

Hills and Plains Presbytery

Standing Rules

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1. NAME

Hills and Plains is the name of the presbytery in the Presbyterian Church in America whose constituting churches are in Oklahoma, Northwest Arkansas, and Southwest Missouri.

2. RELATIONSHIP OF HILL AND PLAINS PRESBYTERY TO ITS CONSTITUTING CHURCHES

2-1. Hills and Plains Presbytery is composed of all teaching elders and congregations within its geographical bounds that have been accepted by the presbytery, together with the mission churches for which it has the responsibility of initiation and oversight.

2-2. Any non-PCA congregation in the geographical bounds of Hills and Plains Presbytery may ask for admission into the presbytery, upon which request the presbytery shall select a commission for the enablement of admission, according to BCO 13-8.

(BCO 13-8 "The Presbytery, before receiving into its membership any church, shall designate a commission to meet with the church's ruling elders to make certain that the elders understand and can sincerely adopt the doctrines and polity of the Presbyterian Church in America as contained in its Constitution. In the presence of the commission, the ruling elders shall be required to answer affirmatively the questions required of officers at their ordination.")

2-3. New churches are necessarily organized by the presbytery.

2-4. The jurisdiction of the individual congregation is in its session, and, if it has no session, is in the presbytery.

2-5. Since membership in the presbytery is voluntary, congregations may remove themselves from the relationship to Hill and Plains Presbytery when they so desire.

2-6. Properties are owned by the individual congregations, not by or with any higher court.

2-7. Hills and Plains Presbytery is responsible for the oversight of individual member congregations, and exercises this responsibility chiefly through the examination of session records each year.

2-8. Hills and Plains Presbytery budgets money for its various operations of service, and asks the local congregations to make contributions in the amount of 0.75% of general budget funds for that service, sending, if possible, at the beginning of each year, quarter or month, as it is necessary for the payment of presbytery expenses.

3. MEETINGS

3-1. Stated Meetings

3-1.a. Presbytery shall hold (3) three Stated Meetings a year.

3-1.b. Meeting Days, Times, and Locations

3-1.b.i. In even numbered years: One (1) meeting will be held on the second Saturday in February. Two (2) meetings will be held on the second Tuesday in May and October.

3-1.b.ii In odd numbered years: Two (2) meeting will be held on Saturdays: the second Saturday in February and the first Saturday in May. One (1) meeting will be held on the second Tuesday in October.

3-1.b.iii. The time of each Stated Meeting will be 10:00 a.m. for Saturday meetings and 2:00 p.m. for Tuesday meetings unless modified at a prior stated meeting.

3-1.b.iv. Five (5) out of six (6) stated meetings over a rolling two (2) year period will be held in the Tulsa-Metro area.

3-1.b.v In extraordinary circumstances Administrative Committee is empowered to change the mode of meeting to include a called virtual meeting.

3-1.c. A proposed docket shall be prepared by the Stated Clerk for each business meeting of Presbytery in consultation with the Moderator, and Chairmen of the Permanent Committees, and a copy suitable for reproduction of all communications and reports from individuals, committees, and Church courts which require action by the Presbytery shall be received by the Stated Clerk three (3) weeks prior to the Stated Meetings of Presbytery. The Stated Clerk shall send one (1) copy of the above and the docket to each Teaching Elder and church on the rolls of Presbytery, or more if requested, ten (10) days prior to the Stated Meetings of Presbytery. Requests for special speakers or presentations from outside Presbytery shall be referred to the appropriate Permanent Committee and approved by that Committee before being admitted to the docket. Presbytery shall adopt the docket by a majority vote, and the body may amend the docket at any time during the meeting by a majority vote.

3-2. Adjourned Meetings

Adjourned Meetings may be held as determined necessary by Presbytery for continuing the business of regular Stated Meetings.

3-3. Called Meetings

All called meetings of Hills and Plains Presbytery shall meet the requirements of BCO 13-12.

(BCO 13-12 “The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on its own adjournment. The Moderator shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of three teaching elders and three ruling elders from at least three different churches. Should the Moderator be for any reason unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall, under the same requirements, issue the call. If both Moderator and Stated Clerk are unable to act, any three teaching elders and three ruling elders of at least three different churches shall have power to call a meeting. However, any Presbytery may prescribe in its rules its own requirements for calling a special meeting, provided that those requirements are not less than those stated in this section. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than ten days in advance to each teaching elder and to the Clerk of Session of every church. In the notice, the purpose of the meeting shall be stated, and no business other than that named in the notice is to be transacted. The Presbytery also shall convene when directed to do so by the General Assembly, for the transaction of designated business only.”)

3-4. Attendance

Unless honorably retired, declared infirm, or permitted to labor outside the geographical bounds of Presbytery, all Teaching Elders are expected to attend all meetings of Presbytery. Permission for absences shall be requested through the Stated Clerk or from the floor during the Stated Clerk's report.

4. OFFICE

4-1. Moderator

4-1.a. The Moderator shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of one (1) year, with a one-year renewal at the will of Presbytery. Election shall normally be held at the October Stated Meeting, with term of office to begin on January 1st the following. The Moderator may be either a Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder.

4-1.b. The Moderator shall preside over all Meetings of Presbytery. In the event of the Moderator's absence, the last Moderator present or the oldest Teaching Elder longest-a-member-of-the-court may hold the chair until a new or temporary Moderator is elected.

4-1.c. The Moderator has all the authority necessary for the preservation of order, for the proper and expeditious conduct of all business before the court according to the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America and Robert's Rules of Order.

4-1.d. In any emergency the Moderator may change the time or place (or both) of meetings to which the court stands adjourned, giving reasonable notice of such change.

4-1.e. The Moderator may appoint a timekeeper, recording clerk, and parliamentarian. Debate on a main motion shall be limited to twenty (20) minutes unless extended. In the first twenty minutes of debate on the main motion, each speaker shall be limited to a maximum of five (5) minutes. In the event Presbytery wishes to extend the debate, each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes. Time extension shall be approved by a simple majority of Presbytery and shall be in increments of six (6) minutes.

4-1.f. For any motion originating from a committee no substitute motions or amendments will be allowed until ten (10) minutes of discussion have been permitted on the committee's motion. The ten (10) minutes of discussion will begin after the committee has given its rationale for the motion it proposed. If discussion on the committee's motion has ceased before the ten (10) minutes are up, the Moderator will waive the time limit and open the floor to substitute motions and amendments.

4-1.g. The Moderator, by the authority vested in him, is an *ex officio* (RONR 49:8 says that *ex officio* members of a board/committee are voting members) member of the Administrative Committee.

4-2. Stated Clerk

4-2.a. The Stated Clerk shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of one (1) year, subject to re-election at the will of Presbytery. Election shall normally be held at the October Stated Meeting, with term of office to begin on January 1st the following.

4-2.b. The Stated Clerk shall receive an annual stipend to be fixed by Presbytery.

4-2.c. The Stated Clerk may nominate to Presbytery temporary clerks, who, upon election, shall serve under the direction of the Stated Clerk.

4-2.d The State Clerk shall maintain the Book of Record according to BCO 13-7.

(BCO 13-7 “The Presbytery shall cause to be transcribed, in some convenient part of the book of records, the obligations required of ministers at their ordination, which shall be subscribed by all admitted to membership, in the following form:

I, _____, do sincerely receive and subscribe to the above obligation as a just and true exhibition of my faith and principles, and do resolve and promise to exercise my ministry in conformity thereunto.”)

(Editorial note: According to SR 5-2, the Stated Clerk is an ex officio, and therefore voting member—RONR 48:9—of the Administrative Committee.)

4-3. Treasurer

4-3.a. The Presbytery Treasurer shall be elected by Presbytery for a term of one (1) year, subject to re-election at the will of Presbytery. Election shall normally be held at the October Stated Meeting with the term of office to begin January 1st following.

4-3.b. He shall receive and record all funds contributed to Presbytery, shall discharge all designated funds as directed. All disbursements shall be approved by the respective Committees of Presbytery.

4-3.c. He shall give an accounting of the funds to the Presbytery at each Stated Meeting.

4-3.d. He shall be a member of the Administrative Committee, but not necessarily a voting member.

4-4. Trustees

4-4.a. The Trustees of Presbytery shall be composed of six (6) members, with parity of Teaching and Ruling Elders. Members shall be elected by Presbytery upon nomination

by the Administration Committee, for a term of three (3) years, subject to re-election at the will of Presbytery. Election shall normally be held at the October Stated Meeting with terms of office to begin January 1st following.

4-4.b. They shall hold title in the name of Presbytery to any real property or assets.

4-4.c. They shall administer such property or assets as Presbytery's agents when so directed by Presbytery.

5. COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

5-1. Permanent Committees

5-1.a. The Permanent Committees shall consist of Administrative, Pastoral Care, Candidates and Credentials, Missions, Spiritual Formation, and Review of Session Records.

5-1.a.i. Each Committee shall be composed of not less than four (4) and not more than twelve (12) members. Each committee will set its own committee size unless directed otherwise by Presbytery.

5-1.a.ii. For committees, parity of Teaching and Ruling Elders is recommended but not required. However, a minimum of two (2) Teaching Elders *and* two (2) Ruling Elders is required on all committees.

5-1.a.iii. Committee members will be divided into four (4) classes as equal in number as possible depending on size. Terms will be four (4) years in length and a member cannot serve more than two (2) consecutive terms on the same committee. Each class shall be designated by the term completion year, and no more than one class will be elected per year per committee.

5-1.a.iv. Members shall be elected by Presbytery upon nomination by the Administrative Committee. Elections shall normally be held at the October Stated Meeting of Presbytery with terms of office to begin upon election.

5-1.b. The Permanent Committees shall meet as needed in order to fulfill their appointed responsibilities, and the quorum shall be at least four (4) members with a minimum of one (1) TE and one (1) RE present.

5-1.c. The Permanent Committees shall elect their own chairmen and other officers from their membership annually. Committee office terms shall be a period of one year, and officers may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

(This essentially means that the chairman needs to be elected each January for the rest of the year.)

5-1.d. The Permanent Committees shall report to Presbytery at each Stated Meeting.

5-1.e. The members of Presbytery shall serve on only two (2) Permanent Committees at the same time.

5-1.f. Committee Reports which require action by Presbytery shall be sent by the chairman or secretary of the Committee to the Stated Clerk at least three (3) weeks prior to the Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

5-1.g. The Chairmen of the Permanent Committees shall submit their proposed committee budgets to the Administrative Committee by the September meeting of the Administrative Committee for consideration at the October Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

5-1.h. Each Permanent Committee shall operate according to its own Presbytery-approved policy and procedures.

5-1.i. Prior to the September meeting the Administrative Committee, with the help of the Treasurer shall furnish the churches with a cost of operating the Presbytery.

5-1.j. Whenever a permanent committee is given the continuing power of a commission, this will be noted in an appendix to the Standing Rules as long as the committee is entrusted with that power.

5-2. Administrative Committee—to provide the organization, planning process, information services, meeting space, agenda preparation services, and record-keeping that will enable the Presbytery effectively to accomplish its God-given vision. With the Stated Clerk as an *ex officio* member, the Committee shall oversee the administrative work of the Presbytery. Specifically, the Administrative Committee shall be responsible for, but not limited to:

- a. develop and maintain appropriate organizational structures;
- b. present nominations to the Presbytery for officers, for Standing Committees, and for various General Assembly committees and boards;
- c. coordinate all correspondence with the Stated Clerk and the General Assembly;
- d. present all overtures from the General Assembly to the Presbytery for a vote;
- e. prepare and propose Presbytery financial records in conjunction with a Treasurer;
- f. receive and determine the appropriate course of action for appeals and complaints;
- g. make arrangements for Presbytery meetings;
- h. develop and distribute the agenda prior to each meeting of the Presbytery.
- i. Receive requests from the committee chairman for unbudgeted or additional funds. If a request exceeds \$1,000, bring a recommendation to the presbytery.

5-3. Pastoral Care Committee—to provide spiritual support and accountability to the Teaching Elders and churches of our region. Specifically, the Pastoral Care Committee shall be responsible for but not limited to:

- a. provide counsel and assistance in reconciliation for the purity and peace of the churches and the members of Presbytery;

- b. provide accountability and encouragement for the health of the local church;
- c. guide pastors needing to go through a discipline process;
- d. receive and consider changes of call to an “out of bounds” status and making a recommendation to the presbytery regarding approval, according to the direction provided in BCO 8-7;

(BCO 8-7 “A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a teaching elder to work with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work. As far as possible, such a teaching elder shall be a member of the Presbytery within whose bounds he labors. (See BCO 20-1.)”

BCO 20-1 “Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. (See also BCO 8-7 and 21-1).

A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It shall be in accord with the BCO 8.

BCO 21-1 “No minister, licentiate or candidate shall receive a call from a church but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deems it for the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed. Ordinarily a candidate or licentiate may not be granted permission by the Presbytery to move on to the field to which he has been called, prior to his examination for licensure or ordination. Likewise an ordained minister from another Presbyterian Church in America Presbytery or another denomination, ordinarily shall not move on to the field to which he has been called until examined and received by Presbytery.”)

- e. oversee the work of Teaching Elders serving outside the bounds of presbytery, according to BCO 8-7, and oversight of men without call, according to BCO 13-2;

(BCO 13-2 “A minister shall be required to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he resides, unless there are reasons which are satisfactory to his Presbytery why he should not do so. When a minister labors outside the geographical bounds of, or in a work not under the jurisdiction of his Presbytery, at home or abroad, it shall be only with the full concurrence of and under circumstances agreeable to his Presbytery, and to the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he labors, if one exists. When a minister shall continue on the rolls of his Presbytery without a call to a particular work for a prolonged period, not exceeding three years, the procedure as set forth in BCO 34-10 shall be followed. A minister without call shall make or file a report to his Presbytery at least once each year.”

BCO 34-10 “Whenever a minister of the Gospel shall habitually fail to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the cause of such dereliction and, if necessary, to institute judicial proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. If it shall appear that his neglect proceeds only from his lack of acceptance to the Church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it withdraws license from a licentiate for lack of evidence of the divine call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds (2/3) being necessary for this purpose.

In such a case, the clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery forthwith deliver to the minister concerned a written note that, at the next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defense; and if the decision pass against him he may appeal, as if he had been tried after the usual forms. This principle may apply, with any necessary changes, to ruling elders and deacons.”)

- f. advise the Spiritual Formation Committee on potential topics of discussion and training.
- g. review, and if necessary, make recommendations, regarding the dissolution of pastoral relations between a church and a pastor.
- h. approve the terms of all ministerial calls and present them to Presbytery.

5-4. Candidates & Credential Committee—to oversee candidates/interns and examine candidates and pastors desiring to join the Presbytery. Specifically, the Candidates & Credentials Committee shall be responsible for but not limited to:

- a. theological and personal examination of all Teaching Elders seeking to be ordained or installed in the Presbytery;

- b. examine candidates coming under care, candidates for licensure, and candidates for ordination;
- c. perform relevant background and reference checks for all candidates;
- d. provide oversight and assign mentors for all candidates and interns;
- e. issue, receive, and review annual candidate and intern reports and make necessary recommendations to the Presbytery;
- f. develop and regularly remind the Presbytery of the process and the philosophy of examination throughout each of the stages of ministerial preparation and candidates credentialing.

5-5. Missions Committee—to oversee and help coordinate mission work, church planting, RUF, disaster relief efforts, and other outreach efforts. Specifically, the Missions Committee shall be responsible for but not limited to:

- a. recruit, evaluate, and call church planters;
- b. work with RUF area coordinators to recruit, evaluate, and call RUF campus ministers;
- c. make presbytery members aware of opportunities for partnership in disaster relief;
- d. promote and make presbytery members aware of opportunities for partnership in regional and world missions.

5-6. Spiritual Formation Committee—to coordinate presbytery efforts for worship, training, and retreats. Specifically, the Spiritual Formation Committee shall be responsible for but not limited to:

- a. plan the worship services for each presbytery;
- b. propose to the Administrative Committee potential topics for discussion at presbytery meetings and retreats to assist pastors and churches with soul care, outreach, cultural engagement, and development of ministerial gifts;
- c. educate unto and advance racial reconciliation and ethnic diversity of pastors and churches.

5-7 Review of Session Records Committee—to perform the yearly required review of session records for churches and mission churches per BCO 12-7 and BCO 40. The responsibilities and operating procedures shall include, but are not limited to:

(BCO 12-7. Every Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings, which record shall be submitted at least once in every year to the inspection of the Presbytery.)

- a. The committee will prepare a form for the review of these records and provide a copy of that form to each Session in Hills and Plains Presbytery.

- b. Clerks of Session will be required to mail or email a copy of their records to the person designated by the Committee by their assigned due date each year.
- c. The minutes are to be reviewed carefully by designated reviewers before the assigned stated meeting.
- d. The Stated Clerk will append one copy of the review form to the Minutes of Hills and Plains Presbytery.
- e. This committee will also receive responses from sessions to exceptions of substance, and report those to Hills and Plains Presbytery with their recommendation.
- f. The Stated Clerk will serve as an advisor to the committee, but is not necessarily on the committee.

5-8. Commissions

5-8.a. All commissions appointed by Hills and Plains Presbytery will have a quorum of two Teaching Elders and two Ruling Elders unless otherwise specified by Presbytery.

5-8.b The Moderator may appoint a commission(s) as directed by presbytery.

6. GOVERNMENT

6-1. Rules of Order

The rules of parliamentary order shall be the Standing Rules of Hills and Plains Presbytery here-in-after provided, the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, and Robert's Rules of Order - Revised.

6-2. Standing Rules of Presbytery

6-2.a. The Standing Rules shall be printed in the minutes of Presbytery once a year. Suspension of the Standing Rules shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of Presbytery and shall apply only to a particular action in the same meeting in which suspension takes place.

6-2.b. Amendments to the Standing Rules shall be proposed in writing at one meeting, admitted to the docket of the next Stated Meeting, and become effective **by a majority** vote of Presbytery.

7. GENERAL POLICIES

7-1. Expenses

7-1.a. Presbytery committee and commission expenses shall be paid by the Treasurer when approved in writing by the chairman of the committee or commission.

7-1.b. Presbytery will use the current IRS standard mileage rate for charitable organizations when reimbursing automobile travel expenses.

7-2. Forms and Resources

To find forms and checklists of common use, please reference the Handbook for Presbytery Clerks.

IMPORTANT NOTES: *[These are **not** part of the standing rules, but rather these have been added by the stated clerk as convenient reminders.]*

- **Evangelists** need to have their evangelist status renewed each year. For convenience's sake, it is the opinion of the stated clerk that we renew these each FEBRUARY.
- The General Assembly Administrative Committee has politely asked that **Nominations for Permanent Committees** be submitted each NOVEMBER. Committees of commissioners can wait until FEBRUARY—and when necessary, though past the deadline, can even be done in MAY.