

SAMPLE

MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

Session of _____ Presbyterian Church, _____, MS

Adopted/Revised, _____, 20__

I. Originating Documents

[Include in this section the church's organizing covenant and a list of charter members, if known, as well as the Articles of Incorporation and the congregation's current bylaws including the dates of their adoption or latest revision.]

II. Governance

As a council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Session of _____ Presbyterian Church (Session) is governed by the current edition of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and in accordance with that constitution its parliamentary authority is the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (*Book of Order*, G-3.0105).

III. Members

The membership of the session is determined by the congregation. The number of ruling elders in active service, their terms of service, and the manner of their nomination and election are defined in the congregation's bylaws.

IV. Officers

A. Moderator:

In accordance with G-1.0504 of the *Book of Order*, the installed pastor of the church is the moderator of the session. When the church is without an installed pastor, the presbytery provides a moderator. Rules governing a presiding officer when the installed or appointed moderator is unable to preside are contained in G-1.0504 and G-3.0201 of the *Book of Order*. Installed pastors are full members of the session with voice and vote (G-3.0201). Invited or appointed moderators have voice but not vote.

B. Clerk

The session elects its own clerk, who shall be a ruling elder and who may be an elder in active service on the session. The clerk is elected for a term of _____ year [*years*] or until a successor is elected, and may [*may not*] be elected to serve additional successive terms. The clerk's duties, which include maintaining the church's rolls and registers and taking minutes at all meetings of the session and congregation, are contained in the *Book of Order*. When the clerk is not present at a meeting of the session, the session shall elect another ruling elder to serve as clerk for that meeting.

C. Treasurer

The session elects a Treasurer for a term of _____ year [*years*] or until a successor is elected, who may [*may not*] be elected to serve additional successive terms. The Treasurer's duties are contained in G-3.0205 of the *Book of Order*.

V. Meetings

The session meets monthly [*weekly, quarterly*] for stated meetings, at a time and place which is agreed upon by the session. Members of the congregation may attend meetings of the session as visitors, without voice or vote. Voice may be granted to visitors by a majority vote of the session, and the session may also vote at any time and for any reason by a majority to go into executive session. Special meetings may be called by the moderator with adequate notice to members, and the moderator shall call a meeting when requested in writing by the presbytery or by any two members of the session (G-3.0203).

A quorum for meetings of the session is a majority of its voting members, except when the only business to be conducted is the reception or dismissal of members, in which case the quorum is a moderator and at least two additional ruling elders.

Meetings of the session and its committees and other entities may be held electronically so long as the technology utilized permits simultaneous aural communication (such as a conference call).

VI. Authority and Responsibilities

In accordance with F-3.0209 of the *Book of Order*, "the jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries." The session's authority and responsibilities are those specifically defined in *Book of Order* section G-3.02.

VII. Committees

At its first meeting after the installation of new ruling elders, the session assigns its members to serve as moderators of various committees. Committee moderators are responsible for recruiting members to serve on their committees and bringing those recommendations to the session for

approval. The session may create special committees to accomplish specific tasks. The following standing committees are to be maintained by the session:

A. Worship

The Worship committee oversees the congregation's worship life as described in the *Book of Order*, and specifically in the Directory for Worship. It is responsible for the hiring and supervision of musicians and for those aspects of worship planning designated as sessional responsibilities in W-1.4004 of the *Book of Order*.

B. Finance

The Finance committee develops an annual budget for adoption by the session, and oversees the church treasurer in his/her work. The committee is responsible for collecting, counting, and depositing weekly offerings. It is also responsible for ensuring an annual financial review is conducted in accordance with G-3.0113 of the *Book of Order*.

C. Christian Education

The Christian Education committee is responsible for all aspects of the church's weekly Sunday School program and an annual Vacation Bible School, and for presenting all educational curricula as well as teachers and other leaders for these programs to the session for its approval. The committee may also recommend other educational classes or events through the year. The Christian Education committee is responsible preparing individuals for reception as active members in accordance with G-1.0402 of the *Book of Order*, and for preparing those elected to ordered ministry for their examinations in accordance with G-2.0402 of the *Book of Order*.

D. Membership and Nurture

The Membership and Nurture committee is responsible for church suppers and other church-wide events, in cooperation with the Presbyterian Women. It is also responsible for ensuring that a program of member visitation is implemented, and that attention is given to members with special needs (including meals delivered to individuals and families at times of illness or bereavement). The committee conducts an annual review of the church's membership rolls, and makes recommendations related to those rolls in accordance with G-3.0201c of the *Book of Order*.

E. Property and Grounds

The Property and Grounds committee is responsible for all aspects of the maintenance and upkeep of the church's property and grounds. It may recommend to the session occasional work days, and it oversees anyone who is hired or contracted to carry out maintenance, upkeep, or repairs.

The committee will obtain bids from at least three entities for any repair, renovation, or maintenance project in excess of \$250, and will obtain the session's approval for any expenditure of over \$250 other than usual utility bills.

The committee is responsible for ensuring that property and liability insurance coverage is maintained and reviewed annually in accordance with G-3.0112 of the *Book of Order*.

F. Outreach

The Outreach committee is responsible for maintaining an active program of Christian service opportunities for church members that includes local, national, and international mission projects. It is responsible for publicizing the denominational offerings approved by the session, as well as mission projects of the Presbytery of St. Andrew, the Synod of Living Waters, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

VIII. Amendments

This Manual of Administrative Operations is automatically updated by any relevant changes to the *Book of Order*. Other amendments (to articles other than I – III, VI) may be made by majority vote of the session with previous notice, or by a two-thirds vote at any meeting.

IX. Policies

A. Sexual Misconduct Policy

This congregation opposes any form of sexual misconduct by its teaching and ruling elders, [deacons,] employees, and volunteers. This policy applies equally to all of the above.

1. Defining Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment

- a. Sexual misconduct of a teaching elder involving a parishioner, client or employee with whom the elder has a professional, pastoral relationship is unethical and unprofessional behavior.
- b. Sexual contact between any professional staff member or volunteer and a church member, client or employee with whom the staff member or volunteer has a working, leading, or teaching relationship constitutes sexual misconduct.
- c. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to: unwelcome and unsolicited sexual advances, request for sexual favors, discriminatory tormenting based upon gender and other undesired verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In particular, sexual harassment occurs if there is:
 - i) Submission to any kind of sexual harassment as an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment;
 - ii) Submission to or rejection of, sexually harassing behavior if used as a basis for employment or other personnel decisions affecting the recipient of the behavior;
 - iii) Purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the recipient's work performance;
 - iv) Verbal harassment or abuse;

- v) Pressure for sexual activity;
- vi) Derogatory or dehumanizing remarks about women/men;
- vii) Remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications;
- viii) Touching of a sexual nature;
- ix) Suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's job, volunteer position or reputation, etc.;
- x) The dissemination of material (such as cartoons, articles, pictures, etc.) which have sexual content.

2. Reporting Sexual Misconduct or Sexual Harassment

- a. The first step in stopping sexual harassment is to directly inform the person involved that his/her conduct is unwelcome, a violation of church policy, and that it must stop immediately.
- b. Anyone may report allegations of sexual misconduct.
- c. Allegations of sexual misconduct against teaching elders are to be reported to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of St. Andrew.
- d. Allegations of sexual exploitation against teaching elders will be reported in compliance with any existing Presbytery or other denominational requirements.
- e. Allegations of sexual misconduct against other staff and volunteers should be reported to the Session through the Clerk of Session.
- f. *G-4.0302* of the *Book of Order* includes the following statement on mandatory reporting, which is binding on this congregation:

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

- g. Alleged victims of sexual misconduct are assured of legal confidentiality of any allegations they make.
- h. Allegations of sexual misconduct must be made in writing as to date, time and circumstances.

3. Investigating Sexual Misconduct

- a. Session members, pastoral and other staff, and volunteers will cooperate with denominational investigation of any allegation of misconduct by teaching elders.
- b. Allegations of sexual misconduct against teaching and ruling elders, staff, employees, and volunteers will be investigated, handled with discretion and confidentiality, and adjudicated in accordance with D-10.000 of the Rules of Discipline in the *Book of Order*.
- c. Victims of alleged sexual misconduct have the right to confront the accused.
- d. Victims may have the support of a trained advocate through the process.
- e. The accused has the right to know the nature and substance of the allegations.
- f. The alleged victim and the accused will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and its outcome.

4. Youth Activities

There will be chaperones of both genders at any church sponsored youth activity, when young people of both genders are participating in the activity. Men will not chaperone girl's activities without a woman present and women will not chaperone boy's activities without a man present.

5. Responding to Sexual Misconduct

- a. Teaching elders found guilty of sexual misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with denominational guidelines.
- b. Other staff and volunteers found guilty of sexual exploitation will be removed from their duties in the congregation.
- c. False allegations and/or information will be subject to disciplinary action by the session.
- d. The congregation will extend Christian love and support to the victims and their families.
- e. The congregation will extend Christian love and support to those accused and/or found guilty of sexual misconduct.

6. Oversight and Education

- a. The session is responsible for the education of congregation members about sexual misconduct and the existence of these polices.

- b. The session shall review these policies annually with all teaching and ruling elders, staff members, committee moderators and volunteers.
- c. The session is responsible to ensure that these policies are followed.
- d. All paid staff will be educated through annual meetings in regard to this policy and shall acknowledge receipt of the policy by signature.

B. Wedding Policy

C. Building Use Policy

D. Miscellaneous Policies