

BYLAWS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE SOUTHWEST, OPC

(Last on January 21, 2017, perfected May 5, 2017)

CHAPTER 1 – RULES OF ORDER

The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern the presbytery in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, or these bylaws.

CHAPTER 2 – MEETINGS

Section 1 There shall be three stated meetings of the presbytery annually: a Winter meeting normally held in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, convening the third Friday of January at noon with a *terminus ad quem* of noon on Saturday; a Spring meeting convening the first Friday of May at noon with a *terminus ad quem* of noon on Saturday, and a Fall meeting convening the third Friday of September at noon with a *terminus ad quem* of noon on Saturday.

Section 2 These meetings shall be opened with a devotional service conducted by the moderator, or a member of presbytery appointed by him.

Section 3 Such adjourned and special meetings shall be held as shall lawfully be appointed and called under the "Form of Government," Chapter XIV, Section 7.

Section 4 The session of the host church and the moderator and clerk of presbytery shall constitute a Committee on Arrangements, and its duties shall be to provide hospitality for the presbytery. The pastor of the host church shall be chairman and shall report at the opening session of presbytery. The moderator shall appoint the host church for the Winter stated meeting.

Section 5 Every particular session of presbytery shall be opened and closed with prayer.

Section 6 A copy of the minutes of regular meetings of presbytery shall be sent within six (6) weeks of the meeting to each particular congregation in the presbytery, to each minister in the presbytery, and to each candidate under the care of presbytery, and upon his request to any elder within the regional church.

Section 7 Presbytery committees (with the exception of the Committee on Stewardship) shall submit their reports to the stated clerk, the ministers, and the sessions of presbytery in electronic form no less than seven days prior to the Spring and Fall stated meetings of presbytery. Written reports shall also be provided at the meeting. Reporting to the Winter meeting is optional unless ordered by the presbytery or otherwise required by these bylaws.

Section 8 During the two-minute reports of the spiritual progress of the churches, each church shall provide a one-page written summary of its report, including matters for prayer.

CHAPTER 3 - OFFICERS

Section 1 The officers of the presbytery shall be a moderator, a stated clerk, and an assistant clerk.

Section 2 Terms of office:

- a. The moderator shall be elected by ballot, unless there is only one nominee, at each Winter Stated Meeting to serve for one year or until his successor is elected.
- b. The stated clerk shall be elected by ballot, unless there is only one nominee, at the Winter Stated Meeting to serve for two years or until his successor is elected. The Stated Clerk shall receive \$500.00 each year for his services.
- c. The assistant clerk shall hold office at the meeting for which he is elected.

Section 3 Duties of officers:

a. In addition to his general duties, the moderator shall:

1. Be custodian of the records of presbytery on microfilm, microfiche or some form of electronic media.
2. In the event of the absence or inability of the stated clerk, notify and certify alternate commissioners for the General Assembly as outlined in 3. b. 15.

b. In addition to his general duties the stated clerk shall:

1. Keep minutes in successively enumerated paragraphs in each successive meeting.
2. Give timely notice of all meetings of presbytery to all ministers, churches, licentiates, and candidates under the care of presbytery, and upon his request to any elder within the regional church.

3. Prepare a statistical record of presbytery.
 4. Form a roll of all members present at each meeting of presbytery, keep a list of ministers absent and churches absent and unexcused at stated meetings, which he shall report at the next stated meeting.
 5. Maintain a roll of the ministers of presbytery showing those designated by presbytery as pastors, evangelists, teachers, retired ministers, and ministers emeritus.
 6. 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.
 7. File and preserve all papers and reports presented to presbytery which may be placed in his hands.
 8. Notify committees of their appointment.
 9. Communicate officially any acts of presbytery to the parties concerned.
 10. Keep a copy of the bylaws of presbytery corrected to date.
 11. Keep a list of names and addresses of clerks of session of the churches of presbytery.
 12. Keep a roll of candidates for the ministry under the care of presbytery with memoranda of their examinations before presbytery and the actions thereon.
 13. Produce at each stated meeting copies of the Constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the last published minutes of the General Assembly, all the minutes of the presbytery, and a copy of the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.
 14. Deliver a copy of the minutes to the moderator on some form of electronic media.
 15. Advise the stated clerk of the General Assembly, by March 1st of each year, of the names of the commissioners to the General Assembly and of the addresses of the ruling elder commissioners.
 16. In the event of the inability of the selected commissioners for the General Assembly to attend, notify the appropriate alternates, and certify such alternates (and send addresses of ruling elders) to the stated clerk of the General Assembly.
 17. Be authorized to fill vacancies for commissioners to the General Assembly only after the winter stated meeting of presbytery, and only after the lists of alternates elected by presbytery has been exhausted.
 18. Annually provide in electronic form a list of the names of pastors, ruling elders and deacons in each church, including street address, telephone number, E-mail address, and wife's name.
 19. Provide to each minister upon his reception or ordination in the presbytery, the address list of item 18 and a copy of approved presbytery minutes from the past two regular meetings.
 20. Provide a proposed docket to each stated meeting which shall include the names of the members of each permanent committee, their class, and the bylaw citation for committee membership
 21. Inform the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly as soon as reasonably possible when ministers are received or dismissed, new men are ordained or installed, churches and mission works are organized or started, and any other changes should be made to the OPC Directory.
- c. The duties of the assistant clerk shall be to assist the stated clerk.

CHAPTER 4 - STANDING COMMITTEE

The Resolutions Committee shall be appointed by the moderator at each stated meeting of presbytery and shall report to that meeting of presbytery with recommendations.

The Resolutions Committee shall propose resolutions as directed by the presbytery or its moderator.

CHAPTER 5 - PERMANENT COMMITTEES

The following permanent committees shall be elected by presbytery:

- a. Archivist
- b. Bills and Overtures
- c. Candidates and Credentials
- d. Christian Education
- e. Diaconal

- f. Foreign Missions
- g. Fraternal Relations
- h. Home Missions
- i. Leave of Absence and Sessional Records
- j. Young People's
- k. Stewardship
- l. Visitation

Section 1 The Archivist shall be a member of the Regional Church, and shall collect and preserve historical data of the presbytery, its churches and chapels, and inform the press of newsworthy events within the presbytery.

He shall also edit and distribute the Regional Ramblings, a newsletter informing the churches of presbytery of noteworthy events in the churches and the church.

Section 2 The Committee on Bills and Overtures shall consist of three members of the presbytery.

The committee shall recommend to presbytery responses to Bills and Overtures.

This committee may be augmented by the moderator to meet special requests that come before presbytery.

Section 3 The Committee on Candidates and Credentials shall consist of four members of the presbytery.

It shall represent presbytery in exercising oversight of all ministers of presbytery who are not in pastoral charges of the presbytery, including those laboring outside the geographic bounds of presbytery, except missionaries serving with the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It shall require that those ministers, except for retired ministers and ministers emeritus, make an annual report on their activities to the presbytery at the Spring Stated Meeting. Also, the committee shall visit and/or correspond with those ministers every two years and shall report to the presbytery with respect particularly to the following matters: a. the minister's commitment to the standards of the church; b. in case of ministers not in a profession ordinarily requiring ordination, the reasons for his maintaining ministerial status; c. any action the committee shall recommend that the presbytery take to fulfill its roll of oversight of these ministers. A copy of the report must be sent to the minister involved at least four (4) weeks in advance of the meeting of presbytery at which it is presented.

It shall have oversight of all candidates for the ministry under the care of presbytery, and shall report annually concerning their conduct and progress in study, and it shall encourage them in all their work.

It shall administer the Student Aid Fund according to the rules of presbytery.

It shall conduct the examination of those applying for licensure or ordination. The only oral examinations which must be conducted on the floor of presbytery are the examinations in theology, Christian faith and life, and the trial sermon. All others may be conducted by committee.

It shall also examine as to Christian faith and theological belief all ordained ministers applying to be received into the presbytery upon certificate from other bodies including other presbyteries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and no man whether previously ordained or seeking ordination shall be received into the presbytery without an open examination in theology.

It shall communicate to the General Assembly's Committee on Pensions the names and addresses of those ordained to the ministry immediately following the actions of presbytery setting the dates of their ordination.

The phrase "free from worldly care and employment" in a ministerial call should be determined by 1) taking into consideration the terms indicated in the Salary Guidelines section of the report of the Committee on Home Missions in the latest minutes of the General Assembly; 2) including the family needs of the candidate under consideration; and 3) evaluating the composition of the congregation and its ability to meet these needs in its budget.

In determining if the terms of a minister's call are adequate to provide for the minister's livelihood, the presbytery shall consider the provisions in the call for adequate retirement, and health insurance. The Presbytery shall also inquire of the candidate if he has adequate life insurance.

Section 4 The Committee on Christian Education shall consist of two members of the Regional Church, one of whom shall be a teaching elder of the presbytery.

The committee shall promote Christian education in the presbytery by planning and conducting periodic conferences or seminars that further encourage and equip the saints. It shall cooperate with the Committee on Christian Education of the General Assembly and its work.

Section 5 The Diaconal Committee shall consist of two deacons and one ruling or teaching elder, one of whom shall be treasurer.

- a. It shall investigate and evaluate all cases of need arising from within the presbytery referred to it by local boards of deacons, by sessions, or by the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and recommend appropriate action to be taken between meetings of presbytery if necessary.
- b. The Diaconal Committee shall maintain its own treasury funded through appeals to the churches of presbytery. The Diaconal Fund shall be subject to annual audit by the Committee on Stewardship.
- c. It shall administer financial aid to needy churches.
- d. Needy churches shall normally receive aid on a graduated support-scale of five years with full aid in the first full calendar-year and a 20% reduction each year thereafter.

Section 6 The Committee on Foreign Mission shall consist of one member of the Regional Church and shall act as liaison between the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the presbytery. The work of the committee shall consist of assisting with missionary itineration, promoting foreign missions in the presbytery, and assisting with Direct Missionary Support matters. The committee shall report at least once annually to the Fall Stated meeting.

Section 7 The Committee on Fraternal Relations shall consist of three members of the presbytery.

It shall establish and develop fraternal relations with churches of reformed and presbyterian persuasion and represent the Orthodox Presbyterian church to other churches.

Section 8 The Committee on Home Missions shall consist of five members of the presbytery. Each member shall be elected by presbytery for a term of three years.

- a. The committee shall promote interest and participation in the work of Home Missions within the Regional Church.
- b. The committee shall encourage and assist the churches of the Regional Church to establish new churches.
- c. The committee shall represent the presbytery and the churches of the Regional Church when seeking assistance from the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and
- d. The committee shall present the work of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.”

Section 9 The Committee on Leaves of Absence and Sessional records shall consist of four members, two ministers and two ruling elders.

- a. The committee shall be responsible for maintaining an examination process by which approximately one third of the sessions must submit their sessional records at each stated meeting. The Committee shall present a written report of notations and exceptions to the next stated meeting.
- b. The committee shall be authorized to assign sessional records to subcommittees appointed by it such that each record shall be examined by at least one minister and one ruling elder.
- c. The committee shall send a letter at least 45 days prior to each stated meeting to those sessions designated to report in (a.) above, instructing them to submit two copies of their session records to the Leave of Absence/Session Records Committee at the next stated meeting.
- d. The committee shall make a written report to presbytery of recommendations as to each record examined. Before recommending that an exception be taken to the minutes of a session, the committee shall normally confer with the moderator of the session or the ruling elder delegate of the church. Upon approval of the report by presbytery, the minute book of each session shall be signed by the moderator indicating whether or not exceptions were taken. The report of the subcommittee as edited by the committee shall be provided to the session.

Findings of the committee with respect to the minutes of each session shall be assigned to the following categories as appropriate:

Notations: Notations are any of the following which in the judgment of the committee do appear to conform in substance to church standards and therefore do not warrant the specific attention of presbytery: errors of form or fact or violations of regulative standards to which sessions are subject. These might include typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation, non-prejudicial misstatements of fact, failure to provide proper or sufficient information or identification, or prejudicial misstatements of fact. General suggestions or advice for improving some aspect of the minutes would also be appropriately included here.

Exceptions: Exceptions are any of the following which in the judgment of presbytery appear not to conform in substance to church standards, and therefore warrant presbytery’s specific response: actions of sessions or errors of form or fact or violations of regulative standards to which sessions are subject.”

Section 10 The Young People’s Committee shall consist of six members of the Regional church, at least three of whom shall be ministers.

It shall supervise the work of our young people and promote in general the young people's work in the presbytery.

It shall supervise the planning and conducting of the young people's conferences and other meetings deemed advisable, in cooperation with the churches of presbytery.

Section 11 The Committee on Stewardship shall consist of three male members of the Regional Church, at least two of whom shall be officers.

The committee shall promote Scriptural giving and Christian stewardship as well as planning, coordinating, collecting, and administering the finances of presbytery.

Pursuant to this task, it shall have the following specific duties:

- a. It shall keep before the presbytery the theology and implications of stewardship.
- b. It shall present the following reports to presbytery:
 1. A current treasurer's report at each stated meeting of presbytery,
 2. A previous calendar year annual report at the winter stated meeting,
 3. A financial status report to each session in the presbytery in January, April, July, and October.
- c. It shall present to presbytery a proposed next calendar year annual budget at the fall stated meeting for adoption. All committees and the stated clerk shall submit to it their proposed budgets for the coming year at the fall stated meeting, and any revision or supplement to the current budget at each stated meeting.
- d. It shall appoint annually at the fall stated meeting a treasurer to keep an accurate record of all income and expenditures, and he shall present a treasurer's report to the Stewardship Committee and the Committee on Home Missions. He shall pay all expenditures of the presbytery authorized by the Committee on Stewardship out of a general treasury.
- e. An annual examination of the treasurer's books will be conducted by the churches of the presbytery on a rotational basis with the findings being reported to the Stewardship Committee.
- f. It shall recommend allotment for travel expenses for commissioners to meetings of presbytery.

Section 12 The Committee on Visitation shall consist of four members, two ministers and two ruling elders.

- a. The committee shall seek to aid sessions and churches in a timely manner to encourage the spiritual health and mutual care of our ministers, sessions, and churches for one another and to pray for one another.
- b. Regular Visits of Churches: The Committee on Visitation shall arrange for a minister and a ruling elder to meet with each Session of Presbytery, with its concurrence, once each year during presbytery meetings to inquire into the spiritual life of the church.
- c. Special Visits of Churches
 1. When a local session or a particular congregation requests a special visit from the Committee on Visitation or directly from the Presbytery, due to the presence of serious issues in the church, the Committee on Visitation shall ask two ministers and two elders to visit the church.
 2. This Special Visitation subcommittee shall speak with the session, and others as needed, to ascertain the problems, and to seek to give advice and counsel to aid in the remedying of the problems. The chairman of the Special Visitation subcommittee shall submit a report to the Session and the Committee on Visitation within two months.
 3. When a minister requests a special visit from the Committee on Visitation, or directly from the Presbytery, due to difficult circumstances, the Committee on Visitation shall ask one minister and one elder to visit with him.
- d. The Committee on Visitation will develop and propose a budget to Presbytery for the reimbursement of expenses incurred during visits. For situations where cost is significant for a personal visit, the committee may consider video and/or telephone conferencing.
- e. The Committee on Visitation shall develop a brief handbook on visitation, giving general guidelines, and suggestions for possible formats for visitation.
- f. It shall also be responsible for the oversight of needy churches. A needy church is one which has applied for and been approved for ongoing financial aid from the presbytery. Application for and approval of such financial aid establishes an agreement or covenant between the presbytery and the needy church which requires a degree of oversight by the presbytery.
 - I. Mode of oversight by the Committee
 - A. The Committee as a whole, and / or

- B. The Committee's appointed individuals, and / or
 - C. Augmentees to the local session (by constitutional method).
- II. Substance of oversight
- A. Is the Word being preached? - worship
 - B. Is the church active in edification (FG III: 1, 2)?
 - C. Is the church doing witness?
- III. Reporting
- A. Quarterly reports to Committee
 - B. Some kind of report to presbytery.

CHAPTER 6 - GENERAL TREASURY

Section 1 The presbytery shall have a general treasury under the oversight of the Committee on Stewardship.

Section 2 The treasury shall be supplied by:

- a. offerings received at the public worship services conducted by the presbytery.
- b. the churches of presbytery shall be requested to contribute to the treasury the necessary funds to meet the budget approved by presbytery.
- c. fees charged for camps, retreats, etc., conducted by the presbytery.

Section 3 No commissioner shall receive any portion of his travel expenses unless he is present at all sessions of the presbytery meeting, or has been excused by an action of presbytery.

Section 4 The expenses incurred by the installation and ordination of pastors shall be paid by the local church.

CHAPTER 7 - ELECTIONS

Section 1 When the number of nominees exceeds the number of persons to be elected, if, after the first balloting the required number of persons is not elected, the name of the person receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped, providing that the resultant number of remaining nominees never be less than one more than the number of persons to be elected.

Section 2 At the stated fall meeting of presbytery, there shall be an election of commissioners for the next general assembly. An additional election shall be held at the stated Winter meeting to add commissioners or alternates as necessary.

In addition to the number of commissioners allowed the presbytery, there shall be alternates elected, in number up to that of commissioners allowed, the alternate receiving the highest number of votes shall be the first alternate, the one receiving the second highest shall be the second alternate, and so on down to the last alternate.

Section 3 Election of permanent committees.

- a. Election shall be held at stated springs as follows:

Winter meeting – Election for Archivist, Stewardship, Bills and Overtures, and Visitation,

Spring meeting – Election for Candidates and Credentials, Christian Education, Diaconal, and Foreign Missions,

Fall meeting – Election for Fraternal Relations, Home Missions, Leave of Absence and Sessional Records, and Young People's.

- b. Nominations shall be from the floor, and the elections shall be by ballot, except when the number of nominees does not exceed the number of vacancies.
- c. Each committee shall be divided as equally as possible into three classes, with each class to serve a three year term, and one class to be elected each year.
- d. When presbytery initially forms the classes of a committee, the nominee(s) with the highest majority shall be elected to the longest term, the nominee(s) with the second highest majority to the next longest term, and the nominee(s) with the third highest majority to the shortest term.
- e. In case of a resignation, an election shall be held to fill the unexpired term.
- f. Presbytery, when it wishes to change the geographical location of a committee, shall reserve the right at an election to terminate, by a two-thirds vote, the services of the present members of the committee, and then to nominate and elect a new committee in accordance with paragraphs "a-d" of this section.

CHAPTER 8 - AMENDMENTS

These bylaws, except for this chapter, may be temporarily suspended by a two-thirds vote of those present at a stated meeting of presbytery.

No bylaw shall be permanently suspended, amended, or repealed, nor shall any new bylaw be added except at a stated meeting of the presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the members present, the amendment having been proposed in writing to the previous stated meeting.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE SOUTHWEST, OPC

A. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The suggested order of business at the stated meetings of presbytery shall be:

1. Devotional service and two minute reports of the spiritual progress of churches in the presbytery and intercessory prayer by presbyters.
2. Call to order and constituting prayer
3. Roll call
4. Enrollment of corresponding members
5. Election of an assistant clerk
6. Report of the Committee on Arrangements
7. Presentation of printed minutes
8. Presentation of communications to presbytery
9. Presentation and adoption of the docket, including specific orders of business
10. Report of the stated clerk
11. Report of the Committee on Stewardship (Winter Election) [three members of the regional church, at least two of whom shall be officers.]
12. Appointment of standing committees
 - a. Mileage
 - b. Resolutions
- **13. Recess for meetings of committees
- *14. Report of Permanent Committees (elections to follow each report)
 - a. Archivist (Winter Election) [member of the regional church.]
 - b. Bills and Overtures (Winter Election) [two members of presbytery.]
 - c. Candidates and Credentials (Spring Election) [three members of presbytery.]
 - d. Christian Education (Spring Election) [three members of the Regional Church, one of whom shall be a teaching elder of presbytery.]
 - e. Diaconal (Spring Election) [two deacons and one ruling or teaching elder, one of whom shall be treasurer.]
 - f. Foreign Missions (Spring Election) [one member of presbytery.]
 - g. Fraternal Relations (Fall Election) [three members of presbytery.]
 - h. Home Missions (Fall Election) [five members of presbytery.]
 - i. Leaves of Absence and Sessional Records (Fall Election) [one minister and one ruling elder.]
 - j. Young People's (Fall Election) [four members of the Regional Church, at least two of whom shall be members of presbytery.]

- *15. Report of special committees
- *16. Report of standing committees
- *17. Election of commissioners for general assembly (fall and winter)
- *18. Report and appointment of liaison representatives (fall only)
- *19. Addresses of fraternal delegates
- 20. Miscellaneous business
- 21. Election of moderator (winter only)
- 22. Election of a stated clerk (winter only - every two years)
- 23. Set time and place of next meeting
- 24. Closing roll call
- 25. Reading of minutes
- 26. Adjournment and benediction

** called at the discretion of the moderator, but not earlier than this item in the docket

* called at the discretion of the moderator

B. RULES FOR SESSIONAL RECORDS

1. The records of the session shall conform to the ordinate and subordinate standards of the Church (e.g. Form of Government XIII:7-8).
2. The records of the session shall be legibly written or typed on numbered pages, with a margin of at least one inch on the left side. They shall state the time and place of meeting and the names of the members present and absent, the time of adjournment, and the minutes shall be appropriately signed.
3. All votes and proceedings which are necessary to give a complete history of the church (a full picture of the life of the congregation) shall be recorded, including statistical reports, elections of elders and deacons, reception and dismissal of members, time of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, baptisms of infants and adults, and marriages. Separate records should also be kept of baptisms, marriages, and deaths.
4. All records of the reception of members by letter shall state from what church the member came; and records of dismissal shall state to what church the member is recommended.
5. Church sessions shall order the incorporation of proceedings of congregational meetings with their own record so as to exhibit the actions taken and shall indicate the commitment made by the congregation each year for the support of its pastor, and any changes in the terms of the call.
6. The records of sessions shall be read and approved by the session, and the fact of such approval shall be entered in the minutes.
7. Two copies of sessional records shall be annually submitted for examination and approval to presbytery at the stated meeting designated for each session by the Leave of Absence & Sessional Records Committee. The sessional records book shall be presented to the subsequent presbytery meeting, at which the Leave of Absence & Sessional Records Committee presents its report on the reviewed minutes. The expense of the committee is to be covered by that church which fails to comply with number six (6) of the "Rules for Sessional Records".
8. The session shall take note in its minutes of exceptions taken by the presbytery to its minutes, together with the corrections or explanations adopted by the session to rectify them.
9. All meetings should be opened and closed with prayer and that fact should be noted in the minutes.
10. The minutes of a meeting of session should inform the reader as to who was moderating the meeting.

C. DUTIES OF SESSIONS

1. The presbytery recommends that each session hold at least four regular meetings each year.
2. The session in granting letters of dismissal must address them to some particular evangelical church.

3. Each session shall review its roll of members annually.
4. A request to be excused from ruling elder representation at a stated meeting of presbytery shall include in the request the statement that this was an official action of the session and the date of the meeting at which it was taken.
5. The session shall communicate to the stated clerk the name and address of the clerk of session.