

OHIO PRESBYTERY
Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
Presbytery Bylaws

(Amended 10/31/2015)

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PREFACE

Our vision is to glorify God as we grow and multiply Ohio Presbytery by zealously preaching Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23), and engaging in the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout this region. We are committed to function as a:

- *Community* – God has called us to care for one another through worship, prayer, edification, fellowship, and accountability. We are passionate about God-centered worship as a priority in our churches and our Presbytery. We will pro-actively minister to one another and to the churches under our care. We will encourage and invest in the ministries of the men, women, youth and children in the Church.
- *Court* – God has called us to uphold His truth and to maintain high expectations for those who lead His church. We are dedicated to exhibit mutual trust, encouragement and accountability of our committees, our commissions and ourselves. We will exhort our elders to be active participants in Presbytery and to be prepared for our meetings through the wise use of modern technology. We will seek to conduct our activities efficiently while not overlooking consequential matters of theology and church governance, striving to be respectful of the time commitments on our fellow elders.
- *Mission* – God has called us to advance the Gospel of His kingdom to all people through church planting, church revitalization, campus ministry, and mercy ministry. We are dedicated to the forming and nurturing of healthy, growing, and reproducing churches and ministries. We will work with others of like faith and ministry, without compromising the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in order to communicate this Gospel and extend God's Kingdom.

This preface does not have the force of law, but indicate the intent of the framers of these Bylaws.

ARTICLE 1. *Name and Boundaries.*

- 1-1 The name of this Presbytery shall be: "THE OHIO PRESBYTERY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA."
- 1-2 As ratified by the 37th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the geographical boundaries of this Presbytery are: "All of Ohio north and east of and including the counties of Mercer, Shelby, Logan, Union, Madison, Pickaway, Hocking, Vinton, and Meigs, and south and west of but not including the counties of Columbiana, Carroll, Tuscarawas, Guernsey, Noble and Monroe." (Appendix B)

ARTICLE 2. *Doctrinal and Governmental Standards*

- 2-1 The Standards of this Presbytery shall be those of the Constitution of the PCA, "... which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word Of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, together with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church (BCO, Preface III)." These Presbytery Bylaws are not to conflict with the Constitution of the Denomination, but are established to facilitate Presbytery business.

ARTICLE 3. *Meetings*

- 3-1 **Stated Meetings.** This Presbytery shall hold at least three (3) stated meetings per year, with the specific dates and times to be finalized by the Executive Committee.
- 3-2 **Called Meetings.** Called meetings may be held as deemed necessary per BCO 13-12. Requests for Called Meetings must be made in writing to the Stated Clerk or Moderator according to BCO 13-12, and that request must be e-mailed or mailed out at least ten (10) days before the meeting according to the postmark date on the letter or e-mail.
- 3-3 **Time and Place of Meeting.** The place of each Stated Meeting shall be determined by Presbytery one (1) year in advance, or, should Presbytery not make this decision, by the Executive Committee.
- 3-4 **Docket.** A Docket (see Appendix A) shall be prepared by the Executive Committee one (1) week prior to the convening of Presbytery. The following procedure will be used:
1. All committee chairmen will be required to submit a synopsis of the business to be presented to Presbytery, along with an estimate of the amount of time needed to conduct the business. This synopsis should be submitted in writing two (2) weeks prior to the convening of Presbytery. If a committee chairman does not submit this synopsis, his committee report will be docketed at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
 2. The Executive Committee shall agree on a proposed Docket, via e-mail or teleconference, at least one (1) week before the meeting. More important items of business should be placed early in the Docket. Special orders may be used to conduct urgent or weighty business at a specific time. The Docket should include only matters that require action of Presbytery. If ad interim committees are necessary, appointments should be made at the time the Presbytery approves the Docket.
- 3-5 **Attendance.** All Teaching Elders who are members of Presbytery shall be required to attend every Stated Meeting, and all church Sessions shall be represented at each Stated Meeting, unless providentially hindered. Presbytery suggests that Sessions delegate all of their Ruling Elders to attend at least one (1) Stated Meeting per year. When providentially hindered from such attendance, a Teaching Elder or Session shall submit an adequate excuse in writing to Presbytery (e-mail or regular mail), stating his/their reason for non-attendance. Exceptions to these requirements shall be granted automatically to Teaching Elders who have been honorably retired or declared infirm, and to overseas missionaries serving outside the bounds of Presbytery.
- 3-6 **Communications.** The deadline for communications to Presbytery and its committees shall be one (1) month prior to the convening of each Stated Meeting of Presbytery. Exceptions may be made by the Executive Committee.
- 3-7 **The Content of Each Stated Meeting.** Each Stated Meeting of Presbytery shall include a time of worship, typically led by the host Session.
- 3-8 Presbyters are expected to read through and prayerfully consider all materials to be discussed and come prepared to do the business of the Presbytery in an efficient and expeditious manner. Presbyters are expected to bring their own copies of the materials for Presbytery.

ARTICLE 4. *Officers*

- 4-1 **Moderator.** The Moderator must be an elder and shall be elected at the first Stated Meeting of each year to serve for one (1) full year, until his successor is elected. He shall be eligible to be reelected once. He shall preside at all meetings

of Presbytery and perform other duties as assigned by Presbytery and in conformity with the BCO. Presbytery, before its adjournment at the last Stated Meeting of each year, may make a nomination for the office of Moderator. There shall be a rotation on successive years of Ruling and Teaching Elders.

4-2 **Stated Clerk.** The Stated Clerk must be an elder and shall be elected at the last Stated Meeting of each year for a term of three (3) years, and shall be eligible for reelection. He will assume his office January 1 following. He shall receive an annual stipend to be fixed by Presbytery. He shall perform the following duties and any others assigned by Presbytery (and in conformity with the BCO).

1. He shall notify the membership of Presbytery of a meeting four (4) weeks before a Stated Meeting and ten (10) days before a Called Meeting.
2. He shall attend every Stated Meeting or make arrangements for a qualified substitute.
3. He shall have available at each meeting the Constitution of the Denomination, the most recent Assembly Minutes, the most recent *PCA Yearbook*, the Bylaws of Presbytery, past Minutes of Presbytery, and a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order*.
4. He shall chair the Administrative & Stewardship Committee, and shall open Stated or Called Meetings when the Moderator is not available. He shall preside until an acting Moderator may be elected.
5. He shall present to Presbytery all communications, and/or refer them to the appropriate Presbytery committees.
6. He shall advise the Moderator on procedural questions, and serve as Presbytery's Parliamentarian.
7. He shall promptly communicate all special orders of Presbytery, and needed official correspondence.
8. He shall have the Minutes, Proceedings, and Reports as adopted by Presbytery distributed following each Stated and Called Meeting. He shall send out the Minutes, via hardcopy and/or e-mail, no later than forty-five (45) days after each meeting, Stated or Called, and he shall preserve carefully the official copy of the permanent Minutes for annual submission to the General Assembly.
9. He shall keep an accurate roll of Teaching Elders, Churches, Clerks of Session, Church Treasurers, Candidates, and Licentiates of Presbytery.
10. He shall serve as liaison between the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Presbytery.

4-3 **Recording Clerk.** The Recording Clerk must be an elder and shall be elected at the last Stated Meeting of each year to a term of three (3) years, and shall be eligible for reelection. He will assume his office January 1 following. His duties shall be to take a record of the meetings, to prepare a copy of the Minutes and send them to the Stated Clerk for editing, publishing, and distribution within thirty (30) days after each meeting, Stated or Called; and assist the Stated Clerk in his duties at the meetings of Presbytery, as needed.

4-4 **Treasurer.** The Treasurer must be an elder or deacon, and shall be elected at the last Stated Meeting of each year to a term of three (3) years, and shall be eligible for reelection. He will assume his office January 1 following. He shall receive an annual stipend to be fixed by Presbytery. He shall perform the following duties:

1. He shall receive and record all funds contributed to Presbytery, these to include the General Fund from the operational askings of the Presbytery from the churches and Teaching Elders not in the pastorate and any other funds of the Permanent Committees of Presbytery.
2. He shall disburse all designated funds as designated and all undesignated funds under the guidelines set by Presbytery and its annual budget. Committee disbursements must be approved by the respective Committee.
3. He shall give a report and an accounting of these funds at each Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

4. He shall prepare an annual General Fund Budget and receive the committees' annual budgets to be presented at the last Stated Meeting of each year. He shall propose the operational askings of the Presbytery from the churches at the last Stated Meeting of each year.
5. He shall present all his books for auditing annually at the direction of the Administrative & Stewardship Committee.

4-5 **Executive Committee.** For the more efficient functioning of Presbytery between Stated Meetings, an Executive Committee shall work between those meetings, to be composed of the Moderator, the Stated Clerk, the Chairmen of the Permanent Committees and two (2) members of Presbytery elected at the same time as the Moderator, to serve one (1) year with eligibility to be reelected (total of seven (7) elders). This Committee must have at least three (3) Teaching Elders and three (3) Ruling Elders. The responsibilities of this Committee will be the dismissing of Teaching Elders to other presbyteries when no difficulties exist, the coordination of all Presbytery committees and commissions, the appointment of substitute officers and committee members until the next Stated Meeting, and any other matters that Presbytery may ask this Committee to do. A quorum of two (2) Teaching Elders and two (2) Ruling Elders of this Committee is required for it to meet and act. The Moderator will chair the Executive Committee, and the Stated Clerk will report on the actions of this Committee at the earliest practicable time at every Stated Meeting.

4-6 **Nominations and Elections.** All candidates for office in Presbytery will be nominated from the floor at the meeting at which they are to be elected, except that one (1) nominee for Moderator may be made at the last Stated Meeting of each year. Election shall be by majority vote of those present and voting (i.e., only "Yes" and "No" votes will be counted, and Abstains will not be counted).

ARTICLE 5. *Committees and Commissions*

5-1 Permanent Committees.

1. Each Permanent Committee's minimum roster shall consist of an equal number of Teaching and Ruling Elders.
2. Committees shall be elected at the last Stated Meeting of each year for three-year (3-year) terms. Terms shall be equally divided into three (3) classes, so that one third (1/3) of the terms expire each year.
3. Committee members shall be eligible to serve for two (2) terms (a maximum of six (6) years) consecutively and may be reelected for a like period after at least one (1) year off. Committee members' terms of service begin upon the adjournment of the meeting at which they are elected.
4. The committee membership should be representative of the geographical regions of the Presbytery.
5. Campus ministers or church planters are ineligible to serve on the committee that is funding their work.
6. Each committee shall have a Chairman and Secretary. The Chairman shall be responsible for calling and conducting the meetings of the committee, setting its agenda, reporting to Presbytery, and expediting the work of the committee. The Secretary shall be responsible for recording and distributing the Minutes of committee meetings, and for maintaining the records of the committee in conjunction with the Stated Clerk.
7. Each committee Chairman and Secretary shall be elected annually by that particular committee. No one may serve as Chairman or Secretary of more than one (1) Permanent Committee at a time. The term of office for the Chairman and Secretary shall be one (1) year, renewable each year at the discretion of the committee. The exception to this is the Administrative & Stewardship Committee, which is chaired by the Stated Clerk.
8. The quorum for committee meetings shall be at least one-half (1/2) of its members, as long as at least one (1) Teaching Elder and one (1) Ruling Elder are present. Chairmen of each committee may deputize a Teaching Elder and a Ruling Elder to fulfill a quorum for that meeting.
9. These meetings may take place either face-to-face and/or remotely (e.g., telephone or Internet conference). Balloting may be conducted by e-mail or other electronic means outside the committee meeting. Meetings may be held the day before or immediately preceding stated Presbytery meetings in the case where personal interviews

must be conducted and travel to a separate meeting would not be practical. Committee meetings should not be held concurrently while the Presbytery is in session, except under extraordinary conditions by majority vote of the Presbytery.

10. Reports will be given at each Stated Meeting of Presbytery, with Minutes and brief outline of the reports submitted to the Stated Clerk for the permanent records.
11. The Permanent Committees consist of the Administrative & Stewardship, Candidates & Credentials, Pastoral Care, Missions and Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) Committees.

5-2 **Administrative & Stewardship Committee.**

1. This committee shall promote the work of Christian education and nurture throughout Presbytery, including the areas of Sunday School, Christian day schools, leadership training, Christian family education, men's work, women's work, youth works, and camps, as well as continuing education for all elders.
2. This committee shall nominate to Presbytery suitable persons to serve on Presbytery's Permanent Committees (last Stated Meeting of each year), suggest to Presbytery suitable persons for its nominations to the General Assembly's Permanent Committees (first Stated Meeting of each year) and Committees of Commissioners (first Stated Meeting of each year), and present nominations to fill unexpired terms whenever such vacancies occur.
3. This committee shall help prepare the annual budget with the Treasurer and promote stewardship throughout the Presbytery. This committee shall ensure that an audit of the Presbytery's financial records is done annually, and a report of the audit findings shall be presented to the Presbytery.
4. This committee shall be responsible for the miscellaneous details surrounding any given Presbytery meeting, including liaisons with the host church.
5. This committee shall be Presbytery's liaison with the General Assembly's Committees except Mission to North America (MNA) and Mission to the World (MTW), and Reformed University Ministries (RUM).
6. This committee shall be composed of at least (6) members, and will be chaired by the Stated Clerk.

5-3 **Candidates & Credentials Committee.**

1. This committee shall examine candidates for the Gospel ministry seeking to come under the care of Presbytery, candidates seeking licensure, candidates seeking ordination, ministers seeking admission into the Presbytery, and shall recommend the dismissal of all of the above to other presbyteries. It shall function in accord with BCO 16 to 21 and other appropriate sections.
2. It shall also work with the Missions Committee in identifying, recruiting, and nurturing potential pastors for church planting within the bounds of the Presbytery, provide ministerial and theological training seminars, and develop position papers that are acceptable to the Presbytery on issues which are important to the on-going work of the Presbytery. It shall also oversee the Presbytery's Internship Program.
3. Between Presbytery meetings only this committee may grant permission to a Teaching Elder or candidate to move on the field following a preliminary examination.
4. This committee shall be composed of eight (8) members.

5-4 **Pastoral Care Committee.**

1. This committee shall serve as a resource for reconciliation and mediation, and encourage mutual shepherding and mentoring within the Presbytery. This committee shall consult with and advise Sessions of churches without pastors, counsel with churches and Teaching Elders experiencing difficulties, counsel parties to disputes as a judicial function, handle emergency situations between Presbytery meetings, and deal with all related matter.

2. This committee shall serve as a standing judicial committee that advises the Presbytery on proactively handling formal judicial business in a timely manner, following the instructions of Matthew 18 and the BCO.
3. This committee shall oversee the work of Teaching Elders serving outside the bounds of Presbytery, review changes in pastoral calls, and review the reasons for absences from meetings of Presbytery.
4. This committee shall review the Session Minutes and records of organized churches and the appropriate Minutes and records of mission churches. The Committee will prepare a schedule to provide for the regular review of Minutes on an annual basis. Sessions will be required to mail a copy of their records to the Stated Clerk forty-five (45) days prior to the Stated Meeting of Presbytery at which their Minutes are to be reviewed. This copy will be forwarded to the Stated Clerk. This will enable the Minutes to be reviewed carefully prior to the meeting. The committee will present a form for the review of these records and provide a copy of that review form to each Session in Presbytery. When records are reviewed using this form, two (2) copies of the completed review form will be provided to the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk will retain one (1) copy for the Minutes of Presbytery and provide the second copy to the Session for insertion in their Minutes. This committee will also receive responses from Sessions to exceptions of substance, and report those to Presbytery with their recommendation.
5. This committee shall be composed of at least (6) members.

5-5 **Missions Committee.**

1. This committee shall promote a concern for world missions, as well as the work of evangelism and church growth throughout the Presbytery, and recommend to Presbytery any matters that should come before it regarding the home and world mission of the Church.
2. This committee shall support and assist new church plants throughout the Presbytery in whatever form that the Lord sees fit to plant His Church (e.g., mother-daughter churches, tentmakers, church network). It will coordinate efforts between specific churches seeking to plant churches, and recruit and identify potential church planters for the Presbytery in coordination with the Candidates & Credentials Committee. This committee shall also provide supervision of mission churches, and guide them through the process of particularization.
3. This committee shall bring before the Presbytery important MTW concerns, including missionaries with home churches in our Presbytery, potential missionaries to support and to speak at churches, and Presbytery-wide short-term mission trips. It shall assist local churches and missions in recruiting missionary candidates from the congregations within the Presbytery.
4. This committee shall be the Presbytery's liaison with the General Assembly's Committee on Mission to the World (MTW) and Committee on Mission to North America (MNA).
5. This committee shall be composed of at least (6) members.

5-6 **RUF Committee.**

1. This committee shall develop, and present for approval, a strategic plan for campus outreach through Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) within our Presbytery, oversee these ministries by providing oversight and supervision to the campus ministers and campus ministries, and initiate new RUF campus ministries on the campuses within our bounds as the Lord provides.
2. This committee shall be the Presbytery's liaison with General Assembly's Permanent Committee, Reformed University Ministries (RUM).
3. This committee shall be composed of at least (6) members.

5-7 **Ad Interim (Temporary) Committees.** These committees may be appointed by the Moderator to examine, consider and report to Presbytery, as needed (BCO 15-1). Their membership may vary as needed, but should reflect parity between Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders.

5-8 **Special Commissions.** Commissions may be appointed, as needed, according to BCO 15-1 through 15-3. When Presbytery establishes a commission to ordain and/or install a pastor, or to examine officer candidates, and/or to organize a church, the quorum shall be set at two (2) Teaching Elders and two (2) Ruling Elders. In the event that a commission is unable to meet this quorum from its elected membership due to extenuating circumstances, it may utilize any available Ruling or Teaching Elder in good standing in the Presbytery to satisfy this requirement. This irregularity shall be recorded in the commission report.

ARTICLE 6. *Expenses of the Presbytery*

6-1 Funds for the current expenses of Presbytery shall be provided by an operational asking from each congregation and each Teaching Elder not in the PCA pastorate, in the amount to be determined annually by the Presbytery at the last Stated Meeting of each year upon the recommendation of the Administrative & Stewardship Committee. The asking is to be based on a church's membership in the latest *PCA Yearbook*.

6-2 Disbursements from this fund are authorized for the following:

1. The stipends and expenses of the Stated Clerk and Treasurer.
2. Expenses of members of Presbytery's committees and commissions.
3. Any other disbursements authorized by specific action of Presbytery.

6-3 The Missions Committee is authorized to have its own Treasury, to be disbursed and kept by the Presbytery Treasurer. Other committees may have their own Treasuries as they are authorized by Presbytery action, and these are to be disbursed and kept by the Presbytery Treasurer.

ARTICLE 7. *Presbytery Position on Properties of Congregations*

This Presbytery forever declares that it does not have nor will ever have an interest in or claim on the real property and the personal property of the constituent congregations. Such properties will forever remain within the control, management, and ownership of the membership of that congregation. Presbytery through its officers shall never claim the right to determine who is the congregation in matters regarding property.

ARTICLE 8. *Men Laboring Outside the Ecclesiastical Bounds of Presbytery.*

8-1 The Teaching Elder shall provide to the Credentials Committee a paper which explains the ministry he seeks to engage in, his reasons for laboring outside of this Presbytery's ecclesiastical boundaries, and his commitment to the principles of Presbyterianism. The Teaching Elder shall also provide as much documentation as the Candidates & Credentials Committee may require to determine the legitimacy and viability of the ministry, which would include such things as bylaws, articles of incorporation, list of directors, and any affiliations of that organization with other organizations (either as affiliates or associates).

8-2 The Teaching Elder shall provide a written statement signed by the appropriate and authorized agent of the ministry acknowledging the ministry's realization that the Teaching Elder's credentials are held by this Presbytery, and he is subject to the Constitution of the PCA and the Bylaws of this Presbytery. The statement should also include a commitment by the ministry to resolve conflicts with the Teaching Elder following the guidelines in the PCA BCO as appropriately adapted to a non-PCA setting. This may include asking the ministry to commit in principle to designate this Presbytery as the court of jurisdiction in resolving issues concerning the Teaching Elder. State laws requiring non-profit organizations and/or incorporations to specify arbitration agents should be satisfied by naming this Presbytery with reference to Teaching Elder-related matters.

8-3 The Teaching Elder shall provide evidence that either he or the ministry has obtained professional liability insurance to cover him in his official duties at said ministry, or an appropriate notarized waiver of some form should this expectation violate the conscience of either the minister or the ministry. In any event, this Presbytery shall obtain liability insurance to protect herself from any problems that might arise in connection with her indirect involvement with this particular ministry.

- 8-4 The Teaching Elder shall provide updated information with his annual report and request to renew his permission to labor out of bounds so as to keep the Presbytery current on matters documented in 8-1 – 8-3 above.
- 8-5 Presbytery realizes circumstances will vary, but commits to strive to maintain a level of consistency in the expectations and requirements placed on ministries who desire to have one of our Teaching Elders serve in their midst.
- 8-6 Presbytery shall provide to ministries with which we are indirectly involved by virtue of having a Teaching Elder in their midst a copy of the “Peacemaker’s Pledge” as a guideline concerning conflict resolution (Appendix C).

ARTICLE 9. *Parliamentary Procedure*

- 9-1 It is the responsibility of the Moderator to preside over meetings equitably and efficiently, protecting the privileges of parliamentary minorities while refusing to allow the meeting to become mired in minutiae of procedural rules. Likewise, it is the responsibility of all commissioners to exercise proper humility and deference to one another, remembering their ordination vows to submit to one another in the Lord.
- 9-2 All parliamentary procedures shall be in accordance with the provisions of the BCO and these Bylaws. The Stated Clerk shall serve as Parliamentarian, and in his absence, a commissioner of Presbytery may be appointed by the Moderator to assist him in these matters, who shall serve only for the term of the actual meeting in which he is appointed. It is the intention of Presbytery that meetings be conducted according to generally-accepted procedures of parliamentary bodies found in *Robert’s Rules of Order*.
- 9-3 Discussion and debate of any main motion shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. This time may be extended by majority vote for a period of no more than fifteen (15) additional minutes at a time.

ARTICLE 10. *Suspension and Amendment*

- 10-1 Requirements within these Bylaws may be temporarily suspended, amended, or revised for a period not exceeding one year at any Stated Meeting of Presbytery by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting, except for Articles 1, 2, 7 and 10 or if such suspension, amendment, or revision would be in violation of any part of the BCO.
- 10-2 Permanent amendments, the repealing of a Bylaw, or the adoption of an additional Bylaw, to be valid, must be proposed in writing at a Stated Meeting, approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote of that meeting, and ratified by another two-thirds (2/3) vote at the next Stated Meeting of Presbytery. Article 1 can be changed only by action of the General Assembly; Articles 2 and Article 7 are unamendable.
- 10-3 “Those present and voting”, as described in this Article, means that only “Yes” and “No” votes will be counted, and abstains will not be counted.

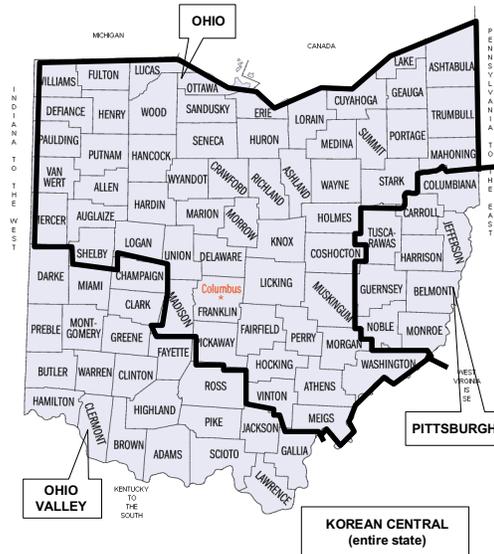
APPENDIX A. *Sample Docket for Stated Meetings*

- 01. Worship, Constituting Prayer, and Seasons of Prayer
- 02. Formation of the Roll
- 03. Election of the Moderator (last Stated Meeting of each year)
- 04. Reading and Approval of Previous Minutes
- 05. Presentation and Adoption of the Docket
- 06. Introduction of Visiting Brethren
- 07. Appointment of Ad Interim Committees (if needed)
- 08. Reports of Commissions and/or Ad Interim Committees
- 09. Report of the Executive Committee (as needed)
- 10. Report of the Stated Clerk
- 11. Reports of the Permanent Committees
- 12. Reports of the Churches
- 13. Miscellaneous Business
- 14. Set Place and Time of the Next Meeting
- 15. Adjournment with Prayer

NOTES:

1. Church reports (optional) will be channeled through the Administrative & Stewardship Committee.
2. The Executive Committee may rearrange the necessary committees and order of business in the above Docket.

APPENDIX B. *Presbytery Boundaries*



APPENDIX C. *Peacemaker's Pledge (Adapted from The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict. © 1997 by Ken Sande)*

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.¹ We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.² Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.³

Get the log out of your own eye — Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.⁴

Gently Restore — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.⁵

Go and be reconciled — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.⁶

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.⁷

- 1 Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26; Matt. 5:9.
- 2 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Rom. 8:28-29; James 1:2-4.
- 3 1 Cor. 10:31; James 4:1-3; Psalm 37:1-6; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:12; John 14:15; James 3:17-18; Rom. 12:17-21; Mark 11:25.
- 4 Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13; Col. 3:5-14; Luke 19:8.
- 5 Matt. 18:15-20; James 5:9; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8.
- 6 Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4.
- 7 Matt. 25:14-21; 1 Peter 2:19, 4:19; Rom. 12:18; John 13:34-35.

APPENDIX D. *Comments to the Bylaws*

The comments below do not have the force of law, but indicate the intent of the framers of these Bylaws.

Section 3-1: The following meeting months (January/February, April after Easter, June and October) are suggested, not fixed, times. This section may be amended in the future to have specific meeting times, after more experience is gained on meeting times agreeable to all parties.

Section 3-3: The presbytery should hold some of its meetings where there is no PCA presence to reinforce the importance of planting PCA churches in these areas.

Section 3-5: Involvement in Presbytery is part of the elder's ordination vows, and attendance at these Presbytery meetings should be a priority for the elder. Communication of adequate excuses for non-attendance to Presbytery will provide an opportunity for prayer and follow-up to the particular individual, Session or congregation.

Section 3-7: The elements of Presbytery worship should follow the prescriptions in WCF, Chapter 21 (Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day) and the Directory of Worship in the PCA BCO.

Section 3-8: Presbyters should utilize modern technology to keep unnecessary costs down.

Section 5-2.1: Continuing education for all elders can include matters pertaining to theology, pastoral ministry, cultural trends and the Church's engagement/response to those trends, and be presented through seminars, teleconferences, or as a docket item during Presbytery meetings.