

Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Boston

Last amended March 21, 2015

A. Membership

1. A ruling elder from a congregation affiliated with this presbytery as a fellowship may be seated as a corresponding member, with voice but without vote.
2. Teaching elder members and those elder commissioners designated by their sessions to represent their churches at presbytery meetings shall notify the stated clerk if unable to attend presbytery meetings, and the presbytery shall vote on excusing those persons from attendance.
3. Active participation in the presbytery's life and work shall be used as a criterion in annually redressing an imbalance of resident teaching elders and ruling elders entitled to vote.

B. Meetings

1. Written notice of all stated and special meetings, and meeting materials, shall be posted on the presbytery website at least seven days before stated and special (called) meetings. Those who are providing materials for posting must submit their materials at least ten days before the meeting. Meeting materials submitted at least four days before the meeting may be posted in a supplemental meeting packet.
2. When family responsibilities would prevent attendance of teaching elders and ruling elder commissioners at meetings of the presbytery, a request for reimbursement of childcare or similar expenses should be submitted to the treasurer.
3. Churches hosting presbytery meetings will provide light refreshments during the pre-meeting fellowship hour, and through the moderator or stated clerk may request partnership assistance in providing this hospitality should the session's invitation to the presbytery depend upon sharing these responsibilities.
4. Ruling elder commissioners and teaching elders are expected to be present for the entire presbytery meeting. Those needing to leave early may request presbytery's voted permission to do so.
5. The moderator or his/her designee invites persons to lead the presbytery in worship, including at the January meeting when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated, and s/he shall preach or otherwise provide for the giving of a sermon at the January meeting concluding the moderatorial term.
6. If the moderator is unable to be present at a presbytery meeting the vice moderator shall preside and, in the case of the absence of that persons, the immediate past moderator or that person's predecessor in office shall be acting moderator.
7. At each meeting one teaching elder and one ruling elder shall be designated by the moderator to read the prepared minutes of that meeting and report their recommendation regarding approval at the next stated meeting for the action of the presbytery.
8. Items presented for inclusion as new business on the docket must be in written form and distributed prior to the opening of the meeting.

9. In the event that a formal protest is filed with the stated clerk in accordance with G-3.0105b the Moderator will ask the vice moderator and the immediate past moderator, if present, or another past moderator if needed, to rule whether the protest should be entered in the minutes. The presbytery may approve entry of a response, as provided by any member present.
10. In its annual budget the presbytery shall provide for compensation for the recording clerk.
11. If the Moderator determines that such emergency conditions as bad weather require postponing a stated meeting, the meeting shall be held on the following Tuesday at the same time and place.
12. Ruling elders serving on committees of the presbytery have the privilege of voice at presbytery meetings during their term of service.
13. The Moderator may appoint an eligible ruling elder or teaching elder of this presbytery to replace an absent member of an administrative commission to ordain or install, with this authority limited to instances when such an appointment is needed in order for there to be a quorum present.

C. Officers

1. In its annual budget the presbytery shall provide for expenses incurred by its officers in fulfilling their responsibilities.
2. In its annual budget the presbytery shall provide for compensation to the stated clerk and treasurer.
3. The stated clerk shall, no later than the March stated meeting, report the annual statistical summary based on reports from the churches.
4. The stated clerk shall, no later than the September stated meeting, recommend bylaw and standing rule revisions needed to conform with constitutional changes approved by the presbyteries and ratified by the last General Assembly.
5. The stated clerk shall provide for the distribution of current bylaws and standing rules to all sessions, teaching elders, ruling elder officers and other voting members of the presbytery.
6. This presbytery delegates to the Stated Clerk the responsibility of approving session minutes of member churches and shall report approvals and exceptions to session minutes to the presbytery.

D. Staff

The general presbyter shall ensure that each member of the presbytery staff meets annually with the committee on personnel.

E. Structure

1. The permanent judicial commission shall be convened at least biennially for orientation.
2. Ordinarily a person shall serve as a voting member on one continuing committee at a time.
3. Ordinarily only one person from a particular church shall serve as a voting member of any continuing committee at a time.

4. The nominating committee shall nominate persons to chair each continuing committee, ordinarily alternating teaching elders and ruling elders.
5. Ex-officio members, those serving on a committee or other entity by virtue of other elected or appointed responsibilities, are full members of those committees or entities unless specified otherwise by the Bylaws.
6. Continuing committees will submit reports for distribution prior to presbytery meetings to the general presbyter's administrative assistant in accordance with the published schedule for pre-presbytery mailings.
7. The Presbytery Council or a continuing committee shall review and bring to the presbytery its recommendation concerning any proposed actions involving the expenditure of presbytery funds; no action may be taken on such proposals without such review and recommendation.
8. The committee on ministry is authorized to dissolve pastoral relationships in cases where congregations and pastor concur, and shall inform the presbytery of such action at the next stated meeting.
9. The committee on ministry is authorized to appoint a teaching elder as moderator of session in a church without a pastor; it shall inform the session of such action immediately, and shall inform the presbytery at the next stated meeting.
10. The committee on ministry is authorized to dismiss teaching elders to other presbyteries, and shall report such actions to the next stated meeting of the presbytery.
11. The committee on preparation for ministry is authorized to certify candidates ready for examination for ordination, pending a call, and shall report such actions to the next stated meeting of the presbytery.
12. Three unexcused absences from presbytery committee meetings make such persons unable to serve out their terms.
13. The presbytery appropriates necessary funds for disciplinary cases originating under its jurisdiction through an advocacy support team.
 - a. When the stated clerk reports to the presbytery that an alleged offense has been referred to any investigating committee pursuant to the Rules of discipline, D-10.0103, the moderator of the permanent judicial commission appoints an advocacy support team, to consist of three presbyters, each of whom shall be a former member of the permanent judicial commission of the Presbytery of Boston, the Synod of the Northeast, or the General Assembly, and none of whom may be currently serving on the permanent judicial commission of the Presbytery of Boston.
 - b. When an alleged offense is referred to any investigating committee at a time when an advocacy support team has previously been formed, the moderator of the permanent judicial commission may choose either to refer the subsequent matter to the existing advocacy support team, or to appoint a new team.
 - c. An advocacy support team remains active until all disciplinary matters referred to it have been concluded, including during any appellate process.
 - d. Throughout the pendency of a matter, the advocacy support team is available to the investigating committee, the prosecuting committee and the accused on an impartial basis to:
 - i. assist in identifying appropriate advocacy support; and
 - ii. facilitate Presbytery's provision of financial support for advocacy expenses.

- e. When the advocacy support team, after consultation with any party to a matter, determines that the Rules of Discipline require Presbytery's financial support of advocacy expenses, the team prepares and presents to Presbytery Council a proposed budget as a request for the funds that the team deems to be reasonably necessary to meet Presbytery's obligation.
 - f. Once the budget has been approved by the Council, and specific expenses have been approved by a majority of the advocacy support team, any member of the team is authorized to submit requests for payment of advocacy expenses to the treasurer of the presbytery. In cases where counsel is retained, the advocacy support team is not involved in the determination of legal strategy, and does not intrude upon the attorney-client relationship.
- 14.
- a. The session of a congregation that contemplates seeking presbytery's approval of an action under G-3.0303b (moving, dividing, being dismissed or being dissolved) or under G-5.05 (entering into joint witness with another denomination) may invite presbytery to create a response team. Creation of a response team should occur expeditiously, without further inquiry, and ideally within one month.
 - b. The function of the response team shall be to accompany the session and congregation as they discern the way in which God is calling them to live out their future ministry as part of the church of Jesus Christ, taking care to seek to hear the breadth of opinions represented.
 - c. The response team shall consist of three ruling or teaching elders, none being members or staff in the congregation involved. The three members are named, one each, by the session, the chair of the committee on ministry, and the moderator of presbytery. It shall be the responsibility of the moderator to name the last member, with attention to ensuring a balanced team. The intent of the selection process is to choose a response team that will enjoy the trust of the session, congregation and presbytery. The moderator and stated clerk shall maintain a list of ruling and teaching elders who are open to such service, although selection is not limited to those so listed.
 - d. When the discernment process determines that the congregation's continued ministry within the Presbytery of Boston will most clearly fulfill its call to further the work of the church of Jesus Christ, the response team will report this conclusion to the presbytery with thanksgiving.
 - e. When the discernment process identifies actions on the part of presbytery, the implementation of which might allow the congregation to continue in good conscience to witness to the Gospel within the Presbytery of Boston, the Team is empowered to recommend to the presbytery, through its Council, any such actions.
 - f. If the response team and session, in their discernment process, conclude that an action contemplated in paragraph (a) of this rule is warranted, the response team is to work with the session and congregation to propose a plan of action that will (1) treat fairly the interests of both the congregation and the presbytery, including financial and legal interests; and (2) provide for actions to be taken in such a way that all involved will be able to affirm continued unity in the Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of the forms that their ongoing ministries may take. Once a plan of action is formulated, the session and response team will communicate the plan to the Presbytery Council, along with a request for creation of an administrative commission (G-3.0109b) to implement the plan. No member of the response team will be eligible for election to any administrative commission so created.
 - g. In the case of any of the outcomes identified in paragraphs d, e, or f, the response team and session are encouraged to plan an appropriate liturgical occasion to allow members of the congregation and presbytery to celebrate their history of ministry together, to offer each other blessings for the new forms of ministry toward which they are moving, and to join in recommitting themselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

h. Should the discernment process fail to reach a consensus, the response team shall report this conclusion to the Presbytery which shall dismiss the team with its appreciation.

15. When the Presbytery Council learns from the session of a congregation, through direct communication to Council or through indirect communication with an officer, staff member or committee of the presbytery, that the congregation or the session contemplates an action listed in paragraph (a) of Standing Rule E.14, the Presbytery Council will advise the session of the opportunity to seek creation of a response team under that rule. If a response team is not sought, or if a response team is appointed and then dismissed under paragraph (h) of Standing Rule E.14, Council will consider the need for the appointment of an administrative commission to support the congregation through its discernment process and, if an administrative commission is warranted will propose appointment of such a commission at the next stated meeting of the presbytery or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

16. A nomination from the floor must be accompanied by a bio on the literature table before the meeting.

F. Corporation and Board of Trustees

The chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall be president of the Corporation.

G. Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to General Assembly

1. The nominating committee shall present nominees for teaching elder [minister] commissioner and one or two alternates who are best able to represent the Presbytery of Boston. Its selections will emphasize inclusiveness as constitutionally defined as well as seniority concerns, taking into account the following presbytery records provided by the stated clerk:

- a. number of years since last attending General Assembly, since ordination to the ministry, and since reception by the Presbytery of Boston;
- b. attendance at a majority of stated meetings of presbytery during each of the two immediately preceding calendar years;
- c. amount of active participation on a presbytery or other council committee, or similar service during the two immediately preceding calendar years;
- d. at least five years of membership in the Presbytery of Boston at the date of the General Assembly.

2. A teaching elder's previous refusal of a nomination, or previous inability to serve as commissioner after election, will have no bearing on the nominating committee's decision.

3. The nominating committee shall present session-designated nominees for ruling elder commissioner and one or two alternates, all from the same church, on a rotating basis using the following presbytery records provided by the stated clerk:

- a. number of years since each church last sent a ruling elder as the presbytery's ruling elder commissioner to General Assembly or if no elder from a church has ever served as commissioner, the date of organization of the church;

! b. attendance of at least one ruling elder at a majority of stated meetings of presbytery during each of the two immediately preceding calendar years.

4. The nominating committee shall present nominations for young adult advisory delegates after communicating with all the sessions concerning this opportunity for younger members and interviewing each interested person. Nominations shall take into account the inclusiveness concerns of G-3.0103 and congregations represented by young adult advisory delegates in the preceding five to ten years.

H. Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the Synod of the Northeast

1. The nominating committee shall present nominations of ministers and elders qualified to serve the needs of the specific synod committees whose vacancies are to be filled, taking into account the inclusiveness concerns of G-3.0103.

2. The nominating committee shall present nominations for young adult advisory delegates after communicating with all the sessions concerning this opportunity for younger members and interviewing each interested person. Nominations shall take into account the inclusiveness concerns of G-3.0103.

I. Amendment and Suspension of Standing Rules

1. Amendments to these standing rules may be proposed at any presbytery meeting and may be adopted by a majority vote of those present and eligible to vote.

2. Suspension of these standing rules may be approved at any presbytery meeting by a majority of those present and eligible to vote.

March 21, 2015