

BYLAWS OF THE
PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND
OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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**BYLAWS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND
OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

I. Meetings

- A. There shall be two stated meetings of the presbytery, one in the spring and one in the fall. Presbytery shall make a good faith effort to schedule the fall stated meeting to commence on the third Monday of October and avoid the second Monday of this month. Presbytery shall make a good faith effort to schedule the spring stated meeting to commence on the first Monday after the last Lord's Day in April and avoid weeks of school vacations.
- B. All uncommissioned ruling elders from the churches of presbytery attending presbytery meetings shall be seated automatically as corresponding members.
- C. Presbytery shall:
1. set a projected terminus for the stated meetings in the proposed docket well in advance of the stated meetings.
 2. convene at 4:00 p.m. on the first day.
 3. hold a worship service in the evening of the first day.
 4. convene the business portion of the next day(s) no later than 9:00 a.m., by the time of which reconvening all committees should make a good faith effort to complete their work. However, the Moderator in conjunction with the Stated Clerk, based on the expected workload of a particular stated meeting, may propose the morning session of the second day begin at 8:00 a.m.
 5. place priority items early in the docket.
 6. have the Moderator and/or Stated Clerk remind presbyters in writing with the proposed docket for each stated meeting, and verbally at the onset of each stated meeting, of the presbyters' duty and responsibility to stay (and plan to that end) until the projected terminus.
 7. have the Moderator remind presbyters verbally at the onset of each stated meeting to use their time efficiently in the following ways:
 - a. begin all sessions on time, especially reconvening promptly following recesses;
 - b. expect the Moderator to be strict in conducting the meeting with "order and dispatch" (the FOG, XVIII,1.);
 - c. resist the temptation of redoing committee work on the floor of presbytery;
 - d. recommit quickly all matters which obviously need more work in committee.
- D. All committees shall submit a preliminary report no less than 10 days prior to the start of each stated meeting. The preliminary report should minimally include an estimation of the matters they will be asking the presbytery to address on the floor at the forthcoming stated meeting, for the purpose of allowing each presbyter ample time to consider, prepare, and pray about such matters, and to aid in the preparation and ordering of the docket. Approximately one month prior to each stated meeting, the Stated Clerk shall remind all committee chairmen, conveners, and executive secretaries of this obligation. The Stated Clerk shall promptly forward all preliminary reports to each teaching elder and the Clerk of each Session within the regional church.
- E. Regarding inclusion of certain overtures in the docket

Overtures prepared for presentation to a higher judicatory shall be proposed only to a stated meeting of presbytery, and may not undergo final action until the next stated meeting; or in lieu thereof, the proposed overture may be sent to all ministers and Clerks of Session no later than 25 days prior to the stated meeting at which it may undergo final action. A majority of the votes cast shall be sufficient for adoption.

Any communication of a proposed overture shall clearly indicate (1) who is proposing the overture to whom, (2) the status of the overture in the judicatories of the church, and (3) the grounds supporting the overture.

- F. When special meetings of presbytery as provided for in the Form of Government, Chapter XIV, Section 7 are requested, the call for the meeting shall contain an explanation of the emergency nature of each docket item.

II. Officers

A. Names

The officers of the presbytery shall be the Moderator, the Stated Clerk, and the Treasurer.

B. Elections

The Moderator, the Stated Clerk, and the Treasurer shall be elected at the stated fall meeting.

C. Terms

The terms of office of the Moderator shall be one year. The terms of office of the Stated Clerk and the Treasurer shall be two years.

D. Duties

1. Moderator

- a. The duties of the Moderator shall be those that ordinarily devolve upon the presiding officer of the deliberative assembly, together with the calling of special meetings of presbytery, his participation in the licensure of candidates, and such other duties as are required by the Form of Government.
- b. The provisions of the Standing Rules of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church concerning the Moderator of the General Assembly shall apply to the Moderator of this presbytery.

2. Stated Clerk

The duties of the Stated Clerk shall be to:

- a. refer matters presented to him between meetings to the standing committees having appropriate jurisdiction.
- b. send notice of the time and place of all meetings of presbytery and, in case of stated meetings, submit to the sessions a copy of the proposed docket two weeks prior to the meeting.
- c. send all communications to the clerks of sessions as well as to the ministers.
- d. notify the chairman of the Committee on Candidates and Credentials of each minister or licentiate applying for admission to the presbytery, at least four weeks prior to the meeting of presbytery.

- e. respond in a timely manner to all requests of Stated Clerks established by the General Assembly.
- 3. Treasurer
The duties of the Treasurer shall be to:
 - a. receive and disburse funds of the presbytery, and present at each stated meeting a report of receipts and expenditures.
 - b. notify sessions of presbytery's request for contributions to meet expenses of presbytery.

III. Standing Committees

Elections to the standing committees shall be held at the stated fall meeting of presbytery except for the Committee on Overtures and Papers, which shall be appointed at each stated meeting of presbytery.

A. The Committee on Home Missions

- 1. **Constituency.** This committee shall consist of six members, at least two of whom shall be ruling elders.
- 2. **Election and Terms.** The committee shall be composed of three classes, each with two members, one class to be elected each year.
- 3. **Duties.** This committee shall encourage the work of home mission in the presbytery. It shall, always subject to the review and approval of presbytery, oversee and direct all home mission and church extension work within the bounds of presbytery, serving as presbytery's representative with the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

B. The Committee on Candidates and Credentials

- 1. **Constituency.** This committee shall consist of seven members, at least one of whom shall be a ruling elder.
- 2. **Election and Terms.** The members of the committee shall comprise four classes, one class to be elected each year.
- 3. **Duties.**
 - a. The committee shall arrange to take under care candidates for the gospel ministry, conferring with and advising them whenever necessary.
 - b. The committee shall assign parts of trial for licensure and ordination, and conduct the examinations for the same, appointing the members of presbytery who are to conduct examinations in the required subjects at least two weeks prior to the time of the examination.
 - c. The committee shall examine and report on the credentials and testimonials of each minister and licentiate applying for admission to the presbytery. Upon

receipt of such application, the chairman shall appoint an examiner to conduct "an examination in theology and in all matters relevant to our standards," and shall notify the candidate of this requirement of the presbytery. Presbytery may, in the exercise of its right and privilege, conduct an examination, primarily in theology, but also in all matters relevant to our standards, of every minister and licentiate applying for admission to the presbytery from another presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

- d. If a candidate for licensure interrupts his examination for a period of three years, and fails to give to the committee satisfactory reasons for such interruption, his name shall be removed from the roll of candidates for licensure.
- e. The Committee ordinarily shall be responsible for presentation of calls to candidates submitted to presbytery.

C. The Committee on Ministerial Relations

- 1. Constituency. This committee shall consist of nine members, at least three of whom shall be ruling elders.
- 2. Election and Terms. The committee shall be composed of three classes, each with three members, one class to be elected each year.
- 3. Duties. The duties of this committee shall be to:
 - a. provide a means through which presbytery shall implement its rightful oversight of its members, and to provide an office through which members of presbytery may seek counsel regarding their labors.
 - b. receive annual reports from ministers laboring outside the bounds of presbytery and ministers not serving as pastors of Orthodox Presbyterian Churches and report to the stated spring meeting.
 - c. enquire of members who fail to attend three consecutive stated meetings of presbytery the reason(s) for such absence.
 - d. recommend to the presbytery proper action against those who have become delinquent with respect to their presbyterial responsibilities.
 - e. request those teaching elders who are members of presbytery without pastoral charge, residing outside the bounds of presbytery (cf. the FOG, XIV,1. & 2.) to place themselves under the jurisdiction of the presbytery within whose bounds they reside, in order to promote mutual spiritual welfare among presbyters; with the exceptions of the following:
 - 1. evangelists and missionaries in accordance with the FOG, XXVII;
 - 2. theological professors;
 - 3. denominational general secretaries.

D. The Committee on Foreign Missions

- 1. Constituency. This committee shall consist of five members, at least one of whom shall be a ruling elder, and one of this committee shall be the Executive Secretary.

2. Election and Terms.
 - a. The Executive Secretary shall be elected by presbytery to a one year term.
 - b. The other members of the committee shall be composed of four classes, one class to be elected each year.

3. Duties. The duties of this committee shall be to:
 - a. promote the work of foreign missions in the presbytery and its churches.
 - b. act as liaison between the presbytery and any foreign missionary members of presbytery.
 - c. seek to encourage those within its bounds to consider foreign missions service.
 - d. serve as liaison between the denominational Committee on Foreign Missions and the member churches of presbytery in planning visits of foreign missionaries to the churches of presbytery.
 - e. serve as a conduit for funds given for the support of persons serving in foreign mission fields, not financially supported by the denominational Committee on Foreign Missions.
 - f. work in conjunction with the churches (and persons) within the bounds of presbytery, subject always to the review and approval of presbytery.

E. The Committee on Diaconal Ministries

1. Constituency. The Committee shall consist of three members, one minister or ruling elder and two deacons. Deacon members must be currently serving on their local board of deacons by election.

2. Election and Terms. The committee shall be composed of three classes, one class to be elected each year.

3. Duties.
 - a. The committee shall promote and encourage diaconal work within presbytery, promote the work of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries of the General Assembly, assist local boards of deacons, as requested by those boards, and assist congregations and mission works without boards of deacons when requested by the appropriate Session or oversight committee.
 - b. The Treasurer of presbytery shall hold all funds designated for the diaconal ministry of presbytery. He shall disburse those funds at the request of the chairman of the committee or the teaching elder serving thereon, or by the presbytery.
 - c. The committee shall present a written report to each stated meeting of presbytery.
 - d. The committee shall recommend to presbytery an annual per capita amount to be requested from each congregation. The committee is authorized to make special appeals directly to the churches when available funds are insufficient to meet a need brought to it by a local board of deacons, or session or oversight committee in the absence of a board of deacons. The committee is also

authorized to request funds from the Committee on Diaconal Ministries of the General Assembly.

F. The Committee on Overtures and Papers

1. Constituency. This committee shall consist of five members, at least two of whom shall be ruling elders.
2. Election and Terms.
 - a. The Moderator shall appoint the members of the committee during each stated meeting of presbytery, selecting one as chair.
 - b. The members shall serve from the conclusion of the stated meeting at which they were appointed until the conclusion of the next stated meeting of presbytery.
 - c. The Moderator shall replace any members unable to complete their term of service.
3. Duties. The committee shall review and report to presbytery at the stated meeting on each communication referred to it by the Stated Clerk, Moderator, or presbytery.

G. The Committee on Fraternal Relations

1. Constituency. The committee shall consist of three presbyters.
2. Election and terms. The committee shall be divided into three classes, one to be elected each year.
3. Duties. The duties of this committee shall be to:
 - a. promote closer relations and fellowship with neighboring presbyteries, classes, and churches of denominations with which the General Assembly exchanges fraternal delegates.
 - b. appoint fraternal delegates to neighboring presbyteries and classes of denominations with which the General Assembly exchanges fraternal delegates.
 - c. consult with the moderator and a representative of the host church of a stated meeting in order to invite fraternal delegates to that meeting.

H. The Committee of the Historian

1. Constituency. The committee shall consist of one presbyter, who will serve as Presbytery Historian.
2. Election and terms. The Presbytery Historian shall be elected at the stated fall meeting and serve for a period of two years.
3. Duties. The Presbytery Historian shall collect and maintain historical records and information on each of the churches in the presbytery. He shall request each church to

send such records and information to him as he deems appropriate to create and maintain a history of the presbytery.

I. The Committee on Church Visitation and Sessional Records

1. **Constituency.** This committee shall consist of three, two teaching elders and one ruling elder, to be elected for terms of three years, one member to be elected each year. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms (six years), but may be eligible for re-election two years after the expiration of his prior term.
2. **Election and Terms.** The committee shall be composed of three classes, one class to be elected each year.
3. **Duties.** The duties of this committee shall be to:
 - a. appoint two church visitors, one teaching elder and one ruling elder, for each church in the presbytery, with not more than two churches being assigned to any one visiting team. The visitors shall be appointed for a term of at least one year and not more than two years, unless there shall be some valid reason for extending their service where a problem to which they have been seeking a solution continues to be unresolved, or distances make the appointment of other visitors impractical.
 - b. be responsible for seeing that each church is visited at least once every two years, and that reports on visits are presented to the presbytery.
 - c. serve in an advisory or consultative capacity with the visitors, particularly concerning their reports and/or matters relating to the visits and problems or difficulties that may have arisen in a particular church on which the visitors desire advice or counsel before reporting to presbytery. It should be understood that neither the Committee on Church Visitation and Sessional Records nor the visitors have the purpose or license to initiate any disciplinary process.

The visitors shall be in charge of the yearly examination of the sessional records of the churches assigned to them as these sessional records are brought to the presbytery for approval at the spring meeting. As the visitors report to the presbytery on examination of the records, they shall include in their reports any irregularities noted from their study of the minutes which ought to be brought to the attention of the sessions in visitation.

After consultation with the pastor or session of each church in order to decide upon a suitable time for a meeting, the visitors shall give notice of a meeting to the session of each church at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

After each visit the church visitors shall prepare a written report to the presbytery, copies of which shall be sent to the session of the local church and to presbytery's Committee on Church Visitation and Sessional Records at least two weeks in advance of the meeting of the presbytery at which the report is to be presented. The report shall be concerned with the general state of each church, with respect particularly to the following matters:

- i) the teaching ministry of the church.
- ii) the administration of the Sacraments.

- iii) the discipline of the church, both administrative and judicial.
- iv) statistical and financial--primarily with respect to growth or decline and the interpretation placed upon these figures by the church leaders.
- v) the visitors shall report the presence of any serious problems or irregularities they may have discovered and may recommend certain action on the part of the presbytery.

IV. Sessional Records

- A. The sessional records shall be examined at the stated spring meeting. Upon request, they shall also be made available to the Committee on Church Visitation and Sessional Records.
- B. Rules for keeping sessional minutes:
 1. Record the date, time, and place of each meeting, the names of the moderator, ministerial member(s) and ruling elders present, and the names of absentees.
 2. Record the opening and closing of meetings with prayer.
 3. Record the reading and approval of the minutes no later than the next stated meeting.
 4. Record only that which is vital to the transactions of the meeting.
 5. The details of discussions, plans which have not been adopted, suggestions which have not been followed, motions that have been lost, should never be recorded except by special order of the session, of which order record should be made.
 6. When a previous action of the session is referred to, the page or pages, or meeting date and paragraph, in which it is recorded should be designated.
 7. Avoid erasures, interlineations, and footnotes.
 8. Do not insert in the records written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper.
 9. Record the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the next regular meeting succeeding. In case the sacrament has been administered privately, the name of the elder or elders assisting should be noted.
 10. Record the baptism of adults and of infants at the next regular meeting.
 11. Record the full legal names of applicants for church membership; in the case of married women, their surnames at birth and all subsequent names; in the case of minors, record the names of the parents; and in every case record whether they have been baptized.
 12. Record the full title of the church to which a certificate of dismissal is granted and the full legal name of the persons dismissed, with the date of the dismissal.
 13. Record the name of the elder appointed as a commissioner to presbytery; also the exact period for which he was appointed commissioner; also upon the expiration of his term of service as delegate his report of his attendance and fidelity.
 14. The record of each meeting is to be duly attested by the clerk or moderator.
 15. Immediately following the last recorded minutes of the calendar year, enter a copy of the annual statistical report sent to the denomination.
 16. All the proceedings of the congregation reported to and received by the session, shall, by its order, be incorporated in its records. This rule has regard to the minutes of the Board of Deacons, and of the Trustees (if the congregation has such organizations), and of reports of the Sunday School, and of other organizations of the congregation.
 17. The records of the session are to be kept in a standard, paginated, minutes ledger, in which a copy of the current edition of these Rules shall be inserted.

V. Procedures for Church Applying for Membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

A. Organized churches applying for admission should follow these procedures:

1. The church shall consult with one or more ministerial members of the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the end that it may be informed concerning the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in such matters as its history, government and doctrine, and the procedure established by presbytery for constituting such churches as particular churches of presbytery.
2. A copy of the formal vote of the congregation indicating its desire to become affiliated with the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shall be lodged with the Stated Clerk of the presbytery.
3. The presbytery shall elect a commission of three or more members, at least one of whom shall be a ruling elder and at least one of whom shall be a teaching elder, to act with power in dealing with the request.
4. At the call of the convener, the commission shall organize, choosing a chairman and a clerk, in order that the proceedings may be orderly, and an accurate record kept and transmitted to the presbytery.
5. The commission shall familiarize itself with the church, its history, its government, its records, etc., with a view to determining whether the membership has been constituted in accordance with the demands of Scripture. If unsatisfied that this is the case, it shall require the church to order its membership in accordance with the demands of Scripture.
6. The commission shall determine further whether there might be any abnormal conditions which might stand in the way of the church being received as a particular church of the presbytery.
7. If satisfied in the light of the investigation described in 5 and 6 above, the commission shall assist the church in drafting bylaws under which it may operate as a particular church of the presbytery, and the church shall adopt a satisfactory set of such bylaws.
8. The church shall take any steps necessary to reorganize into a working pattern of government conforming to that required by the constitutional standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, putting into operation a form of government consonant with that followed in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
9. As proves necessary, the commission shall arrange, with the consent of the congregation, for a session and/or a moderator for the church, with the understanding that the appointments are but temporary and will terminate automatically just as soon as these offices are filled in regular manner in accord with governmental requirements of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
10. In co-operation with the church, the commission shall arrange for a public service of reception of the church into the presbytery. In so doing, it shall employ such parts of service as the following: a) Invocation, b) Reading of Scripture, c) Sermon, d) Reading of records pertaining to the action of the church in applying for admission, the actions of the presbytery relative thereto, and the relevant activities of the commission, e) Reading to and receiving answers from the membership, in a group, the regular constitutional questions asked in an Orthodox Presbyterian Church of new members, f) Statement of the moderator affirming that the congregation is now a particular church of the presbytery and denomination and giving an official welcome, g) Prayer for the church in its new relationship, h) Charge to the congregation, i) Benediction. In the public service, it shall be proper to employ for some of the parts ministers and ruling elders other than of the commission and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but the moderator shall in any

case be a member of the commission and authorized by the commission to act in that capacity.

11. The commission shall keep a formal record of its proceedings, including all votes relative to the reception of the church, a copy of the program for the public service, and the text of the statement by the moderator of the public service that the church is duly constituted a particular church of the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The clerk of the commission shall be responsible for forwarding to the Stated Clerk of presbytery without undue delay a copy of the record.
 12. If the commission finds itself confronted with problems which it cannot resolve satisfactorily or if it judges that the applying church should not be received into the presbytery, it shall report back to presbytery rather than proceeding to receive the church into the presbytery. Such action may be by majority vote. It shall be understood that a vote of the commission to receive a church as a particular church of presbytery shall be by unanimous vote only.
 13. The presbytery retains the right to limit the function of a commission in a given case, or, if it should seem wise in a particular situation, to care for the entire matter itself rather than to appoint a commission.
- B. Unorganized groups desiring to apply for admission should follow these proceedings:
1. The individuals comprising the group shall consult with one or more ministerial members of the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the end that they may be informed concerning the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in such matters as its history, government, and doctrine, and the procedure established by presbytery for constituting such groups as particular churches of the presbytery.
 2. As a means of applying to presbytery to be constituted a particular church of the presbytery, the members of the group shall affix to the following text of application their names and addresses, date the formal application, and forward it through a designated member of the group to the Stated Clerk of presbytery (in addition, those under the age of 18 shall indicate their age):
"We, the undersigned, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, hereby apply to the presbytery to be received as a particular church of the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We have inquired into the government and doctrine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and believe it to be consonant with the Word of God. We have also familiarized ourselves with the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church sufficiently to have the assurance that we wish to be a part of the witness and testimony of this body of Christians."
 3. (same as V.A.3.)
 4. (same as V.A.4.)
 5. The commission shall meet with those signatory to the application and shall interrogate them as to their personal faith in Jesus Christ and as to any other matters which may appear relevant to action upon their request. A satisfactory statement of faith, either verbal or written, shall be required of each person who is to become a member of the new congregation.
 6. The commission shall pass judgment as to whether necessary adjustments being made and proper organization completed, the group shall be constituted a particular church of the presbytery or whether some other course of action is preferable, such as the recognizing of the group as a mission work related to an existing congregation of presbytery, or under the oversight and supervision of the Committee on Home Missions

in this presbytery. If it is decided that the commission should proceed along lines leading to the reception of the group as a church, it will follow a pattern of procedure similar to that specified above under items 7 to 11 in part A.

7. (same as V.A.12. with the following additional sentence:) It shall be understood further that the vote within the commission as to whether a given individual shall be or shall not be received as a part of the group constituting the new church shall be by majority vote.
8. (same as V.A.13.)

C. Mission works of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church under the oversight and supervision of a session of this presbytery, or the Committee on Home Missions of this presbytery, or the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and desiring to become particular congregations of this presbytery, should follow these procedures:

1. The individuals comprising the mission work shall consult first with the session or home missions committee responsible for their supervision in order to inform them of their desire; and also in order to ensure that the petitioning group is informed concerning the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in such matters as its history, government, and doctrine, and the procedure established by presbytery for constituting such groups as particular churches of the presbytery.
2. As a means of applying to the presbytery to be constituted a particular church of the presbytery, the members of the group shall affix to the following text of application their names and addresses, date the formal application, and forward it through a designated member of the group or supervising body to the Stated Clerk of presbytery (in addition, those under the age of 18 shall indicate their age):
(same as under V.B.2.)
A copy of this application shall be filed with the clerk of the supervising session or supervising home missions committee which has had the oversight of this mission work.
3. (same as V.A.3.)
4. (same as V.A.4.)
5. The commission shall first confer with one or more representatives of the supervising session or supervising home missions committee. (continues as V.B.5. with the addition of the following sentence:) Signatories who are members of a particular congregation of presbytery need not be re-examined.
6. The commission shall pass judgment as to whether, necessary adjustments being made and proper organizations completed, the mission work shall be constituted a particular church of the presbytery. If it is decided that the commission should proceed along lines leading to the reception of the mission work as a church, it shall assist the group, if so requested, in drafting bylaws consonant with the Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and with the laws of the State, under which it may operate as a particular congregation of the presbytery.
7. The commission shall seek to determine whether there are any men in the new congregation qualified for the office of elder. If the commission is persuaded that there are any such men it shall require the congregation to meet together for the purpose of electing an elder or elders, in accordance with the provisions of the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. If the commission is not persuaded that qualified men are available, it shall request the presbytery to appoint elders from within its own jurisdiction, with the consent of the congregation, to serve as a session until such time as elders may be elected from the congregation. Action shall then be taken to secure a pastor as soon as practicable.

8. In co-operation with the mission work, the commission shall arrange for a public service of reception of the new congregation into the presbytery. (continues as V.A.10.)
9. (same as V.A.11.)
10. If, under procedure 5 and 6, the commission finds itself confronted with problems which it cannot resolve satisfactorily, or if it judges that the applying mission work should not yet be constituted as a particular church of the presbytery, it shall report back to the presbytery instead of proceeding to receive the church into the presbytery. Such action may be by majority vote. It shall be understood that a vote of the commission to receive a church as a particular congregation of presbytery shall be by unanimous vote only. It shall be understood further that the vote within the commission as to whether a given individual shall be or shall not be received as a part of the group constituting the new church shall be by majority vote.
11. (same as V.A.13.)

VI. Docket

Suggested docket for the stated meetings of presbytery:

1. Devotional service
2. Call to order and constituting prayer
3. Roll call
4. Report of Committee on Arrangements
5. Reading and approval of minutes
6. Reading of communications to presbytery
7. Report of the Treasurer
8. Presentation and adoption of the docket
9. Appointment of temporary committees
10. Reception of ministers
11. Presentation of calls
12. Reports of standing committees:
 - a. Home Missions
 - b. Candidates and Credentials
 - c. Church Visitation and Sessional Records
 - d. Ministerial Relations
 - e. Foreign Missions
 - f. Diaconal Ministries
13. Reports of special committees
14. Reports of temporary committees
15. Dismissal of ministers and licentiates
16. Reports of ministerial advisors to congregations without pastors
17. Miscellaneous business
18. Set time and place of next meeting
19. Adjournment and prayer

Specific order of business at stated spring meeting:

1. Report of Committee on Ministerial Relations (in full)
2. Report of Auditing Committee

Specific orders of business at stated fall meeting:

1. Election of Moderator
2. Election of Stated Clerk (odd years)
3. Election of Treasurer (even years)
4. Election of commissioners to the General Assembly
5. Election to standing committees

VII. Qualifications

- A. All cases that may arise that are not provided for in the foregoing bylaws or the Constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (see Form of Government, Chapter XXXII, Section 1) shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.
- B. A particular provision of these bylaws (not including Section B. and C. of this Chapter VII) may be temporarily suspended by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.
- C. These bylaws may be amended at any stated meeting of presbytery by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, the amendment having been proposed by a majority vote at a previous meeting.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHURCH VISITATION

AND THE PREPARATION OF REPORTS BY CHURCH VISITORS

Church visitation is a spiritual ministry, an important part of our presbyterian fellowship. The effectiveness of a visit cannot be learned from a committee's report; nor should any visit be viewed as an interrogation or the filling out of a questionnaire. It seems, however, that some suggestions might prove helpful as to categories of discussion and possible report. The first paragraph of the report should contain the date of the visit, the name of the church visited, and the names of those making the visit. The presbytery recommends that the following areas be covered in church visits and in the subsequent reports:

1. Pastoral ministry: this includes house visitation by the session as well as the pastor's calling and counseling. The degree to which the pastor is aided in aspects of this ministry might be noted. Does the pastor keep up on necessary communication?
2. Teaching ministry: Are the preaching, teaching, catechetical classes, neighborhood Bible studies, church membership instruction adequate, edifying, orthodox, etc.?
3. Ruling ministry: State of church discipline, sharing of the pastor and elders in the work of rule. Minutes of session meetings. Attitude of elders toward service in Presbytery, General Assembly?
4. Diaconal ministry: Giving to benevolences, activity of deacons, visitation of the sick, counsel for the distressed, relief of the poor in church, in neighborhood, in missions.
5. Worship and sacraments.
6. Outreach: Planned evangelism? Lay activities? Is the pastor active in this? Is he alone active? What about mass media, newspapers, local T.V.?
7. Organization: Is the activity confused, conflicting? Strained feelings may reflect indefinite assignment of responsibilities. How widespread is the organized participation in the work of the church? Limited to a few? What is the actual leadership structure in the session?
8. Sunday School: What materials are being used? Are the teachers members of the church? Are they trained for their work? Do they attend church services regularly? Do they visit in the homes of pupils? Does the Sunday school plan social events on the department or class level?
9. Young people: What materials are being used? Do the young people participate? Do they feel identified with the program? Is there evangelistic outreach here? Are leaders being trained?
10. Prayer meeting: What percentage of morning worship attendance is to be found in prayer meeting? Is the meeting for prayer as well as Bible study?

11. Statistical: What are the overall attendance patterns for the different ministries and services of the congregation? Is attendance data collected and studied?
12. Financial: Growth or decline? How do church leaders interpret these figures? Are figures kept carefully and studied from time to time? Is there a planned program of instruction in and cultivation of Christian stewardship? Is the pastor's salary adequate? Proportion of benevolence giving?
13. Facilities: Physical plant, number of meeting rooms. Immediate needs. Plans for expansion. Equipment.
14. Social life: Do church members meet at any other time than in church? What evidence of fellowship in homes, at work? Does this make for a witness in the community? What outside affiliations are common in the congregation?
15. Problems: Are there problems, conflicts or strained feelings that may be the source of future trouble in the church?
16. Visitors should meet with the entire session.
17. All members of the congregation should be informed of the day and the hour of church visitation, in order that they may have opportunity to meet with the visitors. This provision is in recognition of the universal office of believers.
18. Ministerial affiliation: Is the pastor affiliated with any other local ministerial groups? Are any of these damaging to a consistent Biblical witness?
19. Vacation Bible School: Materials used. Number of qualified teachers available? Number of children reached? Succeed in achieving your goal?