

## **BYLAWS**

### **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:

- a. The constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,
- b. The Standing Rules and Instruments of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (SR&I), or
- c. 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; convening the first Friday of May meeting at noon with a terminus ad quem of noon on Saturday, and the 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** The presbytery minutes shall be made available by the Clerk within six (6) weeks of the meeting to all ministers and sessions of the presbytery, and upon request to any inactive ruling elder of the regional church.

**Section 7** Presbytery committees shall submit their reports to the stated clerk, in electronic form no less than fourteen (14) days prior to meetings of presbytery. The Clerk shall make them available to all ministers and sessions of the presbytery within two days of receipt. Printed reports shall also be provided at meetings by the committee presenting the report.

**Section 8** During the three-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. Each church shall send a one-page written summary of their report to the Clerk in electronic form seven (7) days prior to meetings of the presbytery. The Clerk will make them available to all ministers and sessions. Printed reports shall also be provided by the churches at meetings of the presbytery.

**Section 9** All Ruling Elders currently serving on a session of a church of the presbytery are granted privileges of the floor to deliberate and advise at all meetings of Presbytery in accordance with FG XIV:9.

### **CHAPTER 3 - OFFICERS**

**Section 1** The officers of the presbytery shall be a moderator, a stated clerk, and an assistant clerk. These officers have privileges of the floor at all times for the duration of their respective term of office.

**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 \$3,500.00 each year for his services.
- c. The assistant clerk shall hold office at the meeting for which he is elected and shall receive \$200.00 for his labors at that meeting.

**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.12+13.

- b. In addition to his general duties the stated clerk shall comply with the Rules of Order (Chapter 1 hereof):
1. 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.
  2. Prepare a statistical record of presbytery and present that record to the Statistician of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at his request.
  3. Maintain a roll of the ministers of Presbytery showing those designated by Presbytery as pastors, evangelists, teachers, retired ministers, and ministers emeritus. He shall certify, upon request, to the standing of all ministers on the roll of Presbytery.
  4. 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.
  5. File and preserve all records of Presbytery. This includes: All minute books, electronic copies of minutes, and papers and reports presented to Presbytery which may be placed in his hands. He shall maintain a permanent record of the Bylaws of Presbytery together with all amendments and changes.
  6. Notify committees of their appointment.
  7. Communicate officially any acts of Presbytery to the parties concerned.
  8. Keep a list of names and addresses of clerks of session of the churches of presbytery.
  9. Keep a roll of candidates for the ministry under the care of presbytery with memoranda of their examinations before presbytery and the actions thereon.
  10. 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.
  11. Provide to the moderator in suitable electronic form a copy of the minutes.
  12. 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.
  13. 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.
  14. Fill vacancies for commissioners to the General Assembly only after the winter stated meeting of presbytery, and only after the list of alternates elected by presbytery has been exhausted.
  15. Maintain and distribute to the churches of Presbytery 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.
  16. Provide to each minister upon his reception or ordination in the presbytery an electronic copy of the presbytery directory and access to the records of presbytery.
  17. 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.
  18. 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.
  19. Receive correspondence on behalf of Presbytery. Such correspondence is the property of Presbytery.
  20. Provisionally assign correspondence to Presbytery or one of its committees as appropriate .
  21. Correspondence that is provisionally assigned to a committee shall be made available to that committee at the earliest opportunity.
  22. Upon receipt of instruction from each committee (after the committee has decided whether it is appropriate to publish, or not publish it prior to the presbytery meeting), the Clerk shall make each communication available to Presbytery at the earliest convenience.
  23. Ensure that all correspondence that has been assigned to Presbytery, or a committee, shall be listed in the docket for each meeting so that correspondence and its assignment can be received and adopted.
  24. Remind Presbytery that correspondence which has been distributed to ministers and/or ruling elders of Presbytery does not constitute business before Presbytery until it has been formally received and assigned at the meeting of Presbytery at which it is to be processed.
  25. The Clerk shall handle presbytery documents in confidence.

26. Oversee the maintenance of the Presbytery website: <http://opcsouthwest.org>
27. Maintain the official PSW Directory and publish the same to Presbytery and to the Stated Clerk of the GA.
28. Presbytery records shall be secured in accordance with the principles outlined in the PSW Directory.
29. He shall deliver to his successor all records that have been entrusted to him during his term of office, and shall secure all records to the control of the incoming Stated Clerk.
- c. The duties of the assistant clerk shall be:
  1. Take minutes of all Stated Meetings of Presbytery.
  2. During the course of each Stated Meeting of Presbytery he shall send each minister and elder commissioner a copy of their respective PSW Directory Church information and shall obtain confirmation that the information is current. He shall notify the Stated Clerk of all changes requested by representatives of each church.
  3. He shall prepare a first draft copy of the minutes of each meeting at which he serves.
  4. In the absence or inability of the Stated Clerk, he shall assume the duties of that office.
  5. Assist the Stated Clerk as requested during meetings of Presbytery.

#### **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 four members of the presbytery.

- a. The committee shall recommend to Presbytery responses to Bills and Overtures.
- b. This committee may be augmented by the moderator to meet special requests that come before presbytery.
- c. When formal charges are received, the Stated Clerk shall ordinarily immediately forward them to the Bills and Overtures Committee for review.
- d. When the committee reviews formal charges it has received, the committee shall examine the charges with regard to the requirements of BoD III.1-5, and report to the next presbytery meeting, unless impractical to do so.

**Section 3** The Committee on Candidates and Credentials shall consist of five members of the presbytery, at least one of whom shall be a ruling elder.

- a. 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:
  1. the minister's commitment to the standards of the church;
  2. in case of ministers not in a profession ordinarily requiring ordination, the reasons for his maintaining ministerial status;
  3. any action the committee shall recommend that the presbytery take to fulfill its role 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.
- b. 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.
- c. It shall administer the Student Aid Fund according to the rules of presbytery.
- d. 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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 seven members, four ministers and three 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 to all session clerks instructing them to check the PSW sessional records review schedule for due dates and remind them to submit unapproved session records to the Leave of Absences and Sessional Records Committee at the next stated meeting. Sessions shall have the option to provide either: i) Two (2) printed copies, or ii) a consolidated PDF, of minutes that shall be provided for review.
- 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 and/or clerk of the session of that church.
- e. 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.
- f. Should the presbytery desire to see the records book of any particular session, it shall be presented at the next stated meeting.
- g. Should any session desire to challenge any exceptions or notations made by the Leaves of Absence and Sessional Records Committee, it should formally communicate this to the stated clerk. The session should then bring its records book to the next stated meeting. A temporary committee of three (3), consisting of members of presbytery who are not members of the LOASR committee (having up to two ruling elders) appointed by the moderator to review the challenge. Should the challenge be upheld, the report of the Leaves of Absence and Sessional Records Committee will be amended.
- h. 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 appear to conform in substance to church standards and therefore do NOT warrant the specific attention of presbytery.

These might include:

- typographical errors
- misspellings, improper punctuation
- non-prejudicial misstatements of fact
- failure to provide proper or sufficient information or identification
- 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 do NOT conform in substance to church standards, and therefore warrant presbytery’s specific response:

These might include:

- actions of sessions
- errors or omissions of form or fact
- 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.

- a. It shall supervise the work of our young people and promote in general the young people’s work in the presbytery.
- b. 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,
- 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 least two weeks prior to 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. He shall pay all expenditures of the presbytery authorized by the Committee on Stewardship out of a general treasury.
- e. The Stewardship Committee shall commission an audit of the treasurer's books by an independent auditor every two years and report the findings to the presbytery.
- f. It shall adopt, publish and administer a travel expense policy.

**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 meetings 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: EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENTARY LAW TO ELECTRONIC MEETINGS**

Except as authorized in the PSW Bylaws, the business of the presbytery can be validly transacted only at a regular, or properly called special meeting that is a single official assembly of its members in one room or area, at which a quorum is present.

While video and audio conferences are permissible in the prescribed circumstances listed below, it is the opinion of the Presbytery of the Southwest that meetings with everyone physically present are superior in almost every way, and are to be preferred except in circumstances requiring great difficulties or great expense.

The Presbytery the Southwest may conduct special meetings by videoconference, by using a technology that allows all participating individuals to see each other, as well as hear each other, at the same time, if the business of the meeting can reasonably be expected to be completed in less than 2 hours. Those seeking the floor shall do so by stating their name (e.g. "Jones rising").

The Presbytery may conduct special meetings by audio conference, by using a technology that allows for simultaneous communication among all participating individuals, if the business of the meeting can reasonably be expected to be completed in less than 2 hours. Those seeking the floor shall do so by stating their name (e.g. "Jones rising").

The Presbytery shall not conduct the court's actual sitting to hear complaints, their appeals, trials, or their appeals, by video or audio conferencing.

### **CHAPTER 9 - 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, previous notice of the proposed amendment having been given in writing at the previous stated meeting, and the proposed amendment having been included in the call of the stated meeting at which the motion will be considered (RONR 10:44).

## **INSTRUMENTS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE SOUTHWEST, OPC**

### **A. ORDER OF BUSINESS (PRESBYTERY)**

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

1. Call to order and constituting prayer;
2. Devotional service and three minute reports of the spiritual progress of churches in the presbytery and intercessory prayer by presbyters.
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. SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS (SESSIONS)**

- 1. Call to Order and Prayer
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Approval of Minutes
- 4. Correspondence/Communications
- 5. Adoption of the Docket
  - a. Order(s) of the Day (if any)
- 6. Clerk's Report
- 7. Priority Matters (if any)
- 8. Membership Oversight
  - a. Receptions & Dismissals
  - b. Visitation
- 9. Pastoral Reports
  - a. Pastor's Report
  - b. Associate Pastor's Report (if any)
  - c. Intern's Report (if any)
- 10. Committee and Other Reports
- 11. Christian Education
  - a. Sunday School
  - b. Outreach/Education
- 12. Miscellaneous Business
- 13. Next Meeting
- 14. Approval of minutes (only if approved at the ti

### **C. RULES FOR SESSIONAL RECORDS**

The sessional records committee shall assist sessions and their clerks to meet the requirements as set out in the bylaws of the Presbytery of the Southwest, Chapter 1. The rules for keeping Sessional records shall follow as closely as possible those required for the records of Presbytery as set out per SR&I:A.

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 session shall (Whole Body of Records):
  - a. Be kept in permanent record books (SR&I:A.1).
  - b. Be typewritten or printed, or reproductions from typewritten or printed masters, and shall be neat and legible (SR&I:A.2).
  - c. Have a margin of at least one inch on the punched side of the page (Legibility - SR&I:A.2).
  - d. Have numbered pages (SR&I:A.1). Page numbering shall follow a consistent sequential numbering system.
  - e. Be well organized with numbered sections and section headings. A consistent heading and item numbering system shall be followed (SR&I:A.1).
  - f. Insofar as possible, erasures, interlineations, and footnotes shall be avoided (SR&I:A.15).
  - g. Documents and their specific location may be referred to in the minutes, and filed separately in a file maintained by the Clerk. However, such documents shall be included in the minutes only by transcription (SR&I:A.16).
  - h. The minutes of the meetings of the session shall appear in the minutes book in the order in which the meetings occur. When a previous action of the session is referred to, the date of the meeting in which the action occurred shall be given (SR&I:A.14).
  - i. A copy of the bylaws of the presbytery, corrected as amended, shall be kept by each church session at the front of the current sessional records book (SR&I:A.21).
  - j. Citations in sessional records referring to constitutional standards may be abbreviated, eg: BCO, FG, and BD respectively. Citations shall be used consistently, e.g. “FG XXIII, 8, 8” or “FG 23, 8, 8” but not a mixture of both forms of citation. (Minutes of the 89<sup>th</sup> GA2023, Report by AC12).
3. The records for each meeting shall (Minutes of Meetings):
  - a. State the date and place of each meeting, and the times of convening and adjourning (SR&I:A.3).
  - b. State the names of the members (Ministers & Ruling Elders) present and absent (FG XIII:5, FG XIII:10, SR&I:A.7), and all guests present.
  - c. Record requests for leaves of absences from the stated meetings of the session (BD I:1-3).
  - d. Identify those who have offered prayers (SR&I:A.10).
  - e. Record an opening (constituting) prayer and a closing prayer (for each day of the meeting) (SR&I:A.10).
  - f. Identify the moderator of each meeting (SR&I:A.5).
  - g. If the Stated Clerk is not present, a Clerk pro tem shall be selected, and his selection and the length of service shall be indicated in the minutes. (FG XIX, SR&I:A.6).
  - h. Be signed by the clerk of that meeting (see also C.7.b).
4. The minutes shall record all administrative actions and actions affecting changes in jurisdiction over members (Administrative Actions) taken at each meeting, including:
  - a. All votes and proceedings which are necessary to give a complete history of the church.
  - b. Statistical reports: Once each year, at the end of that year’s records, a facsimile of the statistical report to the denomination shall be inserted. This statistical report shall be on numbered pages (FG XIII:8).
  - c. The selection of the moderator of the session shall comply with FG XVIII and FG XIII:4.
  - d. The selection of the clerk of the session shall comply with FG XIX and upon selection shall record his term of service.
  - e. Elections of elders and deacons (FG XIII:3+7, FGXXV:2). Requests for augmentation of the session, when necessary, shall be approved by the presbytery (FG XIII:10) and recorded in the minutes.
  - f. Reception and dismissal of members (FG XIII:9, BD II:B,2+3, BD IV, BD V).
  - g. 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 (FG XIII:8-9).
  - h. Actions to call a congregational meeting, the purpose of the meeting and prior notification (FG XVI:3).
  - i. The appointment of the Elder commissioner to presbytery shall be recorded in the minutes of the Session (FG XIII:7).

- j. When sessional absence from a stated meeting of presbytery is unavoidable, by order of session its clerk shall send to the stated clerk of the presbytery a request for leave of absence stating the circumstances of the necessary request, and shall record this in the minutes of the session.
5. Actions of the session affecting jurisdiction and oversight by receiving and dismissing of members (Membership Oversight), and shall record:
    - a. All receptions and dismissals shall be in a manner that is consistent with FG XIII:9 and shall cite the appropriate BD II:B reference for the manner of action taken.
    - b. Each reception or dismissal of a member shall be specific by name for each individual. Membership action shall not be referred to by family name alone (FG XIII:9, BD II:B.2).
    - c. The church from which the member was received (BD II:B.2.a+b+c) and any actions taken by the session prior to such reception, such as interviews and/or communications with a dismissing body (BD II:B.2.a+b), and at the determination of the session as part of receiving a member per BD II:B.2.c shall record examinations.
    - d. Reception by confession of faith shall clearly record whether the confessor making profession is a non-communicant, or a non-member (BD II:B.2.d). The action/s of public notification per DW IV:A.3 shall be recorded in the minutes. [*Before permitting anyone to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall announce his name to the congregation on a prior Lord's Day in order that the members of the church may have opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a credible profession.*]
    - e. Members may be received from a church of like faith and practice (as listed on the OPC website - <https://opc.org/relations/>), or as determined by the session. When a member is received from a church that the session regards as being of like faith and practice, yet is not listed on the OPC website as being in an ecclesiastical relationship with the OPC, the session shall record its determination in its minutes (BD II:B.2.b+c).
    - f. Notification to the dismissing judicatory of the fact of reception when accomplished (FG XIII:9, BD II:A.2).
    - g. When a prospective member is interviewed, the date of their subsequent reception shall be recorded in subsequent minutes (FG XIII:8).
    - h. The particular church to which the person is dismissed (BD II:A.2).
    - i. If a dismissal is by removal or erasure, the process described in BD chapter II:B.3. and chapter V:2.a directions must be followed, and it is best to include the specific reference to avoid ambiguity.
    - j. When official acts of discipline are made, this shall be recorded (BD VI:C.1). A record of an announcement of disciplinary action shall be recorded only when the session determines that it is necessary to inform the congregation; such announcement may be made during a worship service or by any other means at the discretion of the session.
    - k. The terms of the NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations (1987) shall be recognized (Copy available from the PSW Google Shared Drive).
      1. **Regular Transfer of Membership.** - That in the regular transfer of membership between NAPARC churches, the session/consistory or presbytery/classis shall not receive a member until the appropriate document of transfer is in the hands of the receiving church.
      2. **Transfer with Irregularities.**
        - i. That upon request for a transfer of membership by a person under discipline, the sending session/consistory or presbytery/classis inform the receiving body of the nature and extent of the disciplinary procedure before implementing the requested transfer, thus enabling informal consultation between the pastors and elders of both churches.
        - ii. That such a person shall not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church has taken into serious account the discipline of and the information supplied by the sending church.
        - iii. That such a person shall not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church is satisfied that proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been seriously attempted.
        - iv. That a "fugitive from discipline" who is no longer a member of a church or who is no longer on the roll of a presbytery shall not be received until the former judiciary/assembly has been contacted to determine if proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been attempted.
6. Minutes of congregational meetings shall:
    - a. Exhibit the actions taken at that meeting of the congregation (FG XVI:3-5).
    - b. Indicate the commitment made by the congregation each year for the terms of call of its pastor/s, and any changes in the terms of the call. (SR&I:A.12.b+c+d).
    - c. A roll call shall be taken at each congregational meeting. The minutes of the meeting of the congregation shall show all communicant members who are eligible to vote, both those present at the meeting and those absent from

- the meeting. The clerk shall record whether or not quorum requirements were established (FG XVI:1).
- d. Be incorporated with its records by order of the session and shall be placed into the Minute book serially with the records of the session (FG XVI:5).
7. Minutes shall be **certified** as approved by:
- a. Record that the minutes were read and approved at the same or a subsequent meeting, and shall be signed by the clerk. (SR&I:A.11, FG XIX).
  - b. When minutes of a previous meeting (or meetings) are approved, the date(s) of said meeting(s) shall be recorded. (SR&I:A.11).
  - c. Minute records may be electronically signed by the clerk as an alternative to use of a hand-written signature. An electronic signing method shall be consistently used to electronically authorize records. The clerk shall document the authorized electronic signature that he may use. As an example the clerk may use a slash-signature-slash signing format (Eg: These minutes are presented by, or submitted by, John Doe, Stated Clerk, electronic signature /*John Doe*/). The clerk shall record in the minutes at least one time every year that the following is a true record of his electronic signature. (FG XIX).
8. Sessional records approval by Presbytery (see bylaw Chapter 5, Section 9.c):
- a. Minutes not previously reviewed shall be annually submitted for examination and approval to presbytery at the stated meeting designated for each session (FG XIII:8).
  - b. The minutes shall be submitted to the clerk of presbytery for distribution to the LOASR committee. (Committee process).
  - c. The permanent records book of the session shall be presented to the subsequent presbytery meeting, at which the Leave of Absence & Sessional Records Committee presents its report on the reviewed minutes (FG XIII:8).
  - d. The session shall record in its minutes all exceptions taken by the presbytery to its minutes, together with the corrections or explanations adopted by the session to rectify them (SR&I:A.23).
  - e. If any session fails to produce its minutes in copy and/or book form at the required times, it shall do so according to the submission schedule for the next stated meeting of presbytery and shall acknowledge its omission in writing to the stated clerk of presbytery, such acknowledgement shall also be recorded in the minutes of the session.

#### **D. 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, and shall record its roll of members, and provide a summary of changes.
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.
6. The session shall instruct the stated clerk in a timely manner of all changes necessary to the PSW Directory in order to keep the records of Presbytery current.

#### **E. SAMPLE OF FICTITIOUS SESSION MINUTES**

Heading stating regular meeting or special meeting, date of meeting, place of meeting.

##### **[REGULAR or SPECIAL] MEETING OF SESSION**

1. Call to Order and Prayer

The meeting was called to order at XX:XX a.m./p.m. at [Location]. [Name of Moderator] led in prayer and read [Scripture selection].

2. Roll Call

Present: [full names and parenthetically indicate moderator] Rev. John H. Smith (moderator); Ruling Elders Brian A. Downs; Charles D. Fox, Stephen D. Jones

Absent: Ruling Elder Fred J. Klein

Visitors: Mr. Samuel T. Cooper and Mrs. Jane S. Cooper

On motion, Elder Klein was excused from the meeting due to illness.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the regular/special meeting on [date] were read (previously?); corrections were received and approved as corrected.

4. Correspondence

[Typically, note correspondence that needs any action or is related directly to the work of the Church e.g., something that may have a budget line item. Such correspondence constitutes business brought to the meeting as a docketed item].

The clerk received a letter of transfer for Samuel and Jane Cooper from Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA), Springfield, Il in response to our request.

5. Adoption of the Docket

The moderator proposed a docket for the meeting. On motion/by unanimous consent the docket was approved as presented/amended. Order of the day: interview/examination of Samuel & Jane Cooper for membership at the call of the moderator.

a. Order/s of the Day

The Session interviewed the Coopers as to their faith and life. On motion, the Session determined to receive Samuel Timothy Cooper and Jane Susan Cooper (né Franklin) as communicant members upon letter of transfer and public profession/reaffirmation of faith (BD II.B.2.b) during a future worship service at a date to be determined.

6. Clerk's Report

a. Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was observed on [date] during the morning/evening worship service/s on [date/s].

b. Administrative action/s

- i. [Full name], son/daughter of [Full names] was baptized on [date] and added to the roll of the church as a non-communicant member in accordance with [BD reference], [reference to the previous meeting in which this action had been approved].
- ii. [Full name] was publicly received as a communicant member on [date] on letter of transfer [from]/reaffirmation of faith/profession of faith and baptism [reference to the previous meeting in which this action had been approved].
- iii. [Full name] was received into membership at [Name of Church]; [he/she] was removed/erased from the roll in accordance with [BD reference] as ordered at prior meeting [date of meeting, section of record].

- iv. The clerk notified the session of [Name of Church] of the reception of [Full Name] to the roll of the church.

7. Priority Matters (if any)

This could be old business, time sensitive matters or judicial discipline matters.

8. Membership Oversight  
[Use as appropriate]

a. Reception or Dismissal of Members

i. Reception by Profession of faith

[Full name] was interviewed by the session on Date and is convinced that the candidate possesses the knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the work of Christ, is trusting Christ for salvation, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life. By common consent, the session determined to receive [him/her] (DB II:B.2.d) per DPW IV:[B/F]. At such time the clerk shall add [his/her] name to the roll of the church.

ii. Receptions from an OPC church

[Full name] has requested transfer of membership [from/to] [Name of OPC Church, location]. A letter of transfer was [sent/received] on [Date]. The session [interviewed him/her] [on Date] [and] being satisfied that the person is in good standing moved to receive [him/her] per BD II:B.2.a. The clerk was ordered to [request approval of transfer from the dismissing session and] [upon receipt of appropriate consent from the dismissing session] add [his/her/ name to the roll of the church. The session ordered the clerk to inform the dismissing session of the date of [his/her] reception onto the roll per BD II:A.2.

iii. Dismissal to an OPC church

[Full name] has relocated and sought to join [Name of OPC Church].

- At [his/her] request the session ordered the clerk to send a [letter/email/communication] to the clerk of the receiving church granting the requested dismissal and to remove [his/her] name from the roll upon receipt of confirmation.

iv. Receptions from other churches

[Full name] was interviewed for membership [on Date] and having heard a credible profession the session determined to work with the dismissing session and to receive [him/her] onto the roll of the church by common consent.

- Transfer from a church of like faith and practice
  - a. The clerk was ordered to request a transfer of membership from [Name of church, location, denomination]
  - b. Upon receipt of appropriate consent and being satisfied with a record of good standing from the dismissing session [he/she] shall be received by reaffirmation of faith (BD II:B.2.b) per DPW IV:D. At such time the clerk shall add [his/her] name to the roll of the church.
  - c. The session ordered the clerk to inform the dismissing session of the date of [his/her] reception onto the roll per BD II:A.2.
- Transfer from a church of unlike faith and practice.

[Full name] was interviewed for membership [on Date] and heard a credible profession of faith. By common consent the session shall receive [him/her] by reaffirmation of faith (BD II:B.2.c) per DPW IV:E. [The session ordered the clerk to inform the dismissing church of the date of [his/her] reception onto the roll per BD II:A.2.]

v. Dismissal to other churches

[Full name] has relocated and seeks to join with [Name of Church, location, denomination]. The session concurs that this is in the best interests of this member to dismiss [him/her] (BD II:B.3.a).

- Transfer to a church of like faith and practice

The clerk is ordered to send a [letter/communication] commending [him/her] to the care of its oversight and to request confirmation when [he/she] has been received onto their roll. Upon receipt of reception from that church (BD II:A.2) the clerk shall remove [him/her] from the roll of the church.

- Transfer to a church of unlike faith and practice.

The clerk is ordered to send a [letter/communication] certifying to [his/her] standing to [Name of Church, location, denomination], and upon being informed that they have joined this church shall remove [his/her] name from the roll of the church.

- b. Disciplinary action [if any] - [record here all judicial actions taken per BD II:B.3.d and/or BD IV-VI]

- c. Visitation

Visitations by elders; [it's a good idea to list all visitations as succinctly as possible].

Elder [last name] reported on a home/phone visit with [full name].

9. Pastoral Report

- a. Pastor's Report
- b. Associate Pastor's Report (if any)
- c. Intern's Report (if any)

10. Committee and Other Reports

Any reports/updates from Church committees or the Deacons.

11. Miscellaneous Business

By unanimous consent, Elder Downs was appointed as commissioner to the Fall stated meeting of the Presbytery of the Southwest.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for [date & time].

13. Adjournment & Prayer

The meeting was adjourned at [time] following prayer led by Elder Fox.

Respectfully submitted

Stephen D. Jones  
Clerk of Session

**F. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES**

**1. SENSITIVE INFORMATION POLICY:**

That the presbytery instruct the Clerk and the Bills and Overtures Committee, that in all communications assigned and received by the Bills and Overtures Committee pertaining to sensitive matters deemed essential for distribution to presbyters, all such communications not be sent to presbyters via electronic mail but be posted on the Presbytery's web site in the password secure link For Church Officers and Presbytery Meeting Documents, and further, that whenever such documents are posted to the website, the clerk notify presbyters via Email of the availability of these documents for printing and reading in preparation for discussion at presbytery meetings to which the documents apply.