

**BYLAWS AND INSTRUMENTS OF  
THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHWEST - THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

(As adopted by the Presbytery of the Northwest on September 13, 1968  
and including amendments adopted through April 24, 2020)

**CHAPTER I - NAME**

The presbytery shall be called the Presbytery of the Northwest, a particular presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

**CHAPTER II - GENERAL RULES**

Robert's *Rules of Order* shall govern Presbytery in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the *Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, or these *Bylaws*.

**CHAPTER III - MEETINGS**

**Section 1**

Stated meetings shall be held two times during the year. The meetings shall convene on the fourth Friday of April and September, the place to be determined by the Presbytery according to the rotation found in Instrument A.

**Section 2**

The stated meeting shall begin on Friday at 10:00 a.m. The Presbytery shall adjourn no later than 12:00 noon on Saturday.

**Section 3**

Special meetings shall be held in accordance with the *Form of Government*, Chapter XIV, Section 7.

**Section 4**

Normally candidates (licentiates and ministers) will be examined and calls to ministry in or by the presbytery will be considered only at stated meetings of presbytery. The examination of candidates and/or consideration of calls will be docketed for special meetings only under the following conditions:

a. The candidate must be or have been within the previous 5 years a ministerial member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

b. A congregation requesting a special meeting for this purpose will certify to the moderator or clerk that it has completed the procedures provided in Chapter VI, Section 2, A. **Candidates and Credentials**, 4. of these *Bylaws*.

c. Before the meeting is scheduled, presbytery's moderator or stated clerk will consult with the Candidates & Credentials Committee. The committee must be able to schedule its examination of the candidate as required by the *Form of Government* prior to the proposed special meeting.

d. If the Candidates and Credentials Committee advises against considering the matter at a special meeting, the moderator or clerk will notify those requesting the meeting immediately, and if they pursue their request despite the committee's advice, the clerk will notify all presbyters of the committee's contrary advice, including its reasons, when the call for the special meeting is issued.

e. The Candidates and Credentials Committee will appoint a representative to attend the special meeting.

**Section 5**

All requests for an excused absence shall be in written (or electronic) form, and shall include a reason for the request. Ministers whom the presbytery lists as retired are welcome to attend the meetings of presbytery with all of the rights and privileges due them before their retirement. Their attendance, however, is not required, and they shall be exempt from requesting an excused absence.

**CHAPTER IV - DOCKET FOR THE STATED MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY****Section 1**

The Friday and Saturday business sessions shall begin with a brief devotional service. After roll call and seating of corresponding members, presbytery shall receive reports from the churches, chapels, and ministers followed by prayer for one another.

**Section 2**

The Friday evening business session shall begin at 7:30 p.m. and recess at 9:00 p.m. If, in the judgment of the moderator and clerks, the anticipated docket allows the time, the Friday evening session shall consist of a public worship service arranged in consultation with the session of the host church, or another public event arranged in consultation with the Committee on Candidates and Credentials. The Saturday business session shall reconvene at 8:30 a.m.

**Section 3**

The business of presbytery at its stated meeting shall normally be conducted according to the following docket:

1. Call to order & constituting prayer
2. Roll call and seating of corresponding members
3. Reports and prayer for the churches
4. Reading and referral of communications
5. Report of the Committee on Arrangements
6. Approval of draft minutes of previous meetings
7. Presentation and adoption of the proposed docket, including specific orders of business and times of recessing and reconvening
8. Treasurer's report
9. Reports of standing committees
  - a. Regional Church Missions
  - b. Foreign Missions
  - c. Candidates & Credentials
  - d. Diaconal
  - e. Ecumenicity
  - f. Judicial
  - g. Meeting Facilitation
  - h. Finance
  - i. Visitation
10. \* Reports & greetings of fraternal delegates
11. \* Reports from ministers not serving pastorates or mission charges (April)
12. \* Reports of special committees
13. \* Report of the auditor (April)
14. \* Any remaining nominations and/or election of officers and standing committees
15. \* Election of commissioners to the next General Assembly (September)
16. \* Resolution of thanks to the host church

17. \* Miscellaneous business
18. Announce the place of the next meeting
19. Adjournment and prayer
  - \* At the call of the moderator

#### **Section 4**

Provision may be made by the Moderator and the host church for a time of fellowship and edification on the Thursday evening and Friday morning prior to the convening of stated meetings of Presbytery.

### **CHAPTER V - OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1 Titles:**

The officers of Presbytery shall be Moderator, Stated Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and Treasurer.

#### **Section 2 Elections:**

These officers shall be elected by ballot at the September meeting of Presbytery, a majority vote being required for election.

#### **Section 3 Terms:**

The Moderator and Treasurer shall be elected for one year. The Stated Clerk and Assistant Clerk shall be elected in alternate years to serve two-year terms.

#### **Section 4 Duties:**

**A. The Moderator** is the presiding officer at the meetings of Presbytery. He shall also call special meetings in accordance with *Bylaws* III, 3 and 4 and participate in licensing candidates in accordance with the *Form of Government*, XXI, 7. 8. He shall make nominations to standing committees at the April meeting. He shall appoint an auditor at the April meeting to examine the Treasurer's records. He shall appoint an historian, whose responsibilities shall be to collect and maintain historical records, including pictures, of the Presbytery and its congregations, chapels, and elders. In the absence of the Moderator, the last Moderator present shall preside. If there is none, an election shall be held.

#### **B. Stated Clerk**

1. He shall keep in order a roll of the ministers, licentiates, candidates for the ministry, churches, clerks of session, together with addresses of each.
2. He shall on approval of the minutes transcribe them in the records of Presbytery.
3. He shall file and preserve (in hard copy or electronic form) for a period of at least seven years all written reports presented to Presbytery.
4. He shall maintain a permanent record of the Bylaws of Presbytery together with all the amendments and changes.
5. He shall communicate officially any acts of presbytery to the parties whom they concern.
6. He shall certify, upon request, to the standing of all ministers on the roll of Presbytery, and, upon request provide ministers with identification cards.
7. He shall send, in hard copy or electronic form, to each minister and session at least one month prior to the date of each stated meeting a notice of such meeting and a copy of the proposed docket.
8. He shall give notice in writing to all sessions to present their sessional records at the appropriate meeting of Presbytery for approval.

9. He shall notify the chairman of every standing committee of his appointment and/or the appointment of members to the committee.
10. He shall notify the chairman of every special committee of his appointment, the particular business assigned, the names of other committee members, and the date required for reporting.
11. He shall be responsible for maintaining a website for the presbytery. A portion of the website shall be for the use of distribute annually to ministers and clerks of sessions, and shall include copies of minutes, a list of the officers of Presbytery, the chairman and members of each standing committee, and other relevant information. A portion of the website shall provide information for the public.
12. He shall advise all ministers not serving Orthodox Presbyterian pastorates or mission appointments to report on their work in the gospel at least once each year, normally at the April meeting. Ministers whom the Presbytery lists as retired shall be exempt from this requirement.
13. Following each stated meeting he shall mail or post to a presbytery web site copies of current draft minutes and a copy of any minutes approved at that meeting.
14. He shall give information of actions of Presbytery which may be of public interest to representatives of secular and religious press.
15. He shall produce at the stated meetings of the Presbytery, in hard copy or electronic form, the records of the Presbytery, Bylaws of Presbytery, the Book of Church Order, the last published Minutes of the General Assembly, and Roberts Rules of Order.
16. He shall prepare and transmit all records and reports required by the General Assembly and shall maintain whatever records are required by the Presbytery or the General Assembly. He shall maintain a roll of members at large of the Regional Church of the Northwest, and shall include that roll as an appendix to the minutes of each stated meeting of Presbytery.
17. He shall certify as necessary all actions of the presbytery, whether recorded in approved or draft minutes.
18. In the absence or inability of the Treasurer to function, he shall be authorized to act in the place of Treasurer, and for this purpose his signature shall be listed at the bank.
19. He shall deliver to his successor all records of the Presbytery.

#### **C. Assistant Clerk**

1. He shall take minutes of all meetings of Presbytery, preparing a draft copy for the Stated Clerk to distribute to ministers and sessions.
2. In the absence or inability of the Stated Clerk, he shall assume the duties of that office.

#### **D. Treasurer**

1. He shall receive all money due or collected by the Presbytery, shall make distribution thereof on its order, and shall make a record of all transactions.
2. He shall present his annual report at the September meeting of Presbytery, the fiscal year ending August 31, and shall have his records available for audit, as well as give a report for each period between meetings at each stated meeting of Presbytery.
3. Believing that the workman is worthy of his hire, it is the policy of the Presbytery to pay all expenses incident to carrying on its work.
4. This policy shall be implemented by the adoption of a budget at the September meeting. (See also VI, 2, F. **Finance**.)
  - a. All expenses which can reasonably be estimated for the ensuing year shall be itemized in the budget. Standing committees shall include in their budgeted estimates travel, telephone, clerical, and all other expenses.

- b. **Expenses of Presbytery.** This item in the budget is to cover the business meeting expenses of ministers and commissioners to Presbytery. These include food, lodging, and travel for the stated and special meetings of Presbytery.
- (1) Presbytery shall control the total amount to be spent for this purpose by fixing the amount of the item entitled "Expenses of Presbytery" in the budget.
  - (2) Payment shall be made to ministers and commissioners to Presbytery by the Treasurer upon presentation of a signed voucher which states the date and reason for the expenses. Licentiates, men under care, and others whose presence at a meeting of Presbytery is required by Presbytery or one of its committees may also submit a travel voucher.
  - (3) Payment shall be made for the full amount of the voucher, except that if the total amount of vouchers exceeds the budget, the available funds shall be pro-rated.
  - (4) Apart from the above, no other individual or committee shall have their expenses reimbursed except by motion of Presbytery recorded in the minutes.
  - (5) Unless otherwise authorized by presbytery, the treasurer shall reimburse for presbytery-related travel only within the geographic bounds of the Presbytery of the Northwest.

## **CHAPTER VI - COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1 Nominations and elections:**

At the April meeting the Moderator shall and other presbyters may nominate members to each standing committee; additional nominations from the floor are in order at the September meeting, at which meeting Presbytery shall elect from those nominated. Normally nominations and/or elections shall follow immediately the completed report of each standing committee. Terms of committee members shall be three (3) years, except as provided below, one class to be elected each year; vacancies may be filled by appointment of the Moderator and the term of appointment shall continue until the next stated meeting.

### **Section 2 Standing Committees:**

#### **A. Candidates and Credentials**

1. The committee shall consist of five members, at least two of whom are ministers and two are ruling elders.
2. The committee shall supervise the taking under care of candidates for the gospel ministry, shall assign parts of trial for licensure and for ordination, and conduct examinations for same in accord with the *Form of Government*, XXI, XXII, and XXIII.
3. The committee shall examine and report on the credentials and testimonials of ministers applying for admission to Presbytery.
4. When a session has determined to present a candidate to its congregation, it shall immediately notify the Candidates and Credentials Committee.
  - a. The session will provide the committee with the following *written* information:
    - (1) Candidate's name, current address and telephone number
    - (2) Candidate's current position or occupation and relevant information on his family
    - (3) Copies of candidate's resume, letters of reference, and a summary of oral testimonials
    - (4) Reasons this particular man is being proposed to the congregation as a candidate

- (5) Terms of the proposed call, including salary, housing and utilities allowance, medical insurance, social security and/or retirement allowance, vacation, etc.
  - b. The committee will begin preliminary consideration of the candidate and the call, and it will promptly communicate with the session should any questions or problems arise.
  - c. After the congregation has voted to extend a call and the candidate has indicated to the session his willingness to accept it, the session will immediately notify the Committee on Candidates and Credentials, including any modifications in the proposed terms of call. The committee will promptly arrange to examine the candidate as required by the *Form of Government*.
5. The committee shall examine and make recommendations concerning calls and resignations.
  6. The committee shall provide pastoral counsel to ministers upon their request. The committee shall consult with and then report to the presbytery concerning any minister who incurs unexcused absences from presbytery meetings for a year or more.

### **B. Regional Church Missions**

1. The committee shall consist of six members.
2. The committee shall seek out and confer with churches regarding their admission to the Regional Church of the Northwest and shall be responsible for promoting evangelism and church extension in the regional church.
3. The committee shall examine reports from all missionaries laboring within the bounds of Presbytery.
4. The primary task of the committee is to promote within the regional church awareness of, concern and zeal for, and active participation in outreach to *nonbelievers* with the gospel of Christ. Any group, therefore, that wishes recognition by the committee as a part of the Presbytery's outreach or extension efforts must give evidence not only of a concern for outreach, but also practical efforts at outreach by at least some members in preparing for or engaging in evangelism. Pastors to be called to such groups must also be involved in actively preparing for and engaging in practical evangelism.
5. Under normal circumstances pastoral oversight of members of a mission church shall be provided by a nearby session. However, in cases where that is not practical, the committee shall provide pastoral oversight for members of mission works when the membership is held on the rolls of the regional church at large. It is authorized to carry out the functions of a session for such members, and may appoint a subcommittee, which may include other presbyters, to fulfill this task. The committee shall inform the stated clerk of all changes to the rolls of such members. The committee shall maintain adequate records of such supervision (see Instrument C.2, *mutatis mutandis*.)

### **C. Foreign Missions**

1. The committee shall consist of three members.
2. The purpose of the committee shall be to promote within the Regional Church of the Northwest an awareness of, concern and zeal for, and, where possible, active participation in foreign missions.

3. The committee, in cooperation with the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, shall arrange for itineration of foreign missionaries among the congregations of the Northwest.
4. The committee shall encourage the churches of the Northwest in increased prayer for and financial support of the Worldwide Outreach of the OPC in general and the work of foreign missions in particular.
5. The committee shall encourage and assist in establishing special relationships (in accordance with the *Standing Rules of the General Assembly*) between either churches, clusters of churches, or the regional church, and new fields and new missionaries.
6. The committee shall encourage more direct regional church involvement in foreign mission work.

#### **D. Visitation**

1. The committee shall consist of four members, at least one of whom is a minister and one an elder.
2. Each church shall be visited at least once every three years, or more frequently upon request by the session involved or the instruction of Presbytery.
3. The committee shall arrange ahead of time for a mutually acceptable date for visiting a session; shall urge sessions to seek any desired help or counsel; and shall remember that the nature of their visit is consultative only. A guide for procedure and questions to be discussed is found in Instrument C.1.
4. After each visit the committee shall prepare a brief written report for Presbytery with a copy going to the session. The report shall be presented at the first stated meeting of the Presbytery following a visit, provided that a copy has been sent to the session no later than two weeks before the meeting of Presbytery.
5. The committee shall be given the responsibility of making an annual examination of the sessional records of the churches of Idaho, Montana, and Oregon at the stated September meeting of presbytery and the records of the churches of Alaska and Washington at the stated April meeting of presbytery. The examination shall take place in accordance with the Rules for Examining Sessional Records (Instrument C.3).

#### **E. Diaconal**

1. The committee shall be composed of at least three and no more than seven men elected in sequential years to three year terms in order to ensure continuity of service. All members of the committee shall be elected officers of the church and shall ordinarily be deacons.
2. The Moderator shall appoint a minister or a ruling elder to serve as presbyter and convener of the committee (see paragraph 1). On an annual basis the deacons shall elect a chairman from among themselves, who shall ordinarily be a deacon. It shall be the responsibility of the presbyter to present the written reports and represent the committee to presbytery at its stated meetings in the absence of the chairman. These Bylaws do not intend that the presbyter shall assume responsibility as chairman of this committee or directly control its activities.

3. The committee shall promote and encourage diaconal work in the Presbytery, oversee the disbursement of its diaconal funds, and promote the work of the denominational Committee on Diaconal Ministries. The committee's work shall encompass:
  - a. Regarding Ministers
    - i. Inquires and acts to ensure that every retired minister of the Presbytery, every minister's widow and his dependent family have adequate resources to meet their normal needs.
    - ii. Seeks to discover cases of pastors in presbytery in need and gives them aid as they are able, if they judge that circumstances warrant that aid.
  - b. Regarding Local Congregations
    - i. Stands ready to assist local diaconates with matters that exceed their local resources.
    - ii. Stands ready to assist congregations and mission works without local deacons.
    - iii. Promotes, encourages and coordinates diaconal work within the Presbytery.
    - iv. Communicates and promotes diaconal ministry opportunities within the Presbytery.
    - v. Educates and encourages the Presbytery to carry out diaconal responsibilities in response to various needs.
  - c. Regarding Diaconal Funds
    - i. Facilitates raising of funds from the churches of Presbytery to meet particular needs that come to their attention.
    - ii. Recommends an annual diaconal budget for the Presbytery.
    - iii. Requests funds from the CDM.
  - d. Regarding Deacons of the Presbytery
    - i. Keeps a roll of active deacons of Presbytery and makes such a roll, with contact information, available to Presbytery.
    - ii. Promotes contact between the local deacon boards.
  - e. Regarding the CDM
    - i. Promotes the work of the CDM within the Presbytery.
    - ii. Serves as Presbytery's liaison between the CDM and the churches of Presbytery in evaluating local requests for aid which the Presbytery is unable to provide for, and referring these to the CDM.
  - f. Regarding Anticipating Needs
    - i. Assesses needs by conducting a survey of the financial needs of the churches in Presbytery.
    - ii. Brings to the Presbytery's attention the work of other Christian relief agencies.
  - g. Regarding Disaster Relief
    - i. Promotes the work of disaster relief among the churches of our Presbytery, in coordination with the CDM, other OPC Presbyteries, and the broader church in general.

## **F. Finance**

1. The committee shall consist of three members, consisting of at least one minister, one ruling elder, and the Presbytery Treasurer.
2. The purpose of the Finance Committee shall be:
  - a. To receive from each standing committee no later than August 1, each year, its proposed budget for the coming year;
  - b. To submit to Presbytery a proposed budget at the regular stated September meeting of Presbytery for the fiscal year, September 1 through August 31.
  - c. To make annually in September a budget analysis and prospectus for the newly proposed budget;



- d. To keep the standing committees informed quarterly or more often of their particular budget status.

### **G. Judicial**

1. The committee shall consist of three members, at least one of whom is a minister and one a ruling elder. Annually the presbytery shall elect an alternate to a one-year term to serve in the event that a member of the committee is recused or is otherwise unable to serve. The alternate shall be a minister or a ruling elder, whichever office is in the minority on the committee.
2. All matters pertaining to civil and ecclesiastical law shall be referred to the committee.

### **H. Ecumenicity**

1. The committee shall consist of three presbyters.
2. The committee shall promote ecumenical fellowship with other Presbyterian and Reformed churches, especially those with whom the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is in "Ecclesiastical Fellowship." It shall have the authority to appoint fraternal delegates to other bodies. In consultation with a representative of the host church of a stated meeting it shall invite fraternal delegates to that meeting. (The Committee may use the "Guidelines" developed by the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations as a guide for advising our fraternal delegates.)

### **I. Meeting Facilitation**

1. The committee shall consist of two presbyters, each elected for two-year terms on alternating years. The senior member shall serve as chairman and do the majority of the coordination work. The junior member shall assist and learn so he can do the work the next year as chairman.
2. The committee shall plan and coordinate the logistical aspects of stated presbytery meetings. Logistical aspects include securing lodging, meeting facilities, food and service for meals and breaks, sound systems, hymnals, and any other incidentals required for successful meetings. The committee may also coordinate room assignments.

### **Section 3 Special committees:**

Special committees shall be established as needed, elected by the Presbytery or appointed by the Moderator, as the Presbytery may direct.

### **Section 4 Reports:**

All standing committees shall report at least once a year. All committees that have reports to present at any stated meeting shall, at the beginning of that meeting, provide for the delegates written copies of those records.

## **CHAPTER VII - OVERTURES**

Overtures prepared for presentation to a higher judicatory shall ordinarily be proposed only to a stated meeting of Presbytery and shall not be finally acted upon until the next stated meeting. A majority of votes cast shall be sufficient for adoption. Should this normal method of presenting an overture not be followed, the proposed overture may be sent to the members of the Presbytery no later than three weeks prior to the next stated meeting and voted upon at the regular meeting, providing that two-thirds of the members of the Presbytery present approve taking action at that time.

## **CHAPTER VIII - AMENDMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS**

### **Section 1**

The *Bylaws* may be amended or revised at any stated meeting of Presbytery by a two-thirds vote of those present. Any such change must be proposed in writing at the stated meeting prior to the one at which the change shall be considered.

**Section 2**

Any bylaws, except those of Chapter VIII, may be suspended at any stated meeting by a three-fourths vote of those present.

**Section 3 Instruments**

The following provisions shall stand as Instruments of the Presbytery and shall be amended by the majority of any Presbytery:

Instrument A – Locations of stated meetings

Instrument B – Rules for election of commissioners to General Assembly

Instrument C – Visitation Committee

Instrument D – Web page guidelines

Instrument E – Meeting facilitation explanation

**INSTRUMENTS**  
(Updated April 24, 2020)

**Instrument A – Stated meetings**

**1. Locations:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
September 27–28, 2019	Portland, OR
April 24–25, 2020	Zoom
September 25–26, 2020	Lynnwood, WA
April 23–24, 2021	Bend, OR
September 24–25, 2021	Kent, WA
April 22–23, 2022	Wasilla, AK
September 23–24, 2022	Olympia, WA
April 28–29, 2023	Port Angeles, WA
September 22–23, 2023	Bothell, WA
April 26–27, 2024	Cour d'Alene, WA
September 27–28, 2024	Kennewick, WA
April 25–26, 2025	Airdrie, AB
September 26–27, 2025	Corvallis, WA
April 24–25, 2026	Roseburg, OR
September 25–26, 2026	Portland, WA
April 23–24, 2027	Lynnwood, WA
September 24–25, 2027	Kent, WA

April 28–29, 2028	Olympia, WA
September 22–23, 2028	Newberg, OR
April 27–28, 2029	Bothell, WA
September 28–29, 2029	Medford, OR
April 26–27, 2030	Kennewick, WA
September 27–28, 2030	Oak Harbor, WA
April 25–26, 2031	Corvallis, OR
September 26–27, 2031	Grants Pass, OR
April 23–24, 2032	Portland, OR
September 24–25, 2032	Colville, WA
April 22–23, 2033	Lynnwood, WA
September 23–24, 2033	Bend, OR
April 28–29, 2034	Kent, WA
September 22–23, 2034	Idaho Falls, ID

## 2. Miscellaneous Procedure:

Closed-door sessions: Meetings of the presbytery are generally open to the public. When a closed-door session is necessary, visitors shall be excused, but presbyters, alternates, and corresponding members may remain, unless specifically requested to leave by further action of the presbytery. The following is provided as suggested language for the moderator to use as the body enters a closed-door session: “As we enter this closed-door session, we ask that all visitors, except those who are corresponding members, leave the room. Presbyters, alternates, and corresponding members are welcome to stay.”

## Instrument B – Rules for election of commissioners to General Assembly

1. Date of election: Commissioners to the General Assembly shall normally be elected at the stated September meeting preceding the Assembly.
2. Nominations:
  - a. Ministerial commissioners: Ministers may be nominated by submitting to the stated clerk in writing an indication of their willingness and intention to attend all the business sessions of the Assembly. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of Presbytery.
  - b. Ruling elder commissioners: Ruling elders may be nominated in writing by the session of the church in which they are members or in which they serve. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of Presbytery.
  - c. Acceptance of a nomination or election shall constitute an indication of the nominee’s intention to attend all the business sessions of the Assembly.
3. Election: Election shall be by ballot. Those receiving the highest majorities of votes shall be named commissioners until all of the commissioner positions are filled. Alternates shall be appointed in order of higher to lower majority of votes.
4. Certification of commissioners: The stated clerk of Presbytery shall certify to the stated clerk of the General Assembly the names of those elected. He shall provide the clerk of the Assembly with addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail contact information of commissioners.
5. Authorization to certify additional commissioners and alternates: Following the stated September meeting of Presbytery, the stated clerk shall be authorized to appoint additional ministerial or ruling elder commissioners or alternates to the next General Assembly in the order in which written indication of their availability to serve or nomination by their sessions, respectively, are made known to him, provided that anticipated travel compensation to be

requested from the General Assembly or Presbytery for such commissioners or alternates does not include travel from outside the United States.

### **Instrument C – Visitation Committee**

#### **Instrument C.1 – Guidelines for visits**

##### Suggested Order for Visitation Committee Visit

- 1) Scripture Reading with Prayer
- 2) Read/Summarize Presbytery By-laws to briefly explain scope and purpose of Visitation Committee's visits to churches
- 3) Outline of Topics to address (VC will take notes while session reports on each item.)
  - I. Church Structure
    - A. Worship
    - B. Preaching
      - C. Discipline
      - D. Work of Session and Deacons
      - E. Finances
    - II. Christian Ed.
      - A. Sunday School
      - B. Youth Work
      - C. Training Programs
      - D. VBS
      - E. Bible Studies
      - F. Christian school, home school, public school
    - III. Outreach
      - A. Calling, Visitation
      - B. Fellowship meetings
    - IV. Other Matters of concern or interest to Visitation Committee/Presbytery?
- 4) Closing prayer

#### **Instrument C.2 – Rules for keeping sessional records**

##### **A. Purpose:**

The presbytery publishes these guidelines for keeping sessional minutes in order to assist the clerks of each session in their job of accurately reporting the events of the session meeting. These minutes are important for the church as a historical record. They are also to be an accurate record of the decisions made by the church's leaders and to assure that the decisions made are done decently and in good order according to the standards of the church. Therefore the clerks of session are encouraged to look over the following guidelines and to pursue excellence in their minute taking.

##### **B. What to Record in Sessional Minutes:**

1. The openings of meetings:
  - a. Date, time and place of each meeting.
  - b. The names of the moderator and elders present and absent.
  - c. The names of any visitors who are present.

- d. Record opening prayer and, when applicable, the Scripture read to open the meeting.
  - e. If the meeting is a special meeting of session, note the purpose of the special meeting. See B.8.a.
  - f. Record the reading and approval of the minutes of previous meetings
2. The administration of the sacraments:
    - a. Record at the next regular meeting when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.
    - b. Record the dates when baptism is administered along with the full names (including the middle name) of persons who are baptized and the names of their parents in the case of children.
  3. Membership Issues:
    - a. When members are received, record the fact of their examination (if one takes place), acceptance and names (if, in the judgment of the session, they are needed to avoid confusion, include middle names and in the case of married women, their maiden names).
    - b. Record the full names of covenant children. In the case of minors, record parents' names, and in every case state whether or not baptism has been received.
    - c. Record the means by which the members are received as found in the Book of Discipline, chapter II: B: 2 – i.e. by confession of faith, transfer etc.
    - d. Whenever a name is dropped from the rolls for whatever reason, a notation must appear in the minutes along with the reference to the means of removal as found in the Book of Discipline, chapter II: B:3.
    - e. When someone is dismissed to another church, the full name and address of that church must be recorded alongside the full name of the person dismissed.
    - f. Note all marriages and deaths of members of the church.
  4. Sessional business:
    - a. Decisions made must be recorded as motions that have been adopted. Do not record details of discussions, plans not adopted, suggestions not acted upon or motions lost. Do, however, include enough explanatory phrases that the reason and intent of a motion are clear.
    - b. Record ordinations, installations or any other changes to the eldership or the deaconate.
    - c. Record the names of elder commissioners to Presbytery and the General Assembly.
  5. Historical events:
    - a. Items of historical or special interest should be recorded as noted by the session.
  6. Closing:
    - a. Time of closing.
    - b. Closing in prayer.
    - c. The signature of clerk following the minutes of each meeting.
  7. General:
    - a. All pages in the minute book must be consecutively numbered for reference.
    - b. The minutes of session must be kept in an official lock-type minute book.
    - c. Avoid erasures, interlineations, and footnotes.
    - d. Do not insert written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper.
  8. Additional Rules for Certain Meetings:
    - a. Special meetings: Only the matters stated in the call of the meeting may be acted on.
    - b. Congregational meetings:
      - i. The minutes of congregational meetings should be included in the session's minutes as they occur. The text of reports received from church

- organizations, unless otherwise required, should be filed elsewhere with notation in the minutes that a report was made.
- ii. Record if a quorum is present and the number of voting communicant members present.
  - iii. The minutes of a congregational meeting must be read and approved at the end of the meeting.
- c. Discipline cases and trials: Make sure to read the Book of Discipline carefully and record all the necessary information. This is the place where accuracy and thoroughness are most important.
9. Exceptions to minutes: A session shall address in its minutes any exception taken to its minutes by the presbytery.

### **C. Other Sessional Records:**

1. The following rolls should be kept:
  - a. A roll of elders and deacons with the date of election, removal or death.
  - b. A roll of communicant members with date of reception, date and place of dismissal or death.
  - c. A roll of covenant children with date of birth, names of parents, and notation of removal, i.e. to membership or dismissal.
  - d. A list of adherents (if desired).

Note: In every case a name should be accompanied by an address.
2. A file of Sessional correspondence, church reports, records of trials and disciplinary actions and similar documents.

### **Instrument C.3 - Rules for the Examination of Sessional Minutes:**

1. Minutes must conform to the primary and secondary standards of the church, should conform to the rules set forth above, and should be appropriate in form, structure, minimum content, and appropriate use of the English language.
2. Findings of the examination of minutes should be reported under two categories:
  - a. Notations: Typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation, minor violations of the rules for keeping sessional records, etc.
  - b. Exceptions: Significant violations of the rules for keeping minutes and actions which do not conform to the standards of the church and require clarification.
3. The committee shall report in writing its findings but before recommending taking exceptions to minutes, the committee shall confer with the member of session immediately concerned.
4. Exceptions to the minutes must be corrected by the next reading of the minutes by Presbytery. As part of its examination of the minutes of the session the committee shall recommend to the Presbytery that it find acceptable or unacceptable the session's response to the exceptions.

### **Instrument D – Web page guidelines**

Presbytery web site.

- a. The stated clerk shall be responsible for maintaining a website for the presbytery. He may undertake this himself, or may arrange for others to do so under his oversight.
- b. A portion of the web site shall be for the use of ministers and clerks of sessions, and shall include copies of minutes, a list of the officers of Presbytery, the chairman and members

- of each standing committee, and other relevant information. It shall be username and password protected, with those being provided to presbyters of the Northwest, licentiates, men under care, and others with a need to know information such as docket materials.
- c. A portion of the web site shall provide information for the public. The primary purpose of this website is to provide the inquiring public with enough information to determine what the OPC believes, how the Presbytery operates and the location of its closest live OP church contact.
  - d. The moderator and assistant clerk shall advise the stated clerk on matters relating to the website.
  - e. Should a website purport to represent the Presbytery of the Northwest or its Regional Church, it shall do so only with the express approval of the Presbytery, and shall be subject to its oversight (*Form of Government XXX.3.*).

### **Instrument E – Meeting facilitation explanation:**

The objective is to have some men dedicated to planning and executing the logistics of stated presbytery meetings so there is reliability, consistency, ease of travel, and reasonable thrift for the treasury. A second objective is to free the stated clerk of the logistical burdens of coordinating lodging and facilities.

This committee's work would be purely logistical. The presbytery as a whole would still determine the locations of future meetings and the clerk would coordinate the dockets and orders of the day. The committee would assure that the presbytery has consistent meeting facilitation, provide a central contact, and take a burden off the clerk who presently gets involved in room assignments and other small details.

The committee would work with churches at or near the stated meeting site ahead of time to see how much they want to be involved in supporting the meeting. That may include anything from providing the meeting place in their church or another related facility, recommending hotels or conference rooms, fully or partially catering meals and breaks, or offering lodging in homes for presbyters that want to do that. The committee would compile a procedural guidebook to be edited and passed on to succeeding chairmen. The guidebook might include checklists and timelines, facilities used in the past with critiques, contacts for facilities and churches, and other useful information. The committee would also submit a report to presbytery after each meeting with cost and details that might help future planning. This increasing consistency should help with saving the presbytery money. The committee should probably have oversight of the stated meetings portion of the annual budget. The committee would also be expected to submit a budget each year for approval.

The chairman would work with the Treasurer to coordinate payments and advances for reservations and other expenditures. Likewise, the chairman would coordinate communications and special logistical needs with the stated clerk as the meeting docket is developed. Attendance, room assignments, special room arrangements, special travel needs, and the like would all be directed to the Meeting Facilitation Committee, instead of to the stated clerk.

To start the committee there could be two men elected, one for a one-year term as chairman and a second as a two-year term. The two year term man would assist the first year, then be the chairman the second. In the second year there would have a new man elected as assistant.

[End of Bylaws and Instruments]