry development (SR 2-7.2),
- C.** Establish, in conjunction with the Southwest Joint Committee on Campus Ministries and each campus minister, annual budgets (including all staff salaries), assist in raising annual support and develop strategies to provide for the permanent financial support of campus ministries,
- D.** Identify potential candidates, recommend such men and extend calls to teaching elders to serve in campus ministry under the auspices of Presbytery, as well as hire un-ordained staff (such as "campus interns"),
- E.** Encourage churches of Presbytery to pray and provide financial support for the campus ministries under the oversight of the Southwest Joint Committee on Campus Ministries and promote healthy relationships between campus ministries and local PCA churches near each campus ministry and
- F.** Encourage the Sessions of the churches of Presbytery to refer college students who are members of their churches to Reformed University Ministries, if one exists on the campus of the college or university they will be attending, and encourage their involvement in that ministry.

### **12-3.2 Campus Ministers**

This committee shall oversee all teaching elders working on campuses in the bounds of Presbytery and any staff hired to directly oversee the work of the campus ministers. In conjunction with the Southwest Joint Committee on Campus Ministries and the Area Coordinator, this committee shall:

- A.** Receive regular reports from each campus minister and send a representative to visit each campus at least annually to report on the condition of the ministry,
- B.** Evaluate the programs offered at each campus to ensure that the ministry is conducted in accordance with the doctrinal system set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church in America and the principles of Presbyterian polity as set forth in the Book of Church Order,
- C.** Ensure participation of all campus ministers, staff and interns in area-wide and ministry-at-large programs and projects,
- D.** Provide mentoring, training and counsel for campus ministers and their wives and make contributions toward the cost of support services, area assistance and training, and ensure that all campus ministers, staff and interns participate in training provided by Reformed



- University Ministries and
- E. Act toward each campus ministry as a Session would act for a local church, including approving major decisions.

**12-3.3** This committee shall act as the liaison between Presbytery and the General Assembly Committee on Reformed University Ministries and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of that committee.

## **13 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **13-1 Composition and Quorum**

This committee shall be composed of six elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be three members, including one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

### **13-2 Chairman**

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

### **13-3 Duties**

This committee shall:

**13-3.1** Promote and coordinate those aspects of educational ministry that would be "...of common advantage to the Church at large..." (BCO 13-9.h.) within the bounds of Presbytery,

**13-3.2** Facilitate the churches' ability to share resources, training opportunities and joint ministry opportunities for areas of educational ministry which the churches have in common,

**13-3.3** Act as a clearinghouse for materials and resources for churches that are seeking help in the area of educational ministry,

**13-3.4** Manage and maintain the official website of Presbytery.

**13-3.5** Oversee the work of Presbytery Women in the Church, and ensure that it submits a report annually to Presbytery, including a budget for approval (SR 2-11) and an accounting for expenditures,

**13-3.6** Promote the consideration of moral and ethical issues that affect the churches of Presbytery at large and ensure that Presbytery addresses "...erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church..." (BCO 13-9.f.) within its bounds and

**13-3.7** Act as the liaison between Presbytery and Covenant College and the General Assembly Committees on Christian Education and Publications and Ridge Haven, and shall inform Presbytery of the current work of these three organizations which serve the General Assembly.



## 14 SESSIONAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

### 14-1 Composition and Quorum

This committee shall be composed of six elders in three classes. Members of this committee shall be elected at the February meeting of Presbytery for a three-year term effective at the end of the meeting at which the member(s) is elected. Each class shall have one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

Whenever a vacancy occurs on this committee, the chairman shall report it to the nominations clerk (SR 4-1.2.D.ii).

A quorum shall be three members, including one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

### 14-2 Chairman

The chairman shall be elected pursuant to SR 2-11.

### 14-3 Duties

This committee shall "...review the records of church Sessions, redress whatever they may have done contrary to order and take effectual care that they observe the Constitution of the Church;" (BCO 13-9.b.).

**14-3.1** This committee shall establish a procedure to ensure that the Session of each church within the bounds of Presbytery submits its minutes annually for review by the Committee (BCO 12-7).

**14-3.2** This committee shall examine the minutes and report notations and exceptions to Presbytery and to the Clerk of that Session, according to the spirit of the Rules of Assembly Operations (RAO Article XIV).

- A.** Notations and exceptions of **form** (RAO 16-6, c. 2-3) shall be reported to Presbytery and the Clerk of that Session in writing.
- B.** Exceptions of **substance** (RAO 16-6, c. 1 and 16-10) shall be reported on the floor of Presbytery, with recommended action, and to the clerk of that Session.
- C.** Failure to send statistical information to the General Assembly shall be reported on the floor of Presbytery, and to the clerk of that Session.

**14-3.3** This committee shall provide and update guidelines for minutes, which it shall distribute to clerks of Session annually.

**14-3.4** This committee shall offer counsel and help to clerks of Session, as it deems necessary.

## 15 RESOLUTIONS AND OVERTURES

All resolutions and overtures (except that of the Resolution of Thanks Committee) to be considered on the floor of Presbytery shall be sent to the stated clerk of Presbytery at least 30 days prior to the Presbytery meeting at which the author wishes it to be considered and enacted. The stated clerk shall forward the resolution to the appropriate Permanent Committee, which shall meet to consider the resolution and to formulate a recommendation in the form of a motion to be submitted to Presbytery. All resolutions and, if possible, the committee's response, shall be distributed by the stated clerk with the docket for the meeting at which they are to be considered (SR 2-10 & 4-1.2.B.ii.c.)

## 16 CHRISTIAN CONCILIATION

The members of Presbytery are Christians and believe that the Bible commands them to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian community in conformity with the biblical injunctions of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Matthew 5:23-26, and Matthew 18:15-20. Therefore, the

members of Presbytery agree that any claim or dispute arising out of, or related to, these Standing Rules or to any aspect of the employment relationship, including statutory claims, shall be settled by biblically-based mediation.

If such mediation does not result in resolution of the dispute and reconciliation, then the matter shall then be submitted to a panel of three independent and objective arbitrators for binding arbitration. Each member of Presbytery shall have the right to select one arbitrator (unless the parties mutually agree to the use of only one arbitrator). The two arbitrators selected by the parties shall jointly select the neutral, third arbitrator. If there is an impasse in the selection of the third arbitrator, the Institute for Christian Conciliation division of Peacemaker Ministries of Billings, Montana [(406) 256-1583], or a similar entity if this group no longer exists, shall be asked to provide the name of a qualified person who will serve in that capacity. The mediation and arbitration process shall be conducted in accordance with the "Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation" contained in the Peacemaker Ministries booklet, Guidelines for Christian Conciliation.

These methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of the employment relationship or these Standing Rules, and the members of Presbytery expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit against one another in any civil court for such disputes, except to enforce a legally binding arbitration decision.

This paragraph shall not be interpreted in a way that conflicts with BCO Appendix I.

## 17 **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Presbytery is authorized to act in areas of church discipline, as set out more particularly in Part II of the Book of Church Order (Rules of Discipline). These determinations are entirely theological matters and shall not in any circumstance create any civil right or obligation.

## Appendix A – Presbytery Calendar

		<i>January</i>	February	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>
	<b>Stated Meetings Of NTP</b>	SC distributes docket and handouts 2 weeks prior to stated meeting.	NTP stated meeting is the 1st Friday/Saturday.		SC distributes docket and handouts 2 weeks prior to stated meeting.	NTP stated meeting is the 1st Friday/ Saturday.	<b>General Assembly</b>
<b>N O M I N A T I O N S  C L E R K</b>	<b>GA Committees, Boards &amp; Agencies</b>	NC pursues biographical information as needed.	1. NC nominates men for NTP approval for GA Committees, Boards & Agencies. 2. NTP elects men as nominees for GA Committees, Boards & Agencies. 3. NC pursues biographical information as needed. 4. NTP SC must submit names to the GA SC <i>4 months prior to annual GA meeting.</i>		NTP member of the GA Nominating Committee reports to NC the individuals approved by the GA Nominating Committee to be sent to GA.	NC reports to NTP a) the names of the nominees sent to the GA SC & b) the action taken by GA Nominating Committee.	
	<b>GA CofCs</b>	SC sends copies of GA registrations to NC.	1. NC nominates men as NTP commissioners on CofCs. 2. NTP elects men as commissioners on CofCs. 3. NTP must submit names of its commissioners on CofC's to the GA SC by <i>April 15.</i>	1. SC sends copies of GA registrations to NC. 2. NTP must submit names of its commissioners on CofC's to the GA SC by <i>April 15.</i>	NTP must submit names of its commissioners on CofC's to the GA SC <i>April 15.</i>		
	NTP Permanent Committees	1. NC sends names of nominees for NTP committees to the AC by <i>January 10</i> for approval. 2. AC Meets at least 15 days prior to the February NTP Meeting in order to approve names from the NC. Names approved by AC shall be sent out with the February docket.	1. NTP elects Moderator and Chairman of AC annually; NTP elects NC, SC, and Treasurer every 3 years. 2. SC of NTP maintains a list of all NTP committee memberships. 3. Term of office for all positions begins immediately upon the adjournment of the February NTP meeting, except for the NC whose term begins immediately upon the adjournment of the May NTP meeting.			NC takes office upon the adjournment of the May NTP meeting.	
	<b>NTP Budget</b>	NTP Treasurer provides financial reports for the 6 months ended 12/31 for distribution with the February docket via the SC.		NTP committees are required to convene by <i>March 15</i> to elect a chairman & a clerk, & to draft committee plans & budgets for the coming year. The annual plans & budgets must be submitted to the Chairman of the AC no later than <i>April 1.</i> (SR 2-11).	1. AC meets by <i>April 15</i> to draft a proposed budget for recommendation to NTP. 2. The proposed budget, as recommended by the AC, should be distributed with May docket.	At the NTP meeting, the NTP budget for the coming fiscal year is approved. (SR 6-3.1)	<b>End of Annual Cycle</b>  NTP fiscal year ends June 30.

<b>Short Hand</b>	GA	=	General Assembly
	NTP	=	North Texas Presbytery
	NC	=	Nominations Clerk of North Texas Presbytery (new position)
	SC	=	Stated Clerk (of North Texas Presbytery unless otherwise specified)
	CofCs	=	General Assembly Committees of Commissioners
	AC	=	NTP Administrative Committee (formerly A&S)

<i>July</i>	<i>August</i>	A. September	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>		
	SC distributes docket and handouts 2 weeks prior to stated meeting; NTP stated meeting is the 4 <sup>th</sup> Friday/Saturday.		SC distributes docket and handouts two weeks prior to stated meeting.	NTP stated meeting is the first Friday/Saturday.		<b>Stated Meetings Of NTP</b>	
<b>End of Annual Cycle</b>	<b>Beginning of Annual Cycle</b>  GA SC informs NTP SC by <b>August 1</b> of the positions open for GA Committees, Boards & Agencies. NTP SC gives the information to NC.			1. NC informs NTP that men are needed to fill positions on GA Committees, Boards & Agencies. 2. NC announces: "Here are blank biographical forms that need to be returned to NC at least three weeks before the February meeting of NTP."	NC pursues biographical information as needed.	<b>GA Committees, Boards and Agencies</b>	<b>N O M I N A T I O N S  C L E R K</b>
	<b>End of Annual Cycle</b>  NC reports to NTP the participation of its commissioners on CofCs.	<b>Beginning of Annual Cycle</b>		NC announces: "Those Presbyters who plan to attend GA and are available to serve as commissioners on CofCs, please contact the NC." This information should be distributed with the docket.		<b>GA CofCs</b>	
<b>End of Annual Cycle</b>	<b>Beginning of Annual Cycle</b>  1. NC sends a letter (w/in 10 days after the August NTP meeting) to the chairman of each NTP committee & to the SC of Session of each member church of NTP to solicit names of likely candidates. 2. NC collects names & matches names & positions for NTP committees.	NC collects names & matches names & positions for NTP committees.	1. NC collects names & matches names & positions for NTP committees. 2. NC reports vacancies on NTP committees to SC for inclusion in the docket for the November NTP meeting.	1. NC collects names & matches names & positions for NTP committees. 2. NC announces to NTP that, at its February meeting, NTP will elect individuals to fill vacancies & supply new members for each NTP committee & to serve as NTP Moderator & AC chairman.	NC collects names & matches names & positions for NTP Committees.	<b>NTP Permanent Committees</b>	
<b>Beginning of Annual Cycle</b>  1. NTP Budget Year Begins <b>July 1</b> . 2. Treasurer will provide financial reports for the year ended 6/30 to the SC for distribution with the August Docket.						<b>NTP Budget</b>	

<b>Short Hand</b>	GA	=	General Assembly
	NTP	=	North Texas Presbytery
	NC	=	Nominations Clerk of North Texas Presbytery (new position)
	SC	=	Stated Clerk (of North Texas Presbytery unless otherwise specified)
	CofCs	=	General Assembly Committees of Commissioners
	AC	=	NTP Administrative Committee (formerly A&S)

**APPENDIX B**  
**The Nomination Process**  
**Areas of Responsibility, a Calendar, & a Nominee Schedule Summary**  
**for the Nominations Clerk**  
**(Beginning July 1 & ending June 30)**

**PREAMBLE:** This appendix is intended as a helpful guide to the nomination process; however, the reader should consult the references cited, as well as any other applicable passages of the governing documents.

**PART 1: AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

- I. Presbytery: The nominations clerk shall nominate men to serve on the following 8<sup>(1)</sup> Permanent Committees of Presbytery (SR 4-2.4.b.):
  - A. Candidates (SR 7-1)
  - B. Theological Examining (SR 8-1)
  - C. Ministerial Relations (SR 9-1)
  - D. Mission to the World (SR 10-1)
  - E. Mission to North America (SR 11-1)
  - F. Campus Ministries (SR 12-1)
  - G. Christian Education (SR 13-1)
  - H. Sessional Records (SR 14-1)
- II. General Assembly: The nominations clerk shall nominate men to stand for election by Presbytery as its members of, or nominees for, the following 31<sup>(2)</sup> **General Assembly Positions**:
  - A. Committees, of which there are 4 types
    1. Permanent Committees, of which there are 5, for each of which Presbytery elects a nominee(s)
      - a. Administrative (BCO 14-1.12; RAO 4-2, 4-5, V; Bylaws V.A.)
      - b. Christian Education and Publications (BCO 14-1.12; RAO 4-2, 4-5, 6-1; Bylaws V.B.)
      - c. Mission to the World (BCO 14-1.12; RAO 4-2, 4-5, 6-3; Bylaws V.C.)
      - d. Mission to North America (BCO 14-1.12; RAO 4-2, 4-5, 6-2; Bylaws V.D.)
      - e. Reformed University Ministries (BCO 14-1.12; RAO 4-2, 4-5, 6-4; Bylaws V.E.)
    2. Special Committees, of which there are 5<sup>(2)</sup>, for 3 of which Presbytery elects a nominee(s) to each (Interchurch Relations, Constitutional Business, and Theological Examining), for 1 of which Presbytery elects a member (Nominating), and for 1 of which Presbytery elects a member and 1 alternate (Review of Presbytery Records)
      - a. Interchurch Relations (RAO 4-4, 8-1; Bylaws V.F)
      - b. Constitutional Business (RAO 4-4, 8-2; Bylaws V.F)
      - c. Theological Examining (BCO 14-1.14; RAO 4-4, 8-3; Bylaws V.F)
      - d. Nominating (BCO 14-1.11; RAO 4-4, 8-4; Bylaws V.F)
      - e. Review of Presbytery Records (RAO 4-4, 8-5; Bylaws V.F)
    3. Committees of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies, of which there are 11, for each of which Presbytery elects a member
      - a. Administrative (RAO 14-1.1, 14-2)
      - b. Christian Education and Publications (RAO 14-1.2, 14-2)
      - c. Covenant College (RAO 14-1.3, 14-2)

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<sup>(1)</sup> In addition, there is the Administrative Committee; however, per SR 4-2.1.a, 4-2.2.a, 4-2.3.a, 4-2.4.a, 6-1, 6-2, the nominations clerk does not present nominees for this committee.

<sup>(2)</sup> In addition, there is the Cooperative Ministries Committee; however, per RAO 7-1.a., 7-2.a., Presbytery has no direct responsibility to elect men as either members or nominees to this committee.

- d. Covenant Seminary (RAO 14-1.4, 14-2)
  - e. PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc. (RAO 14-1.5, 14-2)
  - f. Interchurch Relations (RAO 14-1.6, 14-2)
  - g. Mission to North America (RAO 14-1.7, 14-2)
  - h. Mission to the World (RAO 14-1.8, 14-2)
  - i. PCA Foundation (RAO 14-1.9, 14-2)
  - j. Ridge Haven (RAO 14-1.10, 14-2)
  - k. Reformed University Ministries (RAO 14-1.11, 14-2)
  - 4. Other Committees, of which there is 1, Local Arrangements (RAO X; Bylaws V.G), for which Presbytery elects members
- B. Agencies, of which there are 5, for each of which Presbytery elects a nominee(s)
- 1. Covenant Theological Seminary (RAO 4-3, 4-5; Bylaws V.G, VI.3)
  - 2. Covenant College (RAO 4-3, 4-5; Bylaws V.G, VI.2)
  - 3. Ridge Haven Conference Center (RAO 4-3, 4-5; Bylaws V.G, VI.4)
  - 4. PCA Retirements & Benefits, Inc. (RAO 4-3, 4-5; Bylaws V.G, VI.1)
  - 5. PCA Foundation (RAO 4-3, 4-5; Bylaws V.G, VI.5)
- C. Standing Judicial Commission (BCO 15-4; RAO XVII; SJC Manual), for which Presbytery elects a nominee(s)
- D. Communion elder, of which 1 is required (established practice)
- E. Floor clerk position, of which at least 1 is required (established practice). Presbytery shall fill at least 1 floor clerk position which may be filled by up to 3 men working in rotation during the week of the General Assembly annual meeting. Presbytery may fill additional floor clerk positions, as needed by the General Assembly, each of which additional floor clerk positions may similarly be filled by up to 3 men working in rotation during the week of the General Assembly annual meeting.

## **PART 2: CALENDAR**

**NOTE:** If at any time there is a vacancy(ies), for whatever reason(s), on a **Permanent Committee(s) of Presbytery**, the nominations clerk shall nominate one man for each vacancy at the next stated meeting of Presbytery to fulfill the unexpired term (SR 2-12). If time allows before that next stated meeting of Presbytery, the nominations clerk shall first submit the name(s) of any nominee(s) to the Administrative Committee for its approval; however, if time does not allow, then the nominations clerk shall nominate one man for each vacancy at the next stated meeting of Presbytery without the Administrative Committee's approval.

### **July**

No regular action is required.

### **August**

Within 10 days following the adjournment of the August Presbytery meeting, the nominations clerk shall communicate in writing with the chairman of each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery** and the stated clerk of session of each church within Presbytery, soliciting the names of likely candidates to fill those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**. (Note: The stated clerk of Presbytery maintains a list of all Presbytery committee memberships [SR 4-2.2.b.viii].)

At the **August Presbytery meeting**, the nominations clerk shall provide a written report to Presbytery identifying the members of Presbytery who are members of General Assembly Permanent Committees, Special Committees, Agencies, or the Standing Judicial Commission.

This report shall also identify the members of Presbytery who were elected at the most recent February meeting of

Presbytery to serve on a Committee of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies or the Overtures Committee and whether or not those members are recorded in the reports of their respective Committee of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies or the Overtures Committee as having served.

### **September**

The nominations clerk shall continue to collect the names of likely candidates to fill those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**.

(Note: The nominations clerk shall expect to receive from the stated clerk of Presbytery a copy of the General Assembly Fall nominating information which the stated clerk of Presbytery shall expect to receive from the stated clerk of General Assembly as to the available **General Assembly Positions**.)

### **October**

The nominations clerk shall continue to collect the names of likely candidates to fill those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**.

The nominations clerk shall send to the stated clerk of Presbytery a report of those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery** as well as the available **General Assembly Positions** for inclusion in the docket for the November Presbytery meeting. In this report, the nominations clerk shall advise Presbytery that at the February Presbytery meeting elections shall be held for moderator (SR 4-2.1.a), stated clerk (SR 4-2.2.a), treasurer (SR 4-2.3.a), nominations clerk (SR 4-2.4.a), chairman of the Administrative Committee (SR 6-2), and **Permanent Committees of Presbytery** (SR 7-1, 8-1, 9-1, 10-1, 11-1, 12-1, 13-1, 14-1), as their respective offices or classes expire. (Note: Nominations for moderator (SR 4-2.1.a), stated clerk (SR 4-2.2.a), treasurer (SR 4-2.3.a), and chairman of the Administrative Committee (SR 6-2) shall come from the floor.)

Also in this report, the nominations clerk shall solicit men interested in filling **General Assembly Positions** and instruct them to complete biographical forms (RAO 8-4.d), which the nominations clerk shall make available, and to return them to both the nominations clerk and the General Assembly stated clerk's office at least three weeks prior to the February Presbytery meeting in order to be considered.

### **November**

The nominations clerk shall continue to collect the names of likely candidates to fill those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**.

### **December**

The nominations clerk shall continue to collect the names of likely candidates to fill those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**.

The nominations clerk shall pursue biographical information (RAO 8-4.d) as needed for men seeking to fill available **General Assembly Positions**.

### **January**

No later than 3 days prior to the January meeting of the Administrative Committee of Presbytery, the nominations clerk shall submit to the Administrative Committee, for its approval, his nominations for those positions which shall expire in February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery** as well as the available **General Assembly Positions**.

The nominations clerk shall continue to pursue biographical information (RAO 8-4.d) as needed for men seeking to fill available **General Assembly Positions**.

### **February**

At the *February Presbytery meeting*, the nominations clerk shall nominate those men approved by the Administrative Committee to fill available **General Assembly Positions** and those positions which expire in



February on each **Permanent Committee of Presbytery**. (SR 2-12, 7-1, 8-1, 9-1, 10-1, 11-1, 12-1, 13-1, 14-1). Presbytery shall then vote on those nominations.

The nominations clerk shall continue to pursue biographical information (RAO 8-4.d) as needed for men seeking to fill available **General Assembly Positions**.

**No later than 4 months prior** to the convening of the annual meeting of General Assembly (RAO 8-4.e), the nominations clerk shall submit to the stated clerk of the General Assembly the names of the members or nominees elected by Presbytery for available **General Assembly Positions**.

Latitude sometimes exists to submit to the stated clerk of General Assembly the names of the members elected by Presbytery for the **General Assembly Committees of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies, Communion Elder, and Floor Clerk Position(s)**; however, the sooner these names are submitted, the better. For current specifics, if any, as to this latitude, please consult the current edition of the forms as published by the stated clerk of General Assembly (RAO 8-4.e).

### **March**

The nominations clerk shall continue to seek to fill the available positions for **General Assembly Committees of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies, Communion Elder, and Floor Clerk Position(s)**.

### **April**

The nominations clerk shall ascertain the General Assembly Nominating Committee's actions regarding Presbytery nominees to fill available **General Assembly Positions**.

The nominations clerk shall continue to seek to fill the available positions for **General Assembly Committees of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies, Communion Elder, and Floor Clerk Position(s)**.

### **May**

At the *May Presbytery meeting*, the nominations clerk shall provide a written report to Presbytery of the action taken by the General Assembly Nominating Committee regarding Presbytery nominees to fill available **General Assembly Positions**.

The nominations clerk shall continue to seek to fill the available positions for **General Assembly Committees of Commissioners for Permanent Committees and Agencies, Communion Elder, and Floor Clerk Position(s)**.

### **June**

No regular action is required.

# **APPENDIX C**

## **Template for a Docket**

Registration – 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Call to order and prayer by the Moderator 7:00 p.m.

Determination of a quorum

Welcome by host church

Opening worship

Approval of docket

Introduction of visitors

Partial reports from the Christian Education Committee and the Mission to the World Committee (SR 2-8)

Encouragement and prayer

Appointment of Resolution of Thanks Committee

Report of the Stated Clerk

- 1) Communications
- 2) Approval of minutes
- 3) Report of other business directed by the court

Report of the Treasurer

Report of Nominations Clerk

Reports of Permanent Committees

Mission to the World Committee  
Mission to North America Committee  
Campus Ministry Committee  
Christian Education Committee  
Sessional Records Committee  
Administrative Committee  
Candidates Committee  
Minister and Church Relations Committee  
Theological Examining Committee

Old Business

New Business

Report of Resolution of Thanks Committee

Report location of future meetings

Motion to adjourn

Hymn or psalm

Prayer and benediction

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Template for Minutes/Report for Permanent Committees**

#### **I. MEETING TIME, PLACE, QUORUM**

The meeting of the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee of the North Texas Presbytery  
was convened on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(Location)

A quorum was established with the following members:

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

The meeting began with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

#### **II. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLE BUSINESS CONDUCTED**

#### **III. MATTERS TO BE RECEIVED BY PRESBYTERY AS INFORMATION**

#### **IV. MATTERS FOR PRESBYTERY ACTION**

(Committee recommendations, which are on the floor and do not need a second)

The meeting was closed with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Respectfully submitted

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Committee Secretary)

## APPENDIX E

### Template for Report of Commission to Ordain/Install

Report of the commission to ordain/install Mr./Rev. \_\_\_\_\_  
as Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_

The commission met on \_\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.  
at the church (or at \_\_\_\_\_). A quorum was present.

Commission members present were:

TE _____	RE _____
TE _____	RE _____
TE _____	RE _____

Others Present:

The commission meeting was opened with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_.  
Mr./Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ was elected chairman and Mr./Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ was elected Secretary of the  
commission. The Commission recessed with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_ for the ordination/installation  
service.

The chairman presided in the sanctuary service, which was opened with singing, prayer and Scripture reading. The sermon was  
preached by Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, on the topic/text:  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Chairman stated briefly the previous proceedings of Presbytery, and pointed out the nature and importance of the  
ordination/installation ordinance.

The Chairman propounded the constitutional questions to the candidate/Minister (**BCO 21.9**) and these were answered in the  
affirmative. The Chairman then propounded the constitutional questions to the \_\_\_\_\_  
congregation (**BCO 21.10**), and these were answered in the affirmative by the Members holding up their right hands. The  
candidate then kneeled and was set apart to the holy office of the Gospel Ministry with prayer and the laying on of hands. He  
then rose and the members of the commission gave him the right hand of fellowship. The Chairman then declared that Mr./Rev.  
\_\_\_\_\_ had been regularly elected, (ordained), and installed as Pastor of the Church.

A charge to the Pastor was delivered by Mr./Rev. \_\_\_\_\_

A charge to the congregation was delivered by Mr./Rev. \_\_\_\_\_

Following prayer and singing, the new Pastor pronounced the benediction

The Commission reconvened, approved its Minutes, and was adjourned by prayer by \_\_\_\_\_.  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Template for Session Minutes**

The Session of \_\_\_\_\_

met in a [Called / Stated] Meeting on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

at (location) \_\_\_\_\_.

A quorum was declared with the following elders:

Present:

Absent:

Excused:

The meeting was opened with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ (AM/PM)

The minutes of the meeting(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ were read for approval.

- Include appointment of Presbytery/General Assembly representatives, and also reports from the same following said meetings.
- Include record of members received and dismissed, with BCO reference.
- Include record of officer nominations, session examination of nominees, congregational elections, and ordinations/installations.
- All actions taken by motion, seconded and carried.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ (AM/PM)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of Session

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Guidelines for Session Minutes and Records**

**ATTENTION: BCO Paragraphs 12: 7,8,9**

**A.** There shall be a permanent record of the following:

1. All communicant members of the church, showing date of reception into the local church, method of reception (profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, transfer), and dismissal, decease (if applicable), or ordination.
2. All non-communicant members of the church, showing date of reception into the local church, and dismissal, decease, or transfer to communicant membership.
3. All baptisms, showing date and officiating pastor
4. All officers, including Pastors or Ministers of the Word (Regular and Supply), ruling elders, and deacons, with dates of election, ordination, installation and dismissal.
5. All Moderators and Clerks of the Session, showing dates served.

**B.** The Clerk shall be responsible for:

1. Keeping records up to date and recording the minutes of the Session.
2. The timely depositing of copies of minutes with Presbytery's Sessional Records Committee.

**C.** The minutes of the Session shall include the following:

1. Kind of meeting – Stated or Called.
2. Time, date and place of meeting.
3. Names of those attending (including visitors) and of those excused and not excused from attending the meeting.
4. Names of Moderator and Clerk
5. Meetings opened and closed with prayer and by whom.
6. If Stated, reading and approval of minutes of previous meetings
7. All actions taken by motion, seconded and carried. Actions may be taken by common consent if there is no objection. The following need not be recorded:
  - a. Name of Mover and Seconder, unless so ordered.
  - b. Vote count, unless so ordered.
  - c. Negative action votes, unless so ordered.
8. Time of adjournment
9. Minutes signed by the Clerk (the person who recorded the minutes of the meeting)

## APPENDIX H

### Template for Call to Ministry

I. The church [or Session of church], being on sufficient grounds well satisfied with your ministerial qualifications, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the office of Pastor [or Associate Pastor, or Assistant Pastor] in this congregation beginning, \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord.

II. **Salary.** That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the following annual amounts:

Salary in regular monthly [weekly, twice monthly] installments	\$
Self-employment tax contribution (FICA/SSI)	\$
Housing allowance [or use of manse and utilities]	\$_____

Salary & Housing Total \$\_\_\_\_\_

III. **Benefits.** We will also provide (specify which of these, or add others):

Medical, prescription, dental and hospitalization insurance	\$	Long term
disability insurance	\$	
Retirement contribution, annually	\$	
Reimbursement of ministry expenses [may state a limit]	\$	
Group term life insurance through the PCA [or other]	\$	
Moving expenses	\$_____	

Benefits Total \$\_\_\_\_\_

IV. **Personal** You will be entitled to \_\_\_\_\_ weeks of paid vacation annually and paid study leave of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

V. **Attestation of the call** (Please use one of the following)

A. *[If call is from the congregation]* In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. 20\_\_\_\_.

(Signature of elders, or of congregants of a church becoming particular)

I \_\_\_\_\_ having moderated the Congregational meeting on, \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ which extended a call to \_\_\_\_\_ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules of the Book of Church Order, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

Moderator of the Meeting (Signature)

**OR...**

B. *[If call is from the Session]* I, \_\_\_\_\_ having moderated the Session meeting on, \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ which extended a call to \_\_\_\_\_ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules of the Book of Church Order.

Moderator of Meeting (Signature)

Clerk of Session (Signature)



# **APPENDIX I**

## **Guidelines for Local Sessions Planting Churches** Considerations for Coordinating Local Church Planting With the Presbytery Mission to North America Committee

The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church of America states, "Ordinarily, the responsibility for initiation and oversight of a mission church lies with Presbytery, exercised through its Committee on Mission to North America, or by a Session, in cooperation with Presbytery's Committee on Mission to North America." (BCO 5-2). While Presbytery welcomes the zeal of local church Sessions to be involved in church planting, because of the Mission to North America Committee's overall responsibility for oversight of mission churches within the bounds of Presbytery, Presbytery advises local Sessions to implement this strategy as the best way to foster cooperation between a local Session and the Mission to North America Committee.

Notify the committee as soon as a decision to plant a church is being seriously considered by the Session, before such a decision is announced to the congregation or to Presbytery, so issues of mutual concern can be discussed (e.g. location, strategy, leadership, philosophy of ministry, etc.).

Seek the concurrence of the committee for the proposed site for the new church, in order to ensure that there is no overlap in plans or to see if there might be a site with a higher priority with the committee that the Session might consider as an option.

Bring any candidate for the church planting position before the committee for their interview and recommendation, before beginning to use him in any formal or informal capacity in a church planting setting.

Send copies of advertisements that will employ the PCA name and logo to the committee. Since failed efforts in the past have left an enduring poor impression on the people of those communities and hindered future church planting, Presbytery should have input into activities that will affect its public perception as a whole.

Consult with Sessions of other PCA churches near the proposed target area.

Presbytery is responsible to oversee the common interests of the churches in her membership. Insofar as church planting is a joint responsibility as well as the prerogative of local churches, we must work together for the overall benefit of the PCA in North Texas. These guidelines serve to clarify Presbytery's interpretation of the Book of Church Order and will promote the cooperation of Presbytery and local churches as we work toward the common goal of church planting in our Presbytery.

## **APPENDIX J**

### **Guidelines Regarding Ministers Without Call**

The Minister and Church Relations Committee shall provide pastoral care for ministers without call and encourage these men in the exercise of their gifts. In addition the committee shall magnify the privilege and protect the integrity and honor of the office of teaching elder.

The committee shall appoint a member who shall:

1. Meet with the minister(s) without call who is assigned to him by the committee within the first six months since the time he became a minister(s) without call,
2. Maintain monthly contact with the minister(s) for pastoral encouragement and prayer, to inquire as to his personal, emotional, financial and ecclesiastical needs and to explain the requirements of Presbytery with regard to ministers without call,
3. Submit a written report as part of the committee's report at each stated meeting of presbytery in regard to the minister assigned to him,
4. Contact the minister one year from the date he became a minister without call to inquire into the status of his call (using the Guidelines listed below) and his progress in regard to his seeking another call,
5. Maintain quarterly contact with the minister after the first year since he became a minister without call,
6. Contact the minister two years from the date he became a minister without call to inquire into the status of his call (using the Guidelines listed below) and his progress in regard to his seeking another call and
7. Arrange for a meeting of the minister and the committee in accordance with BCO 13-2 and 34-10 in the event he has continued to be without a call for a period of three years.

Guidelines for determining whether a minister is fulfilling his call to ministry

1. Regular (50% or more) attendance at the stated meetings of Presbytery,
2. Inward testimony of a continuing sense of God's call to the ministry and actions consistent with pursuing a call to a particular ministry,
3. Regular exercise of the gifts of a teaching elder through some acceptable combination of the following: preaching, teaching, pastoral counseling, serving on a session, presbytery or General Assembly committee or agency work, administration of the sacraments and evangelism and
4. A vital and measurable connection with the P.C.A. through his participation and his family's membership in a local PCA church.

# APPENDIX K

## The Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

(Guidelines for M&CRC in applying BCO 23-1)

The Minister and Church Relations Committee (M&CRC) shall use the following procedure when any minister tenders the resignation of his pastoral charge to the Presbytery or when any church desires to be relieved of its pastor.

### I. Steps to follow when a minister tenders his resignation of his pastoral charge to the Presbytery.

- A. The minister sends his letter of resignation to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.
  1. Concurrently, the minister may also inform the congregation of his desire to resign.
  2. A congregational meeting shall be called to allow the congregation the opportunity to vote if they approve or object to the resignation.
- B. The Stated Clerk forwards the resignation letter from the minister to the M&CRC for their review and recommendations.
- C. The M&CRC cites the church to appear by its commissioners to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation.
- D. If the church fails to appear, or if there is no known objection by the congregation, the M&CRC may proceed as a Commission of the Presbytery (if a quorum is present) and the resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation be dissolved if both conditions are met as outlined in NTP Standing Rules 9-5.2.
- E. If the commissioners from the church give reasons why the pastor should be retained, the M&CRC may not act as a commission of the Presbytery. The M&CRC shall refer the matter to the Presbytery with recommendations on how to proceed. (NOTE: NTP Standing Rules 9-5.2)
- F. The Presbytery (or the M&CRC if acting as a commission of the Presbytery) shall determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned. (BCO 23-1)

### II. Steps to follow when a congregation desires to be relieved of its Senior or Associate Pastor.

- A. A congregational meeting is called for the purpose of receiving a motion to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship with their pastor. *(This meeting shall be conducted in the same manner as one calling a pastor. BCO 23-1; 20-4)*
1. The voters being convened, and prayer for divine guidance having been offered, the moderator shall put the question:  
**Are you ready to proceed to the motion to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship with your pastor?**
2. If the congregation declares themselves ready, the moderator shall call for the reading of the motion. Time shall be given for questions and debate both for and against. The vote will then be taken by ballot.

If it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to asking the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship and cannot be induced to concur with the motion, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from asking that the pastoral relationship be dissolved. But if the electors be nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority shall insist upon their right to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship, the moderator shall proceed to declare the motion passed and any facts of importance from the proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery. *(Wording paraphrased from BCO 20-5 as a guide to how to conduct the meeting in the same manner as calling a pastor.)*

- B. If the motion to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship passes, this action is then communicated to the Presbytery through the Stated Clerk.
- C. The Stated Clerk forwards the request from the congregation to the M&CRC for their review and recommendations.
- D. The M&CRC cites the minister to appear before their committee to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not dissolve the pastoral relationship.
- E. If the minister fails to appear, or there is no known objection by the pastor, the M&CRC may proceed as a Commission of the Presbytery (if a quorum is present) and the request granted and the pastoral relation be dissolved.
- F. If the pastor objects to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship and/or gives reasons why he should be retained, the M&CRC may not act as a commission of the Presbytery. The M&CRC will refer the matter to the Presbytery with recommendations on how to proceed. (NOTE: NTP Standing Rules 9-5.2)
- G. The Presbytery (or the M&CRC if acting as a commission of the Presbytery) shall determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned. (BCO 23-1)

### **III. Steps to follow for Assistant Pastors.**

- A. The Assistant Pastoral relationship is a three way agreement between the pastor, the Presbytery, and the Session. (BCO 22-3)
- B. The same procedures will be followed as in steps I and II above. However, since the Assistant Pastor is called by the Session, the Session would function in a similar manner as the congregation when determining the call or dissolution of call to Senior or Associate Pastors.
- C. An uncontested resignation or request by the Session to dissolve the call may be approved by the M&CRC as a commission of the Presbytery. (Conditions of Standing Rules 9-5.2 still apply.)
- D. The M&CRC shall refer all contested resignations or requests of dissolution of calls to the Presbytery with recommendation on how to proceed. (Standing Rules 9-5.2)
- E. If the process ends with the dissolution of the pastoral relationship the Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned. (BCO 23-1)

### **IV. Steps to follow when there is conflict within a Session between the Ruling and Teaching Elders.**

- A. The Senior and Associate pastoral relationship is a three way agreement between the pastor, the Presbytery, and the congregation. (BCO 20-1, 22-2)
  - 1. The Session is not empowered to call or hire the Senior or Associate Pastor.
  - 2. The Session is not empowered to dissolve a call or fire the Senior or Associate Pastor.  
 Only the Presbytery has the power "To establish the pastoral relation and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties\*, or where the interest of religion imperatively demands it." (BCO 13-9.c.)  
 (\*parties = Pastor & Congregation for Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor. parties = Pastor & Session for Assistant Pastor.)
- B. The Session shall work toward reconciliation before they seek dissolution of the pastoral relationship.
  - 1. **Work toward reconciliation** by following the steps outlined in the BCO. (27-5 and Appendix I)

a. If conflict or disagreement takes place between the Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders serving on a church session, the parties involved must follow the procedures outlined in Appendix I of the BCO, "Biblical Conflict Resolution."

1) *BCO* 27-5 outlines the proper principles for the exercise of church discipline. This *BCO* section emphasizes that the steps indicated, (a) through (d), must be followed in proper order. The steps are:

- a) Instruction in the Word;
- b) An individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1);
  - 1) Overlook an offense.
  - 2) Discuss the offense with the goal of reconciliation.
  - 3) Negotiate the issue so that reconciliation is made possible.
- c) If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matt. 18:16);
  - 1) Mediation - seeking outside help to guide parties to reconciliation.
  - 2) Arbitration - agreeing to allow a third party to hear the views and render a binding decision that results in reconciliation.
- d) If rejection persists, then the church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition.

2) If the Session is unable to find reconciliation through the first two steps ('a' or 'b'), the Session as a whole, individual Ruling Elders, or the Pastor shall contact the M&CRC to seek assistance in working toward reconciliation.

- a) The M&CRC will be available to help **mediate** a decision. (c.1, see BCO Appendix I) The M&CRC will invite the PAL in to assist in the situation as necessary.
- b) If mediation fails, then the M&CRC will be available to **arbitrate** a binding decision. (c.2, see BCO Appendix I) The M&CRC will invite the PAL in to assist in the situation as necessary.

(NOTE: The sole purpose and goal of mediation and arbitration is reconciliation. The arbitrator is not empowered to decide if the pastor should resign or if the congregation should seek dissolution of the pastoral relationship. It is important that reconciliation be accomplished in a timely manner. Ordinarily, if progress is not observed within a three month period, the process should move to the next step. Mediation - Arbitration - Church Discipline)

3) If reconciliation is still rejected, the M&CRC will seek help from the Presbytery which may include a request to investigate to see if there is a strong presumption of guilt that sin is present that makes reconciliation impossible... and if it is found that a strong presumption of guilt exists, the Presbytery will proceed with a judicial process (Step 'd' above, see BCO Appendix I).

b. If the result of the reconciliation process ends with dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the Presbytery (or the M&CRC if acting as a commission of the Presbytery) shall determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned. (BCO 23-1)

2. **Seek dissolution of pastoral relationship:** If the Session desires to have the pastoral relationship dissolved, they should follow the steps of BCO 23-1 and contact M&CRC of the NTP "in a similar procedure" to a TE tendering his resignation. They should then call a congregational meeting for the purpose of asking the congregation to request the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship. Section II covers the steps a congregation must follow to be relieved of their Senior or Associate Pastor. Section III covers the steps the Session must follow when they desire to be relieved of their Assistant Pastor. Neither the church nor Session should pressure the pastor to resign against his will.

Supporting References and Documents for Presbytery background and discussion purposes only.

## CHAPTER 23

### The Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation and the Procedure for Honorable Retirement

**23-1.** When any minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the church to appear by its commissioners, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation. If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation dissolved. If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation. (BCO 23-1)

If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

The associate or assistant pastors may continue to serve a congregation when the pastoral relation of the senior pastor is dissolved, but they may not normally succeed the senior pastor without an intervening term of service in a different field of labor. However a congregation by a secret ballot with four-fifths (4/5) majority vote may petition Presbytery for an exception which by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote Presbytery may grant. Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the senior pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned.

Historical Background from this paragraph of the BCO:

F.P. Ramsay, *Exposition of the Book of Church Order* (1898, pp. 155-156), on VI-5-13:

A Pastor resigns to the Presbytery, and not to the church; and the church applies to the Presbytery for a dissolution, and does not ask the Pastor to resign. It is the Presbytery that establishes and dissolves the pastoral relation, and not the Minister and the church. These two parties have no negotiations with each other directly concerning the pastoral relation, but only through the Presbytery.

At the same time, according to the principle indicated in paragraph 126, that the church may have already had a meeting and prepared its answer to Presbytery, in case some other church has made out a call that aims at the removal of the Pastor, the church may likewise, if its Pastor gives notice of his intention of tendering his resignation to the Presbytery, hold a congregational meeting and appoint its commissioners to answer in the matter to Presbytery, before that meeting of Presbytery at which the Pastor's resignation is to be presented ; and the issue may then be determined. The church, when cited by Presbytery, must be convened in congregational meeting, but it may decide to make no opposition, and in that case may decide not to send any answer to the Presbytery. And this requirement of a congregational meeting does not forbid the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation on its own motion, without consulting either Pastor or church, "where the interests of religion imperatively demand it." (See PCA BCO 23-1; 13-9.c) (*This was taken off of the PCA website.*)

#### **13-9.c Presbytery, it has power:**

c. To establish the pastoral relation and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or where the interest of religion imperatively demands it;

From the North Texas Presbytery Standing Rules:

**9-5.2** This committee may act as a commission of Presbytery when Presbytery has received a request to dissolve the pastoral relation (BCO 23-1). Such power shall be exercised only if both of the following conditions are met:

- A. There has been an uncontested request from either the teaching elder or the congregation to dissolve the pastoral relation and
- B. The teaching elder is in good standing, with no charges pending or problems known that might warrant future disciplinary action.

This committee shall submit a report of its actions at the next Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

BCO:

**20-1.** Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. (See also *BCO* 8-7 and 21-1).

A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the *BCO* 8.

*A congregational meeting to receive a motion to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship should be conducted in the same manner as the call to the pastor (BCO 23-1) The manner that the congregational meeting to call a pastor is found in BCO 20-3 - 20-5*

**20-3.** When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it is important that they should elect a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer. All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the churches to which they are respectively attached.

**20-4.** Method of voting: The voters being convened, and prayer for divine guidance having been offered, the moderator shall put the question:

Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor?

If they declare themselves ready, the moderator shall call for nominations, or the election may proceed by ballot without nominations. In every case a majority of all the voters present shall be required to elect.

**20-5.** On the election of a pastor, if it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to the candidate who has received a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from prosecuting it further; but if the electors be nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a pastor, the moderator shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by them, certifying at the same time in writing the number of those who do not concur in the call, and any facts of importance, all of which proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the call.

**27-5.** Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will. Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are:

- a. Instruction in the Word;
- b. Individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1);
- c. If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16);

d. If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition  
(See *BCO* 29 and 30 for further explanation). Steps (a) through (d) must be followed in proper order for the exercise of discipline.



1 APPENDIX I BIBLICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
2 PREFACE

3 As we continue to seek to become a church holy before God, the manner in which we respond to sin  
4 and conflicts in the body, and gently shepherd those caught in sin, will reflect our commitment to the  
5 authority of God's Word and the spirit of love, which should define all of our actions and  
6 relationships. Biblical peacemaking is one of God's highest priorities (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18; Gal.  
7 6:1); therefore, it must be one of our highest priorities. The *Book of Church Order (BCO)* reflects our  
8 commitment to following God's procedure for reclaiming those going astray. It says, "Scriptural law is  
9 the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will. Proper disciplinary principles  
10 are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed" (*BCO* 27-5). It also says, "An injured party shall  
11 not become a prosecutor of personal offenses without having tried the means of reconciliation and of  
12 reclaiming the offender, required by Christ" (*BCO* 31-5). The purpose of this Appendix is to provide  
13 guidance through the steps of biblical peacemaking required as pre-conditions to judicial process in  
14 cases of personal offense (*BCO* 31-5), and for use whenever possible in cases of general offense (*BCO*  
15 31-7).

16 Each Presbytery should endeavor to have several elders trained in the methods of "Christian  
17 conciliation" (including mediation and arbitration), and available to serve as Christian conciliators in  
18 cases that could and should be resolved privately before judicial process is initiated. We would do  
19 well to follow the wisdom of those who have considered the importance of this matter. For example,  
20 Elder Edmund Clowney states, "Discipline...is not first an exercise of negative judgment, a matter of  
21 church courts and censures. It begins with the care of friends with whom we strive to follow Christ"  
22 (Clowney, E.P., *The Church*, IVP, 1995).

23 THE BIBLICAL STEPS OF DISCIPLINE AS THEY RELATE TO BIBLICAL  
24 PEACEMAKING

25 *BCO* 27-5 outlines the proper principles for the exercise of church discipline. This *BCO* section  
26 emphasizes that the steps indicated, (a) through (d), must be followed in proper order. The steps are:  
27 a) Instruction in the Word;  
28 b) An individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1);  
29 c) If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matt. 18:16);  
30 d) If rejection persists, then the church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension,  
31 excommunication and deposition.

32 This Appendix addresses the first three steps, (a) through (c), by providing an expanded discussion of  
33 the implications raised by Scriptural direction for a complete process at each step. Step (d), formal  
34 church discipline, is addressed by Part II of the *Book of Church Order*, The Rules of Discipline.

35 1. The first step - Instruction in the Word.

36 Many Christians do not fully understand the emphasis God places on living at peace and in unity with  
37 others (Eph. 4: 3). Preaching and teaching should regularly address this emphasis and the purposes for  
38 church discipline as set forth in *BCO* 27-3 and *BCO* 27-4. Attention should be drawn to the fact that  
39 the main procedural passage related to church discipline, Matthew 18:15-20, is set forth in the context  
40 of two powerful parables teaching the extent and depth of God's love in reclaiming those who have  
41 strayed (Matt. 18:10-14), and the vast measure of His forgiveness and the expansive forgiveness He  
42 expects from His children toward one another (Matt. 18:21-35). The extent of instruction on  
43 reconciliation provided to church members in "new member classes" and regular preaching from the

pulpit will have a significant bearing on the extent to which a church member understands the benefits of church discipline and has consented to ecclesiastical jurisdiction (which is helpful for the church if it is to avoid legal liability for the proper exercise of church discipline).

Teaching God's Word concerning sin, and conflicts that result from it, and how Christians should respond biblically to conflict, will equip church members to become peacemakers themselves. Peacemaking has always been one of a Christian's most important ministries. As we are reminded in 2 Corinthians 5:18, God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." One of the most powerful ways that we can encourage reconciliation with God is to model reconciliation among people.

When others see us resolve our differences in a loving and biblical manner, they are inclined to give more weight to what we say about the Lord (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23). On the other hand, when they see Christians embroiled in disputes, they tend to write God's people off as hypocrites and dismiss the claims of Christ (Rom. 2:21-24; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

The Bible sets forth a process for resolving personal and substantive disputes in a constructive manner. This process is sometimes referred to as "Christian conciliation" and it may be used to resolve everything from minor personal differences to church divisions or lawsuits involving church members. As indicated in passages such as Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 5:23-25 and 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, and Galatians 6:1, conciliation involves three basic steps: (1) when Christians are involved in a conflict that is too serious to overlook, the first thing that they should do is meet together privately and in person to try to resolve their differences; (2) if this effort is unsuccessful, they should ask one or more other Christians to meet with them and help them to seek reconciliation and a voluntary settlement of their differences (a process sometimes referred to as mediation); and (3) if they cannot arrive at a voluntary settlement, they should ask one or more other Christians to hear both sides of the matter and render a biblically based decision that both sides are obligated to accept (a process sometimes referred to as arbitration).

There are many benefits to resolving disputes through Christian conciliation. It prevents a public quarrel that would dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ and diminish the credibility and witness of His Church. Conciliation also allows Christians to demonstrate their faith in Christ and their confidence in His teachings (John 13:34; 14:15; 17:20-23). In addition, conciliation encourages forgiveness and promotes reconciliation, which can help to preserve valuable relationships and strengthen the Church (Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-17).

Conciliation also helps people to identify and deal with the root causes of conflict, which may include such things as pride, selfishness, fear, vengeance, greed, bitterness, or unforgiveness (see Matt. 7:3-5). This allows people to make changes in their lives so that they will enjoy more peaceful relationships in the future (Eph. 4:1-3, 22-24).

Christian conciliation is especially beneficial for people who sincerely want to do what is right and are open to learning where they have been wrong (Prov. 15:31-32). Conciliators can help them to identify improper attitudes or unwise practices, to understand more fully the effects of their decision and actions, and to make improvements in their lives that will help them to honor and serve the Lord more effectively in the future (1 Peter 2:12).

Teaching and Ruling elders are encouraged to learn all they can about Christian conciliation and develop local ministries that will equip members under their care to respond to conflicts in a manner that reflects the power of Christ working in their lives. The more church members understand these concepts and benefits, the more likely they will be to apply biblical principles when conflicts occur.

2. The second step - An individual's responsibility to admonish another (**Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1**).

Scripture warns against making a premature judgment about a matter (Matt. 7:1-5). By first going personally and in private to those who have offended, we provide the opportunity for clarification of misunderstandings and avoid premature judgment. This step includes the three responses of personal peacemaking as follows:

Overlook an offense: An individual may overlook an offense of another if it is minor in nature and it has not significantly dishonored God, damaged a personal relationship, or hurt other people (including the offender). "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense" (Prov. 19:11). Discussion: When personal wrongs are too serious to overlook, the parties are required to seek to resolve them privately through loving confrontation and confession. "If your brother has something against you...go and be reconciled" (Matt. 5:23-24). "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matt. 18:15).

Negotiation: When a substantive issue related to money, property, or other material issues or rights divides Christians, a process of biblical negotiation should be followed that will meet the interests of all those involved. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4).

Privately responding to conflict early, before it escalates, through the means of these three forms of personal peacemaking will often result in reconciliation and no need for further peacemaking attention. Successful personal peacemaking is usually based on at least one parties' willingness to accept responsibility for how they have contributed to the conflict and by being willing to humble themselves for the greater goal of God's glory through "making every effort" (Eph. 4:3) to keep the unity of the spirit.

3. The third step - If private admonition is rejected, then calling of one or more witnesses (Matt. 18:16; 1 Cor. 6:1-9).

Involving others is a serious escalation of a conflict and should be considered only after the elements of step two have been fully exhausted. Step three includes the three assisted peacemaking responses as follows:

Mediation: If a dispute cannot be resolved through personal peacemaking, the parties should ask one or more other Christians to meet with them to help the parties communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. The mediators may give advice but have no power to impose solutions. They may later act as witnesses in formal church disciplinary proceedings, should mediation fail due to hardness of heart or the unrepentant sin of one or both parties. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (Matt. 18:16).

Arbitration: When two parties to a conflict cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a substantive issue, one or more arbitrators may be appointed to listen to the arguments and evidence of each side and render a binding decision. "If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

Church Discipline: Formal church discipline, pursuant to the procedures of *BCO* Part II, is reserved for those cases where the person who professes to be a Christian refuses to be reconciled, repent of personal sin, and do what is right. Church leaders bearing ecclesiastical jurisdiction over such persons should formally intervene to promote justice, repentance, and forgiveness. "If he refuses to listen, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17-20).

## APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

Judicial cases that come to the attention of church courts frequently begin as personal disputes between two or more individuals. Typically, when one side feels they are not getting what they want, they bring charges of sin against the other side. In this manner, sessions and presbyteries are drawn into conflicts that would better be resolved at a personal level through Christian conciliation. Of course, when conflicted parties refuse to be reconciled, the accountability afforded by formal church discipline should be used to further the goals of purity in the Church, the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, and the spiritual good of offenders (1 Cor. 5:5). Every effort should be made, however, to resolve the conflict through repentance, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation before formal charges are entertained by a church court. The intent of the relevant *BCO* provisions is to encourage Christian unity before the formal provisions of church discipline are brought to bear on a situation. Of course, not every situation will lend itself to Christian conciliation. However, every effort should be made to utilize private confrontation, mediation, and arbitration in order to reserve the use of formal church discipline, and the time of church courts, for those matters related to the purity of the Church and the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners (*BCO* 27-3). Many of these ends will be realized through the processes of Christian conciliation and, therefore, should be viewed as prerequisite procedures to the formal disciplinary process.

## FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE STEPS

Churches unwilling or unable to instruct their members completely in the full breadth of the steps of conciliation and discipline encourage resorting to unbiblical, worldly responses to conflict. The escape responses of denial, flight, and even suicide can be expected if church members are not positively directed to the biblical processes of Christian conciliation. Others, when not given the hope of having matters responded to within the body of Christ, will resort to civil litigation, verbal and physical attack, and possibly even murder to remove an opponent where there is no avenue for a just resolution. Moving a case too quickly to formal church discipline can build barriers that could otherwise be dealt with in mediation or arbitration. Every church and Presbytery is encouraged to equip elders and mature members with the skills of Christian conciliation, and to exhaust conciliation processes and remedies before moving to formal church discipline.

## USE OF CONCILIATION CLAUSES IN MEMBERSHIP DOCUMENTS

One significant way church members can be educated and prepared for biblical conflict resolution is through the use of a conciliation clause in the membership covenant or other agreement signed by new members when they join the church. The recommended language for this clause is set forth below. It should be noted that signing this clause cannot be made a condition for membership, but may be encouraged as a voluntary biblical commitment. It should be clearly offered as an optional statement for the resolution of any disputes that may arise.

### **Christian Conciliation**

Members are encouraged but not required to make this additional commitment.

If I ever have a dispute with the church that cannot be resolved through its own internal procedures, I agree to resolve the dispute according to biblical principles (such as those set forth in Matthew 5:23-25 and 18:15-20, and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) by submitting the matter to mediation and, if necessary, arbitration, according to the Bylaws of this church and the *Rules of Procedure* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation. I understand that arbitration is a legally binding process, and that judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction.

Dated this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_

1 Name (Printed) Signature

2 Name (Printed) Signature

3 Parent's or Guardian's Name Parent's or Guardian's Signature (for minors)

4 This agreement is subject to arbitration pursuant to the [state] arbitration act, title ##, chapter #,  
5 [state] code annotated.

6 **AMEND CHURCH BYLAWS TO ALLOW CONTINUING CHURCH JURISDICTION**

7 The following clause is recommended for inclusion in local church bylaws to allow the continuing  
8 ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a member who may otherwise simply flee from the church to avoid  
9 biblical discipline:

10 Members may be removed from membership at their own request following the steps of appropriate  
11 pastoral care as set forth in *BCO* 38-4. If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or  
12 disappointments with the church, the Session shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member  
13 may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the Session is  
14 unable to resolve those matters, it shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and  
15 practice that can respond more effectively to his gifts and needs. If it appears to the Session that a  
16 member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect  
17 until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.

18 Use of this clause will also help the church avoid serious legal liability for following through with all  
19 of the steps of church discipline. Members should be informed of its provisions and carefully taught  
20 the Scriptural basis for continuing shepherding and pastoral care especially when caught in sin (see  
21 also *BCO* 38-3 and 38-4).

22 **CONCLUSION**

23 The courts of the church are encouraged to employ the means of Christian conciliation whenever  
24 possible. That is, churches and presbyteries are encouraged to defer judicial action until all other  
25 remedies have been exhausted. Peace, unity, and the mission of the Church can be furthered through  
26 careful and complete attention to every step of the process as set forth in *BCO* 27-5 as understood  
27 through the expanded guidance concerning Christian conciliation as set forth above.

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