

New Form of Government Checklist, Explanations, and Resources  
 For Congregations and Sessions  
 Presbytery of St. Andrew  
 September 12, 2011

<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
CHECKLISTS FOR SESSIONS AND CONGREGATIONS	2
EXPLANATIONS FOR CONGREGATION'S NFOG ITEMS	3
EXPLANATIONS FOR SESSIONS NFOG ITEMS	4
RESOURCES, EXAMPLES, AND ON-LINE HELPS FOR SESSIONS & CONGREGATIONS	6
Example 1 A Checklist for Developing A Manual of Operations	6
Example 2 A More Detail Method for Developing A Manual	8
Example of A Congregation's Corporate Bylaws	11
Some Additional Resources Available on Request	14

## CHECKLISTS FOR SESSIONS AND CONGREGATIONS

### Congregations

- Determine quorum for congregational meetings (G-1.0501)*
- Determine the period of minimum notice for a congregational meeting (G-1.0502)*
- Determine whether to adopt Robert's Rules as parliamentary authority.*
- Determine the size and composition of the congregational nominating committee (G-2.0401)*

### Sessions

- Determine the quorum for session meetings (G-3.0203)*
- Whether to keep a list of inactive members (G-1.04)*
- How to prepare people for active membership (G-1.0402)*
- How to examine those elected as deacons, ruling elders (G-2.0104b)*
- What term the session clerk will serve (G-3.0104)*
- Develop an administrative manual of operations, and a policies/processes for sexual misconduct and financial review (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205)*
- Obtain property and liability insurance coverage (G-3.0112)*
- Develop a provision for participation in the work of presbytery (G-3.0202b)*

## EXPLANATIONS FOR CONGREGATION'S NFOG ITEMS

The following are matters that should be determined by the congregation, *if they are not already determined in your bylaws*. In normal practice, such matters would come to the congregation upon recommendation from the session, but they can be initiated simply by motion from the floor. The session should include in the call for the congregational meeting the matters about which congregational decisions are needed.

- ❖ *Determine quorum for congregational meetings (G-1.0501)*. This passage gives congregations the right to determine for themselves what the quorum for a congregational meeting will be. I would recommend the adoption of the previous *Book of Order* standard of not less than one-tenth of the active membership, and in no case less than three members.
- ❖ *Determine the period of minimum notice for a congregational meeting (G-1.0502)*. This passage gives a congregation the right to determine what the required minimum notice for any congregational meeting. The previous standard has been at least ten days, to include two Sundays, and that the announcement would be made both in writing and from the pulpit. Whether that continues to be a realistic standard is a matter for each congregation to consider.
- ❖ *Determine whether to adopt Robert's Rules as parliamentary authority*. The new *Book of Order*, unlike the previous version, does not mandate that congregational meetings must be conducted with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (RRONR) as the parliamentary authority. Of course, the basic form of *Robert's* is virtually second nature to our meeting style, and many will wonder whether there is any other way. It may therefore be wise simply to enact a simple provision in the congregation's minutes that, barring suspension of the rules, RRONR will be the parliamentary authority in meetings of the congregation.
- ❖ *Determine the size and composition of the congregational nominating committee (G-2.0401)*. The new *Book of Order* provides greater freedom to a congregation to compose its congregational nominating committee. The basic standard of the new G-2.0401 is that the CNC will be composed of no less than three active members of the congregation, at least one of whom must be a ruling elder in active service on the session. The pastor of the congregation serves as a member *ex officio*, without vote. Congregations may wish to be more specific than this basic standard, creating a larger committee or specifying other groups within the congregation's life from which one or more members are drawn. If a congregation wishes to be specific that a majority of the CNC membership must *not* be in active service on the session, it should indicate that, as well.

## EXPLANATION FOR SESSION'S NFOG ITEMS

There are also several items about which sessions should make procedural decisions. Some of these may already be in session manuals of operation or in the records of the session. I have listed all that I could determine here so that, in the event that your session has not thought about a matter, the list might serve as a stimulus to do so.

❖ *Determine the quorum for session meetings (G-3.0203).* Under the previous *Book of Order*, the session could set its own quorum, provided that it was no less than the pastor (or other presiding officer) and one-third of the ruling elders, but not less than two ruling elders. The exception was that for meetings to receive new members the quorum was the moderator and two members of session. The new language states that the session determines its own quorum, but requires that the quorum include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of the membership of the session. The session may, if it wishes, determine a higher quorum.

❖ *Whether to keep a list of inactive members (G-1.04).* The new *Book of Order* no longer requires that the session maintain a roll of inactive members. For some sessions, the inactive member roll has served a pastoral function, reminding the session of members who are no longer active but are still of concern to the congregation. It is perfectly permissible to maintain a list of such persons, if that is the session's desire. On the other hand, sessions may wish to go through the inactive roll and either remove the names of persons who have ceased to be active altogether, or restore some to active status. Bear in mind that any person restored to active status is a person for whom the session is responsible to pay a *per capita* apportionment.

❖ *How to prepare people for active membership (G-1.0402).* This is not a new responsibility, but the new emphasis in the *Book of Order* on membership as a covenant between God, the member, and the congregation provides an opportunity to revisit the way sessions prepare new members for their obligations as members. Please look at the responsibilities for membership listed in G-1.0304, and consider how to encourage both new and continuing members to take these responsibilities with greater seriousness and zeal.

❖ *How to examine those elected as deacons, ruling elders (G-2.0104b).* Again, the responsibility of sessions to examine those elected is not new. What is new is the standard of G-2.0104b, approved this year to replace the old "fidelity and chastity" language. However you may feel about the change, it is clear that the change reemphasizes the obligation on the session to do a careful and prayerful job of examining those whom the congregation elects to be deacons and ruling elders. At minimum, such examinations should cover the gifts, skills, and suitability to the responsibilities of the ministry of deacon or ruling elder, and it should assess whether the candidate is likely able to live out the commitments made in giving affirmative answers to the ordination/installation questions in W-4.4003. In making this decision, sessions are to be guided by Scripture and the confessions. Sessions may wish to draft a set of basic exam questions they will routinely pose as "discussion starters" for candidate examinations.

❖ *What term the session clerk will serve (G-3.0104).* The session should determine, if it has not already done so, what term the session clerk will serve. Neither the previous nor the new *Book of Order* mandate a specific term for the clerk, but both leave the matter to the session's discretion. Practice varies, but most clerks serve terms of one, two, or three years.

❖ *Develop an administrative manual of operations, and a policies/processes for sexual misconduct and financial review (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205).* This is a new requirement for sessions, although many congregations have had by laws and administrative manuals for years. If your session has such a manual, there is no need to change

it unless you determine that you wish to do so. If your session does not have an administrative manual, it should begin the work of creating one. The presbytery office is in the process of creating a sample manual that might be used as a starting point. There is also a bylaws template and list of matters to be addressed in an administrative manual available at [www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment](http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment). (See list of helps below for Manuals)

Also new this year is the requirement that every congregation have a sexual misconduct policy. Again, many of our congregations already have one. For those that do not, creating one as part of the creation of an administrative manual may make sense. The presbytery office is also creating a sample policy for use in creating your own.

Financial review is not a new requirement, having been part of our *Book of Order* for many years. The requirements of the new *Book of Order* are not different from the previous requirements. However, if your session has not created a process for handling money and reviewing the congregation's finances, this would be a good time to do so. (Review budget procedures G-3.0205; Full financial review G-3.0113)

- ❖ *Obtain property and liability insurance coverage (G-3.0112)*. Again, not a new requirement.

**RESOURCES, EXAMPLES, AND ON-LINE HELPS  
FOR SESSIONS & CONGREGATIONS**

**EXAMPLE ONE OF TWO  
FOR DEVELOPING A SESSION'S  
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS**

**A Checklist**

**(Copy of Appendix T from the Companion to the Constitution)**

In the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly, a manual of administrative operation is required (G-3.0106). Such a manual is desirable for your church (Chapter 12). Below is a partial listing of materials to include in the manual.

*(1) Originating Documents*

- (a) organizing covenant,
- (b) list of charter members,
- (c) articles of incorporation,
- (d) bylaws,
- (e) mission statement.

*(2) Nominating, Electing, and Ordaining/Installing*

- (a) description of the work of the church officer nominating committee,
- (b) elements in the examination by the session of those elected,
- (c) procedure on the day for ordination/installation.

*(3) Membership*

- (a) procedures for contact and invitation for membership,
- (b) procedures for removing names from the roll.

*(4) Committees and Organizations*

- (a) job description of the work of each committee and organization,
- (b) description of annual sequence of the work required for each committee and organization,
- (c) time, place, and frequency of meetings of each committee and organization,
- (d) expectations of persons serving on committees and organizations.

*(5) Contact with the Presbytery*

- (a) description of the procedure and report from the triennial visit,
- (b) catalogue of resource library,
- (c) directory of committee membership,
- (d) list of presbytery commissioners,
- (e) form to nominate persons to serve on presbytery committees.

*(6) Personnel*

- (a) position description for each church staff position—paid or volunteer,
- (b) personnel policies,
- (c) forms used in hiring, including disclosure forms for prior charges or conviction in sexual misconduct and sexual abuse,

(d) description of performance review and compensation review procedure.

(7) *Finances*

- (a) church budget,
- (b) description of procedure for stewardship and pledging,
- (c) procedures for counting the offering.

(8) *Calendar*

church calendar of events during the year.

(9) *Annual Meeting*

description of preparation for the annual meeting with copy of last meeting.

(10) *Worship and Sacraments*

- (a) instructions for ushers,
- (b) instructions for greeters,
- (c) instructions for those serving communion,
- (d) instructions for those preparing communion,
- (e) procedure for elder assisting in baptism

**EXAMPLE TWO OF TWO  
FOR DEVELOPING A SESSION'S MANUAL  
FOR ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS**

Organized in more detail with NFOG citations in 3 Parts

1. Incorporation 2. Organization of the Congregation 3. Sexual Misconduct Policy)

*G-3.0106 Administration of Mission: Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council.*

**1. INCORPORATION**

a. Is the congregation incorporated?

*G-4.0102 Where permitted by civil law, each congregation **shall** cause a corporation to be formed and maintained.*

b. Do the Articles of Incorporation and Corporate Bylaws specify that the congregation is part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and governed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (A sample of Bylaws is listed below)

c. Do the Articles of Incorporation and Corporate Bylaws specify Corporate and Ecclesiastical business may be conducted as part of the same meeting?

*G-1.0503 Business Proper to Congregational Meetings-- Whenever permitted by civil law, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting.*

d. Do the Articles of Incorporation and Corporate Bylaws specify whether the session or a separate board shall serve as the Trustees of the Corporation?

*G-4.0102 The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees.*

e. Do the Corporate Bylaws specify:

i. An annual meeting of the Congregation/Corporation? *G-1.05 thru G-1.0505*

ii. How special meetings may be called?

iii. A quorum for meetings?

iv. How much notice must be given in advance of a Congregational/Corporate meeting?

v. Meetings are to be conducted in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised?

*G-3.0105*

## 2. ORGANIZATION OF THE CONGREGATION

- a. Membership Categories
  - i. Baptized (G-1.0401)
  - ii. Active (G-1.0402)
  - iii. Affiliate (G-1.0403)
  - iv. Inactive In the new form of government there are no inactive members. What do you do with those currently on your inactive roll? Continue with an inactive roll? Delete them from all membership rolls? Place them back on the active roll? What criteria do you use to make the determination of who is inactive or who should be deleted?
  
- b. Nominating Committee *(G-2.0401 Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session.*
  - i. How big is the committee?
  - ii. How is the committee nominated?
  - iii. Other criteria for composition of the committee?
  
- c. Insuring fair representation and diversity *(F-1.0403 & G-2.0401)*
  
- d. Session
  - i. How many ruling elders on Session
  - ii. Quorum *G-3.0203 Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.*
  - iii. When are ruling elders elected
  - iv. When are ruling elders ordained/installed
  - v. One term or re-electable for a second term
  - vi. Who will serve as Clerk *(G-3.0104) The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine.*
    1. A ruling elder in active service
    2. A ruling elder not in active service
    3. Length of term of service
  - vii. How often does the Session meet?
  - viii. What is considered as “reasonable notice” for a special meeting of the Session?
  - ix. Commissioner to Presbytery *G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils It is of particular importance that sessions: a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports*
    1. How is it decided who goes?
    2. How are reports presented?

e. Deacons *G-2.0202 A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.*

i. Will there be a board of deacons?

1. When elected?
2. When ordained/installed?
3. How many deacons?

ii. Individually commissioned

iii. Session fulfill duties?

f. Finances

i. Treasurer *G-3.0205 The session shall elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide and shall supervise his or her work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees.*

1. When is treasurer elected?
2. What is the length of term?
3. Re-electable?
4. Who will supervise (session, trustees, deacons)?

ii. Budget

1. Who prepares it?
2. When is it presented to Session for adoption?
3. When is the Congregation informed about it?

iii. Audit/Financial Review *G-3.0113 A full financial review of all financial books and records shall be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures.*

1. Who will do the financial review?
  - a. Committee
  - b. Professionally done
2. When will it be done?
3. Reporting of finances of all organizations to the Session
  - a. When?
  - b. Format?

### 3. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

**Our Presbytery is in the process of developing a policy but for more assistance:**

**Link to the PCUSA GAMC site with Reasons & Helps for Sessions in developing a Sexual Misconduct Policy**

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/sexualmisconduct/create-policies/>

**See Suggested Components In Child Safety Policy from Pres of Detroit  
(Copy available in Word Format)**

## EXAMPLE OF A CONGREGATION'S CORPORATE BYLAWS

### (Appendix S From the Companion to the Constitution)

#### Sample Bylaws of the Particular Church

**(Revise, adapt, edit, and change as needed  
in consultation with the presbytery if needed)**

#### I. Statement of Purpose or Mission

The Presbyterian Church of \_\_\_\_\_ has been called by God and organized to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, to minister to the needs of members of the congregation and residents of the community, and to promote peace and justice in the world.

#### II. Relation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church is a member church of the Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ in the Synod of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

#### III. Governance of the Church

This church shall be governed in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Consistent with that *Constitution*, these bylaws shall provide specific guidance for this church. *Roberts Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

#### IV. Meetings of the Church

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation on the \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday in January, at which at least the following business shall be presented:

annual reports from organizations and the session (information only),  
financial report for the preceding year,  
budget for the current year (information only),  
changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s),  
nominating committee report for church officers (G-1.0501),  
electing members to serve on the nominating committee.

Special meetings may be called by the session. Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of such special meetings, and business shall be restricted to that which is specified in the call. (G-1.0501)

#### V. Notice of Meetings

Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given, including notice given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting. *Own rule of minimum notification specified.* (G-1.0502)

#### VI. Moderator

The pastor shall moderate the meetings. If there are co-pastors, they shall alternately preside at meetings. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator appointed by the presbytery shall preside. If it is impractical for the pastor or the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery to preside, he or she shall invite, with the concurrence of the session, another minister of the presbytery to preside. When

this is not expedient, and when both the pastor or the moderator concur, a member of the session may be invited to preside. (G-1.0504)

### **VII. Secretary**

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary. If the clerk is not present or is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary.

### **VIII Minutes of the Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting recorded by the secretary shall be attested by the moderator and the secretary, recorded in the minute book of the session. (G-1.0505)

### **IX. Quorum for the Meeting**

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and \_\_\_\_\_ members, but under no circumstances shall it be fewer than \_\_\_\_\_ of the active members of the congregation.

Consistent with the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_, a quorum shall be \_\_\_\_\_ active members on corporate matters. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present. All active members of the congregation present at either annual or special meetings are entitled to vote. (G-1.0501.

Consistent with the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_, voting is restricted to active members age \_\_\_\_\_ or above. Voting by proxy is not allowed. Consistent with the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Churches in applicable states would fill in.)

### **X. Incorporation**

In accordance with the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_, the congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed. Consistent with the laws of this state, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of the congregation. (G-1.0503).

(Note: There will be variations from state to state on provisions for incorporation. Since the pastor or moderator is not a member of the corporation, consistent with Article VI, a member of the session shall be invited to moderate the meeting when corporate matters appear on the agenda. The elders serving on the session shall serve at the same time as trustees.)

### **XI. Nominating Committee (See G-2.0401)**

The congregation shall form a nominating committee in the following manner:

(congregation will need to determine process for election of a nominating committee)

(1) There shall be \_\_\_\_\_ active members on the nominating committee.(at least three)

(2) One of the members shall be ruling elder who is currently serving on the session.

(3) The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote.

(4) Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation.

(5) A majority of all active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

## **XII. Elders**

The congregation shall elect \_\_\_\_\_ elders divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term. No elder shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. An elder having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the session for a period of at least one year.

The session, at its first meeting following the annual meeting, shall elect an elder to serve as clerk and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work. At that same meeting of the session, the session shall annually elect a treasurer. A quorum for the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders.

## **XIII. Deacons**

The congregation shall elect \_\_\_\_\_ deacons divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term. No deacon shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the board of deacons for a period of at least one year.

The board of deacons, at its first meeting following the annual meeting, shall elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work.

The pastor shall be an advisory member of the board of deacons.

A quorum for the board of deacons shall be one third of the members, including the moderator.

## **XIV. Vacancies**

Vacancies on the session or the board of deacons may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting, as the session may determine.

## **XV. Amendments**

These bylaws may be amended subject to the Articles of Incorporation, the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_ and the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* by a two-thirds vote of the voters present, providing that the proposed changes in printed form shall have been distributed at the same time as the call of the meeting at which the changes are voted upon.

## SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN PDF FORMAT

Comparison Chart with Old BOO crossed reference with New BOO

Comparison Chart with New BOO crossed reference with Old BOO

A 3 Page Chart of the NFOG Changes in 3 columns

New Book of Order Reference    Content of the Reference    What is the change?

Advisory Handbook Chart with NFOG list of Policies and Procedures Required for Sessions  
(which is *not* in the new Book of Order)

Revised for NFOG Checklist for Session Minutes & Registers by the Upper Ohio Pby

Internal Audit Guidelines & Full Financial Review by Los Ranchos Presbytery (prior to NFOG)

2007 Version of the Companion to the Consitution with a very helpful set of Appendices  
(Not necessarily related to the NFOG)

Appendix A: Model for Planning

Appendix B: Articles of Incorporation

Appendix C: Sample Review by Church Member of His or Her Membership

Appendix D: Recognition Certificate for Volunteers

Appendix E: Suggestions for Working with Volunteers

Appendix F: Questions Concerning Volunteers in the Church

Appendix G: Sample Position Description

Appendix H: Life Together in the Community of Faith: Standards of Ethical Conduct for  
Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Appendix I: Guidelines for Discussions Regarding the Manse with Ministers and  
Congregations of Presbytery

Appendix J: Model Policy for Presbytery Manse Loan Fund

Appendix K: Possible Committees of the Session

Appendix L: Hints on Preparing for and Conducting a Meeting

Appendix M: Suggestions for Personnel Policy for Local Church

Appendix N: Sample Agenda for Stated Session Meeting

Appendix O: Sample Agenda for Board of Deacons Meeting

Appendix P: A Suggestion for Session Minutes

Appendix Q: Records for the Session to Keep

Appendix R: Sample Corporate Bylaws

Appendix S: Manual of Administrative Operation

Appendix T: A Formula of Agreement

Appendix U: General Assembly Council Mission Goals