

RULES OF PRESBYTERY OPERATION  
FOR THE HOUSTON METRO PRESBYTERY

**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- 1-1 These Rules of Presbytery Operation of the Houston Metro Presbytery (the “Presbytery”) are made pursuant to the Book of Church Order (the “BCO”) of the Presbyterian Church in America and to the extent that any provision of any provision of these Rules of Presbytery Operation is inconsistent with the provisions of the BCO, that provision of these Rules of Presbytery Operation is of no effect. However, the finding that a provision of these Rules of Presbytery Operation is inconsistent with the provisions of the BCO does not invalidate the remaining provisions of these Rules of Presbytery Operation that are not inconsistent with the BCO.
- 1-2 The rules contained in Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern the Presbytery meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Book of Church Order or these Rules of Presbytery Operation.
- 1-3 These Rules of Presbytery Operation may be amended, rescinded or suspended only by a two-thirds vote of the membership at any meeting of the Presbytery.
- 1-4 The fiscal year of Presbytery shall be from January 1 through December 31 of each year.
- 1-5 The officers of the Presbytery shall be a Moderator, a Stated Clerk, and a Treasurer.
- 1-6 The effective dates of officers and other elected positions, including committees, shall be the day following the Presbytery meeting in which nominations and election occur.

**MEETINGS**

- 2-1 The Presbytery shall meet four times per year. The stated meetings of the Presbytery shall be held on the third Friday of January, the second Monday of April, the third Friday of August, and second Monday of November commencing at 4:00 p.m. at such place as is determined by the Presbytery.
- 2-2 The Presbytery consists of all the teaching elders and churches within its bounds that have been accepted by the Presbytery.
- 2-3 New Business. Any overture, resolution, or request for action to the Presbytery that does not come from a Permanent Committee (cf. RPO 6), whether from an individual or a Session received by the Stated Clerk prior to the date of a Stated Meeting shall be treated as new business.
  - 2-3.1 New business that is presented to the Stated Clerk more than thirty (30) days prior to the date of a Stated Meeting shall be referred by the Stated Clerk to the Administration Committee. The Administration Committee may, at its option, choose to meet prior to the Stated Meeting of Presbytery and make a recommendation with respect to the new business, whether to recommend approval, disapproval, or further reference to another Permanent Committee. In the event that the Administrative Committee does not meet or does not have a recommendation, the procedure in RPO 2-3.2 shall be followed.
  - 2-3.2 New business that is presented to the Stated Clerk thirty (30) days or less prior to the date of a Stated Meeting shall be placed on the docket of the next Stated Meeting by the Stated Clerk under the caption “New Business.” All items docketed as New Business shall only be referred to a Permanent or Ad Hoc

Committee, unless the Presbytery votes by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Presbytery to receive the new business and act upon it at that Stated Meeting.

- 2-4 In case of extraordinary events occurring or unusual circumstances arising that make it impractical for the Presbytery to hold a stated meeting on the date previously approved by the Presbytery, the Moderator with the Administrative Committee shall be authorized, upon the recommendation of the Stated Clerk and Moderator, to cancel, postpone, or reschedule a stated meeting.
- 2-5 A special meeting of Presbytery may be conducted by teleconference or videoconference, provided that
  - 2-5.1 the meeting does not conduct any of the following kinds of business: (a) the gathering of evidence; (b) deliberation of guilt or innocence; (c) deliberation of a censure; or (d) an examination.
  - 2-5.2 a meeting conducted by teleconference or videoconference shall employ technical means that ensure that all persons participating in the meeting can contemporaneously hear each speaker and be heard by all other participants.
  - 2-5.3 In a meeting conducted by teleconference or videoconference, a participant shall seek the floor by announcing his name and church affiliation or by sending an electronic message to the chair of the meeting. The chair will be responsible for keeping a list in order of participants who seek the floor. The chair of the meeting shall recognize a speaker by name, at which time the speaker will then have the floor. Participants shall take care to avoid speaking at the same time. Participants in the same room shall not converse with each other while another has the floor.

### **MODERATOR**

- 3-1 The Moderator shall be elected for a term of one (1) year at the November stated meeting and shall begin service on the day following his election. The Moderator shall preside and exercise authority according to the provisions of the Book of Church Order. The Moderator, at his pleasure, may appoint parliamentarians. The office of Moderator may be re-elected following his initial term, with the requirement that the office must be rotated between teaching elder and ruling elder every two (2) years.
- 3-2 The Moderator in cooperation with the Stated Clerk shall prepare the docket for each meeting of the Presbytery.
- 3-3 Nominations for moderator shall come from the floor.

### **STATED CLERK**

- 4-1 The Stated Clerk shall be elected for a term of two (2) years at the November stated meeting and will begin service on the day following his election, with the privilege of serving additional terms when so elected. Any ruling or teaching elder shall be eligible to be elected.
- 4-2 The Stated Clerk shall be responsible to:
  - 4-2.1 Record, preserve and distribute the minutes of all meetings of the Presbytery.
  - 4-2.2 In co-operation with the Moderator, prepare the docket of each meeting of the Presbytery.
  - 4-2.3 Administer the Presbytery's correspondence and records.
  - 4-2.4 Report on leaves of absences.

- 4-3 The Assistant Stated Clerk shall be elected for a term of two (2) years at the November stated meeting and will begin service on the day following his election, with the privilege of serving additional terms when so elected. The Assistant Stated Clerk shall assist the Stated Clerk in his duties, including during the meetings of Presbytery. In the event that the Stated Clerk is not present at a meeting of Presbytery, the Assistant Stated Clerk shall assume the position of Stated Clerk *pro tempore*.

### **TREASURER**

- 5-1 The Treasurer shall be elected for a term of three (3) years at the November stated meeting and will begin service on the day following his election. The Treasurer shall be responsible to:
- 5-1.1 Be the custodian of the funds of the Presbytery and shall receive, deposit, and disburse such funds as directed by the Presbytery.
  - 5-1.2 Prepare, or have prepared, such reports of the financial condition of the Presbytery for each stated meeting of the Presbytery.
- 5.2 The Moderator or his designee will review the financial records for the previous calendar year and report to the presbytery at the August stated meeting.

### **PERMANENT COMMITTEES**

- 6-1 The Presbytery shall establish the following permanent committees:
- Candidates and Credentials
  - Ministerial Relations
  - Mission to North America
  - Mission to the World
  - Nominations
  - Review of Sessional Records
  - Reformed University Ministries
  - Administration
- 6-2 Except for the Administration Committee, each of the permanent committees shall be comprised of no more than one (1) ruling elder and one (1) teaching elder from a particular church within the Presbytery. Should a committee member move his membership to another church within Presbytery during mid term, he shall be allowed to keep his committee membership for the remainder of his term.
- 6-3 Each permanent committee shall elect one of the members to be the chairman at the January meeting each year. Where, for any reason, a committee is without a chairman between committee meetings, the Moderator shall appoint a convener to convene the committee meeting, during which meeting the committee will elect a chairman of the committee. A committee can elect a chairman at any meeting of the committee where a quorum is present.
- 6-4 Each committee of Presbytery may set its own quorum so long as a quorum is: (a) at least 50% of committee membership, and (b) with at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder present.
- 6-4.1 Each Committee of the Presbytery shall meet at least twice per year. The Committee chair may convene additional meetings as often as necessary in order to conduct the work of the committee.

- 6-5 A teaching elder who is a member in good standing of the Presbytery and with a call approved by the Presbytery is eligible to be elected to any committee of the Presbytery except that he shall no longer be eligible to serve on a permanent committee upon being given permission to labor out of bounds and that laboring out of bounds is also outside the geographical area of the Presbytery.
- 6-6 A ruling elder who meets the following requirements is eligible for election to a presbytery permanent committee:
- 6-6.1 A ruling elder who is actively serving as a ruling elder on any session of a member church within the Presbytery is eligible to be elected to any committee of the Presbytery.
- 6-6.2 A ruling elder who is not presently actively serving as a ruling elder on a session of a member church of the Presbytery (hereinafter an “Eligible Session”), and
- 6-6.2.1 Who previously served as an active serving ruling elder on the Eligible Session of the church where his communicant membership remains and the said Eligible Session has by resolution declared the said ruling elder to be eligible for election to a presbytery committee is thereby eligible to be elected to any committee of the Presbytery;
- 6-6.2.2 Who previously served as an active serving ruling elder on an Eligible Session of a Church other than the Church in which he now holds his communicant membership, such a ruling elder may be eligible for election to a presbytery committee if the Eligible Session of the Church in which the ruling elder now hold his communicant membership declares by resolution the said ruling elder to be eligible for election to a Presbytery committee.
- 6-7 The members of the Permanent Committees of the Presbytery shall be elected at the November stated meeting of the Presbytery, except Nominations, which shall follow the schedule set forth in 12-2. A committee member shall commence his term of service on the day following his election, except that a person elected to fulfill the unexpired term of a member of a committee shall commence his term of service (*i.e.* the remainder of such term) immediately. In the event of a vacancy on a committee, at the next Presbytery meeting following such vacancy, a replacement member shall be elected. At the time of the November election for Presbytery committees, should there not be sufficient qualified and appropriate ruling elders nominated for a particular committee, then the Presbytery may elect a qualified and appropriate teaching elder to take the place of a ruling elder but for a period of one (1) year only.
- 6-8 Committee chairs shall present reports during stated meetings of the Presbytery. However, if the committee has not met prior to presbytery, no report may be given. Committee chairs may submit a request to the Clerk of the Presbytery to have information presented on behalf of the committee during a stated meeting of the Presbytery. This will be at the discretion of the Moderator. This information if approved may be presented by the committee chair, by the Stated Clerk, or by the Moderator

### **CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS**

- 7-1 The Candidates and Credentials Committee shall be composed of four (4) teaching elders and four (4) ruling elders in two (2) classes, with each class for a term of two (2) years and composed of two (2) teaching elders and two (2) ruling elders.

## 7-2 Committee Responsibilities:

### 7-2.1 Vacant churches.

7-2.1.1 This committee shall assist vacant churches in securing supply preaching and interim supply.

### 7-2.2 Ministers:

7-2.2.1 Churches desiring to call a minister may seek the committee's counsel.

7-2.2.2 The committee shall be responsible to present to Presbytery: transferring ministers, ordainees, and licentiates seeking admission to Houston Metro Presbytery along with their credentials. The applications for admission to Houston Metro Presbytery must ordinarily be received one month prior to the Presbytery meeting next at which the applicant will be examined.

7-2.2.3 This committee shall review all calls examining them as to whether they are in order before presenting them to Presbytery.

7-2.2.4 This committee shall instruct churches that a minister must be examined and approved by Presbytery before he can move on the field.

7-2.2.5 This committee shall present new calls in the Presbytery.

7-2.2.6 This committee shall present the transfer of a minister's credentials only at a meeting of presbytery.

### 7-2.3 Candidates:

7-2.3.1 The committee shall oversee the candidates' course of study and practical training.

7-2.3.2 This committee shall have the oversight of all candidates for the Gospel ministry under the care of Presbytery still pursuing courses of preparation, keeping in touch with their progress and spiritual growth by annual reports from them.

7-2.3.3 It shall receive and consider all applications from persons seeking to become candidates for the Gospel ministry.

7-2.3.4 The committee shall recommend candidates eligible for a loan from funds administered by the Presbytery, or a seminary, when funds administered by the seminary required such recommendation and approval by the Presbytery.

7-2.3.5 This committee shall assist candidates and licentiates of the Presbytery in securing summer employment within the bounds of the Presbytery.

7-2.3.6 The committee shall provide guidance to sessions on the process of bringing a candidate under care of the session and Presbytery.

7-2.3.7 The committee shall, upon application of the candidate, give a certificate of dismission to another presbytery.

### 7-2.4 Examinations:

The Candidates and Credentials Committee shall prepare and conduct a preliminary examination of those seeking licensure, ordination, and ministers seeking admission from another Presbytery or denomination according to the requirements of the BCO.

### 7-2.5 Sub-Committee on Internship Training

7-2.5.1 The Sub-committee on Internship Training shall be composed of four (4) members appointed by the Candidates and Credentials committee.

- 7-2.5.2 This sub-committee shall:
- 7-2.5.3 Approve all intern programs.
- 7-2.5.4 Approve all intern mentors.
- 7-2.5.5 Receive reports from interns and mentors.

### **MINISTERIAL RELATIONS**

- 8-1 The Ministerial Relations Committee shall be composed of three (3) teaching elders and three (3) ruling elders in two classes, with each class for a term of two (2) years. One class shall be composed of two (2) ruling elders and one (1) teaching elder, and one class shall be composed of one (1) ruling elder and two (2) teaching elders.
- 8-2 Committee Responsibilities:
  - 8-2.1 Ministers:
    - 8-2.1.1 Churches desiring to call a minister may seek the committee’s counsel.
    - 8-2.1.2 This committee shall have the oversight of ministers who are laboring outside the bounds of Presbytery, or who are without a definite call. The term “bounds of Presbytery” refers to both geography and oversight of the particular work he is doing. A minister may only engage in work outside the bounds of Presbytery with the permission of Presbytery. This committee shall receive requests and make recommendations concerning ministers who desire to work outside the Presbytery’s jurisdiction. Those active ministers who are without a definite call shall report their progress in seeking to engage in their functions as teaching elders at the January meeting of Presbytery.
    - 8-2.1.3 This committee shall provide guidance for pastors and churches seeking to dissolve their relationship.
    - 8-2.1.4 This committee shall receive requests for the dissolution of pastoral relationships and recommend actions to presbytery.
    - 8-2.1.5 This committee is empowered as a standing Commission of the Presbytery to dismiss Teaching Elders in good standing (i.e. those not under discipline, disciplinary process, or investigation) to be received by another Presbytery (BCO 20-9) or another ecclesiastical body.
    - 8-2.1.6 This committee shall present changes in call for teaching elders who are already members of the Presbytery.
  - 8-2.2 BCO 31-2 Investigations:
    - 8-2.2.1 The Ministerial Relations Committee is designated as the point of contact for any reports concerning the Christian character of (BCO 31-2) or charges against (BCO 32-2) a teaching elder who is a member of Houston Metro Presbytery or under its care. Upon the initiation of a BCO 31-2 investigation by Presbytery, the Ministerial Relations Committee or an ad hoc committee formed by Presbytery for that purpose, shall make a recommendation to the Presbytery as to whether a strong presumption of guilt exists.
    - 8-2.2.2 The Committee shall develop strategies to encourage and strengthen fellowship among members of Presbytery.

## **MISSION TO THE WORLD**

- 9-1 The Mission to the World (MTW) Committee shall be composed of two (2) teaching elders and two (2) ruling elders in two classes, with each class for a term of two (2) years. Each class shall be composed of one (1) ruling elder and one (1) teaching elder.
- 9-2 This committee shall:
  - 9-2.1 Encourage active participation in world missions by the churches of Presbytery by means of the following:
    - 9-2.1.1 Providing information to Presbytery on MTW's activities in areas of interest to the churches of Presbytery.
    - 9-2.1.2 Bringing to Presbytery's attention short-term mission opportunities in which the churches of Presbytery might participate.
    - 9-2.1.3 Responding to requests from churches of Presbytery for assistance in identifying and developing candidates for world missions.
  - 9-2.2 Encourage MTW missionaries on home ministry assignment by inviting them to Presbytery and seeking opportunities for them to visit the churches of Presbytery.
  - 9-2.3 Assist MTW-approved candidates in their support-raising efforts.
  - 9-2.4 As time permits, provide encouragement and assistance to non-MTW missionaries and agencies supported by any church of Presbytery.

## **MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA**

- 10-1 The Mission to North America Committee shall be composed of three (3) teaching elders and three (3) ruling elders in two (2) classes, with each class for a term of two (2) years. One class shall be composed of two (2) ruling elders and one (1) teaching elder, and one class shall be composed of one (1) ruling elder and two (2) teaching elders. In addition, all church planters shall be non-voting members of the committee.
- 10-2 This committee shall:
  - 10-2.1 Have oversight and supervision of all home mission churches, giving assistance in evangelism, stewardship, and all other areas of the life of the mission church.
  - 10-2.2 Confer with, examine and guide the session of any organized church seeking admission to the Presbytery.
  - 10-2.3 Assist in the survey for, and organization of, new congregations, and missions.
  - 10-2.4 When an organized church has been admitted into the Presbytery, the committee will visit the church during a worship service and extend Presbytery's welcome.
  - 10-2.5 In the case of newly organized churches, the commission appointed by Presbytery will perform this privilege of extending Presbytery's welcome.
  - 10-2.6 Promote the cause of General Assembly's work on Mission to North America.
  - 10-2.7 Maintain the oversight of those presbyters who labor as evangelists (per BCO 8-6). Each evangelist of Presbytery is required to prepare a written report, in English, concerning his work. These reports shall be submitted quarterly to the chairman of the Mission to North America Committee.
  - 10-2.8 Develop and oversee chaplain's ministries.
  - 10-2.9 Develop and oversee mercy and caring ministries.
  - 10-2.10 Develop and oversee resources for building and finance to aid new church development.

## **REFORMED UNIVERSITY MINISTRIES**

- 11-1 The Reformed University Ministries Committee shall be composed of four (4) elders in two classes with each class for a term of two (2) years and composed of two (2) elders. In addition, all campus ministers shall be non-voting members of the committee.
- 11-2 The work of this committee will be accomplished in conjunction with and through the meetings of the Southwest Joint Committee on Campus Ministries.
- 11-3 The duties and responsibilities of this committee will be assigned and carried out in a way consistent with the “Affiliation Agreement for Campus Ministries.”
- 11-4 A quorum shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned “Affiliation Agreement for Campus Ministries.”

## **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

- 12-1 The Nominations Committee shall be composed of two (2) teaching elders and two (2) ruling elders in two classes with each class for a term of two (2) years and composed of one (1) teaching elder and one (1) ruling elder.
- 12-2 The members of this committee shall be elected at the April stated meeting of the Presbytery with nominations being made from the floor of Presbytery.
- 12-3 This committee shall:
  - 12-3.1 Nominate to Presbytery persons to serve on the other various committees.
  - 12-3.2 Nominate those persons to serve on General Assembly’s permanent committees.
  - 12-3.3 Mail information to churches concerning the permanent Presbytery committees and the Assembly permanent committees at least thirty days prior to the November meeting of Presbytery. This information should include a listing of all returning members and nominees for the permanent committees of Presbytery, names of Presbytery members presently serving on the Assembly’s permanent committees, and openings for nominees.
- 12-4 Elections:
  - 12-4.1 After the Nominating Committee announces its nominees, any Presbyter may nominate an additional eligible teaching elder or ruling elder (as the case may be) for election.
  - 12-4.2 In the event there are multiple nominations for a position, the Presbytery shall proceed to a vote without any debate or discussion. In order to be elected to a position, a person must receive a majority of the votes cast. If multiple votes are required to obtain a majority, a person may at any time withdraw before a vote is cast.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

- 13-1 The Administration Committee shall consist of the chairmen of the following committees: Candidates and Credentials, Ministerial Relations, Mission to North America, Mission to the World, Review of Sessional Records, Nominations, and Reformed University Ministries, along with the Moderator, the Stated Clerk, the Treasurer, plus one (1) member elected by the Presbytery to serve as chairman for a two-year term.
- 13-2 This committee shall:

- 13-2.1 Prepare the Presbytery budget each year and present it at the January meeting. All committees with budgets over \$1000 will provide line item budgets upon request.
- 13-2.2 Formulate a long-range program for Presbytery.
- 13-2.3 Serve as a public relations committee.
- 13-2.4 Suggest a stewardship program and policies.
- 13-3 The Administration Committee shall be the point of contact for all references and complaints against Presbytery and any acts and decisions of a lower court that are brought to Presbytery (see BCO 39-1), except charges and reports pertaining to a teaching elder who is a member of the Presbytery.
- 13-4 The Administration Committee, after following the BCO, may recommend to Presbytery, if the Committee deems it appropriate, that Presbytery proceed with adjudication of the judicial matter(s) at hand.
- 13-5 The Administrative Committee is empowered as a standing Commission of the Presbytery for the purpose of appointing a representative of the Presbytery to present a reference to a higher court, represent the Presbytery in an appeal, or to defend the Presbytery's action in a complaint.
- 13-6 The Administration Committee shall serve as trustees, and is empowered to hold in trust for Presbytery such property of the Presbytery. The committee shall supervise, control, collect, and distribute whatever Presbytery shall entrust to them and formulate written reports as necessary for the temporal under girding of the court.

#### **REVIEW OF SESSIONAL RECORDS**

- 14-1 The Review of Sessional Records Committee shall be composed of three (3) teaching and three (3) ruling elders in two classes, with each class for a term of two (2) years. One class shall be composed of two (2) ruling elders and one (1) teaching elder, and one class shall be composed of one (1) ruling elder and two (2) teaching elders.
- 14-2 The Committee shall receive from each church the minutes of the Session of that church for the preceding year as indicated below or at a stated meeting of Presbytery as designated by the Committee.
  - 14-2.1 Records of churches are due by the last day of February each year.
  - 14-2.2 If records of a church are not received by the above deadline, the committee will send an e-mail reminder to the clerk of session on record and/or the senior teaching elder and/or the delinquent church's office.
  - 14-2.3 If the records of a church are not received or a reasonable (as judged by the committee) excuse given before the April meeting of the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall issue an official reminder to such church.
  - 14-2.4 If the records themselves or a reasonable (as judged by the committee) excuse are not received by the August stated meeting of the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the Session to appear by its representatives at the November stated meeting to explain the Session's failure to submit its previous year's records for review.
- 14-3 The Committee shall review the minutes of each particular church in accordance with the requirements of the BCO and any guidelines established by the General Assembly or this Presbytery.

- 14-4 The Committee shall report to the Presbytery the result of the review of the minutes and shall make recommendations in relations to those minutes. Such recommendations shall include whether the minutes are to be approved with or without exceptions or notations.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF AD INTERIM COMMITTEES**

- 15-1 As the need arises Ad Interim Committees may be appointed by the Moderator.

#### **JUDICIAL PROCESS**

- 16-1 If the Presbytery agrees to the trial of a teaching elder or if a complaint (BCO 43) or appeal (BCO 42) is filed with the Presbytery, then the Moderator may recommend a judicial commission be formed by Presbytery (BCO 15-3) to adjudicate the matter in accordance with the provisions of the BCO and these Rules of Presbytery Operation.
- 16-2 When a commission is formed for a trial the Presbytery will first appoint a prosecutor in accordance with BCO 31-2.
- 16-3 A judicial commission shall be comprised of at least two (2) teaching elders, two (2) ruling elders, one teaching elder alternate, and one ruling elder alternate to adjudicate the judicial matter. The Moderator will appoint the convenor for the commission.
- 16-4 A teaching elder is eligible to serve on a judicial commission if he is a member in good standing of the Presbytery and is not directly involved with the judicial matter at hand.
- 16-5 A ruling elder is eligible to serve on a judicial commission if he is a member in good standing of a church in the Presbytery and is not directly involved in the judicial matter at hand.
- 16-6 When a judicial commission is in place, it shall conduct its business in accordance with the relevant provisions of the BCO and may use for guidance the Manual of Standing Judicial Commission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America.