

First Presbyterian Church Of Petaluma  
Standing Rules for Session and Commissions  
*Adopted February 16, 2012*

I. Meetings

- A. The stated meetings of the Session shall be held on the third Thursday of each month.
- B. There shall be an organizational meeting annually at a date specified by the Session, at which time assignments shall be defined for the upcoming year of ministry.
- C. Special meetings  
In accordance with the Book of Order (G-10.020), special meetings may be called:
  - 1. By the moderator,
  - 2. By the moderator, when requested in writing by, two Session members.
  - 3. By the Presbytery,
  - 4. Notice of the meeting shall be given not less than 24 hours in advance of the meeting and the purpose shall be stated.
- D. Quorum
  - 1. One third (1/3) of the elders, with the moderator.
  - 2. In the event that the church is without a pastor(s), the quorum shall consist of 1/3 of the elders plus a moderator appointed by the Presbytery of the Redwoods.
- E. Telephone meetings  
Session may meet by telephone conference call or video conference, as provided by Roberts Rules. Voting by mail or "telephone survey" or by email is not permitted. Voting by proxy is not allowed.
- F. Rules of Order  
Meetings of the Session shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order insofar as they are not in conflict with the Book of Order or with the Church Bylaws.
- G. Potential Conflicts of Interest  
Session members may not serve on a committee or commission that oversees the ministry of an employee who is an immediate family member. Session members are required to recuse themselves from business (discussion of a motion and voting) that may directly affect an employee who is an immediate family member.
- H. Meetings and records
  - 1. Meetings of the Session are open to members of the congregation, except in cases when the Session votes to go into executive session. (See the Book of Order, G-10.0201)
  - 2. The records of the Session are to be made available to members of the church except portions of the minutes of executive session. If the Clerk of the Session is in doubt as to whether to grant an extract from the records/minutes, the Session shall be consulted. Ordinarily, at annual meetings of the congregation, the Clerk shall provide the congregation an appropriate summary of Session actions.

II. Moderator

- A. The pastor of the congregation shall be moderator of the Session. The Session may elect an acting moderator in the absence of the moderator, per the approval of the pastor. If for any reason it seems prudent to invite another minister, from outside the congregation, to preside; such person shall be a member of the Presbytery of the Redwoods.
- B. Ordained pastors are members of the Session with voting rights, in accordance with the Book of Order. Ordinarily the moderator of Session will exercise voting rights to make or break a tie, in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order.
- C. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session shall be a minister appointed for that purpose by the presbytery through its Committee on Ministry.
- D. By virtue of the office, the pastor is the chief executive officer in any particular church and is responsible, in consultation with the elders, for the direction and supervision of other persons employed by the Session.

### III. Clerk

- A. At its annual organizational meeting, the Session shall elect a clerk to serve for one year, beginning with the organizational meeting, to record their transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required.
- B. The clerk shall keep the minutes of the Session according to the rules supplied by Presbytery's Committee on Review of Records.
- C. The clerk with the concurrence of the moderator, shall prepare a proposed agenda for each Session meeting.
- D. The clerk of Session may speak at Session meetings to clarify the wording of a motion, upon a point of order, or when the Session grants him or her the privilege of the floor.

### IV. Delegates to Presbytery

At its annual organizational meeting, the Session shall elect delegates to Presbytery in accordance with the Book of order, equal to two (2) in number for each installed/interim/supply minister of this congregation, to serve for a period of one year. An alternate delegate will be selected.

### V. Church Nominating Committee

At its annual organizational meeting, the Session shall elect two (2) representatives to the Nominating Committee of the Congregation to serve for a period of one year, one of whom shall be designated as presiding officer of the committee.

### VI. Organization

The work of Session may be divided into sub-groups such as commissions, standing committees and ministry teams. The Session or commissions may form special committees to perform a specific task or inquiry. Special committees cease to exist one year from the formation or sooner.

#### A. Commissions

- 1. Each commission shall perform specific functions with regard to the operation of the church and shall be duly authorized to act in the name of the Session when performing assigned duties. Commissions are authorized to supervise and maintain existing programs, and to plan for new

ministries/programs. All new ministries/programs shall be approved by Session before implementation.

2. Each commission shall have a chair or co-chairs, appointed by the Session, at least one of whom is a member of Session. The chair is responsible for calling meetings, setting the agenda for each meeting and moderating commission meetings. The Pastor is an ex-officio member of all commissions.
3. Commission members must be members of the congregation, active in worship attendance and stewardship. Non-members who are actively involved in the church may be co-opted to commissions, without vote, provided that the majority of the commission is made up of active church members.
4. Commissions may act as committees of the whole or may divide into subcommittees or task forces.
5. Commissions shall meet at least every two months at times and places set by the commission. If the commission fails to set a time and date, the Pastor or Session may do so.
6. Commissions shall appoint a clerk, other than the chair, to keep minutes of meetings and provide provisional minutes to commission members within two weeks of the meeting. In addition, the secretary shall provide commission reports to the clerk of Session seven days before each Session meeting for inclusion with the Session agenda. Commission reports shall include recommendations requiring Session action, which shall be highlighted, and all other actions taken.
7. Commission chairpersons shall be consulted before moneys are spent on matters relating to their commission's programming when the amount spent is beyond what is provided in the budget (i.e. orders, special orders, materials, supplies, etc.).
8. Commissions shall prepare a budget yearly for approval by the Session in accordance with the schedule set by Session.
9. Commissions shall report to the congregation in writing at least once per year. The report shall include but not be limited to: goals and objectives set, goals and objectives achieved, actions taken, funds expended, appointments made and resignations accepted.
10. Commissions are permanent and shall operate under supervision of Session.

#### B. Ministry Teams

1. Ministry Teams may be formed to start or carry out specific ministries that support the mission and vision of the church. Ministry Teams serve under the authority of a commission, the Session, or a staff member designated by the Session. Session must vote to approve the formation of a Ministry Team and vote annually to approve the continuation of Ministry Teams.
2. Ministry teams are formed with people who have spiritual gifts and skills for the ministry that is to be performed. All ministry team members are personally involved in the ministry. Team members are not required to be church members.
3. A Ministry Team is led by an active church member, appointed by the team or a staff member and approved by the Session. Every Team Leader must be involved in church-wide leadership orientation and periodic training meetings (such as the Leadership Huddle). A Ministry Team may include appropriate staff, who function as full members of the team, with voice and vote. The team may be led by a staff member.
4. A Ministry Team is empowered to make decisions related to their ministry within certain boundaries as stated in our church constitution, church policies and these Standing Rules and the decisions or instructions of the Session or the related commission. Needs that exceed budget or facility resources should be communicated to the related commission or Session.

5. Ordinarily, a team makes decisions by consensus, which are recorded and communicated to the whole team. If a team member disputes the legitimacy of a decision, he/she may request a formal vote.
  6. The Team Leader, or a designated Co-Leader, is responsible for calling meetings, inviting team members, setting the agenda and moderating team meetings.
- C. The following actions must be presented to the Session for approval (in addition to those in the Book of Order, G-10.0102)
1. Appoint commission and standing committee members and accepting their resignations.
  2. Approving Ministry Teams and Ministry Team Leaders.
  3. Initiating new programs or ministries, and substantially altering existing ones.
  4. Adopting policies.
  5. Materially altering the property of the church.
  6. Obligating the church beyond the current year's budget amount.
- D. The Master Church Calendar  
The Office Coordinator will keep the master church calendar.

## VII. Commissions

### **A. Adult Christian Education**

The Adult Christian Education Commission shall:

1. Provide opportunities for members to develop and deepen their relationship with and become followers of Jesus Christ. Our goal is to facilitate all of us to be doers, not just hearers, of God's Word.
2. Oversee adult Sunday school, retreats, small groups and Bible studies, and special educational programs with pertinent topics designed to meet the developing needs and interest of adults in the church.
3. Recruit leaders and teachers that will help us explore, deepen and stretch our faith. Maintain library and book table.
4. Provide effective means by which church members and regular attendees can develop and maintain need-fulfilling relationships with one another.
5. Review membership rolls annually, in accordance with the Book of Order (G-10.0302) and make recommendations to the Session.
6. Prepare annual budget requests and oversee the spending of the commission's budget. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to the Alpha Leadership Team.

### **B. Budget and Finance**

The Purpose of the Budget and Finance Commission is:

1. To conduct the business affairs of FPC/Petaluma in such a way that demonstrates the Christian faith to those with whom it deals on behalf of the church.
2. To discharge the financial and legal responsibilities of the church as defined by state and federal laws and in accordance with the Book of Order, PC(USA).
3. To monitor, report and manage the financial life of the church.
4. The church bookkeeper serves as a member of this Commission.

The Budget and Finance Commission shall:

1. Approve all requests for special offerings and fundraisers in accordance with Session policy. Bring extraordinary requests to Session for approval.

2. Assure the counting and recording of all offerings by at least two duly appointed persons, or a fidelity bonded person. (Book of Order: G-10.0401)
3. Prepare and present a draft annual budget to the Session, for review, no later than the November Stated Meeting.
4. Present a proposed annual budget to the Session, for action, at its December Stated Meeting.
5. Arrange, annually, for a full Financial Review of all books and records relating to finances of the church (including, but not limited to Operations, Reserves, Deacons, Endowment Funds). The review is to be conducted by a public accountant or public accounting firm or a Commission of members versed in accounting procedures. Auditor(s) should not be related to the Church Treasurer, (Book of Order, G-10.0401d). Submit a written report of this Financial Review to the Session for its review and action.
10. Communicate with the congregation through regular articles in the church newsletter, Sunday bulletin, website, email newsletter and personal contact.
11. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to Banking Team and Endowment Management Team

#### Endowment Management Team

The purpose of the Endowment Management Commission is to manage the process whereby FPCP may receive and best utilize bequests, deferred giving, memorials, endowments and other special contributions in accordance with the wishes of the individual donor and in a manner that will aid the long-term stewardship of FPCP.

### **C. Congregational Care**

The Congregational Care Commission shall:

1. Oversee church communications, including a monthly newsletter (The Bridge), church web site and other effective means.
2. Coordinate with and support (but not oversee) the care ministries of the church to assist congregants and neighbors in becoming healthy and whole, including Stephen Ministry, Health Ministry, Hope Counseling, Visitation ministry, and Deacons.
3. Oversee and support social ministries, including Adult Fellowship, Senior Ministry, potluck groups, and quarterly all-church events. These will provide effective means by which church members and regular attendees can develop and maintain need-fulfilling relationships with one another.
4. Follow-up with members and attendees when their church attendance has diminished. The goals are to assess if there is a need the church can help meet, and to encourage participation in church activities.
5. Review membership rolls annually, in accordance with the Book of Order (G-10.0302) and make recommendations to Session.
6. Prepare annual budget requests and oversee the spending of the commission's budget.

### **D. Facilities**

The purpose of the Facilities Commission is to create and manage an ongoing framework for maintaining and improving all church facilities for the both the short term and the long term.

The Facilities Commission shall:

1. Support, oversee, and approve the maintenance of all existing facilities and grounds.
  2. Support, oversee, and approve any and all improvements or additions to all facilities.
- The Commission shall cooperate with and assist any ad hoc committee that is formed to

address long range development (past examples have included the Long Range Planning & Design Committee and the Capital Improvement Planning Committee).

3. Authorize and supervise use of church property as such is requested to be used by outside groups or individuals.
4. Oversee and assist the work of the Facilities Coordinator. The Coordinator is supervised by the Pastor as head of staff and is guided by the Facilities Commission. Specific responsibilities of the Coordinator are detailed in the Facilities Coordinator Position Description.
5. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to the Facilities "Ministry Maintenance Team".
6. Review and oversee Liability and Property insurance coverages.
7. Maintain continuity as commission members turn over from one year to the next.
8. Prepare annual budget requests.

#### **E. Mission**

The Mission Commission shall:

1. Recommend to Session mission budget expenditures that extend our ministry beyond our normal reach, balancing our ministry and support between "words" and "deeds," two arms of evangelism and life transformation.
2. Provide educational opportunities to raise congregational consciousness in the areas of community responsibility and concern.
3. Prepare annual budget requests and oversee the spending of the commission's budget.

#### **F. Outreach**

This commission exists to support and equip members in fulfilling their mandate to make disciples through verbal witness and loving ministries.

The Outreach Commission shall:

1. Support and encourage members in fulfilling their call to make disciples among their acquaintances and neighbors. This includes providing quality instruction and materials that members can use to share their faith with their acquaintances and neighbors.
2. Provide resources and advice on the advertising of church activities in brochures, phonebooks, newspapers, Internet and elsewhere.
3. Ensure that visitors to the church campus are warmly welcomed by providing an effective program for visitor retention.
4. Establish and provide programs for helping new attendees become members, including scheduling and conducting, along with the pastor, new member classes throughout the year that introduce new members to the congregation.
5. Communicate with ministry leaders, including small group leaders, Session and the Deacon Board so that leaders are kept informed of all new members. Follow-up to ensure that new members develop relationships with church members through groups for growth, fellowship, and service.
6. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to Connection Ministry Team, various Community outreach teams.
7. Prepare annual budget requests and oversee the spending of the commission's budget.

#### **G. Personnel**

The Purpose of the Personnel Standing Commission is to provide an orderly, focused, and considerate means for the session to build a productive and healthy work environment.

The Personnel Commission shall:

1. Approve position descriptions for employees expected to work less than 20 hours per week; Report decisions to Session. Recommend for session approval, position descriptions for all staff expected to work more than 20 hours per week.
2. Review and recommend to session compensation and salary adjustments for all paid staff.
3. Write, revise, or review as necessary, and recommend for session approval all personnel policies for church and school employees.
4. Assure that personnel policies are followed.
5. Encourage professional growth and development for all staff.
6. Provide for an annual review process for all paid staff.
7. Develop and oversee an effective and fair hiring process and assure that open staff positions are filled promptly.
8. Assure that personnel policies and session guidelines have been followed in all hiring.
9. Assure that all new hiring and promotions have proper approval:
  - a. Ministry/Program Staff expected to work more than 20 hours per week: Recommended by a Search Team; Reviewed by Personnel Commission for Recommendation to Session; Approved by Session
  - b. Non-Ministry/Program Staff who are expected to work more than 20 hours per week: Recommended by a Search Team; Approved by Personnel Commission; Reported to Session.
  - c. All staff expected to work up to 20 hours per week and all temporary workers: Recommended by a Search Team or Staff Member; Approved by Personnel Commission and Pastor or appropriate Director; Reported to Session.
10. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to the Child Safety Policy Team.
11. Review and oversee Workers Compensation insurance coverage.
12. Prepare annual budget requests.

## **H. Stewardship**

The Stewardship Commission shall:

1. Conduct, monitor and report on an annual stewardship program, which encourages members and friends to pledge their time, talent and treasure to the work and ministry of the church.
2. Facilitate regular Biblical and theological study on stewardship.
3. Interpret the mission and ministry of the church in ways that challenge members to respond generously.
4. Work with Christian education leaders to ensure an intentional year-round and age appropriate stewardship education program.

## **I. Student Ministries**

This Commission encompasses the Children's Commission and the Youth Commission which are each headed by active elders:

1. Lead programs for Nursery and childcare, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School (VBS), Junior and Senior High students.

2. Join with staff in recruiting, training and supporting leaders, teachers and other volunteers. Coordinate with staff in recruiting youth members.
3. Provide ministries that are safe for children and students, in full compliance with the church's Child and Youth Safety Policies. Annually review these Policies and update required forms with leaders.
4. Review, revise and coordinate with Personnel Commission and Pastor, the position descriptions for Nursery, Sunday School and Youth Coordinator. Insure that position descriptions are updated as changes occur so that current job functions are included in each position description.
5. Lead in reviewing/developing performance plans and annual performance reviews for Student Ministries staff members, in coordination with Pastor and Personnel Commission.
6. Prepare budget submissions for Session approval and annual reports to congregation.

**J. Worship**

The Worship Commission, in addition to being chaired by an elder, shall include representatives of all ministry teams under the commission.

The Worship Commission shall:

1. Evaluate and recommend improvements for the worship ministries and activities of the congregation (Book of Order, W-1.4004).
2. Plan seasonal celebrations of the church.
3. Oversee and support ministry teams, including, but not limited to the AVL Team, Choir and Praise Team.
4. Prepare annual budget requests and oversee the spending of the commission's budget.

**K. Commission consolidation**

Commissions maybe consolidated or unconsolidated by Session at any time. Normally, commission consolidation will occur at the January organizational meeting of Session when commission chair assignments are made.

VIII. Amendments and Suspensions

A. These Standing Rules may be amended by Session by a majority vote of those present and constituting a quorum; provided that the nature of the proposed amendment has been given in the notice of the meeting.

B. These Standing Rules may be suspended for a meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and constituting a quorum.