

# The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey



## Session Rotation Requirement Exemption Policy

### Introduction

The Book of Order outlines clear provisions for the election, service, and responsibilities of ruling elders and deacons within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These standards affirm the importance of shared leadership, representative diversity, and accountability in church governance.

Two key provisions are:

- **G-2.0401** – Election of ruling elders and deacons from among the congregation, with attention to diversity and inclusiveness.
- **G-2.0404** – Terms of service, limiting consecutive years of service and requiring rotation in leadership roles.

Congregations may, at times, encounter circumstances that make it difficult to meet these requirements. In such situations, the *Book of Order* allows presbyteries to grant exemptions upon written request and approval by majority vote. If a session finds it necessary to request exemptions on a recurring basis, the Commission on Ministry (COM) may invite the session into conversation to explore ways of strengthening leadership and supporting the congregation's ministry.

### Purpose

This policy provides guidance for congregations within the Presbytery of the Highlands seeking an exemption from G-2.0401 and/or G-2.0404. It ensures that requests are made transparently, thoughtfully, and with a commitment to responsible leadership practices.

## Description of Requirements for Exemption Requests

To request an exemption, the **session must submit a written request annually**. Requests must be approved **prior to the annual election** of elders and/or deacons.

Each request must include the following:

### 1. Congregational and Leadership Size

- Provide the size of the congregation and the current size of the session and/or board of deacons if applicable

### 2. Efforts Toward Inclusive Leadership

- Describe how the congregation has attempted to nominate and elect new leaders who reflect the diversity of the church community, in alignment with F-1.0403.

### 3. Rationale for the Exemption

- Clearly state the reasons the congregation is unable to comply with G-2.0401 and/or G-2.0404.
- Explain any efforts made to adjust the size of the session or board of deacons to be more proportionate to the size of the congregation.

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## Submission Instructions

Please submit exemption requests to the Presbytery of the Highlands at:

 [office@highlandspresbytery.org](mailto:office@highlandspresbytery.org)

The COM liaison to the church will contact the session's clerk of session.