

G-3.02 THE SESSION

G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities

The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active service^d as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors. All members of the session are entitled to vote. The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provisions for a moderator. Presbyteries shall provide by rule for moderators when the session is without a moderator for reasons of vacancy or inconvenience.

The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation^c and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:

a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include providing a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture; providing for regular preaching of the Word by a minister of the Word and Sacrament or other person prepared and approved for the work; planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship; planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.

b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.* This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at least quarterly and the administration of Baptism as appropriate, in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship; and exercising pastoral care among the congregation in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.* This responsibility shall include receiving and dismissing members; reviewing the roll of active members at least annually and counseling with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership; providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship; training, examining, ordaining, and installing those elected by the congregation as ruling elders and deacons; encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in

participating in the mission of the whole church; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline^f.

G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

- a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports;
- b. nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);
- c. see that the guidance and communication of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- e. propose to the presbytery, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- f. send to presbytery^g and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

G-3.0203 Meetings

The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. The moderator^h shall call a special meeting when he or she deems necessary or when requested in writing by any two members of the session. The business to be transacted at special meetings shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting. There shall be reasonable notice given of all special meetings. The session shall also meet when directed by presbytery. Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.

G-3.0204 Minutes and Records

Minutes of the session shall be subject to the provisions of G-3.0107. They shall contain the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees.

Each session shall maintain the following roll and registers:

a. *Membership Roll*

There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members in accordance with G-1.0401, G-1.0402 and G-1.0403. The session shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The session may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.

b. *Registers*

There shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.

G-3.0205 Finances

In addition to those responsibilities described in G-3.0113, the session shall prepare and adopt a budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences. It shall authorize offerings for Christian purposes and shall account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement. It shall provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters.

The session shall elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide and shall supervise his or her work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees. Those in charge of various congregational funds shall report at least annually to the session and more often as requested. Sessions may provide by rule for standard financial practices of the congregation, but shall in no case fail to observe the following procedures:

a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;

b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions shall be kept and shall be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;

c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities shall be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregationsⁱ and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner^j and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method