



MUSKINGUM VALLEY PRESBYTERY

Journeying with Jesus to touch the World!

STANDING RULES

PREAMBLE

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at baptismal font and communion table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God's mission (F-1.01, Book of Order, PCUSA). God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ head of the Church, which is his body. The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work (F-1.0201). Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills (F1.0202). In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, the Church is faithful to the mission of Christ as it:

- Proclaims and hears the Word of God;
- Administers and receives the Sacraments; and
- Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ (F-1.0303).

CHAPTER I: VISION

Section 1

God's Mission

In living out Christ's mission to his Church, Muskingum Valley Presbytery seeks to: *Journey with Jesus to touch the world—Empowered by the Spirit to: make disciples, nurture our faith, and serve the needs of the community.*

Section 2

Our Discipleship

In particular, we seek to reflect the discipleship of the early church as described in the Acts of the Apostles:

- We wait to be empowered by The Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2)
- We depend upon God (1:8-8:1; 16:6; 19:10; and its antithesis, 5:1-11)
- We anticipate God at work (8:1-8; 12:1-19)
- We expect and look for divine appointments (5:16-39; 8:26-40)
- We observe and go with what God is doing (9:1-31; 17:16-17)
- We stand strong in the face of opposition (5:40-6:1; 7:59-60)
- We praise God in and out of adversity (3:6-10; 16:22-30)

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- We step outside the conventional ministry box (10:1-29; 11:18)
- We empower and release people to ministry (6:5-7:60; 13:1-3; 13:5)
- We relentlessly witness to the power of God at work (all of Acts).

CHAPTER II: RELATIONSHIPS

Section 1 Presbytery as Shepherd and Servant

The Presbytery serves as shepherd and servant to its congregations with the understanding that congregations are God’s “mission outposts” in the world. As a connectional church, God calls us to serve together, in partnership with the Synod of the Covenant and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to accomplish Christ’s mission for the world.

Section 2 Our Shared Covenant

Therefore, we covenant with one another before God to be a Presbytery that:

- Celebrates our connectedness and acknowledges that, as part of the Body of Christ, we need each other and are accountable to each other;
- Communicates with, supports and prays with and for our member congregations and ministers;
- Provides resources that assist our congregations in carrying out our shared mission to make disciples, nurture our faith, and serve the needs of community;
- Fosters, encourages and lives out our commitment to unity and spiritual growth in the life of the Church to the glory of God; and,
- Reaches beyond our own needs to carry out the Mission of the Church as expressed in the *Foundations of Presbyterian Polity* [F-1.01-1.04].

CHAPTER III: MINISTRY

Section 1 Mission determines Ministry

“Mission determines the forms and structures for the church to do its work” (G-3.106). As a Presbytery, we commit to:

- Educate and grow biblically and theologically as we are formed in Christ (Galatians 1:19);
- Mutually encourage one another (I Thessalonians 5:11);
- Pursue joint missionary work (Matthew 28:16-20);
- Meet regularly for prayer and support (Acts 2:42);
- Enhance the community’s capacity to live the faith (Ephesians 4:1-13).

Chapter IV: Organization of Presbytery

Section 1 Council

The Council of Presbytery exists to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ (G-3.01). Membership of the Council shall include a Moderator, four Teaching Elders and four Ruling Elders as elected by the Presbytery. The General Presbyter, Stated Clerk, Moderator-Elect, and Treasurer shall serve ex officio, without vote. A quorum of Council shall be a simple majority of its voting members.

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The Council and each of its members commits to the following code of conduct:

- a. Members of the Council will serve with undivided loyalty to the interests of Christ regarding those whom he has called the Presbytery to serve (Matthew 28:18-20). This loyalty supersedes any other personal or group interest regarding anyone or anything served by the Presbytery. A member of Council must disclose any conflict of interest, fiduciary or otherwise, and withdraw from any decision-making affected by such conflict of interest.
- b. Members of the Council shall honor the principles and decisions of the Council, act as a whole, and shall not foster dissent or attempt to exercise individual authority over the Presbytery or its staff except as is explicitly stated in the Personnel policies.
- c. Members of the Council shall respect the confidentiality of sensitive issues and information, and must avoid facilitating gossip or other triangulating behaviors, which stand against the practice of direct, biblically based resolution.
- d. The General Presbyter has the responsibility, authority and accountability to serve as the pastor and coach of the Presbytery at every level: with congregations, parish elders, commissions, ministry teams, Council and staff.

Section 2

Commissions

Commissions of the presbytery shall be comprised of ruling and teaching elders who are elected or appointed by the presbytery. Commissions shall be as evenly balanced as possible in the number of ruling and teaching elders. Commissions are empowered, by presbytery action, with specific responsibilities and authority to act on behalf of the presbytery, with those actions being reported to the next meeting of the presbytery. The Chairperson of the Commissions shall be designated by presbytery, except for the Permanent Judicial Commission, which shall elect its own chairperson. With the exception of the permanent judicial commission, commission members will serve a three-year term, electable to a second three-year (3) term (maximum six (6) years consecutively). The presbytery may, from time to time and for particular purposes elect other administrative commissions defining their responsibilities and specifying their level of authority

Three standing commissions oversee particular portions of our shared work:

- Calling

While we are all called into relationship and service to God through our baptism, the particulars of how we live out our respective calls are born of the intersection of our passions and strengths with the needs of the community. A strong underpinning of our Reformed theology understands that call, while experienced by the individual, is confirmed by the voice of the collective body. The work of this commission includes responsibilities and authority for preparation for ministry as detailed in G-2.06.

- Parish Elders

The call of the Parish Elders is to serve as pastor, counselor, and advisor to Teaching Elders, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Congregations. The work of the Parish Elders includes responsibilities as detailed in the *Book of Order* (G-2.05, G-2.10, G-2.11, G-3.0303d). Parish Elders serve specific geographic parishes. Co-Parish Elders shall be treated in the same manner as co-pastors. This body shall be made up of a parish elder for each existing parish. A parity of ruling and teaching elders, as nearly as possible, shall be maintained. There shall be three classes. They shall have full administrative responsibility and authority to act on behalf of the

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presbytery as detailed in the *Book of Order* (G-2.05, G-2.10, 2.11, G-3.0303d).

- Permanent Judicial Commission

The Permanent Judicial Commission shall be elected by the presbytery. Members of the Permanent Judicial Commission serve a single term of six years. The terms of service shall be as equally divided into three classes. The permanent judicial commission shall function in accord with the Rules of Discipline.

Section 3

Teams

The presbytery may, from time to time, establish teams to carryout various administrative and mission functions. The chairperson of the teams shall be elected by the presbytery. Team members may include ruling elders, teaching elders, and members of congregations within the presbytery. The chairperson of each team may recruit team members and shall keep the Mission Coordinator apprised of team membership and their term of service.

The size of the teams shall be determined by the needs of ministry. Each team includes no fewer than three leaders per team, each serving a rotational term of three years (maximum six (6) years consecutively).

Four standing teams oversee particular portions of our shared work:

- Nominating:

Leadership is the key to accomplishing our shared mission. The Nominating Team is responsible for nominating men and women to serve in positions of leadership, including: those serving on Council, as Parish Elders, on the Commissions, on the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission, and as Presbytery Commissioners to higher Councils. To that end, the Nominating Team seeks to faithfully discern those whom God is calling into leadership whose:

- *Character* is grounded in Christ and reflects courage, vision, and empathy for those in the mission field.
- *Commitment* to the mission of Muskingum Valley Presbytery is unswerving.
- *Knowledge* of congregational systems will serve to build health.
- *Skills* in leading systemic change: including diagnostic, prescriptive, and relational skills.

Note: While the first two criteria for leaders are non-negotiable, the Presbytery will provide the necessary training to develop both the knowledge and skills needed to lead deep change. The Nominating Team shall include no less than three, nor more than seven members, serving terms of three years on a rotational basis. A quorum for the nominations team is three. Nominations to serve on the Nominating Team shall be made by the Parish Elders to Council for presentation to Presbytery for vote.

- Equipping

The equipping of pastors, leaders, and congregations for ministry requires discernment of approach appropriate to the need. This team will seek to identify the resources, training and tools needed for faithful, effective ministry in the context of accountable relationships per G-2.05.

- Serving in Mission

Serving beyond the local congregation and community is part of Jesus' call to us. This team will identify the processes by which we might discern ministry

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opportunities and serve in partnership together—across our parishes, country, and world.

- Administration

The Call of the Administration Team is to serve as a resource and advisor to the General Presbyter by ensuring accountability to the mission of Muskingum Valley Presbytery and use of “best practices” in both fiduciary and personnel matters. In accordance with G-3.0106, particular responsibilities of the Administration Team include: financial and legal compliance (including “best practices”), funds development, evaluation of ministry and staff, property needs assessment (for MVP congregations and the presbytery itself).

Section 4

General Presbyter:

The General Presbyter will serve the Presbytery as:

- a. Sentinel (Jer. 6:17) on the watch-tower, looking for ways God is coming to us and being alert for signs of danger and obstacles to God's coming, informing and communicating what he/she observes and discerns;
- b. Midwife (Ex. 1:17) who coaches us to be healthy and engaged in the process of birth even in the face of inevitable losses that come with the transition to something new;
- c. Tender of Vineyards (in response to Jesus' call in John 15:1-17) who nurtures God's emerging work by paying particular attention to community-based ministries that result in transformed communities and nurtured ways of being the Body of Christ.

The General Presbytery shall be called by Presbytery and shall serve as head of staff. This person is accountable to the Council who shall provide review annually. As in all ministry on a presbytery level, the General Presbyter will combine responsibility and authority with accountability.

Section 5

Staff:

Council shall call and/or elect such non-exempt staff as necessary to fulfill its administrative and mission functions. Staff persons shall have such responsibilities as determined by presbytery, in negotiation with their calling, with accountability to and review from presbytery. A security bond, the cost of which shall be paid from Presbytery's General Fund, shall cover any of the above staff with responsibility for receiving and/or disbursing funds of Presbytery. Further details are available in the Position Descriptions.

Section 6

Resignation and Removals:

Any leader may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Moderator of the Council. A leader's resignation shall take effect upon receipt by the Presbytery unless the notice specifies a later effective date. Unless otherwise specified therein, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective. A leader shall be deemed to have resigned in the event of such leader's incapacity as determined by a court of competent jurisdiction.

CHAPTER V: STRUCTURE

Section 1

Form of Government:

The Presbyterian form of government is grounded in Scripture. The *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* provides that this church is governed by presbyters,

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that is, ruling elders and teaching elders.

Section 2

Councils of the Church:

Teaching and Ruling Elders come together in councils: sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. Each of these councils is governed by the *Bible* and by the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)* that is comprised of the *Book of Confessions and the Book of Order*.

Section 3

Amendment of the Standing Rules:

The Presbytery is responsible for both amending and updating these Standing Rules as necessary. All proposed amendments to the *Standing Rules* shall be presented in writing to the Council no fewer than ten days in advance of the meeting at which the vote will be taken. A two-thirds majority of the members present at the meeting shall be required to approve the proposed amendment(s), or to suspend any specific standing rule(s) for a definite period of time.