

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 and Appointments

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. Except in the case of elections to fill vacancies, or unless the presbytery otherwise directs at the time of the election, the terms of standing committee members begin at the end of the meeting in which the member is elected or appointed.

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. Presbytery Historian

1. Constituency. The appointment 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. Liaison to the Women's Council

1. Constituency. Presbytery shall appoint one presbyter to serve as Liaison to the Women's Council.
2. Election and Terms. The Presbytery liaison shall be elected at the stated fall meeting and serve for a period of three years.
3. Duties. The Presbytery liaison shall provide advice regarding any Women's Council concerns and assist in communicating information or concerns to the presbytery as needed.

J. The Committee on Church Visitation

1. Constituency. The committee shall consist of three members, at least one of whom shall be a teaching elder and one of whom shall be a ruling elder.
2. Election and Terms. The committee shall be composed of three classes, one class to be elected each year for a term of three years.
3. Duties.
 - a. The duties of the Committee:

1. ensure that each church is visited at least once every three years and that reports of visits are presented to the presbytery at least two weeks prior to its stated meeting.
 2. establish four church visitation districts that group churches geographically for visitation, keeping the number of churches in each district equal, inasmuch as possible.
 3. assign each church to one of the four church visitation districts.
 4. establish and promulgate a visitation schedule that indicates when the churches in each district should be visited by church visitors.
 5. appoint two church visitors per district, one a teaching elder with at least five years pastoral experience and one a ruling elder, for each visitation.
 6. 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 about which the visitors desire advice or counsel before reporting to presbytery. The Committee on Church Visitation does not have the purpose or license to initiate any disciplinary process.
 7. compile and review the written visitation reports submitted by church visitors.
 8. prepare and submit to presbytery a summary visitation report, with the written visitation reports submitted by church visitors attached for reference, noting in the summary report any matters reported by church visitors which the Committee believes may require the attention or action of presbytery.
- b. The duties of Church Visitors:
1. visit the churches assigned to them by the Committee.
 2. consult with the pastor or session of each assigned church to decide upon a suitable time for a visit.
 3. request from the church to be visited, prior to the visit, the session minutes since the previous visit.
 4. refer to the *Guidelines for Church Visitation and the Preparation of Reports for Church Visitors* as current in the Presbytery Bylaws when visiting churches and then preparing and submitting written visitation reports.
 5. prepare and submit written visitation reports within the following time frames:
 - i. prepare each written visitation report within one month of the visit to ensure the substance of the visit is documented while details are recent, to provide the most benefit to the visited session, and to avoid undue delay.

- ii. submit copies of each written visitation report to the session of the visited church and the Committee on Church Visitation no later than three weeks before the next presbytery meeting.

K. The Committee on Session Minutes

1. Constituency. The committee shall consist of six members, at least two of whom shall be a teaching elder and two of whom shall be a ruling elder.
2. Election and Terms. The committee shall be composed of three classes, one class to be elected each year for a term of three years.
3. Duties. The duties of this committee shall be to:
 - a. examine the session minutes of each church annually to ensure that each session's significant actions are recorded in minutes that are consistent in form and substance and comply with these Bylaws and the Book of Church Order.
 - b. schedule approval of the session minutes of each church for either the spring or fall meeting of presbytery.
 - c. coordinate pre-meeting examination of session minutes with churches at least six weeks prior to the meeting of presbytery at which they are scheduled to be approved.
 - d. refer to the presbytery Rules for Keeping Session Minutes and The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church when examining session minutes.
 - e. identify the findings resulting from examination of minutes as Exceptions or Notations, as follows:
 - 1) Exception: any finding which, in the judgment of the committee and the presbytery, appears not to conform in substance to church standards, including actions of sessions or errors of form or fact or violations of regulative standards to which sessions are subject, and requires a specific written response from the session to presbytery regarding remedial action(s) taken in response to the finding.
 - 2) Notation: any finding which, in the judgment of the committee, appears to conform in substance to church standards, and therefore does not require the specific attention of presbytery, and does not require a specific response from the session to presbytery regarding remedial action(s) taken in response to the finding. These might include typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation, or non-prejudicial misstatements of fact. General suggestions or advice for improving some aspect of the minutes would also be appropriately included as a Notation.
 - f. complete pre-meeting examination of session minutes, prepare a pre-meeting examination report, and provide a copy of the pre-meeting examination report, including exceptions, notations and general suggestions or advice for improving some aspect of session minutes,

to the church whose minutes were examined at least three weeks prior to the presbytery meeting at which the minutes are scheduled to be approved.

- g. present at each presbytery meeting, for presbytery's approval, a report of the session minutes examined, exceptions noted, the request for churches to provide responses to the exceptions noted, and the responses of churches to exceptions taken to minutes by presbytery at previous meetings.
- h. provide to the moderator, upon presbytery approval of the committee's report of the session minutes examined, the minutes book of each session for his written attestation regarding approval of the minutes by the presbytery, the number of exceptions taken to the minutes by the presbytery, and noting whether or not there were notations taken to the minutes by the committee.

IV. Rules for Keeping Session Minutes

A. Purpose:

These rules are provided to guide sessions in the maintenance of complete, accurate and uniform session minutes that reflect adherence to the requirements of the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church pertaining to the government, discipline, and worship of the church.

The specific requirement for sessions to keep minutes is found in Form of Government, Chapter XIII. The Local Church and Its Session, Section 8.

Sessions are enjoined to observe the following rules in keeping their session minutes.

The Committee on Session Minutes will refer to these rules during the annual review of session minutes to ensure that each session maintains minutes that are consistent in form and substance and comply with the requirements contained in the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

B. Rules:

- 1. Opening of a meeting:
 - a. Record the date, time, and place of each meeting.
 - b. Record the names of the moderator, ministerial member(s), and ruling elders present and absent.
 - c. If the moderator or clerk is absent, record the election of a moderator or clerk pro tem.
 - d. Record the names of any visitors who are present at the beginning of the meeting and their time of departure if they leave before the end of the meeting. If any visitors are present for only part of the meeting after it starts, record their arrival and departure times in the appropriate places in the minutes.
 - e. Record opening with prayer and, when applicable, the scripture read to open the meeting.
 - f. If the meeting is a special meeting of session, note the purpose of the special meeting. (See B.9.b.)

2. Approval of session minutes:
Record the reading and approval of the minutes of previous stated and special session meetings no later than the next stated meeting, noting whether the minutes are approved as submitted or approved as corrected.
3. Administration of the sacraments:
 - a. Record the administration of the Lord's Supper at the next regular meeting. If the sacrament has been administered privately, the name of the elder or elders assisting should be noted.
 - b. Record when baptism is administered at the next regular meeting, including the full legal name(s) of the person(s) baptized and, in the case of children, the name(s) of their parent(s).
4. Membership:
 - a. Record the full legal names of all 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 name(s) of the parent(s); and in every case whether they have been baptized.
 - b. Record the details of interviews with applicants for church membership and the decision(s) of the session made pursuant to those interviews. If the interview occurs during a regular meeting, both the interview and the decision(s) of the session regarding membership should be recorded in the regular meeting minutes. If the interview occurs during a special meeting called specifically for the purpose of conducting the interview, both the interview and the decision(s) of the session regarding membership should be recorded in the special meeting minutes.
 - c. Record the reception of both communicant and non-communicant new members and cite the provision from the Book of Discipline, chapter II.B.2. applicable to their reception.
 - d. Record the removal of any members' name from the roll of the church, ensuring that adequate details of the relevant circumstances are entered in the minutes, and cite the provision from the Book of Discipline, chapter II.B.3. applicable to the removal of their name.
 - e. When a letter of transfer or certificate of standing is approved for a member pursuant to Book of Discipline II.B.3.a. or b., record the full name and address of the church to which the letter of transfer or certificate of standing will be sent, and ensure that adequate details of the relevant circumstances are entered in the minutes.
 - f. Record the birth of children to members; the marriage of members; and the death of members. When recording the birth of children, record their full legal names, the name(s) of the parent(s), and in every case whether baptism has been administered.
5. General requirements:
 - a. Record a summary of communication(s) pertinent to matters discussed and acted upon; noting the date, originator, and topic of the communication(s). Other communications may be recorded as information.
 - b. Record only that which is vital to the transactions of the meeting; however, include enough detail so the reason for and intent of a transaction is clear.
 - c. Decisions made must be recorded as either motions that have been adopted or agreement by general consent. Do not record details of discussions, plans not adopted, suggestions

- not acted upon, or motions lost except by special order of the session, of which order a record should be entered.
- d. Record the ordination and/or installation of ruling elders or deacons, or any other changes to the eldership or the diaconate.
 - e. Record the names of ministerial members and ruling elders appointed as commissioners to meetings of the presbytery or the General Assembly; the meeting for which they were appointed commissioners; and a report of their attendance.
 - f. When a previous action of the session is related to a current action of the session, or is referred to, the page or pages, or meeting date and paragraph, in which the previous action is recorded should be designated.
 - g. Record any actions taken or decisions made by the session in response to exceptions taken to session minutes by the presbytery as a result of session minutes review.
6. Items of historical or special interest:
Items of historical or special interest may be recorded as directed by the session.
7. Closing of a meeting:
- a. Record the motion or general consent to adjourn.
 - b. Record the time of adjournment.
 - c. Record that the meeting closed with prayer and who prayed.
 - d. The minutes of each meeting must be duly attested in the minutes book by signature of the clerk or moderator.
8. Minutes book:
- a. The minutes of session must be kept in an official lock-type minute book.
 - b. All pages in the minute book must be consecutively numbered.
 - c. Avoid erasures, interlineations, and footnotes.
 - d. Do not insert written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper.
 - e. Immediately following the last recorded minutes of each calendar year, enter a copy of the annual statistical report sent to the denomination.
 - f. A copy of the current edition of these Rules shall be inserted at the front of the minutes book.
9. Additional rules for other proceedings of the congregation, special meetings, congregational meetings, and judicial process:
- a. Other proceedings of the congregation reported to and received by the session, may, by its order, be incorporated in its minutes. This rule has regard to the minutes or reports of the Board of Deacons and of the Trustees/Corporation (if the congregation has such organizations), and reports of the Sunday School and other organizations of the congregation. The text of reports received from church organizations, unless otherwise required, should be filed elsewhere with notation in the minutes that a report was made.
 - b. Special meetings:
 - i. Special meetings may be called to discuss and act upon specific matters.
 - ii. Only the matters stated in the call of the meeting may be discussed and acted upon.
 - iii. Minutes of special meetings must include the specific call for the meeting.
 - c. Congregational meetings:

- i. The minutes of congregational meetings should be included with the session's minutes as they occur.
 - ii. Record the date, time, and place of each meeting.
 - iii. Record the names of the moderator, ministerial member(s), and ruling elders present and absent.
 - iv. If the moderator or clerk is absent, record the election by the session of a moderator or clerk pro tem.
 - v. Record opening with prayer and, when applicable, scripture read to open the meeting.
 - vi. Record if a quorum is present and the number of voting communicant members present.
 - vii. The minutes of a congregational meeting should be read and shall be approved before the close of the congregational meeting, pursuant to Form of Government, Chapter XVI. Congregational Meetings, Section 5.
- d. Judicial process:
 - i. Ensure that all judicial cases are adjudicated and documented in accordance with the Book of Discipline.
 - ii. Ensure the minutes of a trial judicatory are clearly identified as such and differentiated from the minutes of the session.

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 of 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:

Day One -- Convening at 4:00pm

1. Call to Order and Constituting Prayer
2. Bylaw I.C.7 Charge to Presbytery
3. Roll call
4. Receive Fraternal Delegates
5. Recognize Visitors
6. Election of the Moderator (fall)
7. Election of the Clerk (fall, odd years)
8. Report of the Committee on Arrangements
9. Reading and Approval of the Minutes
10. Reading of Communications to the Presbytery
11. Presentation and Adoption of the Docket
12. Appointment of Special Committees (including Date and Place or Audit Committee, as needed)
13. Report of the Treasurer
14. Election of the Treasurer (fall, even years)
15. Election of Commissioners to the General Assembly (fall)
16. Elections for Standing Committees (fall and as needed)
17. Reports of Ministerial Advisors to Churches without Pastors
18. Fraternal Relations

19. Committee of the Historian
[For any Day One items not completed, see item 28.]
Day One -- Devotional Service at 7:00pm

Day Two -- Convening at 9:00am

20. Candidates and Credentials (Includes Presentation of Calls, Reception of Ministers, and Dismissal of Ministers)
21. Home Missions
22. Church Visitation and Session Records
23. Ministerial Relations
24. Foreign Missions
25. Overtures and Papers
26. Diaconal Ministries
27. Any remaining items from the "Day One" list.
28. Reports of Special/Temporary Committees
29. Report of Audit Committee (spring)
30. Miscellaneous Business
31. Set Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting
32. Resolution of Thanks
33. Adjournment with Prayer

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.

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH VISITATION
AND THE PREPARATION OF REPORTS BY CHURCH VISITORS

Church visitation is a spiritual ministry intended to foster fellowship in worship and nurture within the regional church. It is an important expression of our mutual commitment to advance the spiritual welfare of all the churches in the presbytery.

Church visitors shall refer to these Guidelines when visiting churches and preparing visitation reports. It will be beneficial if sessions to be visited prepare preliminary written responses to each Guideline in advance of the visit.

During a visit, the visitors should address all the topics below, as applicable to the church being visited.

After a visit, the visitors should prepare a written visitation report. The first paragraph of each visitation report should contain the date of the visit, the name of the church visited, and the names of the church visitors. The visitors shall report on all the topics below, as applicable to the church being visited, and the presence of any serious problems or irregularities they may have discovered, and they may recommend certain action(s) for consideration by the presbytery.

Guidelines:

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 both administrative and judicial 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 administration of the 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? Growth or decline? How do church leaders interpret these figures?
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. Missions: Is it a priority of the church to provide prayer and financial support for OPC home and foreign missions? Does the church provide prayer and financial support for any foreign missionary activities outside the OPC? Are members encouraged to be personally involved in supporting foreign missions, such as by providing independent prayer and/or financial support, writing letters of encouragement, or sending packages? Does the church periodically review its support for missions in a systematic manner? Are opportunities to learn about OPC home and foreign missions provided for church members? Does the church provide prayer and financial support for any other charitable or community service entities or activities?
14. Facilities: Physical plant, number of meeting rooms. Immediate needs. Plans for expansion. Equipment.
15. 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?
16. Problems: Are there interpersonal problems, conflicts or strained feelings that may be the source of future trouble in the church? Are there any serious problems or irregularities that may require certain action on the part of the presbytery?
17. Visitors should meet with the entire session.
18. 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.
19. Ministerial affiliation: Is the pastor affiliated with any other local ministerial groups? Are any of these damaging to a consistent Biblical witness?
20. Vacation Bible School: Materials used. Number of qualified teachers available? Number of children who participate? Succeed in achieving your goal?

Addendum 1

On Retirement for Ministerial Members of the Presbytery of New York and New England

1. Retirement is acknowledged by the FOG, but not clearly defined. These guidelines are intended to guide the Presbytery of New York and New England and its ministers who desire to retire from active ministry.
2. If a minister desires to retire from active ministry, he should
 - a) request to dissolve his relationship with the calling body he is serving (a church, Presbytery or the General Assembly);
 - b) and also request the Presbytery grant him retirement status.
3. “Emeritus” is a title granted by a congregation, the Presbytery, or an agency of the denomination to a minister who is retiring and has provided exceptional service in terms of length of time or quality of service. “Retirement” can only be granted by the body of which the officer is a member. These two terms should not be confused with each other.
4. Generally, retirement status may be granted to:
 - a) ministers in good standing who are 65 years of age or older and who desire to retire from active ministry;
 - b) or ministers with a disability which makes it impossible or difficult to continue in active ministry.
5. Retirement status allows a minister to exercise all the privileges of church office without many of the obligations.
 - a) A retired minister continues to enjoy all his privileges in regard to Presbytery, including the right to vote and speak on all matters in Presbytery, and to be elected to committees, offices, or as a commissioner to a General Assembly if he desires to serve in this way.
 - b) He may continue to preach the gospel, teach, counsel, lead public worship, serve the sacraments, function as a ministerial advisor, etc. in the churches of the Presbytery or in other circumstances as God may allow.
 - c) He may continue other ministerial functions (such as weddings) as permitted by the laws of the State wherein those functions occur.
 - d) He is no longer obligated to actively seek a call to another ministry (FoG 26.3) or approved labor (FoG 24.4).
 - e) He is no longer obligated to attend meetings of the Presbytery (unless he continues on a standing committee or serves as an officer of the Presbytery), nor does he need to provide an excuse for his absence, though he should be encouraged to attend these meetings when he is able.
6. Retired ministers shall
 - a) Promptly report any change of address or other contact information to the stated clerk of the Presbytery.
 - b) Submit an annual report to the Ministerial Relations Committee referencing any current ministerial activities and present availability for ministerial functions when appropriate;
 - c) Attend meetings of Presbytery, if he remains as a member on a standing committee or holds an office of Presbytery (moderator, stated clerk or treasurer), or provide an excuse in the same manner as other members of Presbytery.
7. A retired minister is encouraged to keep the Presbytery informed of changes to his health or that of his family that the Presbytery may pray for him regularly.
8. The Presbytery, *through the work of the Ministerial Relations Committee and the Diaconal Committee*, should assure itself that a retired minister has adequate resources for himself and his

family. If necessary, the Presbytery should provide counsel or aid for a retired minister to help him to obtain those resources.

9. A retired minister should carefully consider the impact that his presence may have on the continued wellbeing of a congregation he has served or on the ministry of another minister newly installed. Retired ministers are encouraged to consider relocating. Ministers who choose to not relocate are strongly encouraged to worship in another OPC congregation (or a congregation of like faith and practice) for regular worship over an extended period of time. No pastor should return to regularly worshipping at the last church he served prior to his retirement without having full and frank discussions with the Session and new pastor of that church about the nature, limits, and special challenges of his involvement in the life of this congregation. Generally, a retired minister should not serve on the session of a church where he has served as pastor.
10. While a retired minister may perform his office in any circumstance where God may place him, he should feel free to decline such ministry, and particularly in congregations where he has previously served when another minister is installed in that office.
11. It is important to remember that God has invested many retired ministers with both wisdom and experience which is of great value to the church. So long as it does not burden the retired minister, the Presbytery should avail itself of that wisdom when making decisions or taking actions that pertain to matters in which he has been previously involved.
12. A retired minister may serve as a regular supply (FOG XVII.3) without relinquishing his retirement status. However, if a retired minister accepts a formal call to ministry (even if the call is 'part time'), he shall no longer be considered retired and shall return to his former duties with regard to the Presbytery.
13. Any retired minister from a different Presbytery of the OPC who relocates within the geographic bounds of the Presbytery is encouraged to contact the stated clerk to make his presence known. He should be kept informed of Presbytery activities and encouraged to participate when he is able. He should be welcomed at meetings of Presbytery and seated as a corresponding member.
14. Retired ministers who are members of the Presbytery of New York and New England, should they move outside the geographical boundaries of the presbytery, should carefully consider transferring their membership into the presbytery where they are residing.