

Bylaws of The Presbytery of Philadelphia The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Adopted September 1940; revised March 1941, May and July 1944, March 1946, July 1954, March 1955, May 1958, January and May 1960, September 1961, January and March 1962, January and November 1963, May 1964, November 1965, March 1967, May 1969, November 1970, January, March and May 1974, January and May 1975, December 1976, January, March, May and October 1977, May 1978, November 1980, March and May 1981, January 1982, May 1985, May 1986, September 1990, November 1991, February 1993, February 1994, February and May 1995, February and May 1996, May and November 2002, February 2003, November 2003, February 2004, May 2004, September 2004, November 2004, November 2006, February 2007, May 2007, February 2009, November 2009, February 2017, September 2018, May 2019, September 2019, July 2020, February 2022, May 2022, May 2023

Chapter I. Meetings

Section 1. Stated Meetings

There shall be Stated Meetings of the Presbytery the second Saturdays of September, February, and May. The meetings shall begin at 8:30 AM, with projected adjournment at 5:00 PM.

The notice sent out concerning Stated Meetings of the Presbytery (cf. Bylaws II, 4, B, 21) shall indicate that any minister (except one who has been granted a permanent excuse) that does not attend and any session that does not send a commissioner shall be required to inform the Stated Clerk as to the reason and request an excused absence. At the meeting, the Moderator shall appoint a temporary committee of two to report to that meeting with a recommendation which requests to grant and which to deny. The minutes shall indicate those absentees whose requests for excuse have been granted as “excused.” Those absentees whose requests for excuse are denied and those who failed to request excuse shall be indicated as “unexcused.”

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special Meetings, if required, shall be requested according to the provisions of Form of Government XIV.7 and Robert's Rules of Order; in other words, only when there arises, between Stated Meetings, an emergency that is unforeseen and that also calls for immediate action which cannot wait until the next Stated Meeting. Both the nature of the emergency and the particular business to be transacted shall be stated in the call of the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at the Special Meeting besides the particular business specified.

A special meeting cannot be called by a Stated Meeting, but only between Stated Meetings by the Moderator (or by the Stated Clerk) as provided in Form of Government XIV.7.

Care shall be taken by advance planning to avoid requesting improper Special Meetings. Important matters such as examinations in theology and the approval of calls shall be scheduled at Stated Meetings or Adjourned Meetings, except under extraordinary circumstances. Those who request a Special Meeting shall also consider the convenience of the Presbytery as a whole in relation to the proposed location of the Special Meeting, the season of the year, and the duty of all presbyters to attend Special Meetings.

Section 3. Adjourned meetings

If at a Stated or a Special Meeting the Presbytery is unable to complete either the business on its

docket or other known business not on the docket, the Presbytery may determine to continue its work at an Adjourned Meeting. The proper motion is, that when the Presbytery adjourns, it adjourn to meet again at a specified time and place. In the same motion, the Presbytery may also restrict the business of the Adjourned Meeting to remaining items on its docket or to any specified known items.

Without such restriction, the Adjourned Meeting may address any known business proper to the Presbytery (see Robert's Rules of Order, on the topic "Adjourned Meeting").

Chapter II. Officers

Section 1. Titles

The Officers of Presbytery shall be a Moderator, a Stated Clerk, an Assistant Clerk, and a Treasurer.

Section 2. Elections

These officers are to be elected by ballot at the Stated Meeting of Presbytery held in September, a majority of the total votes cast being necessary for a choice.

Section 3. Terms

The term of office of the Moderator shall be one year. The terms of office of the Stated Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and Treasurer shall be two years.

Section 4. Duties

A. Moderator: The duties of the Moderator shall be those that ordinarily devolve upon the presiding officer of a deliberative assembly, together with the calling of Special Meetings of Presbytery, and his participation in the licensing of candidates as provided in the Form of Government, Chapters XIV.7; XVIII.2; XXI.7, 8; XXIII.8-11,12b,14-17. Should the Moderator be absent at the time at which a meeting is scheduled to begin, the member present who has last been elected Moderator of the Presbytery shall preside at the meeting until the Moderator presents himself.

B. Stated Clerk: He shall receive an honorarium. The duties of the Stated Clerk shall be to:

1. Refer to the appropriate Standing Committee all business that has been presented to him between meetings.
2. Furnish the Moderator with a docket prepared in accordance with the order of business fixed by the rules of the Presbytery.
3. Arrange for places of meeting for Presbytery. Prepare and submit to the May meeting a list of tentative meeting places for the following year.

4. Arrange for a minister to preach to, or a candidate to exhort, the Presbytery in the devotional service with which Presbytery shall begin its stated meetings.
5. Produce at the Stated Meetings of Presbytery the records of Presbytery, the Constitution of the Church, and the last published minutes of the General Assembly.
6. Engross the records in a substantial record book which shall be available for inspection by any member of Presbytery. The Clerk shall certify accurate copies of the minutes upon request by any member of Presbytery.
7. File and preserve all records and reports presented to Presbytery.
8. Maintain the Presbytery's website and online presence.
9. Prepare the roll of ministers, licentiates, candidates for the ministry, churches, and clerks of Session, together with the addresses of each.
10. Prepare a Statistical Report of Presbytery to be presented at the May meeting of Presbytery for its approval.
11. Call attention to all acts of the General Assembly of which he has received official notice, and to all other communications to Presbytery which may be placed in his hands.
12. Communicate officially any acts of Presbytery to the parties whom they may concern, excepting appointment to committees or to special duties.
13. Keep a copy of the Bylaws of Presbytery constantly corrected to date as they may be altered or amended by act of Presbytery, and deliver to each minister or session which may come under the jurisdiction of Presbytery from time to time a copy of the Bylaws.
14. Certify, upon request, to the standing of all ministers on the roll of Presbytery.
15. Receive annual reports from ministers laboring outside the bounds of presbytery and ministers not serving as pastors of Orthodox Presbyterian Churches and report to the stated Spring meeting.
16. Request those teaching elders who are members of presbytery without pastoral charge, residing outside the bounds of presbytery (cf. the FOG, XIV.1 & 2) to place themselves under the jurisdiction of the presbytery within whose bounds they reside, in order to promote mutual spiritual welfare among presbyters; with the exceptions of the following:
 - a. Evangelists and missionaries in accordance with the FOG, XXVII.
 - b. Theological professors.
 - c. Denominational general secretaries.
17. Shall arrange for the exchange of corresponding members of neighboring

presbyteries and classes of denominations with which the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church exchanges fraternal delegates.

18. Perform such duties as may rightfully devolve upon a Stated Clerk in addition to those enumerated in the foregoing.

19. Serve as pension plan representative by informing the Committee on Pensions of the name and address of each licentiate or minister who is received into the Presbytery and notify ministers as they are enrolled by the Presbytery, if they are not covered by the Pension Plan of the Denomination, concerning the provisions for coverage by the plan.

20. Deliver to his successor all the records of Presbytery.

21. Give notice of the time and place of all meetings of Presbytery to ministers and Clerks of Session, licentiates, and men under care of Presbytery, not less than 10 days before the date of the meeting, this notice to include those ministers scheduled to give their ministerial report and any other information deemed relevant for a particular meeting.

22. Arrange a schedule for annual reports of all ministers of Presbytery.

23. Present a "Stated Clerk's Report" at Stated Meetings when such a report is deemed appropriate.

24. Poll, in advance of the February meeting of Presbytery, the ministers of Presbytery and each Session with respect to the ruling elders of Presbytery, as to the availability of members of Presbytery to be commissioned to go to the following General Assembly. At the time of election of commissioners, the list of those indicating their availability to go to the General Assembly shall be made available to the presbyters for their information.

25. Serve as Archivist for the Presbytery, under which role he shall:

a. Collect and preserve, in accordance with current archival standards, the records of dissolved churches, and such records of the Presbytery, congregations and sessions as the Presbytery and the respective sessions may submit to him for safekeeping.

b. Control access to such records according to the direction of Presbytery, or of the session concerned.

c. Promote the collection and preservation of other information about the history of Presbytery and the local churches, lest that information become inaccessible or lost.

d. Consult with the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in relation to the duties outlined above.

C. Assistant Clerk: He shall receive a stipend. The duties of the Assistant Clerk shall be to:

1. Take minutes of the proceedings of Presbytery and prepare them for engrossment.

2. Keep an accurate record of ministers and elders present, and of the absent ministers and unrepresented churches not excused.

3. Send a copy of the minutes of each meeting of the Presbytery to all ministers and Sessions of the Presbytery within three weeks.

4. Notify presbyters of their appointment to committees or to special duties.

5. Give information of actions of Presbytery which may be of public interest to representatives of secular and religious press.

6. Discharge all other duties as Presbytery from time to time directs.

D. Treasurer: The duties of the Treasurer shall be to:

1. Act as custodian for the funds of Presbytery and disburse them according to the following rules:

a. Incidental expenses of Clerks shall be paid upon presentation of invoices, or as directed by the Stated Clerk.

b. Budgeted expenses of a standing committee and of the general operations of the Presbytery shall be paid in a timely fashion as delineated in their respective budgets.

c. Incidental expenses of a standing committee of the Presbytery shall be paid upon presentation of invoices or as directed by the chairman of the respective committee.

2. Present a report of receipts and expenditures at each Stated Meeting of Presbytery. A committee to audit the accounts of the Treasurer shall be appointed by the Moderator at the September meeting of Presbytery to report at the May Stated Meeting.

3. Send to each church Treasurer, no later than March 1st, Presbytery's recommendation of each church's or chapel's contribution to the general operating expenses of Presbytery and any standing committee of the Presbytery which has annual budgeted expenses that have been approved by the Presbytery.

Chapter III. Standing Committees

Section 1.

A. The Standing Committees of Presbytery shall be:

1. Committee on Candidates and Credentials.

2. Committee on Church Extension and Home Missions.

3. Committee on Session Records.

4. Committee on Young People's Work.

5. Committee on Diaconal Ministries.
6. Committee on Ministerial Oversight.
7. Committee on Judicial Matters, Appeal and Complaints.
8. Committee on Foreign Missions

B. Election to those committees shall be by ballot at the Stated Meeting of Presbytery at which each committee submits its annual report. If a Committee is not scheduled to give an Annual Report, the election shall be at the September Stated Meeting. A majority of the total votes cast shall be necessary for a choice. Each elected committee shall elect its own chairman.

Section 2. The Committee on Candidates and Credentials

A. Shall consist of five ministers and two elders divided into two classes, each to serve for two years. Three ministers and one elder shall be elected in the odd years, and two ministers and one elder elected in the even years.

B. Shall examine all candidates for the ministry in accordance with the provisions of the Form of Government, Chapter XXI.1-6 and Chapter XXIII.2, 3, and 6, and with special attention to the requirements for the eldership found in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:1-4.

C. Shall solicit evaluations of candidates for the ministry from the sessions of the congregations of which they are members or where they regularly worship.

D. Shall have oversight of the licentiates of Presbytery and shall make regular evaluation of licentiates' services so as to be able to advise the Presbytery with regard to the requirements of Chapter XXI.11 of the Form of Government.

E. Shall encourage licentiates and candidates under care concerning areas both of home and foreign mission fields where their particular gifts might be effectively used.

F. Shall examine and report on the credentials and testimonials of ministers and licentiates applying for admission to Presbytery in accordance with the provisions of Form of Government Chapter XXII. 10 and 13 and Chapter XXIII.12, 17, and 18.

G. Shall advise all candidates for licensure and all licentiates of other Presbyteries and Churches seeking reception in this Presbytery that they will be required to preach a sermon before the Presbytery.

H. Shall submit to the May Meeting of the Presbytery a detailed written report concerning the conduct of the work of the Committee.

Section 3. The Committee on Church Extension and Home Missions

A. Shall consist of four ministers and three elders divided into two classes, each to serve for two years. Two ministers and one elder shall be elected in the odd numbered years, and two

ministers and two elders in the even numbered years.

B. Shall conduct survey work within the bounds of Presbytery, reporting to Presbytery on desirable locations for new churches.

C. Shall confer with churches seeking admission to Presbytery.

D. Shall oversee the work of any Home Missionaries called by the Presbytery.

E. Shall submit to the September meeting of Presbytery a detailed written report concerning the conduct of the work of the Committee.

Section 4. The Committee on Sessional Records

A. Shall consist of two ministers and one elder divided into three classes, each to serve three years. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms (6 years) but may be eligible for re-election two years after the expiration of his prior term.

B. Shall administer such Rules for Keeping and Examining of Sessional Records as shall be adopted by the Presbytery.

C. Shall coordinate a routine visit to each church within the Presbytery once every three years.

1. At the February stated meeting the committee shall appoint sessions to conduct the visits for that year.

a. The visiting session shall select from its members at least two men to visit the church assigned to it by the committee. If necessary, the visiting session may request other members of presbytery to assist it in visiting its assigned church.

b. In order to familiarize themselves with the life of their assigned church, the visitors shall read the minutes of the assigned church prior to their visit for their own information.

c. The visitors shall attend a worship service of the assigned church. The visitors shall meet with the session of the assigned church and discuss the ministry of the word, sacraments, and discipline of the congregation.

d. The visitors shall also be available to meet with any members of the assigned church wishing to do so. The visitors shall advise the session of the assigned church regarding any such discussion.

e. The visiting session shall offer a brief written report including the names of the visitors to the Committee on Sessional Records and Church Visitation and to the session of the assigned church regarding its observations of the Lord's work at the assigned church no later than five weeks prior to the February stated meeting.

D. The Committee on Sessional Records and Church Visitation shall report to the Presbytery at the February stated meeting, or at other meetings of the presbytery if the committee deems a matter to warrant such, both orally and in writing, describing the Lord's work in the congregations visited during the past year.

Section 5. The Committee on Young People's Work

A. Shall consist of two presbyters to serve for two years divided into two classes, each to serve for two years.

B. Shall promote covenant and non-covenant young people's work especially through the facilitation and/or planning of youth ministry activities in the Presbytery of Philadelphia and with neighboring presbyteries.

C. Shall submit to the September meeting of Presbytery a written report.

Section 6. The Committee on Diaconal Ministries

A. Shall consist of two presbyters and three deacons divided into two classes, each to serve for two years. One presbyter and one deacon shall be elected in the odd-numbered years, and one presbyter and two deacons in the even-numbered years.

B. Shall have the following duties:

1. Regarding Local Congregations

- a. Stand ready to assist local diaconates with matters that exceed their local resources.
- b. Stand ready to assist congregations and mission works that have no local deacons.
- c. Promote, encourage, and coordinate diaconal work within the Presbytery.
- d. Communicate and promote diaconal ministry opportunities within the Presbytery.
- e. Educate and encourage the Presbytery to carry out diaconal responsibilities in response to various needs.

2. Regarding the Denominational Committee on Diaconal Ministries (DCDM)

- a. Promote the work of the DCDM within the Presbytery.
- b. Serve as the Presbytery's liaison between the DCDM and the churches of the Presbytery in evaluating local requests for aid that the Presbytery is unable to provide for, and referring these to the DCDM.

3. Regarding Disaster Relief

- a. Promote the work of disaster relief among the churches of the Presbytery, in coordination with the DCDM, other OPC presbyteries, and the broader church in general.

4. Regarding Ministers

- a. Inquire and act to ensure that every retired minister of the Presbytery, and every minister's widow and his dependent family, have adequate resources to meet their normal needs.
- b. Seek to discover cases of pastors in need, and provide aid as circumstances warrant.

5. Regarding Anticipating Needs

- a. Assess needs by conducting surveys of the financial needs of the churches of the Presbytery.
- b. Bring to the Presbytery's attention the work of other Christian relief agencies.

6. Regarding Diaconal Funds

- a. Raise funds from the churches of the Presbytery to meet particular needs that come to the attention of the Committee.
- b. Recommend an annual per capita amount that each church of the Presbytery should contribute to the Committee.
- c. Request funds from the DCDM as needed.

7. Regarding Deacons of the Presbytery

- a. Maintain a roll of active deacons of the Presbytery, and make it available to the Presbytery and the DCDM.
- b. Promote communication between the local deacon boards.

C. Shall report regularly to each meeting of the Presbytery, and submit to the February meeting a detailed written report concerning the work of the Committee.

Section 7. The Committee on Ministerial Oversight

A. Shall consist of two ministers and one elder, divided into three classes, each to serve for three years. One member shall be elected each year.

B. Shall have the following duties:

- 1. Be available to ministers seeking counsel regarding their lives and labors.
- 2. Provide pastoral care for ministers who are not under the care of a local session (FG.VI.4). This will be done through annual visits by a committee member or other assigned presbyter who will then report to the presbytery that a visit has taken place. The committee will also arrange for additional pastoral care as needs become known.
- 3. Inquire of members who fail to attend three consecutive stated meetings of presbytery the reason(s) for such absence.
- 4. Report to the presbytery the names of those who have become delinquent in their attendance at presbytery.

C. Shall submit to the February meeting of Presbytery a written report concerning the conduct of the work of the Committee.

Section 8. The Committee on Judicial Matters, Appeals and Complaints.

A. Shall consist of three members divided into three classes, each to serve three years, no member shall serve more than two consecutive terms (6 years), but may be eligible for re-election two years after the expiration of his term.

B. Shall have the following duties:

1. To act in advance of a meeting of the Presbytery to receive appeals and complaints, to advise whether appeals and complaints are in order and properly before the Presbytery, to gather, summarize, and/or index the relevant documents and data, and to recommend the whole order of the proceedings, but not the disposition of the appeals or complaints.

2. This committee shall also “conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether judicial process should be instituted” when charges have been brought to the Presbytery. (BD III.7.a)

3. Shall present an Annual Report at the stated May meeting of Presbytery.

Section 9. The Committee on Foreign Missions

A. Shall consist of one presbyter to serve for two years.

B. Shall promote and facilitate within the Presbytery a greater concern and zeal for, increased active participation in, and a more diligent exercise of the means of grace (especially prayer) on behalf of, the work of OPC foreign missions.

C. Shall submit to the May meeting of Presbytery a written report concerning the conduct of the work of the Committee.

Chapter IV. Docket

Section 1. The business of the Stated Meetings of Presbytery shall normally be conducted according to the following docket:

- A. Constituting prayer and Devotional Service
- B. Reports of ministers (ordinarily 5 minutes or less) and Time of Prayer
- C. Roll Call
- D. Presentation and Approval of Minutes
- E. Presentation of Communications to Presbytery
- F. Report of Stated Clerk
- G. Presentation and Adoption of Docket (including specific orders of business)
- H. Report of Treasurer
- I. Report of the Committee on Church Extension and Home Missions
- J. Report of the Committee on Candidates and Credentials
 - 1. Presentation of Candidates for Presbyterial Oversight
 - 2. Examination of candidates for licensure
 - 3. Presentation of calls and examination of candidates for ordination
 - 4. Reception or dismissal of ministers and licentiates
 - 5. Annual Report and/or other items
- K. Report of the Committee on Sessional Records
- L. Report of the Committee on Young People's Work
- M. Report of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries
- N. Report of the Committee on Ministerial Oversight

- O. Report of the Committee on Judicial Matters, Appeals and Complaints.
- P. Report of the Committee on Foreign Missions
- Q. Report of Special Committees
- R. Report of Moderators or Ministerial Advisors of Churches without Pastors
- S. Miscellaneous Business
- T. Adjournment and Prayer

Section 2. Provision shall be made in the docket for the inclusion of the following specific orders of business:

A. At the September meeting:

1. Election of those officers whose terms expire (to take place immediately after approval of docket).
2. Election of committee members whose terms expire for those committees not scheduled to give an annual report during the year (to take place at the appropriate place on the docket).
3. Report of the Stated Clerk on actions of the General Assembly relative to this Presbytery.
4. Annual Report of the Committee on Young People's Work.
5. Appointment of the Auditing Committee.
6. Annual Report of the Committee on Church Extension & Home Missions.

B. At the February meeting:

1. Annual Report of the Treasurer.
2. Set per capita contributions to be asked of churches for expenses of presbytery.
3. Annual Report of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.
4. Annual Report of the Committee on Sessional Records.
5. Annual Report of the Committee on Ministerial Oversight.
6. Election of Commissioners to the General Assembly.

C. At the May meeting:

1. Report of the Committee to Audit the Accounts of the Treasurer.
2. Annual Report of the Committee on Candidates and Credentials.
3. Statistical Report of the Stated Clerk.

4. Annual Report of the Committee on Judicial Matters, Appeals and Complaints.

5. Annual Report of the Committee on Foreign Missions.

E. Annual Reports by Ministers according to a schedule to be arranged by the Stated Clerk.

Chapter V. Overtures

Overtures prepared for presentation to a higher judicatory shall be proposed only to a Stated Meeting of Presbytery, and shall not be finally acted upon until the next Stated Meeting; or in lieu thereof, the proposed overture may be mailed to all ministers and Clerks of Session, postmarked 25 days prior to the stated meeting at which it will be finally acted upon. A majority of the votes cast shall be sufficient for adoption.

Any communication of a proposed overture shall clearly indicate (1) who is proposing the overture to whom and (2) the status of the overture in the judicatories of the church.

Chapter VI. Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern Presbytery in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, or the Bylaws.

Chapter VII. Voting

In the case of the election of officers and committees, votes shall be by ballot; and in the case of votes for licensure, ordination, and the reception of ministers from other denominations, they shall be by roll call. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election and approval, blank ballots or votes of "present" not to be included in the total number of votes cast.

Chapter VIII. Inurement of Income

No part of the net earnings of the Presbytery shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers or other private persons except that the Presbytery shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered.

Chapter IX. Dissolution Clause

Upon the dissolution of the Presbytery, the treasurer or the Board of Trustees (if incorporated) shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the Presbytery, dispose of all the assets of the Presbytery exclusively for the purposes of the Presbytery to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law). Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the Presbytery is then located, exclusively for

charitable, educational, or religious purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Chapter X. Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended at any Stated Meeting of Presbytery by a majority vote of the members present, the amendment having been proposed to the previous Stated Meeting.

Chapter XI. Suspension of Bylaws

These Bylaws or any portion thereof may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of those present at a Stated Meeting of the Presbytery.