

Committee on Bills
and Overtures

Presbytery of
Florida



Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

These amendments to the *Book of Order* were approved by the 225th General Assembly (2022) and recommended to the presbyteries for their vote.

Process for Amending the *Book of Order* G-6.04

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly receives proposals (often overtures from presbyteries).

Stated Clerk refers to Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) which advises the GA.

Same General Assembly approves final form of proposed amendments and conveys them to presbyteries for approval or disapproval.

Presbyteries transmit their votes to the Stated Clerk.

Stated Clerk reports affirmative votes of a majority of all the presbyteries.

Amendments become effective one year following the adjournment of the General Assembly transmitting the proposed amendments.

Four Sections
of the *Book of
Order*

The Foundations of
Presbyterian Polity



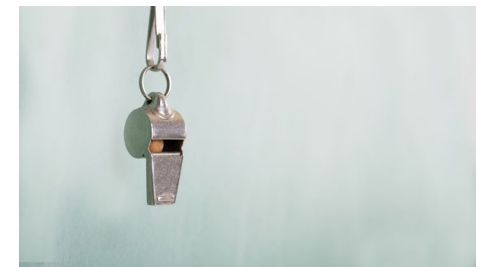
The Form of
Government



The Directory for
Worship



The Rules of
Discipline





Bills and Overtures Recommended Process

1. Review text of proposed changes.
2. Receive recommendation of Bills and Overtures Committee.
3. Put each amendment in one of two baskets for consideration in the business portion of the meeting.



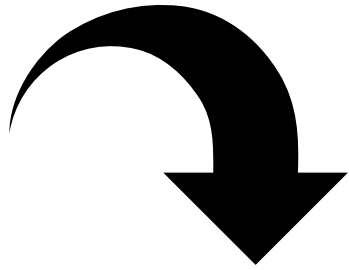
Omnibus Basket

Amendments Bills
and Overtures
Committee
recommends for
approval.



Consider Separately Basket

Amendments Bills and Overtures recommends for disapproval.



Commissioners may move any amendment from the Omnibus basket to the Consider Separately Basket.



Key terms in the *Book of Order*

- **SHALL** and **IS TO BE/ARE TO BE** signify practice that is **mandated**.
- **SHOULD** signifies practice that is **strongly recommended**.
- **IS APPROPRIATE** signifies practice that is **commended as suitable**.
- **MAY** signifies practice that is **permissible but not required**.



The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity



22-A

F-1.0302c

THE
CATHOLICITY
OF THE CHURCH
(POL-16 1a)

... Because the church is catholic, it strives everywhere to testify to Christ's embrace of ~~men, women, and children~~ ***all people*** of all times, places, races, nations, ages, ***abilities,*** ***genders,*** conditions, and stations in life.”



22- B

OPENNESS TO THE
GUIDANCE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT

F-1.0404
OPENNESS

... a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of ~~women and men~~ **all people** of all ages, races, ethnicities, **abilities,** **genders,** and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity.



Form of Government



22-C — G-1.0501

MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION



G-1.0501 MEETINGS (ROD-06 2)

(Added text is in *italics*.) “G-1.0501 *Meetings*

“*Meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer. Unless the congregation shall designate another parliamentary authority in its bylaws, meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, except when it is in contradiction to this constitution.*

“*In accordance with the requirement of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, congregations and their committees may meet electronically at the discretion of their sessions, provided that the technology employed allows for all members present to hear and be heard simultaneously. This includes joining one or more persons electronically to an otherwise in- person meeting. Congregations should adopt special rules of order and standing rules to govern such meetings.*

22 - D

MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION
G-1.0503



Business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall be limited to matters related to the following: ...

... f. approving a plan for the creation of a joint congregational witness, or amending or dissolving the joint congregational witness (G- 5.05).;

g. receiving a disciplinary decision against a member of the congregation as required by D-9.0102.

22-E — G-2.0503

MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT
G-2.0503

CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP



A minister of the Word and Sacrament is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by that presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery, or ~~honorably~~ retired. ...

... c. ~~Honorably~~ Retired

Upon request of a member of presbytery, the presbytery may designate the member ~~honorably~~ retired because of age or physical or mental disability.

22-F — G-2.0505a(1) MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

G-2.0505a(1)
TRANSFER OF MINISTERS OF OTHER DENOMINATIONS
(POL-15)



A (1) In the case of ministers for immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that group requires it, *and in consultation and partnership with that community*, recognize the ordination and receive as a member of presbytery a new immigrant minister who furnishes evidence of good standing in a denomination, ~~even though~~. *If* at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, ~~and~~ *the presbytery should* provide such educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry in the presbytery.



Amendments Regarding Boundary Training

22 – 0 Members of All Councils



22 – K Commissioned Ruling Elders



22 - L Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators



22- G Inquirers

22-O — G-3.0106

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0106 ADMINISTRATION OF MISSION



... Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council.

All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy. *Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.*

22-K — G-2.1002

COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICE

G-2.1002 TRAINING, EXAMINING, AND COMMISSIONING



G-2.1002 Training, Examining, and Commissioning

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. *Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements.* The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by the presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.”

22-L — G-2.1103

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS



G-2.1103 Christian Educators a. Skills and Training

Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations and councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious education theory and practice, and the polity, programs and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). *Certified Christian educators shall provide a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet these two requirements.*

b. Presbytery Responsibility

The presbytery shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian educators and Certified Associate Christian educators and shall provide access to the area of the presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307). During their term of serve in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all meetings. *Certified Christian educators and Certified Associate Christian educators shall provide to the presbytery in which they serve a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet these two requirements. Presbytery shall report a certificate of completion to the national certifying body for these two trainings.”*

22-G

G-2.0603

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY



The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. *They shall provide a certificate of completion of **boundary training**, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements.*

22- H

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY G-2.0605

OVERSIGHT



During the phases of inquiry and candidacy the individual continues to be an active member of his or her congregation and subject to the concern and discipline of the session.

However, during the time the individual is enrolled as an inquirer or candidate, the session shall report to the presbytery any matters of sexual misconduct. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is subject to the oversight of the presbytery within the context of their covenant relationship.

22-I —

G-2.0804

TERMS OF CALL



“G-2.0804 Terms of Call

The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirement of the presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall review annually the minister’s terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the presbytery’s minimum requirements. The call shall include *provision for a minimum of twelve weeks paid family medical leave and* participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.”

22-J

G-2.1001

COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICE



When the presbytery, in consultation with the ~~session~~ ***one or more sessions*** or other responsible committees, determines that its strategy for mission requires it, the presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service ***as a commissioned pastor also known as commissioned ruling elder*** as assigned by the presbytery. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve ~~in a validated ministry~~ ***one or more validated ministries*** of the presbytery. Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation ***or congregations*** to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually.”

22-M

G-3.0104 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

OFFICERS (MC-05)



The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he or she shall invite another minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a member of the presbytery, or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator. *It is appropriate for councils to adopt procedures that may allow for electronic session meetings.*

22-N — G-3.0105

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0105 MEETINGS



“Meetings of councils shall be opened and closed with prayer. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, except when it is in contradiction to this Constitution. Councils may also make use of processes of discernment in their deliberations prior to a vote as agreed upon by the body.

“In accordance with the requirement of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, councils and their commissions and committees may meet electronically, provided that the technology employed allows for all members present to hear and be heard simultaneously. This includes joining one or more persons electronically to an otherwise in-person meeting. Councils should adopt special rules of order and standing rules to govern such meetings.”

22-P — G-3.0106

ADMINISTRATION OF MISSION



... “All councils shall adopt and implement ~~a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy~~ *the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy.*”



Results of adopting 22-P and 22-O

... All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy.

Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.

22-Q

G-3.0303c

RELATIONS WITH SESSIONS



... c. establish minimum compensation standards, *including provisions for dissolution terms, for pastoral calls and for those serving in temporary pastoral service*, Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery;

22-R

G-3.0401

COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES



... The commissioners from each presbytery shall be divided equally between ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. ***A synod may enroll, or provide by rule for the enrollment of, ministers of Word and Sacrament and ruling elders, in numbers as nearly equal as possible, during terms of elected service to the synod. Such enrollment may be used, among other purposes, for fulfilling the principles of participation and representation and may include representation from the synod's racial ethnic active leadership.*** Each person elected moderator or other officer shall be enrolled as a member of the synod until a successor is elected and installed.”

22-S

G-4.0301

TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY



“In the exercise of pastoral care, ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders who have been commissioned by a presbytery to limited pastoral service (G-2.10) shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall work to create communities of trust, accountability, and confidentiality while protecting the vulnerable. Confidentiality creates safe and sacred space for individuals to share concerns, questions, and/or burdens and seek spiritual guidance. Confidentiality should not be an excuse to hold secret the knowledge or risk of harm especially when related to the physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioned ruling elders shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. *except:*

When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a minister of the Word and Sacrament or a *commissioned ruling elder* commissioned pastor (also known as *commissioned ruling elder*) may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information, *or when a* A minister of the Word and Sacrament or a *commissioned ruling elder* commissioned pastor (also known as *commissioned ruling elder*) may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.”

Directory for Worship



... Other actions may follow—a song of praise, such as ‘Glory be to the Father’ or ‘Glory to God’; a summary of the law or call to faithfulness; *the sacrament of baptism*; and the sharing of peace as a sign of reconciliation in Christ.

22-T

W-3.0205

CONFESSION
AND
FORGIVENESS



“... The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. All who come to the table are offered the bread and cup, regardless of their age or understanding. If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation, *when appropriate*, to baptismal preparation and Baptism **should** be graciously extended.”

22-U

W-3.0409

THEOLOGY
OF THE
LORD'S
SUPPER





“... When all have received the bread and cup, the remaining elements are placed on the table. The minister of Word and Sacrament then leads the people in prayer. *A prayer follows,* thanking God for the gift of the Sacrament and asking for grace to live and serve faithfully until the coming of Christ’s realm in fullness.”

22-V

W-3.0414

COMMUNION



22-W — W-4.0403

ORDINATION, INSTALLATION, AND COMMISSIONING

W-4.0403 ORDER OF WORSHIP



... When all questions have been answered in the affirmative, those to be ordained will kneel, if able, for the laying on of hands and the prayer of ordination. (The presbytery commission lays on hands at the ordination of minister of the Word and Sacrament; its moderator may invite other ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders to participate. Members of the session lay on hands at the ordination of ruling elders and deacons; the session may invite other ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament to participate. Because ordination only takes place once for each office, the laying on of hands is not repeated.) Those previously ordained will stand, if able, along with the congregation, for the prayer of installation. *Signs and symbols of blessing may be conferred on the newly installed or commissioned person.* After this, the moderator makes the declaration of ordination, installation, or commissioning. Members of the session or presbytery welcome the newly ordained, installed, or commissioned person(s). . . .

“We respond to God’s grace in the context of personal relationships, particularly when Christians who live together worship together.

Household worship is a central and important practice within the Reformed tradition, an important means of faith formation.

Opportunities for household or family worship include: sabbath-keeping and rhythms of daily prayer; Bible reading, study, or memorization; prayers before meals; singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs; and expressions of giving, sharing, and service to others. Congregations are encouraged to nurture and equip households and families for these practices.”

22-X

W-5.0104

HOUSEHOLD
WORSHIP



22-Y

W-5.0104

HOUSEHOLD
WORSHIP



W-5.0104 Household Worship ...

“... Prayers of thanks and blessing, and lament at the household table draw upon ancient Jewish practice and the examples of Jesus, his disciples, and the early Christian community. Mealtimes provide opportunities to give thanks to God’s works of creation and redemption by which we are sustained for Christ’s service. We respond with heartfelt thanks and praise in the sharing of our daily bread.”

22-Z

WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

W-5.0201

THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH



“God calls the Church in the name of Jesus Christ to mutual love, *discipleship*, and service. Jesus’ ministry and the church’s worship are deeply connected; indeed, worship is ministry. The church’s ministry springs from its worship, where God builds up the body of Christ through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church’s ministry flows back into worship as we bring to God the celebrations and concerns of the community of faith.

“Within the church, we seek to love and serve one another through the rhythm of daily prayer, the ministries of Christian education and pastoral care, the activities of councils of the church, and other gatherings of believers. The church’s ministries are shaped and nourished by the Word and Sacraments, and are to be carried out in the spirit of *faithful discipleship* and constant prayer (*F-1.0301; F- 1.0302a; F-1.0303; F-1.0403*).”

22-AA — W-5.0204

WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

W-5.0204
PASTORAL CARE



“... All members are called to take part in the ministry of pastoral care, visiting the sick, supporting the weak, and comforting those who mourn. Ruling elders, deacons, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament have particular responsibility for the exercise of pastoral care within the community of faith. Those with special gifts and appropriate training may be called to the *particular specialized pastoral care* ministries of ~~pastoral counseling, or chaplaincy~~. In certain circumstances, persons may need to be referred to other qualified and credentialed professionals to receive appropriate counseling and care.”

22-BB — W-5.0204

WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

W-5.0204 PASTORAL CARE



“Services of wholeness and healing are one way of enacting the church’s ministry of pastoral care. The central element in these services is prayer, calling upon God’s saving grace or giving thanks for healing received, *in life and in death, in body, mind, or spirit*. A service of wholeness includes the proclamation of the Word, focusing on the promise of *peace and abundant life in Christ*. Prayer may be enacted through the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, provided that these actions are carefully introduced and interpreted: ~~healing always~~ *in its many forms* comes as a gift from God, not as a product ~~an~~ *accomplishment* of human prayer. The Lord’s Supper is a fitting way to seal the promise of wholeness proclaimed in the Word. Services of wholeness are to be authorized by the session and are under the direction of the minister of Word and Sacrament, but may involve leadership from ruling elders, deacons, and others with gifts for prayer. They may take place on a regular basis, as an occasional event, or as a part of the Service for the Lord’s Day.”

Rules of Discipline



22-CC — D-3.0106

JURISDICTION IN JUDICIAL PROCESS

WHEN JURISDICTION ENDS



“D-3.0106 When Jurisdiction Ends *Upon Renunciation of Jurisdiction*

Jurisdiction in the *The* judicial process ends *does not end* when a person in an ordered ministry or a member renounces the jurisdiction of the church. Should the accused in a disciplinary case renounce the jurisdiction of the church as provided in G-2.0407 or G-2.0509, the clerk or stated clerk shall report to the council both the renunciation and the status of the matter at that time, including the name of the accused, *and* the date and fact of renunciation during an investigation or trial, and the charges filed. The judicial process shall then proceed per the Rules of Discipline.”

22-DD — D-10.0302

COMMUNICATE
DETERMINATION

D-10.0302

IF CHARGES ARE
TO BE FILED



“If the investigating committee has decided to file charges, it shall promptly inform the accused in writing of the charges it will make, including a summary of the facts it expects to prove at trial to support those charges. It shall ask the accused if ~~that person~~ **they wish ~~es~~ to plead guilty to the charges to avoid full trial and indicate the censure it will recommend to the session or permanent judicial commission.”**

22-EE — D-10.0303

COMMUNICATE
DETERMINATION



If no charges are filed, the investigating committee shall file a written report of that fact alone with the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery, and notify ~~the person who submitted the written statement,~~ *in writing, both the person who has been accused and the person making the accusation.*

22-FF —

AMENDING “THE
ACCUSED”

AMENDING THE USE OF
“THE ACCUSED” IN THE
CURRENT RULES OF
DISCIPLINE



- . . . that all other sections referring to “the accused” in the current Rules of Discipline be modified to read ***the person accused.***

That's all, folks!



22-GG

Replacing the current Rules of Discipline with a new “Church Discipline” section.





22-GG

Background and Rationale

- The current Rules of Discipline were last revised in 1996.
- The proposed section entitled “Church Discipline” is the result of the work of the Rules of Discipline Task Force which was appointed by the General Assembly moderators in 2017.
- This revision is intended to make this portion of the *Book of Order* more accessible to the church, so far as possible removing language that is also used in secular judicial proceedings and using language accessible to members not well-versed in church discipline.



22-GG

Features of proposed Church Discipline section.

- Clearly defines the steps in each process.
- Allows for the use of electronic communication.
- Preserves rules that have guided the church for generations.
- Requires those who file complaints, bring allegations, or seek vindication, as well those who are accused or act as counsel to be Presbyterian.
- Mediators, facilitators, and advocates need not be Presbyterian but need to be familiar with Church Discipline.
- Presbyterians can file allegations on behalf of persons who are not Presbyterian.
- Adds an alternative form of resolution based on principles of **restorative justice**.



22-GG

Features of proposed Church Discipline section.

- Provides for three forms of alternative resolution: Restorative Justice, Mediation, and Other Negotiated Agreements.
- Allows for mediators who are not certified, but who are “persons known for calm, wise counsel.”
- Provides flexibility in crafting censures and remedies.
- Spells out specific remedies appropriate to each degree of censure.
- Adds language explaining that censure in church discipline is given not with malice or vindictiveness but in Christian love to offer correction in error and to restore the unity of the church when possible.