

Principles of Order for Congregations Without a Manual of Operations

Whereas the New Form of Government in the PCUSA *Book of Order* went into full force and effect on July 10, 2011, requiring all sessions to adopt a local Manual of Operations detailing various standards and procedures;

Whereas the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina took action at the June 16, 2011 meeting allowing that the standards of the *2009/2011 Book of Order* would continue to apply until a session and congregation adopted their local Manual of Operations up through December 21, 2011.

Whereas *Book of Order* G-3.0106 *Administration of Mission states*, "Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council."

Whereas the Presbytery provided sample Manuals for congregations to edit and adopt;

Whereas it has been discovered that numerous churches in the Presbytery have not yet adopted a local *Manual of Administrative Operations*;

Be it resolved that from this date forward any session or congregation under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina lacking an approved¹ *Manual of Operations* that the following standards shall be in full force and effect except that if a session and/or congregation has properly adopted and approved other provisions for the particular items covered in this policy and which are in keeping with the *Book of Order* then those provisions will supersede these Universal Policies.

1. Congregational meetings:
 - a. for routine business and the annual meeting the congregational meeting shall be announced one Sunday in advance of the meeting stating the time and purpose of the meeting. (Annual meeting, election of nominating committee, election of officers, etc.) Special meetings of the Congregation may be called in accord with *Book of Order* G-1.05.
 - b. For election of a Pastor or Associate Pastor the notice shall be a minimum of 10 days including two (2) Sundays.
 - c. For encumbering the property (loans) or selling property the notice shall be a minimum of 10 days including two (2) Sundays.
 - d. Each year the Congregation shall hold at least one congregational meeting. The business at that meeting may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Financial report for the preceding year
 - Budget for the current year adopted by the Session (for information only)

¹ "Approved" in this instance means approved by the session and/or the congregation as appropriate.

- Any proposed changes in the terms of call for the pastor (s) in accord with *Book of Order G-2.0804*
 - Nominating committee report for church officers and their election
 - Election of members to serve on the current year's nominating committee
 - Review of reports from the pastor (s), the Session, and all church organizations (for information only)
 - See G-1.0503 for the business that is appropriate for a congregational meeting.
- e. The quorum for Congregational meetings shall be the moderator and at least ten percent (10%) of its active members and in no case fewer than five members. {2009-2011 *Book of Order G-7.0305*}
- f. Neither absentee ballots nor voting by proxy shall be permitted in any meetings. (a *Robert's Rules of Order* principle)
2. Schedule of and Proper Notice for a Session meeting:
- a. Session shall meet at least quarterly for stated meetings. Meetings shall be moderated by the duly appointed (COM approved) Presbyterian moderator.
 - b. Called meetings of Session may be held for a stated purpose, if requested by two elders or the moderator. The Clerk shall notify all active elders and the moderator giving at least 48 hours notice. Special meetings may be called in accord with *Book of Order G-3.0203*.
 - c. Called meetings to receive new members may be held at any time by gathering together 3 elders and the Moderator. A report shall be made to all elders.
 - d. The quorum for Session meetings shall be the moderator and a majority of elders in active service on the Session.
 - e. Neither absentee ballots nor voting by proxy shall be permitted in any meetings. (a *Robert's Rules of Order* principle)

3. Finances

- a. See these sections of the *Book of Order G-3.0113 Finances*

“Each council shall prepare and adopt a budget to support the church’s mission within its area. 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. Reviewers should not be related to the treasurer(s). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.”

And *G-3.0205 Finances*

“In addition to those responsibilities described in G-3.0113, the session shall prepare and adopt a budget and determine the distribution of the congregation’s benevolences. It shall authorize offerings for Christian purposes and shall account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement. It shall provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters.

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. Those in charge of various congregational funds shall report at least annually to the session and more often as requested. Sessions may provide by rule for standard financial practices of the congregation, but shall in no case fail to observe the following procedures:

- a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;
 - b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions shall be kept and shall be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;
 - c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities shall be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.”
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- b. It is the responsibility of the session to prepare and adopt a budget to support the congregation’s mission, and determine the distribution of the congregation’s benevolences. This includes authorizing offerings and accounting for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursements, providing full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters. (G-3.0205: a, b, c)
 - c. The treasurer(s) shall be elected annually by the session.
 - d. The session shall review the authorized signatures on all accounts at least annually.
 - e. The full session, or a committee of not less than three persons appointed by the session, shall review the financial records of the church not less than annually. If a committee is appointed the treasurer(s) shall not be part of the review committee. A report of the review shall be made to the full session.
 - f. The financial records are the property of the church and shall be presented to the session at least annually or when requested by the session.
 - g. The session shall oversee all entities in the church receiving or disbursing funds in the life of the church that are not separately incorporated. For example: Presbyterian Women, Sunday School Class Funds, Cemetery Accounts, Preschool, Youth funds, Assistance funds, etc.
 - h. Accounts can be opened in the name of the church or its entities only with the express permission of the session.

4. Composition of the Session

- a. The minimum number of elders for any congregation is three (3). If less than three elders are serving (due to death, resignation, inability to serve or any other reason) the Presbytery must be notified immediately.
- b. The congregation shall set or adjust the number of elders only at a properly called congregational meeting.
- c. Elders are to serve in classes of equal or near equal numbers for terms of three years renewable for a second term. Maximum of 6 consecutive years in active service, a one year break is required before returning to active service. A congregation may request a waiver from the 6 year rotation requirement by asking Presbytery for such a waiver.
- d. Newly elected elders shall be ordained or installed according to W-4.4000 to W-4.4004 in a regular service of worship. This requirement applies to officers being elected to serve a second term or returning onto the session.
- e. The Clerk of Session shall be elected annually by the session. The Clerk may be elected from the roll of active an inactive elders. If the clerk is an inactive elder then the clerk shall only maintain records and shall not vote on items before the session. (See the duties of Clerk found in *G-3.0107 Records* and in the index please look up "Clerk")

5. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accord with BOOK OF ORDER G-2.0401, the Congregation shall form a nominating committee in the following manner:

- a. There shall be a minimum of 3 members.
- b. One of the members shall be an elder designated by the Session currently serving on the Session, and who shall serve as chair of the committee.
- c. A majority of the members, who are not elders currently on the Session or deacons currently in service, shall be nominated by the nominating committee and elected at a meeting of the Congregation. Nominations from the floor are always in order.
- d. Members of the nominating committee shall be elected annually, and no one shall serve more than three years consecutively.
- e. The pastor (or moderator of the Session) shall be a member ex-officio, but without vote.
- f. The committee will ordinarily bring to a meeting of the Congregation nominations only for the number of positions to be filled, but if more nominations than positions to be filled are desired, or if there are additional nominations from the floor, election should be by secret ballot.
- g. The floor shall be open for additional nominations at the congregational meeting.
- h. Elections in the Congregation shall be fair, just and inclusive in accord with *Book of Order* F-1.0403, and G-3.0103, 3.0104 and 2.0401.

[End of Policies]

Recommended by COM to Presbytery

DATE: September 4, 2014

Adopted by Presbytery on
Posted to Website on
Mailed to all Clerks on

DATE: _____
DATE: _____
DATE: _____

Note Well:

- Upon adoption of these policies the Presbytery will post this document with these end notes on their website www.presbycc.org and mail a copy to all clerks of sessions.
 - The sessions are hereby reminded to comply with the Book of Order *G-3.0106 Administration of Mission*, that states, "All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy."
 - The Presbytery expects active elders in the local congregations to act in good faith according to these policies and is, therefore, not liable for the failure of a session to comply with these standards.
 - Churches are strongly encouraged to adopt their own Manual of Administrative Operations. The presbytery staff and the COM members are willing to help as needed or requested.
6. Presbytery hereby STRONGLY commends to each session to adopt these additional policies and record such action in their minutes:
- a. Upon employment, the session shall conduct background checks on all persons working with children and youth up to age 18. The session shall appoint two persons to review the background check confidentially.
 - b. All volunteers traveling on overnight trips with minors shall have background checks reviewed every 4 years.
 - c. A copy of the adopted sexual misconduct policy shall be distributed annually to all employees, all pastors and all volunteers working with minors.