

General Council Handbook

ROLE: Serves as the Executive Body to direct, coordinate, promote, and implement programmatic work and strategic planning of the Presbytery.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership of General Council consists of twenty-three (23) voting members and five (5) non-voting members with voice, but no vote.

1. Voting Members:

- Chair, General Council
- Moderator, Mission Presbytery
- Moderator-Elect, Mission Presbytery
- Representative, Valley Region
- Representative, Corpus Christi Region
- Representative, Victoria Region
- Representative, Hill Country Region
- Representative, Austin Region
- Representative, San Antonio Region
- COM Chair or Vice-Chair
- CPM Chair
- COR Chair
- HMK Trustees Chair or Co-Chair
- NOM Chair
- CDE Chair
- ECN Chair
- MOJC Chair
- PCC Chair
- PER Chair
- PW Chair
- SFOC Chair
- Trustees of Mission Presbytery Chair
- YCC Chair or Co-Chair

2. Non-Voting Members:

- Executive Presbyter (ex officio)
- Church Consultant
- Youth and Young Adults Director
- John Knox Ranch Director
- Stated Clerk/Recorder

MEETINGS:

1. General Council shall meet no less than three (3) times per calendar year held no sooner than one (1) month before a stated meeting of Presbytery.
2. General Council's Leadership Team, comprised of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Chair of General Council, Executive Presbyter/Head of Staff, and Stated Clerk, shall meet as called by the Chair of General Council.
3. Meetings ordinarily are conducted face-to-face to ensure adequate discussion and discernment regarding matters of the Presbytery.

4. Meetings may be conducted electronically:
 - a. Electronic meetings as Stated Meetings of Council ordinarily will be conducted by telephone conference call or a web-based meeting service that allows for simultaneous discussion and immediate response to and by members of Council.
 - b. Electronic meetings may be conducted by Email as Called Meetings of Council for business matters that only require minimal explanation and minor grammar, syntax, or spelling edits.
 - 1) The Chair of Council will halt any Email meeting and call for a conference or face-to-face meeting to continue the meeting should Email business matters require discussions, ability to immediately and simultaneously respond to or by members, study, and/or proposed amendments.
 - 2) The Chair of General Council will Email all members of General Council citing the Email meeting's start date/time and an end date/time for voting of not less than a 24 hour period nor more than 72 hours.
 - 3) Meetings conducted by Email will include in the body of the message:
 - Subject Matter
 - Background/Rationale
 - Recommendation/Motion

QUORUM:

1. A quorum to function as an Administrative Commission of Mission Presbytery shall consist of no less than three (3) Ruling Elders and (3) Teaching Elders present in person for the meeting.
2. A quorum to meet as a committee of Presbytery without commission authority requires any six (6) General Council's voting members present in person or on conference-call/web-meeting for the meeting.
3. A quorum for E-mail meeting/voting is all of the above listed voting members.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION FUNCTIONS ASSIGNED BY PRESBYTERY:

1. Authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper at meetings of Presbytery, Presbyterian Women's annual Gatherings, Diakonia Emmaus and Presbyterian Pilgrimage spiritual retreats within the bounds of the Presbytery.
2. Authorize annually Ruling and Teaching Elders on the Presbytery staff to officiate the Lord's Supper at worship services or retreats conducted in performance of their Presbytery responsibilities and in support of the Presbytery's mission.
3. Approve Presbytery's annual budget.
4. Authorize appointment of Sub-Committee Chairs for Stewardship & Finance Oversight and Personnel.
5. Staff the Presbytery office and conduct employment assessments.
6. Establish annually the minimum package for compensation for Teaching Elders, Christian Educators, and Christian Associate Educators.
7. Appoint committee members to fill unexpired or unfilled term vacancies when those vacancies are less than twelve months in duration.
8. Approve committee handbooks and policies for the Manual of Operations appendixes.
9. Appoint Ruling and Teaching elders to be readers of standard ordination examinations.
10. Set meetings of Presbytery.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Greater Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) & Ecumenical:

1. Oversees ecumenical and interfaith affairs.
2. Maintains relationships with Synod and General Assembly.
3. Coordinates all ecumenical concerns for which the Presbytery has responsibility.
4. Coordinates denominational programs through correspondence, cooperation, and consultation with the General Assembly and the Synod of Sun and their agencies.

Organization & Vision:

1. Reviews and evaluates the work of Presbytery in light of the goals, priorities, and directions developed by the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly.
2. Serves as Presbytery's visioning team.
3. Recommends Presbytery create, staff, and fund new programmatic committees.
4. Evaluates the effectiveness of the organizational structure and mission of Presbytery at least every (5) years and make recommendations to Presbytery for its modification.
5. Reviews and evaluates Presbytery's mission in the light of adopted priorities annually.
6. Makes recommendations to Presbytery on all exceptions to provisions in the Book of Order.

Committee & Commission Tasks:

1. Acts on items that have been assigned to it by the Presbytery (to be reported to Presbytery in assembly) for action between meetings of Presbytery.
2. Supports the chairs of standing committees and Presbytery agencies in coping with issues and problems confronting them.
3. Prepares a report for each stated meeting of Presbytery including items of business transacted by General Council.
4. Receives, acts on, and/or refers correspondence that is directed General Council.
5. The decisions of General Council become immediately operative wherever the Presbytery has conferred power; and, decisions may be reviewed and reversed by the Presbytery.

Communication:

1. Directs the communication of the Presbytery.
 - a. Maintains the Presbytery's webpage.
 - b. Utilizes electronic mail distribution as the primary and the most cost effective means of communicating to Presbytery members and congregations.
 - c. Provides for communications to congregations lacking internet connectivity.
 - d. Provides communications to Presbytery members and congregations from higher councils.
2. Appoints a Communication Officer for the Presbytery to deal with media interests and reporters.
3. Tasks the Executive Presbyter/Head of Staff to regularly communicate in writing or electronically to members of Presbytery and congregations.

Personnel:

1. Directs the work of called and employed personnel of the Presbytery.
2. Approves changes to the staff design of the Presbytery and provides input to the Personnel Committee of anticipated staffing needs.
3. Approves specific staff salary changes upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee.
4. Appoints an Interim Search committee of both teaching and ruling elders when there is a vacancy for Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk.
5. Nominates teaching and ruling elders to the Presbytery for election to a Search Committee for either an Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk.
6. Reviews the Personnel Committee's annual performance evaluation of the EP.
7. Approves contractors for non-personal services.
8. Provides access to the Personnel/Employee Policies & Procedures to each employee, volunteer, contractor, member of Presbytery, and congregations' Sessions.

Fiduciary:

1. Considers and report upon all appeals for funds not allocated by the Presbytery budgets.
2. Submits a budget for General Council operations for the coming calendar year in September for General Council meetings, travel, Presbytery Office operations and equipment, and special projects.
3. Receives and reviews budgets for the coming calendar year from committees of Presbytery in September.
4. Considers approval of all funds requests by individuals and any unfunded expenditures by committees or agencies that exceed the approved budget line items.
5. Reviews the audit annually and make changes in financial practices in response to the findings of the audit.
6. Recommends to the Presbytery the amount of per capita apportionment if over and above the percentage set by General Assembly, identifying the percentage distribution of benevolence giving necessary to support the mission causes of the Presbytery and Synod of Sun.
7. Approves contractors' non-personal services terms.
8. Annually reviews the Presbytery's insurance policy for sufficient coverage to cover non-profit religious organizations and its members.

Nominations:

1. Recommends a Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to the Presbytery for election annually at its Spring meeting.
2. Recommends members of the Nominations Committee for election by the Presbytery.
3. Recommends Chairs for all standing committees of Presbytery and General Council's sub-committees to the Presbytery for election.

Committees of Presbytery:

1. Assumes, at General Council's discretion, the obligations of Presbytery agencies unable to perform assigned responsibilities.
2. Reviews and controls actions of committees Presbytery agencies (committees, sub-committees, task forces, or work groups) in line with the scope of the Constitution of the

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbytery By-Laws and Manual of Operations, and available resources.

3. Hears reports from committees of Presbytery and acts upon them as necessary.

Appointments of Special Temporary Committees:

1. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for appointing Investigating Committees as needed for disciplinary cases.
2. Chair of General Council with the Moderator of the Committee on Ministry and the Stated Clerk will appoint members to Listening Teams and Resolution Teams functioning within the policy for gracious separation.
3. Creates Task Forces, Sub-Committees, and Work Groups necessary to accomplish the work of the Presbytery.
4. Unless otherwise provided, the General Council names the chair and members of these special committees.
5. Reviews and controls actions of Presbytery agencies (sub-committees, task forces, or work groups) in line with the scope of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbytery By-Laws and Manual of Operations, and available resources.
6. Hears reports from its subcommittees, commissions, task forces, work groups and temporary committees, when requested, and act upon them.

Set Presbytery Meetings:

1. Determines meeting venues for Presbytery to accommodate commissioners and visitors.
2. Arranges the docket of business for meetings of Presbytery with the assistance of the Stated Clerk.
3. If meeting venue has adequate space for Displays:
 - a. Reserves three to five (3-5) tables per meeting for displays directly related to the mission focus for the particular meeting of Presbytery.
 - b. Distributes reservation invitations for display space to requests to other groups at least one (1) prior to a meeting of Presbytery.
 - c. Approves display reservation requests based upon submission dates and with the intention to offer a balance of perspectives.
4. Determines the theme of Presbytery meetings.
5. Approves pre-Presbytery workshops.
6. Approves and staffs workshops, breakout groups, and educational sessions conducted within the meeting of Presbytery.
7. Approves recipients for designated offering collected during the Communion service.
 - a. Reviews requests received no later than its Stated Meeting prior to a particular meeting of Presbytery.
 - b. Approves or appoints a speaker for each meeting of Presbytery to explain the purpose of designated offering.
8. Plans worship at Presbytery meetings, assigning whatever aspects it wishes to the Worship Task Force. The Chair of General Council and Vice-Moderator will serve on the Worship Task Force.
9. Approves all flyers, committee reports, speakers, workshops, and displays for Presbytery meetings no less than one (1) month from the next meeting of Presbytery.
10. Receives final committee reports to Presbytery no less than three (3) weeks from the

- meeting of Presbytery.
11. Identifies meeting venues for the Summer meeting of Presbytery that facilitates the Youth of the Presbytery meeting and lodging.

Policy:

1. Approves all policies included in the committee appendixes of the Manual of Operations before implementation.
2. Directly responsible for creating and revising the following policies of Presbytery:
 - a. Gracious Separation Policy
 - b. Presbytery Attendance Policy
 - c. Worship Task Force
 - d. Gifts and Securities Policy
 - e. Minimum Effective Salary Policy
 - f. Theft and Fraud Policy
 - g. Per Capita Policy
 - h. Minimum Effective Salary
 - i. Other policies as assigned by Presbytery