

**The following proposed amendments to the Book of Order
will be voted upon at the May 9, 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.

22-F (Page 13) Form of Government [G-2.0505a(1)]: Ministers of the Word And Sacrament:
Transfer of Ministers of Other Denominations

Proposal: That if a presbytery may, in consultation with a particular community, recognize the ordination of an immigrant minister who provides evidence of good standing in a denomination, and receive that person as a member of the presbytery. If that minister lacks the required education assumed by the Presbyterian Church (USA), the presbytery should provide educational opportunities to provide for that minister's success.

Rationale: Often, pastors for immigrant fellowships are recognized in their home country as having fulfilled all necessary requirements, and may even be in partnership with the Presbyterian Church (USA), but may face cultural and language challenges inhibiting successful completion of the ordination exams. This proposed amendment calls for educational and mentoring programs that will help foster a successful transition to ministry in the United States.

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution, having made recommendations that were ultimately incorporated into the proposal, advises approval.

Comment: The General Assembly Committee on Representation notes that our structure and polity can create barriers to ministry when it comes to diversity within our denomination. If the PC(USA) is serious about its commitment to diversity, then a more flexible, collaborative, and individualized approach is needed.

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Proposal: That terms of call shall include provision for a minimum of twelve weeks paid medical leave in addition to its current standing requirements. *This proposed amendment applies to terms of call, which only applies to Ministers of Word and Sacrament.*

Rationale:

The General Assembly defines of Family Leave as:

- Leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child.
- Leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member.
- Leave to heal following a loss or tragic event.

Since 2014 the General Assembly has taken multiple actions to encourage its agencies, presbyteries, and churches to create parental leave policies. In 2018 the Family Leave Policy Task Force (FLPTF) was created, and it has determined the most effective method of accomplishing this goal for called and installed ministers is through a constitutional mandate.

It has been the policy of Highlands Presbytery since 2021 to grant twelve weeks family leave annually. You can find this policy in its entirety at:

[Highlands Presbytery Family Leave Policy](#)

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised disapproval, not on the merits of such a policy, but because what is current practice today may change tomorrow. For this reason, this proposed amendment is more fitting for a manual of operations than for a constitutional document.

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns recommends approval, seeing this as an opportunity to model our theology on work and workers.

The Advocacy Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends approval, given that as a denomination we have affirmed the importance of supporting families, but in practice we have not guaranteed this to those employed by the PC(USA).

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee recommends approval.

Comment: The General Assembly Committee on Representation has supported efforts for an equitable family leave policy. The proposed amendment would provide the framework for individuals needing parental or family leave, and should serve as a resource concerning employment practices as stated in the Book of Order.

22-Q (Page 36)

Form of Government (G-3.0303c): The Presbytery: Relations with Sessions

Proposal: That when establishing minimum compensation standards,

- a. provision for dissolution terms (severance) be included, and
- b. that it apply to pastoral calls, temporary pastoral service, Certified and Certified Associate Christian Educators.

Rationale: In 1993, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission ruled that presbyteries do not have the power to require congregations to pay compensation upon dissolution of pastoral relationships. It has been understood that a presbytery can have guidelines and policies for severance, but that presbytery has no authority to enforce those policies. This proposed amendment seeks to make that authority explicit, and linking it to the power to set minimum standards and approve calls.

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution provided advice regarding the original overture. The proposed amendment before us is significantly different from the original, due to changes made by the General Assembly.

The Advocacy Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends approval, noting that there is currently a lack of equity when it comes to severance. Some pastors might receive a fair severance package while another pastor receives nothing. This overture seeks to establish minimums.

22-Z (Page 49)

Directory for Worship (W-5.0201): Worship and the Church's Ministry Within The Community Of Faith: The Church's Ministry within the Community Of Faith

Note: While there are two numbered items under 22-Z, Item 2 is an edit, regarding references. Presbyteries will take one vote on both items.

Proposal: To emphasize the importance of discipleship in the Church's ministry.

Rationale: This amendment seeks to emphasize communal discipleship within the church's practice of ministry and mission.

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution

1. advises **approval** of W-5.0201, as it introduces the concept of discipleship in various paragraphs regarding the church's ministry in the community and the world.
2. It advises **disapproval** regarding W-5.0301 because (a) it is complementary to W-5.0201; and (b) highlighting discipleship in W-5.0201 makes it unnecessary to do so in a second place.

Reminder: The Presbytery takes one vote on 22-Z.

22-AA (Page 51)

Directory for Worship (W-5.0204): Worship and the Church's Ministry Within the Community of Faith: Pastoral Care

Proposal: Regarding specialized ministries of pastoral care, rather than adding to the existing brief list, that more general language be used to offer a wider array of ministries of pastoral care.

Rationale: The original overture proposed adding "spiritual direction" to pastoral counseling and chaplaincy as specialized means of providing pastoral care. Rather than expanding the understanding of pastoral care ministries one specialized ministry at a time, broader language will allow the relevant council to determine whether the gifts and credentials demonstrated are sufficient for meeting their requirements for specialized ministry. It is currently at the presbytery's discretion as to which ministries qualify as "specialized ministries."

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the shift from specific language to more general language, which is in the item before us.

22-BB (Page 53)

Directory for Worship (W-5.0204): Worship and the Church's Ministry Within the Community of Faith: Pastoral Care

Proposal: To add language to the description of services of wholeness and healing that is in keeping with our Reformed theological and pastoral perspectives.

Rationale: Current language in the *Book of Order* does not reflect contemporary Reformed understanding on the nature of healing and wholeness. The recommended changes indicate that healing happens in a variety of ways (body, mind, and spirit), and does not necessarily result in the elimination of whatever is causing disorder or a lack of health and wholeness. Additionally, it makes clear that any such healing is a gift of God, and is not a result of human prayer.

Advisory Opinions (provided for information only, and not part of the proposed amendment):

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises approval, although it would have preferred a tighter editorial hand.