

## RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN ELDER

- Attend **monthly session meetings** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Call into the office (or contact the Clerk) to be excused if you are unable to attend.
- Attend your **assigned committee meetings** on a monthly basis (or as scheduled by committee)
- Please remember to **check your mailbox in the office and your e-mail** (for those who chose this option) on a regular basis for communications and the conveyance of information (i.e. monthly Session and committee minutes). Even if you have chosen e-mail as your preferred method of communication, please continue to check your mailbox in the office.
- Attend **officer training/goal & vision meeting(s)**. (Minimum – A Saturday a.m. in January)
- January - Within your assigned committee, **establish annual goals and objectives** (that are relative to and supportive of CPC's Mission Statement and Mission Direction) and the means and methods for implementing them in the upcoming year. **Establish a proposed calendar of events** for the year, identifying the event, the date and time, building use area(s) needed, and location (if other than CPC). **By the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in February – Submission to the Pastor of each committee's goals and objectives and proposed calendar** for review and identification of any potential conflicts in scheduling or any apparent omissions or unaddressed areas of ministry that need further consideration or resolution.
- On an ongoing basis, **personally encourage and invite others to participate and become actively involved** in the work and ministry of the church. (by way of: general committee involvement – involvement and help with a specific area or task or event – regular attendance/participation in church life and events, etc.). Remember: People are more responsive to personal (as opposed to “general”) invitations to participate or help out – People form relationships through their interactions and involvement with others so, those who “are invited and received into our circles” are more likely to become and remain involved– Look beyond the “same group of people” for help and participation – Invite! Invite! Invite! – “Many hands make light work!”
- Attend called **meetings of the congregation/corporation**.
- **Prepare and submit your committee's anticipated budget needs in August** (for the upcoming year) to the Finance Committee (for review and consideration and in preparation for the Fall Stewardship Campaign with the congregation).
- **Fall Stewardship Campaign** – Be prepared to interpret your committees work/goals/needs to the congregation.
- **Serve communion** as scheduled – Worship committee is responsible for securing elders to serve communion & sign-up sheets are regularly passed at session meetings.
- **Serve as liturgist for worship** – Worship is responsible for securing liturgists & passes a sign-up sheet at the monthly session meetings – seeking volunteers who are comfortable in that role.
- Volunteer to **serve as CPC's elder commissioner at one of the Presbytery of Detroit's meetings** (held the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday at varying locations throughout the Presbytery during the months of January, February, April, June, August, October, and November). Sign-ups are at session meetings.

## SESSION AND THE ROLE OF ELDERS

- **The Session is composed** of the pastor (as moderator) and fifteen (15) ruling elders who are divided into 3 equal classes, one class of which is elected each year for a 3 year term at a Stated Meeting of the Congregation held during the fourth quarter of the year.
- **The Clerk of Session** shall be the secretary of all meetings of Session and the Congregation. If the clerk is not present or is unable to serve, the session or its moderator shall appoint a secretary to record the minutes of the meeting. The Clerk of the Session shall be an elder, elected by the Session, for such term as it may determine. (The Clerk may be, but need not be, serving a term as a currently elected elder by vote of the congregation)
- All fifteen currently elected ruling elders, including the pastor, are **entitled to vote**. (The Clerk has a vote **only** if he/she is serving a term as a currently elected elder by vote of the congregation).
- **The Session is responsible for the governance of the church** in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Consistent with that Constitution, these bylaws, as found in the Book of Order, shall provide specific guidance for the session in terms of its responsibilities (G-10.0102) and in the formation and implementation of its mission directives for CPC.
- We are a **unicameral board**, meaning that it is “One Board” – the Session alone – that has the responsibility and power to govern and have oversight over ALL organizations within the congregation
- The **Standing Committees of this Session** are currently comprised of Christian Ed, Fellowship, Finance & Stewardship, Membership & Evangelism, Mission Interpretation, Music & Worship, Nominating, Personnel, and Trustees.
- In our organizational model, **all standing committees share equal status**, and all are subject to the governance of the Session as a whole. According to Roberts Rules of Order, the pastor, due to vocational call and office, is an Ex Officio member of every committee.
- Though, in our congregational history, the **Deacons and Presbyterian Women** have not been under the direct auspices of any standing committee of the Session (having been given the opportunity to generally define and direct the manner of their ministries within the congregation and wider community), they are still subject to the governance and oversight of the Session.
- Following the annual election of officers, **the pastor will assign each elder to one or more of the standing committees of Session** for the upcoming year – taking into account the gifts and talents (and interests, whenever possible) of the serving elders and matching them with assignments that will provide the greatest overall benefit in addressing the needs of the congregation.
- Although each elder is responsible for serving the standing committee to which they have been assigned and for addressing the needs of that committee to the best of their ability, that does not preclude them from **serving on other committees of their own choice or interest** at any time (excepting the Nominating Committee).
- **All members are welcome and eligible** (and not subject to elected terms of office) **to serve on standing committees of their interest and choice at any time** (excepting Nominating Committee). However, **it is the elders, as elected representatives, who are responsible for the guidance,**

direction, instruction, oversight, and governance of committee business, as well as for making monthly reports to the Session pertaining to the work of their assigned committee.

- **Each committee's chairperson will be an elder who has been assigned to work with that standing committee for the year.** Although the pastor may make recommendations regarding the chairmanships of the various committees (based on experience or talents or a willingness to serve in that capacity), **at the beginning of the year, each committee is responsible for choosing which elder will serve as it's chairperson (or which elders will serve as co-chairs) and inform the session of their selection.**
- **Committee chairpersons are responsible** for calling, scheduling and publicizing it's committee meetings on a regular or as needed basis, for establishing the meeting's agenda, for moderating the meeting, for assigning someone to record the minutes of the meeting and to convey them in a timely manner to the church office for distribution, for general oversight of committee assignments and subsequent follow-up as to what progress is being made, for guiding your committee through the process of resolving issues in a constructive manner, and for having clear and concise motions from your committee available in printed form for the Session's consideration.
- **Elders are called to be spiritual leaders of the congregation.** "Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgement." (G-6.0303) "It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge." (G-6.0304) **It is an awesome, yet necessary, responsibility to set and maintain a positive spiritual tone and direction for our congregation!**
- **It is the responsibility of elders and their respective committees to seek to address and resolve issues/problems related to their committee's oversight and then bring recommendations and/or motions (along with their rationale) to the Session for their consideration and vote.** Although committee members may vote within their committee as to a course of action or recommendation or motion that they wish to present to Session, the vote of a committee has no binding power over the Session with regard to ministry or mission, or program or policy – for it is only the called and elected and ordained and installed Elders who hold voting power to determine matters of program and policy, mission priority, building and financial matters, and matters of stewardship and employment.
- It is the responsibility of elders to – **first – attempt to direct questions and/or concerns that may arise to the appropriate committee,** rather than to usurp the role and function of committees by way of bypassing them and taking unrepresented and unaddressed matters directly to Session.
- **The Session, as a whole, is not responsible for doing the work of the individual committees** – the Session's function is not to operate as a "committee of the whole" in regards to incomplete or unaddressed committee work – but rather, it's function is to discuss and act upon specific motions that are presented for consideration by committees.
- Let us remember, that in our work together as a Session and with our committees and with the people we serve, that we can agree to disagree but not to be disagreeable! – that we may **"lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** (Ephesians 4:1-3)

CHAPTER X

**THE SESSION**

G-10.0000

G-10.0100

**1. General**

G-10.0101  
Membership

The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service.<sup>a</sup> All members of the session, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote.

G-10.0102  
Responsibilities

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church.<sup>b</sup> It therefore has the responsibility and power

a. to provide opportunities for evangelism to be learned and practiced in and by the church, that members may be better equipped to articulate their faith, to witness in word and deed to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and to invite persons into a new life in Christ, in accordance with G-3.0300;

b. to receive members into the church upon profession of faith,<sup>c</sup> upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon satisfactory certification of transfer of church membership, provided that membership shall not be denied any person because of race, economic or social circumstances, or any other reason not related to profession of faith;

c. to lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole Church in the world, in accordance with G-3.0000;

d. to provide for the worship of the people of God, including the preaching of the Word, the sharing of the Sacraments, and for the music program, in keeping with the principles in the Directory for Worship, and to appeal to the presbytery for a duly trained and authorized elder under the provisions of G-11.0103 in those extenuating circumstances where an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament is not available to meet the needs for the administration of the Lord's Supper;

e. to provide for the growth of its members and for their equipment for ministry through personal and pastoral care, educational programs including the church school, sharing in fellowship and mutual support, and opportunities for witness and service in the world;

f. to develop and supervise the church school and the educational program of the church;

g. to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness;

h. to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship of money and time and

(4) observing and carrying out the instructions of the higher governing bodies consistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);

(5) welcoming representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;

(6) proposing to the presbytery and, through it, to the synod and the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;

(7) sending annually to the stated clerk of the presbytery statistical and other information according to the requirements of the presbytery.

q. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships necessary for the life and mission of the church in its locality;

r. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;<sup>e</sup>

s. to keep an accurate roll of the membership of the church, in accordance with G-10.0302, and to grant certificates of transfer to other churches, which when issued for parents shall include the names of their children specifying whether they have been baptized, and which when issued for an elder or deacon shall include the record of ordination.

G-10.0103  
Moderator

a. The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of the session and the session shall not meet without the pastor except as hereunder provided. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session. When it may appear advisable for prudential reasons that some minister other than the pastor should preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the session, invite a minister of the same presbytery to do so. A presbytery may appoint a lay pastor as moderator of session to the church to which she or he is commissioned. The person assigned to the commissioned lay pastor as mentor and supervisor shall also supervise his or her work as moderator. In addition, the moderator of the session of a church with a vacant pulpit may request an elder who is a member of the presbytery's committee on ministry, the stated clerk, executive presbyter, or associate executive presbyter, to preside; such elder may not moderate the session of the church of which that elder is a member. In the case of the sickness or absence of the pastor the same expedient may be adopted; or the session, after having obtained the approval of the pastor, may convene and elect another of its own members to preside.

When Without a  
Pastor

b. When a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the session shall be the minister appointed for that purpose by the presbytery, or a minister of the same presbytery invited by the session