

HANDBOOK  
FOR  
ELDERS  
IN THE  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Frank Walmsley

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# I. Introduction

## A. Overview

This document is primarily an enumeration of the responsibilities of elders placed in the context of policies and procedures. This is about how Presbyterians do things decently and in order, as we are often reminded.

It is easy to get involved in the business of the church and forget to stop and think about the reasons behind our involvement. We are children of God and committed to doing the work of God. Our thoughts should not stray from the Word of God. Our actions need to be founded on a sound theological basis.

## B. Relationships

However, the real place to start is with the Bible which is our reference for faith and practice. And one place to start is to consider the question, "What does God require of me?" rather than "What does my local church, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) require of me?" The Bible asks this question in two places and gives two complementary answers. Deuteronomy 10:12 gives as the answer:

only

- to fear the Lord your God
- to walk in all his ways
- to love him
- to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
- to keep the commandments

Later in the history of Israel social issues had emerged and Micah 6:8 gives as the answer:

- to do justice
- to love kindness
- to walk humbly with your God

These passages remind us that our first responsibilities are to God. Then we must consider our interaction with our fellow human beings, showing them justice, kindness, and love. Elders are the servant leaders of the congregation and this means, not only to lead in financial and governing matters, but to lead in matters of love and kindness and justice. Just as we stop to think about the wisdom of spending money for a project, we need to stop and think how we interact with our fellow church members, our family, our fellow workers, those we know casually, and others whom we do not know but come in contact with. Consider an example. The Calling of the Church, as given in the *Book of Order*, includes a section that states "The Church is a community of love".<sup>1</sup> As members of the Church, we are called to demonstrate this love. As elders, we are called to be leaders in demonstrating this love. The Apostle Paul was very blunt in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians. He said, "You must learn to get along with each other." That applies to Sessions,

congregations, all the way up through the PC(USA) and other denominations. We are representatives first of God and then of our local church. We will see this again in a later section in the mission statement of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): "The Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord."<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Church Government**

The polity (the form of government) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is unique among the various polities of other denominations. Within a particular congregation, the pastor is just one among many serving on the local governing body, the session. The next higher governing body is the presbytery which generally encompasses a limited geographical area with an average of about 66 churches. The representatives to the presbytery include the ministers generally within its borders that are members (clergy are not members of the local churches) and an equal number of laypersons (elders) representing the local churches. The next higher governing body is the synod which encompasses a larger geographical area, sometimes several states. Again there is equal representation between ministers and laypersons (elders). The highest governing body is the General Assembly which again is composed of equal numbers of ministers and laypersons (elders). Each governing body from the session through the General Assembly has responsibilities. In general, above the local level the governing bodies are charged with accomplishing things that apply to its region that the next lower governing body is not able to do. For example, the presbytery is to develop programs that affect its region, programs that a local congregation would be unable to sustain. The unique aspect of this polity is the significant representation of laypersons in the governing bodies above the local level.

### **D. Commissioning, Certification, and Ordination**

The Presbyterian Church recognizes the Biblical principle that we each have different talents or gifts, as given in I Corinthians 12:4-31, and that we should utilize the talents we have. During worship or other services, individuals (usually as part of a group) are commissioned<sup>2</sup> for special work such as Sunday School Teacher through a service of dedication. The *Book of Order* calls this "commissioning for specific acts of discipleship". The Church recognizes persons in Christian education with skills and training both in the Bible and in education by the process of certification.

Persons elected to be presbyters (teaching elders - ministers of the Word and Sacrament - and elders) and deacons are set apart through ordination.<sup>3</sup> The ordination is carried out with prayer and with the laying on of hands and focuses on Christ and the joy and responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the Church. Ministers are ordained and installed by the presbytery; elders and deacons are ordained and installed by the session.

The officers of the church are chosen to fulfill particular functions. This does not in any way diminish the importance of the commitment of all members to the ministry of the church (see again I Cor. 12:4-31). Ordained officers differ from other members in function only. This is illustrated each time communion is celebrated in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): the elders serve the members, the elders serve the minister, and the minister serves the elders. This also illustrates the standard shown by Jesus in his ministry as he came "not to be served but to serve".

The importance and equality of all presbyters is demonstrated above the local level by the requirement that all governing bodies be composed of 50% ministers and 50% laypersons. This is extended to committees and commissions of those governing bodies, as well as the bodies themselves.

## II. Meaning of Membership and Ordination

### A. Membership

We must begin by confessing our faith in Jesus Christ. Our baptism and public profession of faith are signs that we are Christians. The *Book of Order* lists ways in which Christians are called to be involved in the ministry of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

- proclaiming the good news
- taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church
- praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian church
- supporting the work of the Church through giving of money, time, and talents !  
participating in the governing responsibilities of the Church
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the Church !  
responding to God's activity in the world through service to others !  
living responsibly in all relationships of life
- working for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment

Members may be unable to be fully involved in all these ways but, within our own abilities, we should strive to increase our participation and to make it more meaningful.

### B. Ordination

Ordination is the act by which the Church sets apart persons to special specified offices; in the case under consideration here, the office is that of elder.

Prior to ordination, the persons elected to the office of elder must undergo a period of study and

preparation.<sup>5</sup> This includes gaining knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the Church (*The Book of Order* is part of the constitution) and of the duties of the office. They must also be examined by the Session to certify that the period of study and preparation has been completed and to inquire into their faithfulness in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The service of ordination and installation<sup>6</sup> is to focus on the joy and responsibility of serving Christ through the mission of the church. During the service, the newly elected elders are asked to reaffirm their faith; to attest to Scripture; to be led by the confessions of the church; to fulfill the office of elder; to be governed by the church's polity (form of government); to follow Jesus and love our neighbors; to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church; to serve the people of the congregation, and to be a faithful elder. A part of this service is the laying on of hands which some versions of the New Testament use as a synonym for ordination (see I Timothy 5:22 and its footnote in the NRSV).

There are some parts of these ordination questions that could be looked at more closely. The question about fulfillment of the office bothers some people. They might question their worthiness or their ability. We should look to Scripture and read about Moses and about Peter. Both felt inadequate for the job and Peter even made public denials of his relationship with Jesus. But God used them and their abilities to do wonderful things. We need to trust God. The question about serving the people implies we are to be a member of a team. When we disagree with a decision of the Session, we have promised to be a team player and as such we must put aside any thought of disruption and listen more closely to the voice of God speaking through our fellow Christians. This subject comes up again in our promise to further the unity of the church.

### **III. The Mission of the Church**

We must look at the mission of the church in order to understand what is required of elders and of sessions. Reading mission statements seems, at times, to be lessons in futility because they tend to be couched in such general terms. However, it is possible to move from the general to the specific and we will attempt to do that. The mission statement that follows about the Church of Jesus Christ is paraphrased and summarized from the *Book of Order*. Although it is taken from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Constitution, it seems to express the mission of the universal church. The mission statement of Oak Hills Presbyterian Church is given in its entirety.

#### **A. The Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ<sup>7</sup>**

The Church of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of what God intends for all humanity. The Church is called to be a sign in the world for the new reality that God has made available to all people through Jesus Christ. This new reality is the new humanity, a new creation, a new beginning since (1) sin is forgiven, (2)

reconciliation is accomplished, and (3) the dividing walls of hostility are torn down. The Church is called to give shape and substance to this truth.

The Church is called to tell the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. God forgives sin, reconciles brokenness, makes all things new, and is still at work in the world.

The Church is called to present the claims of Jesus Christ. The Church is called to demonstrate the new reality in Christ by the love of its members for one another and by participating in God's activity in the world through its life for others.

### **B. The Mission of Oak Hills Presbyterian Church**

The mission of the Oak Hills Presbyterian Church is actively to promote God's will on earth. We understand that this will require shaping the life of our church around the needs of the community. We believe that concerned Christians, through unified action, can more effectively confront the issues of society, and through corporate strength be instrumental in reconciling and reuniting the diverse elements of society into one people under God.

Our concern is to heed the call of Christ and, where possible, identify those areas where we can meaningfully apply ourselves toward this goal. We realize that to do less would be to reject our Lord.

### **C. Comparison**

These two statements are complementary, as they should be. The mission of the local church should encompass the mission of the whole Church but can emphasize one or more aspects of that mission. Otherwise, the mission statement of the local church would be only a restatement of the mission of the whole Church. The statement of OHPC places an emphasis on reconciliation between people and God, between OHPC members and other people, and among the diverse elements of society. Look at your church's mission statement and compare it to these statements. Does it emphasize what you believe to be important to your Session and to your church?

## **IV. Responsibilities of Elders, Minister, Session, and Congregation**

It is convenient to separate the discussion of duties and powers into four categories which begin with the individual elder and minister and progress to the whole congregation.



## A. Elders

The *Book of Order* is very specific in its list of duties of elders to be undertaken both individually and jointly as the Session.<sup>8</sup> Generally elders, together with the pastor, are to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation through their leadership and service.

- encourage the people in the worship and service of God
- equip and renew the people for their tasks within the Church
- equip and renew the people for their mission in the world
- visit and comfort and care for the people with special attention to the sick and the lonely and to those who are oppressed
- inform the Session and the Pastor of those who may need special attention
- cultivate the ability to teach the Bible

All Christians have duties they are bound to perform by the law of love. These are especially incumbent upon elders because of their calling to the office. In addition,<sup>9</sup> elders are to

- exercise leadership
- have responsibility for both the particular church which they serve and the Church at large
- serve faithfully as a member of the Session
- serve as commissioner to higher governing bodies when so elected

And elders are to be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment.

While members of the church have a great deal of freedom of conscience, officers of the church must adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity.<sup>10</sup> In becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the exercise of freedom of conscience is placed under limitations. The officer is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church.

**B. The Minister** Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are called to be pastors are

responsible for:<sup>11</sup>

- studying, teaching, and preaching the Word
- administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- praying with and for the congregation
- encouraging the people in the worship and service of God
- equipping and enabling the people for their tasks within the church and their mission to the world
- exercising pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled and the dying
- participating in governing responsibilities including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision making of the church, and its task of

reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole ! sharing in the ministry of the church in the governing bodies above the session

The minister as pastor has responsibilities with respect to the worship of the people that are not subject to the authority of the session or the congregation.<sup>12</sup>

- the selection of Scripture to be read and its translation
- the preaching of the sermon or the exposition of the Word
- the prayers to be offered
- the music to be sung
- the use of drama, dance, and other art forms

### **C. The Session**

Section 3.02 of the *Form of Government* section of the *Book of Order* is devoted to the Session.<sup>13</sup> The Session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church and has the responsibility and power,<sup>14</sup> as summarized here, to

- receive members into the church
- lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the church
- provide for the worship of the people of God including preaching and the sharing of the Sacraments ! provide for the spiritual growth of its members
- develop and supervise the educational program
- lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing
- challenge the people of God in stewardship of money and time
- establish the annual budget and other special offerings
- lead the congregation continually to discover God's working in the world
- instruct, examine, ordain, install, and welcome new elders (and deacons, where applicable)
- supervise the board of deacons (where applicable) and all other organizations within the congregation ! provide for the administration of the church's program
- provide for the management of the church's property
- maintain regular and continuing relationships with higher governing bodies
- establish and maintain all necessary ecumenical relationships
- serve in judicial matters in accordance with the *Rules of Discipline*
- keep an accurate roll of members

The pastor serves as moderator of the Session<sup>15</sup> and the Session cannot meet without the pastor except under unusual and specific circumstances. When circumstances dictate, the pastor, with the concurrence of the Session, may invite another minister of the same presbytery to preside. With the approval of the pastor, the session may convene and elect one of its own members to preside.

Regular meetings of the session are called stated meetings. Special meetings,<sup>16</sup> or called meetings, can be held upon request of the pastor (the moderator) or in writing by two members of the session. Reasonable notice of all special meetings must be given when other than routine business is to be transacted.

The Session is responsible (through the Clerk) of keeping accurate minutes and membership rolls.<sup>17</sup> The Session elects a clerk for a specified period of time, such as one year. The clerk must be an elder but does not need to be an active member of session. In the absence of the clerk at a meeting of the session, one of the session members is elected to be acting clerk for the meeting.

Meetings are to be opened and closed with prayer. *Robert's Rules of Order* are to be followed except when the *Constitution* provides otherwise (See Section VI).

#### **D. The Congregation**

The Session has full responsibility for the areas of the Church listed in the previous section. The congregation cannot usurp those responsibilities. For example, the Session is responsible for the finances of the church and the congregation cannot tell the Session how to set the annual budget or how to spend, or not spend, funds. If the congregation has serious concerns, the Session would be wise to listen to the congregation's counsel.

The congregation has some specific responsibilities, all of which are carried out at congregational meetings.<sup>18</sup> These include the following.

- The electing of elders, deacons (not applicable at churches under the unicameral system), and trustees. This includes the election of a Nominating Committee according to the By-Laws and the election of elders after the committee makes its report. The By-Laws of some churches place the positions of trustees into the session committee structure while others are elected separately.
- The calling of a pastor.
- The pastoral relationship including changing the call (the salary, vacation time, study leave, etc.) or dissolution of the pastoral relationship.
- Buying, mortgaging, or selling real property; this also requires approval of Presbytery.

The pastor moderates all congregational meetings<sup>19</sup> and the clerk of session is the secretary of all meetings. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate the meeting (the most common occurrence of this is when changes to the pastor's call are discussed), another pastor or a member of the session may preside.

## V. Session Organization

The sessions of different churches can have different committee structures. Each church adapts to suit its own needs and available resources. All sessions have two things in common dictated by the *Book of Order*: (1) the pastor is the moderator of the session and (2) there is a clerk, elected by the session, to keep the records including the minutes.

The standing committees are set by Session action. Different churches organize themselves in different ways; no one way is the best for everyone.

In most, but not all, churches, each of the standing committees has an active elder as moderator and usually one or more active elders. In addition, each committee can recruit other church members to serve. Session approval is required for all committee memberships.

Each committee carries out the business related to its area of responsibility and oversees its budget. Committees report to the Session at every stated meeting and seek permission for items as needed (called Action Items).

Session sets policy for the church. A copy of church policies should be kept in the office. A listing of policies at Oak Hills Presbyterian Church is attached as Appendix I. You might check your church's list of policies against this list to see if there is anything you may have missed.

## VI. Session Meetings

### A. General

Regular session meetings are known as *stated meetings*.<sup>20</sup> Meetings for specific purposes and with a limited agenda can be called at any time by the pastor or by written request by two elders. The most common agenda for these meetings is to receive new members. These special meetings are known as *called meetings*.

### B. Typical Agenda

1. Opening. Session meetings always open with prayer. There may also be a brief devotional, Scripture reading, or time of sharing. The roll is taken and a quorum declared. Session is then asked to approve granting excused absences to those elders who have requested them. Minutes of previous session

meetings are approved as well as minutes of any congregational meetings (unless previously approved by the congregation). For stated meetings, the agenda must be approved; changes can be made in the agenda, by session vote, at any time during the meeting. For called meetings, the purpose of the meeting must be declared and that is the agenda.

2. The Pastor's Report is received and action taken on items in the report, as appropriate.
3. The Clerk's Report is received. Action is taken on recommended items, as appropriate.
4. Committee Reports are received. Committees should be encouraged to have written reports submitted in advance and items that require session action should be clearly marked. Committee moderators should not read their reports; it should be assumed that each elder has read the report and is familiar with its contents.
5. Old and New Business. Any items not previously considered may be brought before the Session at this time. Elders are encouraged to bring up only items of a pressing nature. Other issues should be submitted to the appropriate committee for due consideration before being brought to session.
6. Closing. Session meetings are closed with prayer.

### **C. Responsibilities**

**Reports.** For each meeting, elders should arrive promptly and prepared. Each committee should have written reports in the elder's mail boxes by the Sunday before the session meeting. Read these reports carefully and prayerfully. Note particularly any items marked as Action Items. You will also receive financial reports. All elders should receive a Budget Summary for the preceding month and for year to date and committee moderators should get more complete reports.

**Meetings.** A governing body as large as the typical Session cannot function effectively as a committee-of-the-whole. In an attempt to keep discussion and action as focussed as possible, all items should first be considered by the appropriate committee. During Session meetings, there is usually not enough time to conduct the nitty-gritty business. This should be left to the committees. Keep the discussion to the overall subject rather than on minutia. For example, the discussion of having a luncheon should focus on the why and when of the luncheon and not on whether to serve tea or punch. If there are specifics that a committee is having trouble working out, it is appropriate for the committee to ask for suggestions. If you think of something new and not related to the current business, make yourself a note and talk to the appropriate committee moderator. If it is pressing business, wait until the New Business is reached on the agenda.

Meetings of large bodies such as Presbytery are carried out in a formal manner following *Robert's Rules of Order*. Only persons recognized by the Moderator may speak and persons speaking, except when

granted permission, must address the Moderator not the body in general. Session meetings are carried out in a less formal manner but some of the same process must prevail. We should not interrupt a person speaking and we should not all try to speak at once. We should allow the Moderator to call on persons to speak so that everyone has their turn. We must show restraint and respect. We also should not carry on side conversations during the meeting because it is distracting and it raises the noise level making it difficult to hear the person speaking.

**Absences.** If you need to be absent from a stated session meeting, notify the clerk or the church office. You will be given an "excused absence".

**Decisions and Actions.** It sometimes takes a while after a new class of elders joins the session for the group to learn how best to work together. We are all working toward the same goals so our discussions should take place in an atmosphere of Christian love and respect. We will not always agree but we all have agreed to abide by the church's polity which is that we abide by the majority's vote.<sup>21</sup>

#### **D. Required Session Actions**

The *Book of Order* is written so that governing bodies' actions can be done decently and in order. The intent is to ensure that the church's government functions fairly and efficiently with careful consideration being given to all issues and that biblical principles are followed.

The language in the *Book of Order* is specific.

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

Appendix II lists the significant practices that are mandated. Note that this listing is not complete; it lists only those practices that are commonly encountered.

#### **E. Some Special Cases**

There are times when it is the duty of Session to see that all requirements of the *Book of Order* are met. This is sometimes difficult because the requirements may be distributed in various places. There are four important examples.

**Receiving New Members.** Members are received into a congregation by Session action.<sup>22</sup> Session may not deny membership to anyone if the basic conditions are met, namely profession of faith in Christ.<sup>23</sup> This condition can be met by actual profession of faith, by reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer from another Christian church.<sup>24</sup> It is assumed that a person who is a member of another Christian church has previously made a profession of faith. The procedure by which a new member is received includes

welcoming and recognizing that person during a service of worship.<sup>25</sup>

**The Lord's Supper.** The Session is given the responsibility to authorize the Lord's Supper at appropriate times.<sup>26</sup> This appears to mean that the Session must take the responsibility to see that all conditions are met. While there is a lower limit to the number of times in a year (once per quarter) the Lord's Supper is to be observed, there is no upper limit other than what is reasonable.<sup>27</sup> The responsibility of the Session is to see that this sacrament is observed and is observed in an appropriate atmosphere and setting. Other requirements include the following. Only ordained officers may serve the Lord's Supper although the Session can authorize other members to do that.<sup>28</sup> Also, when both wine and grape juice are served (if wine is served, grape juice must also be served), the *Book of Order* requires that they be clearly distinguished.<sup>29</sup> Some churches place a statement in the bulletin "light is wine, dark is juice" (using white wine and regular grape juice, of course). The Sacrament must be administered by an ordained minister or commissioned lay pastor (when approved by Presbytery).<sup>30</sup> The observance must be announced at least one week in advance.<sup>31</sup> The procedure for the actual ceremony is given with parts of that being suggested and parts mandatory.<sup>32</sup> This means that many variations in the ceremony are possible. The Lord's Supper may be taken to shutins by the pastor and elders or by elders only if it is done as soon as possible and if the elders are trained.<sup>33</sup>

**Baptism.** The Session is to authorize all baptisms.<sup>34</sup> The *Book of Order* states that the reason for having Session authorize all baptisms is "for reasons of order". It is this author's opinion that this means that it is the Session's responsibility to see that all requirements of the *Book of Order* have been met just as in the case of the Lord's Supper. A person is to be baptized only once;<sup>35</sup> the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) accepts all forms of baptism with water. The Sacrament is to be administered in a public service of worship but arrangements can be made for other situations as long as the congregation is represented.<sup>36</sup> Baptism must be administered by an ordained minister or commissioned lay pastor (when approved by Presbytery).<sup>37</sup> The procedure for the Sacrament is set and is mandatory.<sup>38</sup> There are parallel portions for the person being baptized (or the parents of the child being baptized) and the congregation. Both confess their faith followed by declarations of intent. Following this section, the *Book of Order* lists the Session's responsibilities<sup>39</sup> and the Church's responsibilities<sup>40</sup> toward the person just baptized.

**Examination of Elders-Elect and Deacons-Elect.** The congregation elects church officers (elders and deacons) but before ordination/installation the Session is charged with examination of those persons to ascertain that they are ready, willing, and able to serve. It would be appropriate to use the 9 questions the officers-elect are to be asked before the congregation as a guide to cover the pertinent topics.

## VII. Session Committees

Although you may not be a committee moderator, there is still much work to be done! Each elder is expected to participate in the work of the committee assigned, in session activities outside the committee (such as commissioner to Presbytery when so elected), and in church worship and activities.

The tasks you may be given as a committee member will vary. Approach your committee membership as if you were a moderator-in-training, not necessarily for your committee or for some other committee.

The success of a church fulfilling its mission depends on good relations between session members and between the session and the congregation. The session must act faithfully and responsibly and must communicate its actions and policies clearly. Session members should visibly participate in church activities including Sunday worship. Session members should remember their wider responsibility as members of the congregation as they seek God's will.

## **VIII. Congregation Meetings**

### **A. General**

Just as there are two kinds of session meetings (stated and called), there are two kinds of congregation meetings (annual and called). While state session meetings can consider almost any topic on the agenda, the annual congregation meeting has definite limitations. Called congregation meetings are limited to the topic for which the meeting is called.

If the church is incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the annual meeting of the congregation is also the annual meeting of the corporation. If there is not a quorum present, the meeting must be adjourned and rescheduled in order to meet legal requirements. The same is true for the meeting at which officers are elected, if the election is not held at the annual meeting.

The annual meeting may consider such business as:<sup>41</sup>

- electing officers (such as elders, deacons, nominating committee, trustees)
- hearing reports
- reviewing the adequacy of the pastor's call
- transacting other business as is appropriate

Special meetings may be called for any of these purposes or to conduct other business as appropriate.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, business at congregation meetings shall be limited to:<sup>43</sup>

- matters related to the electing elders, deacons, and trustees (electing a church nominating committee is a matter related to such elections)
- matters related to the calling of a pastor or pastors
- matters related to the pastoral relationship
- matters related to buying, mortgaging, or selling real property (see also G-8.0500)
- matters related to the permissive powers of a congregation



The pastor shall be the moderator of all congregation meetings (without vote since the pastor is not a member of the congregation).<sup>44</sup> Under certain conditions, the presbytery may designate a moderator or an elder may preside. The clerk of session is designated as secretary of the meeting.<sup>45</sup> Voting by proxy is prohibited.<sup>46</sup>

## **B. Agenda**

1. Opening. Congregation meetings always open with prayer. There is a count of members present and a quorum declared. Minutes of previous congregation meetings are approved unless they have been approved by session.<sup>45</sup> The agenda is approved. If the meeting is the annual meeting, the agenda can include any or all of the items listed above and the agenda may be modified (by vote) during the meeting. If the meeting is a called meeting, the agenda is limited to the topic announced in the call.
2. The Business. Reports are received, elections held, and so forth as appropriate. The *Book of Order* is rather specific at times, such as the voting procedure for electing officers.<sup>47</sup>
3. Closing. The meetings are closed with prayer.

## References

All references are to *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order 13/15*; Office of the General Assembly, Louisville, KY

1. F-1.0301
2. G-4.3000
3. G-2.01
4. G-1.0304
5. G-2.0402
6. W-4.4000
7. F-1.01
8. G-2.0301
9. G-2.0301
10. G-2.0105
11. G-2.0301
12. W-1.4005
13. G-3.0201
14. G-3.0201; W-1.4004
15. G-3.0104
16. G-3.0105
17. G-3.0107
18. G-1.0503
19. G-1.0504
20. G-3.0203
21. F-3.0205
22. G-1.0303
23. G-1.0302
24. G-1.0303
25. W-4.2004
26. W-2.4012(a)
27. W-2.4009
28. W-3.3616(d)
29. W-3.3611
30. W-2.4012(c)
31. W -3.3609
32. W -3.3609 - W -3.3702
33. W-3.3616(e)
34. W-2.3011(a)
35. W -2.3009
36. W-2.3011
37. W-2.3011
38. W-3.3602 - W-3.3608
39. W-2.3012
40. W-2.3013
41. G-1.0503a,c
42. G-1.0501
43. G-1.0503
44. G-1.0504
45. G-1.0505
46. G-1.0505
47. G-2.0401

# Appendix I

## OHPC EXTENSIVE POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Memorial Fund Policy
2. Financial Policies
3. Weddings
4. Funerals
5. Endowments
6. Building Use
7. Memorial Services
8. Newsletter Policies
9. Personnel Policies
10. Sexual Abuse Policy
11. Grievance Policy
12. Library Policy
13. Child Care Policy
14. Youth Field Trip Policy
15. Tasks for Audit Committee

## APPENDIX II

### MANDATED POLICIES FOR SESSION

1. General Responsibilities; see Section IV.C.
2. Session Meetings; quorum; moderator
3. Authorize worship  
    baptisms; Lord's Supper
4. Elect clerk
5. Elect treasurer
6. Establish budget
7. Receive and dismiss members
8. Keep minutes and records
9. Submit records to presbytery annually
10. Elect commissioners to presbytery
11. Call congregational meetings
12. Arrange for nominating committee
13. Training and examination of elders-elect
14. Ordination and installation of elders
15. Training and examination of deacons-elect
16. Ordination and installation of deacons

## APPENDIX III

### Resources

*What Unites Presbyterians* by C. Kirkpatrick and W.H. Hopper, Jr. Published by Geneva Press, 1997

*Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* by J.S. Gray and J.C. Tucker. Published by Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991

*Companion to the Constitution: Polity for the Local Church, 4th. ed.* by F.A. Beattie. Published by Geneva Press, 1999

*We Believe: A Study of the Book of Confessions for Church Officers* Rev. ed. by H.W. Eberts, Jr. Published by Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994

*The Presbyterian Elder* Rev. ed. by P.S. Wright and W.B. Lane (eds). Published by Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996

*Selected to Serve: A Guide for Church Officers* by Earl S. Johnson, Jr. Published by Geneva Press, 2000

*How to Worship as Presbyterians* by Dean W. Chapman. Published by Geneva Press, 2001