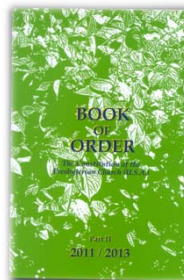


The Revised Form of Government

An Introduction for Congregations

Clerk Training
August 20, 2011
Presbytery of Detroit



(Adapted from a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the
Office of the General Assembly)

On Line Resources

PowerPoint Presentation

<http://oga.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/fog101.ppt>

Downloadable

nFog <http://oga.pcusa.org/constitution.htm>

The oFoG

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/previous-form-government-transitional-manuals/>

Advice for councils handbooks

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/advisory-handbook-councils/>

On Line Resources (cont'd)

Frequently asked questions

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/frequently-asked-questions-new-form-government/>

Sample bylaws

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/sample-bylaws-congregations/>

To purchase hard copies of the nFoG

<http://store.pcusa.org/Communications?search=book+of+order>

Caveat!

How something like this is learned.

Digging Postholes

OVERVIEW:

- **The intent of the nFoG is essentially 2-fold:**
 - **To help the church be more *missional*.**

***Missional* is defined as**

The Church is called into being as a community of witness and participation in God's work of transformation

It is not the church that sends others in mission; we are ourselves sent by God into the contexts where God places us

The congregation is the basic unit of mission in the Church and has all the gifts of the Gospel necessary to be the Church

- **To make the church less *regulatory***
 - **The oFoG was understood as regulatory. (e.g., the traditional *judicatories* became "*governing bodies*" in the oFoG.)**

The two intentions are accomplished in several ways:

- **Presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly are all directed to provide support *downward*. (Mid councils no longer have a specific mandate as "mission centers")**
- **The oFoG mandated structures in presbyteries and synods were deleted. (But not the responsibilities or powers)**

A change of mindset

Can we learn to approach our polity not as a set of rules but as a description of our common life?

Can we change the pattern of creating a rule to address every uncertainty, and learn to apply the broad principles of our polity with creativity and flexibility?

oFoG

CHAPTER I Preliminary Principles

CHAPTER II The Church and Its Confessions

CHAPTER III The Church and Its Mission

CHAPTER IV The Church and Its Unity

CHAPTER V The Church and Its Members

CHAPTER VI The Church and Its Officers

CHAPTER VII The Particular Church

CHAPTER VIII The Church and Its Property

CHAPTER IX Governing Bodies

CHAPTER X The Session

CHAPTER XI The Presbytery

CHAPTER XII The Synod

CHAPTER XIII The General Assembly

CHAPTER XIV Ordination, Certification, and Commissioning

CHAPTER XV Relationships

CHAPTER XVI Union Churches

CHAPTER XVII Union Governing Bodies

CHAPTER XVIII Amendments

nFoG

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PRESBYTERIAN POLITY

Chapter One: The Mission of the Church

Chapter Two: The Church and Its Confessions

Chapter Three: Principles of Order and Government

THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Chapter One: Congregations and Their Membership

Chapter Two: Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification

Chapter Three: Councils of the Church

Chapter Four: The Church and Civil Authority

Chapter Five: Ecumenicity and Union

Chapter Six: Interpreting and Amending the Constitution

The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

- Chapter One - The Mission of the Church
- Chapter Two - The Church and Its Confessions
- Chapter Three - Principles of Order and Government

Contents of the New Material

The Mission of the Church

- F-1.01 God's mission
- F-1.02 Lordship of Christ
- F-1.03 The Calling of the Church
 - Church as the Body of Christ
 - Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic
 - Church called to proclaim the Word, administer the Sacraments, nurture the community of disciples through ecclesiastical discipline
 - Great ends of the Church
- F-1.04 Openness to the Spirit

Contents of the New Material

The Church and its Confessions

- Mostly the contents of Chapter II in 2009/2011 Book of Order on the Confessions
- Two additions:
 - Reflection on the confessions as attempts to articulate the truths of the gospel imperiled by their times
 - *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* (“the Church reformed, always being reformed according to God’s word”)

Contents of the New Material

Principles of Order and Government

- F-3.01 - Historic Principles Of Church Order (1789)
- F-3.02 - Principles of Presbyterian Government (1797)
- F-3.03 - The Nature of Foundational Statements
- F-3.04 - Contents of the Constitution

Contents of the New Material

The Form of Government

- One: The Congregation and Its Members (former concerns of chapters 5 and 7)
- Two: Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification (formerly chapters 6 and 14)
- Three: The Councils of the Church (formerly chapters 9-13)
- Four: The Church and Civil Authority (formerly chapter 8)
- Five: Ecumenicity and Church Union (formerly chapters 15-17)
- Six: Interpreting and Amending the Constitution (formerly chapter 18)

Contents of the New Material

1. The Congregation and Its Members

- G-1.0101 - Mission of the Congregation
- G-1.0301 - The Meaning of Membership
- G-1.04 - Categories of Membership
 - No “Inactive Member” category
- G-1.05 - Congregational Meetings

Contents of the New Material

2. Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, & Certification

Contents of the New Material

- Ordered Ministry - replaces “office”
 - Deacons: The Ministry of Compassion and Service
 - Ruling Elder: The Ministry of Discernment and Governance
 - Teaching Elder: The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament
- G-2.0104b = new language of Amendment 10-A, adopted by presbyteries in 2011
- Preparation for Ministry (G-2.06)
- Ordination (G-2.07)
- Ruling Elders Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service (G-2.10)
- Certified Church Service (G-2.11)

3. Councils of the Church

Contents of the New Material

- “Councils” rather than “governing bodies” - the church’s name for the gathering of its leadership to make theological decisions
- **Work of Councils organized around Reformed Notes: proclamation, sacraments, covenant community**
- Mandates functions, not structures
- 219th GA restored the requirement that councils have a “committee on representation” but did not list a required membership

4. The Church and Civil Authority

- Most of the contents of G-8.0000 in 2009/2011 Book of Order are here.
- G-4.0203 = “Property trust clause” of 2009/2011 Book of Order G-8.0201
- Moved language about mandatory reporting from G-6.0000 in 2009/2011 Book to G-4.03 in 2011/2013 Book

Contents of the New Material

5. Ecumenicity and Church Union

- Definitions of
 - “Correspondence” (G-5.0201)
 - “Full Communion” (G-5.0202)
 - “Ecumenical Statements” (G-5.0203)
- Joint Congregational Witness (G-5.03)
- Union councils (G-5.04)
- Joint congregational witness with other churches (G-5.05) - replaces “union” and “federated”

Contents of the New Material

6. Interpreting and Amending the Constitution

Contents of the New Material

- G-6.02 - Advisory Committee on the Constitution (moved from G-13.0112 in the 2009/2011 Book of Order)
- Process for amending Book of Confessions and Book of Order remains the same

Decisions Congregations Need to Make

Decisions to Make

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

Decisions Sessions Need to Make

Decisions to Make

- **Whether to keep a list of inactive members (G-1.04)**
- How will you prepare people for active membership? (G-1.0402)
- How will you examine those elected as deacons and ruling elders? (G-2.0104b)
- What term will the session clerk serve? (G-3.0104)
- **Develop a manual of operations, including a sexual misconduct policy and a process for financial review. (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205)**
- Obtain property and liability coverage (G-3.0112)
- **Determine the quorum for session meetings. (G-3.0203)**

WARNING! Michigan State Law seems to require the congregation to set the quorum for a session meeting.

All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy. (2011 General Assembly)

nFoG G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church

....

Councils of the church exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ. They do so as they

Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard, responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and inviting all people to participate in that new creation;

Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received, welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ, bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection, anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurture a covenant community of disciples of Christ, living in the strength of God's promise, and giving itself in service to God's mission.

nG-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

....

oFoG G-10.0000 THE SESSION

G-10.0101 Membership

The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service.
 a. All members of the session, including the pastor, copastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote.

G-10.0102 Responsibilities

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.

It therefore has the responsibility and power

- a. to provide opportunities for evangelism . . . ;
- b. to receive members into the church . . . ;
- c. to lead the congregation in participation in the mission . . . ;
- d. to provide for the worship of the people of God . . . ;
- e. to provide for the growth of its members and for their equipment for ministry . . . ;
- f. to develop and supervise the church school and the educational program . . . ;
- g. to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation . . . ;
- h. to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship . . . ;

oFoG G-10.0000 THE SESSION

G-10.0102 Responsibilities

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.

It therefore has the responsibility and power

. . . .

- i. to establish the annual budget, . . . ;
- j. to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God;
- k. to engage in a process for education and mutual growth. . . ;
- l. to instruct, examine, ordain, install, and welcome into common ministry elders and deacons . . . ;
- m. to delegate and to supervise the work of . . . deacons . . . trustees and all other organizations . . . ;
- n. to provide for the administration of the program of the church, . . . ;
- o. to provide for the management of the property of the church, . . . ;

oFoG G-10.0000 THE SESSION
G-10.0102 Responsibilities

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.

It therefore has the responsibility and power

- p. to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the higher governing bodies of the church, including
- (1) electing commissioners to presbytery and receiving their reports; . . . ;
 - (2) nominating to presbytery elders who may be considered for election to synod or General Assembly;
 - (3) . . . , implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure fair representation . . . ;
 - (4) observing and carrying out the instructions of the higher governing bodies . . . ;
 - (5) welcoming representatives of the presbytery . . . ;
 - (6) proposing to the presbytery . . . such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;
 - (7) sending annually to the stated clerk of the presbytery statistical and other information
- q. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships . . . ;
- r. to serve in judicial matters . . . ;
- s. to keep an accurate roll of the

nFoG G-3.02 THE SESSION

nFoG G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities

. . . .

The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:

a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include providing a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture; providing for regular preaching of the Word by a teaching elder or other person prepared and approved for the work; planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship; planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.

b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.* This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at least quarterly and the administration of Baptism as appropriate, in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship; and exercising pastoral care among the congregation; in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.

This responsibility shall include receiving and dismissing members; reviewing the roll of active members at least annually and counseling with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership; providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship; training, examining, ordaining, and installing those elected by the congregation as ruling elders and deacons; encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in 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;
- b. nominate to presbytery** ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);
- c. see that the guidance and communication** of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. welcome representatives** of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- e. propose to the presbytery**, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- f. send to presbytery and General Assembly** requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

Postholes.

About Manuals of Administrative Operations

Always been a requirement for presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly.

New requirement for congregations.

No requirements for what it should contain. (See attached suggestions from the OGA.)

Note that most of the *Questions or options to Consider* column do nothing but reiterate statements already required in the Form of Government, most of which should be reflected in the minutes.

Some suggestions:

- Session creates a document called ____ Church Manual of Administrative Operations.
- Include in it:
 - The Bylaws
 - Any policies you already have. (Note that under Robert's Rules, a "policy" is essentially any act of session with continuing effect.)
 - Policies of your various committees that you wish to require of the committees. (Note that when you do this, Session is requiring the committees to follow those policies to the letter.)
 - If you do not have a sexual misconduct policy, create one. Include the sexual misconduct policy in the manual.

Advisory Handbook for Councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures as required by the Form of Government¹

<u>Policies and Procedures Guide for Sessions</u>	Page 1
Policies and Procedures Guide for Presbyteries	Page 4
Policies and Procedures Guide for Synods	Page 7
Policies and Procedures Guide for the General Assembly	Page 9

Policies and Procedures Guide for the Work of the Session

The congregation is the church engaged in the mission of God in its particular context. Through the congregation God's people carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, and living in covenant life with God and each other. In the life of the congregation, individual believers are equipped for the ministry of witness to the love and grace of God in and for the world. The congregation reaches out to people, communities, and the world to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to gather for worship, to offer care and nurture to God's children, to speak for social justice and righteousness, to bear witness to the truth and to the reign of God that is coming into the world. (G-1.0101)

The session is the council for the congregation and has responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session is charged to keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303), and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304). (G-3.0201)

Councils within our denomination are mutually interconnected. Each council has an expansive range of unique responsibilities; however, the life and ministry of each council is subject to review by the next higher council (G-3.0108). In this review, certain constitutional requirements must be addressed. What follows is a listing of those areas in which a presbytery is required to or justified in reviewing the work of the session of a congregation. The purpose of this review is for mutual awareness of and encouragement in mission. The value of review is in shared knowledge rather than meticulous compliance.

The proposed Form of Government requires that "each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council" (G-3.0106). The following list does not intend to be exhaustive of all actions that might now be included in a session's Manual of Administrative Operations. It does seek to identify those instances in the proposed Form of Government where specific policies or rules are required. In every case, a session should ask whether any existing policies of the session meet the expectations of a particular provision.

¹ Commended to the councils of the church by the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

ADVISORY HANDBOOK FOR COUNCILS

Reference	Constitutional Provision	Questions or Options to Consider
F-1.01 G-1.0101	Each congregation is charged to “carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, and living in covenant life with God and each other.”	Does the session give evidence of a defined mission and do its programs reflect the defined mission?
G-2.03 G-2.04 G-2.05 G-3.02	Nurturing the faith of members & seeing to the proper preparation of persons for ordered ministry.	Has the session sought out members to be encouraged to consider their call to the ordered ministries of ruling elder, teaching elder, and deacon and recommended and supported those who undertake this process?
G-3.0201	Session is directed to an expansive list of responsibilities.	Are routine responsibilities carried out by the session? Is there evidence of energy, intelligence and imagination in the work of the session?
G-1.0303 G-1.0304 G-1.0404 G-4.0101 G-4.0102	Members are to be trained, received, and nurtured.	What opportunities are given for members to be received? Is there a regular program of member nurture after joining the congregation?
G-3.0112 G-3.0113 G-3.0205 G-4.0101 G-4.0102	Certain corporate and financial practices and safeguards are defined for each congregation and session.	Is the congregation incorporated? Do the minutes of the session and congregation give evidence of adequate insurance? Are financial reports regularly presented, annually reviewed or audited? Has the session prepared and approved a budget?
G-1.0303 G-3.0201b W-2.3011– .3014 W-2.4012	The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are acts of the whole church and authorized by a council.	Is there a program of preparation for Baptism offered to parents and unbaptized adults? Are regular observances of the Lord’s Supper authorized? Are special observances reported?
G-3.0107 G-3.0204	Proper and adequate records.	Is there evidence of minutes maintained and reviewed regularly? Is there evidence that membership rolls are current and justly managed?
G-1.05	The congregation holds meetings.	Is an annual meeting held? Has required business been dealt with? Are special meetings appropriately called, reported, minutes approved?
G-1.0502	Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the session, by the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one fourth of the active members on the roll of the congregation. Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given. Congregations shall provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting.	Has the congregation decided on what adequate notice will be for their meetings?

ADVISORY HANDBOOK FOR COUNCILS

Reference	Constitutional Provision	Questions or Options to Consider
F-1.0403 G-3.0103	Each council shall develop procedures and mechanisms for promoting and reviewing its implementation of the church's commitment to inclusiveness and representation.	<u>Has the session developed such procedures and mechanisms?</u>
F-1.0403 G-3.0103 G-3.0104 G-2.0401	Elections in the congregation are to be fair, just, and inclusive.	Is a nominating process in place that represents the diversity of the congregation and is made up of a majority not currently in active service as ruling elders or deacons? Is evidence given of the concerns for diversity being addressed?
G-2.0402 G-2.0403 G-2.0601	Preparing and examining candidates for ordered ministry and ordaining or installing them.	Has the session prepared and examined those elected by the congregation? Are there criteria to assess their fitness for office? Was a service of ordination/installation held prior to the beginning of their service? Has the session examined those seeking to become teaching elders, approved the covenant relationship with them, and commended them to presbytery for preparation?
G-2.0404	Ruling elders and deacons serve for specific terms.	Are ruling elders and deacons grouped in classes and do terms meet constitutional standards?
G-3.0105 G-3.0106 G-3.0203	Meetings conducted decently and in order.	Are dockets prepared and material made available for discussion? Is some form of procedure agreed to and followed? Do meetings include opportunity for spiritual reflection and prayer? Has the session approved a quorum for session meeting?
G-3.0106	Manual of administrative operations.	<u>What policies have been developed and approved by the session for the routine administration of the congregation's life?</u>
G-3.0106	Consultative mission strategy.	Has the presbytery initiated discussions with the session as to mutually beneficial mission activities?
G-3.0106 G-3.0202	Participation in the work of presbytery.	Are representatives of the session in attendance as commissioners at meetings of the presbytery? Are reports of meetings given to the session? Is responsible financial support of the mission of the larger church a part of the session's work? Are any directives from the presbytery properly recorded?
G-3.0109	The work of commissions.	Did the session appoint any commissions? Were the directives specific and clear? Were all actions reported back to the session?