

**Proposed Amendments to the Book of Order coming before
the January 28, 2023 Meeting of Highlands Presbytery**

Congregations may wish to ask ruling elders with a particular interest or expertise regarding a given proposed amendment to consider serving as a ruling elder commissioner for this meeting.

Please remember that every church has a designated number of ruling elder commissioners. If a new ruling elder commissioner is registered for the January Presbytery meeting (or March or May), another ruling elder commissioner could not serve as a voting member at that meeting, so as to not exceed your designated number.

1. Omnibus Motion on items from the Form of Government. Commissioners may request removal of any items from this motion

22-G	Page 15	(G-2.0603): Preparation for Ministry: Purpose of Inquiry
22-K	Page 24	(G-2.1002): Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service: Training, Examining, and Commissioning
22-L	Page 26	(G-2.1103): Certified Church Service: Christian Educators

Proposal: This amendment would require boundary training, including the topics of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months for:

- 22-G Inquirers (throughout their call process)
- 22-K Commissioned Ruling Elders
- 22-L Certified Christian Educators

Rationale: Research shows that regularly required training is the most effective way to prevent sexual misconduct and abuse in the church. This would require these persons to meet the same requirements as those who members of the Presbytery.

Advisory Opinions:

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and the Office of the General Assembly support these proposed amendments.

**2. 22-O Page 33 Form of Government (G-3.0104): General Principles of Councils:
Officers**

Proposal: To mandate boundary training and child protection training for all members of councils including sessions of congregations, presbyteries, synods and the general assembly.

Rationale: It has been shown that regularly required training is the most effective way to prevent sexual misconduct and abuse in the church. This would require all members of sessions,

presbyteries, synods and the general assembly to meet the same requirements as minister members of the Presbytery.

Advisory Opinions:

The General Assembly Health Safety and Benefits Committee concluded that the denomination needs to mandate boundary training and child protection training for all members of councils.

**3. 22-P Page 34 Form of Government (G-3.0106): General Principles:
Administration of Mission**

Proposal: To mandate adoption and implementation of an antiracism policy and a harassment policy for all councils including sessions of congregations, presbyteries, synods and the general assembly, in addition to the previously mandated sexual misconduct and child and youth protection policies.

Rationale: Despite the PC(USA)'s acknowledgement of the country's racist history and the need to protect vulnerable people, "councils have been slow to respond."

Advisory Opinions:

- The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the constitution is not intended to serve as a manual of operations.
- The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns and the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee advise approval of this item.
- The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy advises approval of this item, while advocating for action beyond training.
- The General Assembly Committee on Representation believes such training is important, but emphasizes that how such training happens is as important as whether it happens.

**4. 22-J Page 22 Form of Government (G-2.1001): Commissioning Ruling Elders
to Particular Pastoral Service Functions**

Proposal: To permit commissioned ruling elders to be commissioned in one or more validated ministries of the presbytery.

Rationale: The ministry of Commissioned Ruling Elders has become more common and needed more than ever, both in geographically large presbyteries or where there are not enough pastors. CREs would still be limited to service as commissioned by the presbytery.

Advisory Opinions:

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) approve this item.

**5. 22-E Page 11 Form of Government (G-2.0503): Ministers of Word and
Sacrament: Categories of Membership**

Proposal: To eliminate the descriptive terms “Honorable” or “Honorably” from the status of “Retired.”

Rationale: The only designation of retirement for ministers of the Word and Sacrament allowed in the current Book of Order is “Honorably Retired.” There are, however, circumstances in which a Teaching Elder’s behavior is not worthy of the label “honorable.” Presbyteries presently have no alternative to “Honorably Retired.” This change to the constitution would have no effect on retirement benefits.

Advisory Opinions:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that this proposed amendment “presents issues.”

- Deleting “honorably” does not really affect the content of the paragraphs involved.
- The language of “or other factors satisfactory to the presbytery” may also have unintended consequences