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**P-3 ON COMPLEX AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES:**

Whenever Presbytery is considering a complex or controversial issue, steps must be taken to provide a safe, relaxed arena in which information is clear, all opinions are heard, and commissioners feel, at the conclusion of business, that the process was fair and equitable. In situations where it is known that a sizable minority opinion on an issue exists, decision-making

by which a 51% majority prevails may lead to escalated conflict and ill feeling. Therefore, to improve the decision-making process, the presbytery will seek to do the following:

1. Distribute to all congregations and continuing members of Presbytery all business which is to come before the Presbytery as early as possible to provide adequate time for study, private deliberation and discovery prior to consideration at a stated meeting of Presbytery.
2. In preparing the docket for business at a stated meeting of Presbytery, the coordinating cabinet shall provide sufficient time for expected debate on those items which the cabinet considers controversial or complex. However, it is not the responsibility of the Cabinet to announce to commissioners that the issue is controversial or complex.
3. Any Presbyterian entity may advise the coordinating cabinet that it believes the item they are presenting should be docketed as a controversial or complex item of business.
4. In the situations of #2 and #3, the Coordinating Cabinet could also docket time in which it recommends that the Presbytery adjourn to a committee of the whole. During that time the body may engage in such spiritual discernment practices as scripture study, prayer, small group discussion, all for the purpose of seeking a common ground. Following the committee of the whole process, then the Presbytery may proceed to a debate and vote on the issue.
5. An item of business may also be deemed complex or controversial if a commissioner moves at the beginning of debate or during the debate that the item be considered complex or controversial and if the motion is supported and passed by majority vote. Unless there is a motion to table or postpone action on the item, the debate may continue, but the item shall be treated as a first reading with final debate and vote at the next meeting of the Presbytery. The Coordinating Cabinet would then prepare the docket as noted in #s 1 and 4.
6. At any time during debate on an issue before the Presbytery a commissioner or the moderator may call for a time of prayer, a recess, or an adjustment of the docket moving the item to a point later in the meeting. This may provide a time for feelings to calm down, for perspective to return, and for the credibility and acceptability of the final decision when it is reached.
7. Whenever a complex or controversial issue has been decided by the Presbytery, it is incumbent on its officers to communicate and interpret the action to the Sessions of the congregations in the Presbytery and other interested parties.
8. At all times the members of Presbytery shall be encouraged to know and utilize the document, "Seeking to be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement." Adopted by the 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

***Seeking to be Faithful Together:***

***Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement***

*In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will...*

<p><i>Give them a hearing... listen before we answer</i></p> <p><i>John 7:51 and Proverbs 18:13</i></p>	<p><b>P</b>     <b><i>Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ;</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange,</i></li> <li>• <i>we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>2</b>     <b><i>Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.</i></b></p> <p><b>3</b>     <b><i>State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.</i></b></p>
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<p><i>Speak the truth in love</i> <i>Ephesians 4:15</i></p>	<p><b>4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teachings.</b></p> <p><b>5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we will not engage in name-calling or 20abeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.</li> </ul> <p><b>6 Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.</b></p>
<p><i>Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace</i> <i>Ephesians 4:3</i></p>	<p><b>7 Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.</b></p> <p><b>8 Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.</li> </ul> <p><b>9 Follow these additional guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;</li> <li>• seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;</li> <li>• be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;</li> <li>• abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.</li> </ul> <p><b>10 Include our disagreement in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.</b></p>

Adopted by the 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for use by sessions and congregations

*As Presbyterians, we are called to work for the "peace, unity and purity of the Church" (Book of Order) as we seek to be faithful to God's work in the world. However, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as we try to be faithful. They exist within committees, congregations, presbyteries, synods, at General Assemblies and in the national life of the denomination.*

*Conflicts are inevitable in all of life and certainly in the church. The history of the church is filled with conflicts and disagreements. Several of Paul's letters address the conflicts which were common in the early church. There have been and are going to be disagreements as Christian attempt to discern God's work in the world and as we interpret scripture.*

*Conflicts can be harmful and even destructive. They can cause individuals a great deal of pain and the community of faith immeasurable damage. Congregations have been divided; denominations have experienced schisms.*

*At the same time, conflicts can be an opportunity for new insights, learning, and individual and corporate growth. Disagreements can illuminate a topic in helpful ways and can present solutions to problems which previously had not been seen. The successful resolution of conflict can also bind people together in a powerful way.*

*The Bible contains many stories of conflict and disagreement and much advice about how they can be*

*addressed. As those stories indicate, God is already present wherever there is brokenness, granting wholeness and peace. God promises to be with us in times of disagreement and calls us to reconciliation, trust, love and forgiveness.*

*We realize that our perspectives are limited, so to help us affirm each other, enhance our community, stay open to the viewpoints of others and be sensitive to cultural diversity, we commit ourselves to the Guidelines in a spirit of prayer, trust, and love, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

*Adopted by the 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

*Approved 2/28/06*

#### **P-4 EQUALIZATION OF ELDERS**

The Book of Order requires the Stated Clerk annually to ascertain the members of Presbytery who are active in the life of the Presbytery in order to determine the appropriate number of commissioners that the churches should be sending. The intention is to ensure that the number of teaching elders and elders is equal. G-11.0101

The Book of Order specifies certain representation according to the size of the church. G-11.0101a. It further states that if additional commissioners are needed to bring the representation to equal numbers, a Presbytery may select its own for granting additional commissioners. Those churches that have racial-ethnic minorities as a majority of their membership shall be given priority in assigning additional commissioners.

To equalize the number, the Stated Clerk shall count the number of active teaching elders as those on the active roll who are resident in the area, plus those on the retired roll who are active in the life of Presbytery, measured by counting those retired teaching elders who are on a Presbytery committee, who have a position of some kind in a local congregation, or who attended a meeting last year.

#### **P-5 RESIGNATIONS FROM PRESBYTERY COMMITTEES**

Resignations from Presbytery positions shall be presented in writing to the units involved who may accept them. The units shall report their action to the Committee on Nominations.

#### **P-6 ABSENCES FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Committees of Presbytery having members absent for three consecutive meetings without acceptable reason may declare the position vacant and refer the vacancy to the Committee on Nominations.

#### **P-7. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS COLLECTED AS OFFERING DURING AN INSTALLATION OR ORDINATION SERVICE.**

Funds collected during an afternoon or evening service shall be transmitted to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for the Theological Education Fund. Funds collected during a regular Sunday worship shall be distributed as follows: pledged funds to the church where the service is held, loose offering to the Committee on Candidates.

The Committee of Preparation of Ministry (“CPM”) invites all persons under the care of the Presbytery of Detroit (“PoD”) to apply for a Financial Assistance Scholarship if an