

Proposed Amendments Before the Presbytery in March 2025

And Proposed Amendments Before the Presbytery in May 2025

24-A (Page 4) Openness to the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

F-1.0403 “Unity in Diversity”

Proposal: That categories gender identity, sexual orientation, be included as protected classes in the Unity in Diversity section of Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

Reason: “...While affirming the freedom of councils of the church to make ordination decisions as guided by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that the Church has been called upon historically to be ever more faithful to the most inclusive and affirming statements of Scripture and promptings of the Holy Spirit...” and “No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith” (G-1.0302).

Advisory Opinions: This faced no opposition from those advising.

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-B (Page 7) “The Congregation”

G-1.0104 Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Worshipping Communities, etc.)

Proposal: Adds guidelines for other forms of corporate witness (New Worshipping Communities, Immigrant Fellowships etc.) within an adaptable framework rooted in Reformed polity.

Reason: To provide a minimal, flexible, and adaptable level of historic Reformed polity for small worshipping communities that wish to identify with the larger church in worship and formation, discipleship, and mission.

Advisory Opinions: This faced no opposition from those advising.

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-C (Page 9) “Ordered Ministries of the Church”

G-2.0104b Gifts and Qualifications

Proposal: Adds Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01) and principles of participation and representation (F-1.0403) to required areas for examination for ordination.

Reason: To affirm the freedom of councils of the church to make ordination decisions as guided by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that the Church has been called upon historically to

be ever more and at the same time be faithful to the most inclusive and affirming statements of Scripture and promptings of the Holy Spirit

Advisory Opinions: This faced no opposition from those advising.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution: What is being sought is already in the Book of Order, and so is redundant. At the same time, redundancy can be helpful.

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-D (Page 13) “Pastoral Relationships”

G-2.0504b Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Proposal: Lengthens maximum terms of service for temporary pastoral relationships from twelve months to 36 months

Reason: An increasing number of congregations are being served by temporary pastors. Extending the specified period of service from 12 to 36 months will provide these congregations a stronger sense of stability; save both sessions and presbyteries considerable time and paperwork if they did not have to renegotiate a contract every year; and given that the average time that it takes a congregation to move from the end of one pastoral relationship to the start of another pastoral relationship is longer than 12 months, the church should be able to make provision for temporary pastor contracts that are longer than 12 months.

Advisory Opinions:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution: this is a helpful improvement in the language by retaining a specific standardized time length for temporary pastoral relationships, as well as providing a practical time length in response to the current missional context.

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-E (Page 14) Pastoral Relationships

G-2.0504b Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Proposal: Prohibits non-disclosure agreements at the end of a temporary pastoral relationship

Reason: While ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons promise to serve one another, God, and God’s church with love (W-4.0404), non-disclosure agreements indicate the opposite has happened, and tend to lead to speculation rather than truth-seeking.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-F (Page 17) Preparation for Ministry

G-2.0610 Accommodations to Particular Circumstances

Proposal: Confidential details about a candidate for ministry should be omitted in communicating to the presbytery the need for the approval of alternate means to determine readiness for ministry in areas usually covered by ordination exams

Reason: Placing a detailed record of a potentially traumatic encounter in the permanent records of the presbytery does little to further a relationship of accountability and trust. The proposed amendment allows for greater pastoral sensitivity by presbyteries in their care of those preparing for ministry who have varieties of learning capacity, cultural competency, and neurodivergence.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-G (Page 20) Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

G-2.0901 Congregational Meeting

Proposal: Prohibits non-disclosure agreements when an installed pastoral relationship is dissolved

Reason: While ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons promise to serve one another, God, and God's church with love (W-4.0404), non-disclosure agreements indicate the opposite has happened, and tend to lead to speculation rather than truth-seeking.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-H (Page 23) "General Principles of Councils"

G-3.0106 Administration of Mission

Proposal: Adds "and adults with vulnerabilities" to the required child and youth protection policy

Reason: This amendment builds upon the important work carried out by previous assemblies to provide for institutional protections for at-risk populations within our congregations and councils. By explicitly mentioning "vulnerable adults," we acknowledge our responsibility to protect those who may be at risk due to various factors.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-I (Page 25) “The Presbytery”

G-3.0302d Relationships with Synod and General Assembly

Proposal: Eliminates the need for a concurrence from another presbytery to have business brought before GA (concurrences are still allowed but not required)

Reason: This requirement has created confusion over deadlines, a flurry of activity among presbyteries seeking to have at least one concurrence, and at least one presbytery consistently voting to concur with all of the overtures. It may also adversely affect the PC(USA)’s ability to honor voices from the margins of the church and society.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising. There would no longer a required concurrence, but support for an overture by concurrence would continue.

GA Commissioners: Divided

24-J (Page 27) “The General Assembly”

G-3.0501 Composition and Responsibility

Proposal: Revises the formula for determining the number of commissioners presbyteries are to send to GA.

Reason: The current wording is already out of date and creates a system that doesn’t allow for flexibility, while requiring an exceptionally high threshold for change.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-K (Page 29) “Investigation”

D-7.0501 Referral to Investigating Committee

Proposal: Makes explicit that, when an allegation of offense is made to a clerk of session or stated clerk, the mandates to report to civil authorities in G-4.0302 must be followed

Reason: The Book of Order already names disclosing relevant information as our primary moral obligation in the Mandatory Reporting provision. This amendment makes explicit the mandate to take action to protect vulnerable people by disclosing information to authorities.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor

24-L (Page 31)

“Allegations of Sexual Abuse”

D-7.0501

Referral to Investigating Committee

Proposal: Mandates that administrative leave be paid

Reason: This amendment would preserve the due process rights of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament accused of sexual misconduct. The current language in D-7.0902 fails to provide a standard applicable throughout the denomination. The text fails to define the administrative leave as either paid or unpaid. Such imprecision and ambiguity do not provide an acceptable constitutional standard to be applied equally to all minister members.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: Divided

24-M (Page 34)

“Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries”

G-5.02023

Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries

Proposal: Despite differences between the denominations that limit full communion at this time, permission is sought to continue exploration of how we might grow together in the mission of God.

Reason: Our two churches have agreed to be in dialogue for the specific purpose of exploring mutual recognition of ordained ministries, as a step towards the unity that is Christ’s will for his Church.

Advisory Opinion: This faced no opposition from those advising

GA Commissioners: In favor