

**Bills and Overtures Committee of the Presbytery Council
Presbytery of St. Augustine
2017 Spring Stated Meeting**

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Background: The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries, for their affirmative or negative votes, proposed changes in the language of the Book of Order that, if approved, will amend the Constitution. The Bills and Overtures Committee of our Presbytery Council met to review the amendments and make recommendations for our presbytery's consideration. The 2017-19 Book of Order will include the amendments that are approved by a majority of the presbyteries.

Recommendations: The committee met to review the proposed amendments and invited our 2016 General Assembly Commissioners to attend. During that meeting, the committee prepared a recommendation regarding each proposed amendment. Each amendment is listed below with its recommendation and a brief explanation. In addition, it would be beneficial to review the background material in the document entitled "Proposed Amendments to the Book of Order" and the information provided by the Association of Stated Clerks. These materials are included with the docket/revised docket.

**16-A. Child and Youth Protection Policy
On amending G-3.0106 (Item 05-09)**

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 of the Form of Government be amended as follows?
[Text to be inserted is shown as italic.] "All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child *and youth* protection policy."

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The amendment makes certain that the protections of a sexual misconduct policy are extended to our youth.

**16-B. Parity in Committees
On Amending G-3.0109 (Item 06-05)**

Shall the second paragraph of G-3.0109 of the Form of Government be amended as follows?
[Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

"A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council. It shall make a full report to the council that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by that body. Committees of councils higher than the session shall consist of both teaching elders and members of congregations, ~~with at least one half being members of congregations~~ *in numbers as nearly equal as possible.*"

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The amendment maintains the requirement of parity but allows a bit more flexibility.

16-C. Ordered Ministry Titles (Item 06-08, Recommendations 1 through 8)

16-C.1. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

On Amending F-3.0202 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 1)

“This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders (*also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament*). Ruling elders are so named not because they ‘lord it over’ the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and ~~measure~~ *guide* in its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. ~~Teaching elders~~ *Ministers of the Word and Sacrament* shall be committed in all their work to *teaching the faith in word and in deed* and equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The title “minister” is a more common and preferred term and serves well in all situations (including ecumenical and secular contexts). The title “teaching elder” is still confusing to many.

16-C.2. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

On Amending G-2.0102 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 2)

Shall the third paragraph of G-2.0102 be amended as follows?

[Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.] “Ordination to the ministry of ~~teaching elder, ruling elder, or~~ *deacon, ruling elder, or minister of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder)* is unique to that order of ministry.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

16-C.3. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

On Amending G-2.0301 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 3)

Shall G-2.0301 be amended follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God’s Spirit and governance of God’s people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they ‘lord it over’ the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with ~~teaching elders~~ *ministers of the Word and Sacrament*, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as ~~teaching elders~~ *ministers of the Word and Sacrament*, and they are eligible for any office.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

**16-C.4. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.05 and G-2.0501 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 4)**

Shall G-2.05 and G-2.0501 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strikethrough; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-2.05 ~~Teaching Elders~~ *Ministers of the Word and Sacrament*: The Ministry of ~~the Word and Sacrament~~ *Teaching and Pastoral Care*:

“G-2.0501 ~~Teaching Elder~~ *Minister of the Word and Sacrament* Defined

“~~Teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament)~~ *Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders and pastors)* shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith in word and deed and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). They may serve in a variety of ministries as authorized by the presbytery. When they serve as preachers and teachers of the Word, they shall preach and teach the faith of the church, so that the people are shaped by the pattern of the gospel and strengthened for witness and service. When they serve at font and table, they shall interpret *and ‘show forth’* the mysteries of grace ~~and lift in word and action, lifting~~ the people’s vision toward the hope of God’s new creation. When they serve as pastors, they shall support the people in the disciplines of the faith amid the struggles of daily life. When they serve as presbyters, they shall participate in the responsibilities of governance, seeking always to discern the mind of Christ and to build up Christ’s body through devotion, debate, and decision.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

**16-C.5. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0701 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 5)**

Shall G-2.0701 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Ordination to the ordered ministry of ~~teaching elder~~ *minister of Word and Sacrament* is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

**16-C.6. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastors
On Amending G-3.0307 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 6)**

Shall the second paragraph of G-3.0307 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to ~~Teaching Elders~~ *Its Pastors* and Congregations

“Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.

“Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to ~~teaching elders~~ its pastors, *both ministers of Word and Sacrament* and ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (*also called commissioned pastors (also known as commissioned ruling elders)*), as well as the and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, ~~teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service,~~ *pastors* and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above. Also the other terms for commissioned ruling elder provide more flexibility.

**16-C.7. Minister of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastor
On Amending the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline (Item 06-08,
Recommendation 7)**

Shall the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline be amended so that the terms “ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service” or “ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service” and “teaching elder” shall be replaced with its former terms, *“commissioned pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder)” or “minister” or “minister of Word and Sacrament”, respectively?*

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

**16-C.8. Minister of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending W-4.4001a. (Item 06-08, Recommendation 8)**

Shall W-4.4001a. be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. In ordination the church sets apart with prayer and the laying on of hands those who have been called through election by the church to serve as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders. (W-2.1005) In installation the church sets apart with prayer those previously ordained as deacons, ruling elders, and ~~teaching elders~~ *ministers of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders)*, and called anew to service in that ministry.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. See comment above.

16-D. Relationship to the PC(USA) of a Person Who Has Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church (Item 06-10, Recommendations 1 and 2)

16-D.1. On Amending G-2.0509 (Item 06-10, Recommendation 1)

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-2.0509 be amended as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Whenever a former teaching elder has renounced jurisdiction in the midst of a disciplinary proceeding as the accused, that former teaching elder shall not be permitted to perform any work, paid or volunteer, in any congregation or entity under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) unless and until the person rejoins the church, comes forward and resubmits to the disciplinary process.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. This change modifies the current provision to allow a means of reconciliation and restoration.

16-D.2. On Amending D-10.0401 (Item 06-10, Recommendation 2)

Shall D-10.0401 be amended by adding new section “d.” to read as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic]

“d. For instances where a former teaching elder comes forward in self-accusation to undergo a disciplinary process to regain permission to perform work under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (G-2.0509), no time limit from the time of the commission of the alleged offense to the filing of charges shall apply. Charges based on all accusations that had been made by the time that the former teaching elder had renounced jurisdiction may be brought regardless of the date on which any such offense is alleged to have occurred.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. This clarifies that the statute of limitations for disciplinary action will not have a time limit when a former teaching elder comes forward to self-accuse in order to regain permission to perform work under the jurisdiction of the PC(USA).

16-E. Certified Service Requirements On Amending G-2.1101 (Item 06-15)

Shall G-2.1101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements ~~in a handbook provided by~~ of a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The change is positive because a certifying body (such as for Certified Christian Educators) doesn't always have a "handbook" *per se*.

**16-F. The Ministry of Members
On Amending G-1.0304 (Item 09-11)**

Shall G-1.0304 be amended as follows? [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

"G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members "Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes:

"proclaiming the good news in word and deed,

"taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,

"lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,

"studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,

"supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,

"demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,

"responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,

"living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,

"working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,

"caring for God's creation,

"participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and

"reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful."

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. Care of creation is an appropriate aspect of the ministry of church members.

16-G. Access to the Lord's Table

On Amending W-2.4011a. and b. (Item 14-03)

Shall W-2.4011a. and b. be amended by striking the current text and inserting new text to read as follows? [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Theology of the Lord’s Supper

“a. The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. All who come to the table are offered the bread and cup, regardless of their age or understanding. If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation to baptismal preparation and Baptism should be graciously extended.

“Worshippers prepare themselves to celebrate the Lord’s Supper by putting their trust in Christ, confessing their sin, and seeking reconciliation with God and one another. Even those who doubt may come to the table in order to be assured of God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ.

“Welcoming to the Table

“b. In cases where baptized children who have not yet begun to participate in the Lord’s Supper express a desire to receive the Sacrament, the session should provide an occasion to welcome them to the table in public worship. Their introduction to the Lord’s Supper should include ongoing instruction or formation in the meaning and mystery of the Sacraments.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The amendment allows sharing in the Lord’s Supper before baptism, but it also provides that an invitation to baptismal preparation and baptism should be graciously extended. The amendment provides for a welcoming table and is similar to the practice already followed in many churches.

16-H. Directory for Worship

On Replacing the Current Directory for Worship (Item 14-04)

Shall the Book of Order be amended by striking out the text of Chapters I through VII of the current Directory for Worship and inserting new text to read as follows? [Text to be inserted is shown below.]

Note: this is a complete replacement. The text is contained in the document provided with the docket that is entitled: “Proposed Amendments to the Book of Order.”

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the presbytery vote in the affirmative. The proposed directory is shorter, well-written, and better organized.