

# THE JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY

## BYLAWS

### I. THE PRESBYTERY

#### A. Establishment and Incorporation

The John Knox Presbytery is a unit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), created by the 188th General Assembly meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, in May 1976. The Presbytery is incorporated in the state of Wisconsin with adherence to the laws in the states of Iowa and Minnesota.

#### B. Bounds

The boundaries of The John Knox Presbytery are drawn to include all churches and ministers in the counties of Dubuque (except Community Church, Cascade), Fayette, Clayton, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Jackson (except First Church, Miles) in Iowa; Fillmore, Houston and Winona in Minnesota; and Marquette, Grant, Lafayette, Green, Dane, Iowa, Crawford, Richland, Sauk, Columbia, Vernon, La Crosse, Monroe, Juneau, Adams, Buffalo, Trempealeau and Jackson in Wisconsin.

#### C. Mission Statement

In order to facilitate the worship and service of God in Jesus Christ, and trusting in the Holy Spirit, the John Knox Presbytery exists to nurture the gifts of the local church as a mission partner in its community.

We will do this by serving as a spiritual, educational, and coordinating resource which equips the clergy and the congregations in our shared witness of God.

#### D. The Context, Heritage, and History of John Knox Presbytery

##### PROLOGUE

We are the characters in an ongoing love story. The primary author of that story is God, though we also have a part in creating history.

We find our story written in the narrative of scripture. We find our story reflected in the confessional documents and in the Book of Order of our denomination.

All of these stories are found in the lives of the members of the community of faith God has called throughout history to serve the world as agents of God's love.

##### THE CONTEXT, HERITAGE, HISTORY OF JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY

John Knox Presbytery came into being on January 1, 1977. But that was not the real beginning.

The Presbyterian Church came to Iowa in the 1830's. It came to Wisconsin in the 1840's. And it came to Minnesota in the 1850's.

In Iowa we count our membership churches as 17. Since 1830, 59 other Presbyterian churches have come and gone in the Iowa counties in John Knox Presbytery.

In Wisconsin we count our membership churches as 42. Since 1840, 123 other Presbyterian churches have come and gone in the Wisconsin counties in John Knox Presbytery.

In Minnesota we count our membership churches as 7. Since 1850, 31 other Presbyterian churches have come and gone in the Minnesota counties in John Knox Presbytery.

In the heritage of the John Knox Presbytery are found many streams of denominational format and expressions of faith. For example:

- Old School
- New School
- Congregational Church
- United Presbyterian Church of North America
- Welsh Calvinist Methodist
- Bohemian Brethren
- Synod of the West
- Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Our heritage begins with the first calling by God for people to be God's People: Abraham and Sarah. God's people wavered in the "Yes" to God: Egypt to Mt. Sinai: Mt. Sinai to Canaan: Canaan to Exile: Exile to Canaan to Exile. Our heritage includes the action of God in Jesus Christ to lead God's People firmly from Exile to what we call the Church in every place in the world. Through the presence of power of the Holy Spirit we come to today as God's People committed to bring all peoples of the world to be God's People.

#### THE NATURE OF OUR STORY AS IT UNFOLDS IN THE WORK OF JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY

John Knox Presbytery is people who are  
a part of the long story of God's people;  
called together by God to be the church in this time and  
place.

God is central to all that we do as a presbytery, therefore  
we worship  
acknowledging whose we are;  
seeking God's will;  
we worship  
using a range of forms from ordered liturgy to singular  
prayer or hymn;  
throughout the gathering.

We are a people whose story is formed through  
God's action in Jesus Christ;  
our style of interaction with one another;  
willingness to discuss issues;  
manner of making decisions;  
readiness to minister in the name of Jesus Christ to people in  
the geographic area of the presbytery.

We are a body of congregations who have needs and strengths;  
As a presbytery we encourage congregations through  
helping equip them for ministry;  
visiting them periodically;  
forming networks between needs and strengths;  
celebrating and using gifts.

Congregations encourage the presbytery in its ministry.

John Knox Presbytery takes its place as a faithful partner:  
in the work of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies,  
in the witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),  
and in the mission of the church of Jesus Christ throughout the  
world.

## EPILOGUE

God's love story is a never ending story. God's story will continue to undergo subtle and radical changes in plot and in the characters. God's story will remain constant in that the author, God, remains constant in love.

### E. Membership

1. Membership of the presbytery is set forth in the Book of Order (G-3.0306).
2. Book of Order G-2.0503  
*"A teaching elder is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by that presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery, or honorably retired."*
3. Each year, the stated clerk shall determine the number of minister members of the Presbytery, and when the number of resident ministers entitled to vote is greater than the number of elders so entitled, those honorably retired ministers who have been absent from the preceding six (6) stated meetings of the Presbytery shall be considered inactive for the purposes of achieving balance, in accordance with Book of Order G-3.0301.
4. Elder members are all elders duly elected in accordance with the following provisions:

Each church shall be represented by an elder commissioned by the session with the following additional provisions:

- a. Churches with membership over 500 shall be represented as follows:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| 500-1000  | 2 elders |
| 1001-1500 | 3 elders |
| 1501-2000 | 4 elders |
| 2001+     | 5 elders |

- b. Each year, if the number of resident teaching elders entitled to vote in the presbytery is greater than the number of ruling elders so entitled, particular sessions shall be invited to elect additional ruling elder commissioners for the purpose of redressing the imbalance. (Book of Order G-3.0301). The Stated Clerk shall recommend the particular sessions to be so invited. Normally all such elections shall be for a term of one year. Alternate ruling elder commissioners shall be elected in sufficient number to serve whenever it is impossible for a principal ruling elder commissioner to do so.
- c. A ruling elder elected to the office of moderator or other office, as a chairperson of a permanent or standing committee or as a member of Presbytery Council, shall be a member of presbytery for the term of office. Book of Order (G-3.0301) When the chairperson of a permanent or standing committee cannot be present for a presbytery meeting, his or her designee shall be enrolled as a member of Presbytery for that meeting. Each ruling elder elected by the presbytery as Executive Presbyter or Associate Executive Presbyter shall be enrolled as a member of presbytery for the duration of service in such staff position. Each ruling elder elected as the Moderator of Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery, as a Commissioner to Synod, or as a Commissioner to General Assembly shall be a member of Presbytery for the term of office. Any Commissioned Ruling Elder commissioned to serve a particular church or churches shall be a member of the presbytery for the term of the commission.
- d. Presbyters in good standing in other governing bodies of this church or in any other Christian church in correspondence with the General Assembly of this church, who are present at any meeting of the presbytery, may be invited to sit as corresponding members, with voice but without vote.
- e. Persons who chair committees or task forces of Presbytery shall be seated as corresponding members of presbytery, with voice and without vote, for the term of office. Former ruling elder Moderators of Presbytery, whose membership still resides in a church in John Knox Presbytery, shall be seated as corresponding members of the presbytery.

F. Meetings

- 1. There shall be four stated meetings of presbytery in each calendar year in February, May, August, and November. The February and August meetings shall be held on the third Saturday in the month, and the May and November meetings shall be on the third Tuesday in the month, except when the third Tuesday of November is the same week as Thanksgiving Day, in which case it shall be held on the second Tuesday of November. Presbytery will meet in a place to be determined by the Presbytery Council.

2. Meetings of the Presbytery may be held by electronic means, as established by the Presbytery Council. Such meetings shall provide “opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members.... The notice of an electronic meeting must include an adequate description of how to participate in it.” (RRO,NR, 11th Edition, p. 97) Standard quorum requirements shall apply, from the total members and commissioners in attendance at all locations. The Moderator, Vice Moderator, Stated Clerk and Recording Clerk shall be together in one location. The Moderator may appoint meeting assistants at each location, as desired. Such meeting assistants will help with matters designated by the moderator and related to the conduct of the meeting. Motions made from the floor shall be emailed to the clerk before they are acted upon.
3. When an emergency shall require a meeting earlier than the time to which Presbytery stands adjourned, the Moderator shall, at the request or with the concurrence, of two teaching elders and two ruling elders, the ruling elders being of different churches, call a special meeting. Should the moderator be for any reason unable to act, the stated clerk shall, under the same requirements, issue a call. If both the Moderator and the Stated Clerk are unable to act, any three teaching elders and any three ruling elders, the ruling elders being of different churches, shall have the power to call a meeting. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than 10 days in advance to the officers of Presbytery, to each teaching elder and to each session of the Presbytery.

G. Attendance

Every teaching elder of presbytery, residing within the bounds of presbytery, except those holding the status of honorably retired and not currently serving a congregation, and every ruling elder commissioner to the presbytery shall attend all stated meetings of presbytery. Those unable to attend and notifying the stated clerk shall be recorded as "absent with notice".

H. Quorum

Any three teaching elder members and the ruling elder members present, provided that at least three churches are represented by elders, shall be a quorum competent to proceed to business Book of Order (G-3.0304).

I. Committees and Commissions of the Presbytery

Committees and Commissions of the Presbytery may hold electronic meetings which provide for simultaneous aural communication. The usual meeting procedures shall apply in such meetings.

## II. OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

### A. Officers

1. The moderator(s) of presbytery shall be elected by the presbytery for a term of one year. The duties of the moderator(s) are to work in consultation with the Stated Clerk and Executive Presbyter to plan the content of presbytery meetings; to preside at Presbytery meetings with all authority necessary, according to the current edition of Roberts' Rules of Order, Newly Revised; to be an ex-officio member of Presbytery Council; to moderate Administrative Commissions to ordain or install, or to designate a moderator for such commission; to represent the presbytery at official functions, upon request; to appoint persons to fill vacated positions on Administrative Commissions, in consultation with the Stated Clerk and Executive Presbyter; to appoint members of an Investigating Committee, according to presbytery's rule (Ethics and Accountability Policy, IV, B. 2.a.2); to appoint a Stated clerk pro tem, in consultation with the stated clerk, or if unavailable, the executive presbyter; to perform other duties the presbytery may assign. All appointments shall be reported to the next stated meeting of presbytery. *(Approved 08/17/2019)*
2. The vice-moderator shall be elected by the presbytery to serve one year concurrently with the moderator. The vice-moderator shall in all respects serve as the moderator when the moderator, for any reason, is unable to perform her/his duties and may be called upon to assist as the moderator chooses. Barring extraordinary circumstances, the Nominating Committee shall normally nominate the Vice-Moderator as nominee for Moderator of the Presbytery.
3. The stated clerk shall be elected to serve for a term of three years. Duties of the stated clerk are outlined in Book of Order (G-3.0104). A position description is also provided in the Personnel Policies in the Manual of Operations.
4. The treasurer shall be elected for a term of three years. The treasurer shall consult with the Presbytery Administrator concerning financial matters of the Presbytery.
5. The assistant treasurer shall be elected for a term of three years to correspond with the term of office of the treasurer. He or she shall serve in the absence or the inability to serve of the treasurer under the provisions of 3) above.
6. At the discretion of the presbytery, the offices of stated clerk and treasurer may be held by the same person.
7. A recording secretary shall be secured by the Stated Clerk to take minutes of the presbytery meeting.

### B. Election

Elections to fill expired terms of officers shall be held at the November stated meeting of presbytery. The terms of office shall begin on January 1 of the following year. Elections to fill unexpired terms of office shall be held when

appropriate. A person elected to fill an unexpired term shall be elected for the remainder of that term but may be reelected to the same office. The election of officers shall be by ballot if more than one name is placed in nomination.

The Nominating Committee shall present one candidate for each office of Moderator, Vice-Moderator and Treasurer. Nominations for any office may be made from the floor provided that the nominee has given previous consent.

C. Salaries

Presbytery shall authorize which officers should be paid and the amount to be paid upon recommendation of the Presbytery Council.

III. STAFF

The presbytery may authorize staff positions. Book of Order (G-3.0110).

IV. PRESBYTERY COUNCIL

A. Membership

1. Presbytery Council shall consist of 12 persons nominated by the Nominating Committee, at large. The twelve at large members shall consist of equal numbers of ministers and elders and shall be broadly geographically representative of the Presbytery.
2. The terms of office of these twelve members shall be limited to two terms (which might include election to an unfinished term) with a limit of 6 years served. Presbytery Council members shall be elected in three classes.
3. The Council shall elect its own chairperson from among its membership to a one-year term.
4. The immediate past moderator, moderator, and vice moderator of the Presbytery shall serve on the Presbytery Council for the term of their office, ex-officio with voice and vote.
5. The Executive Presbyter shall serve on Presbytery Council, ex-officio without vote.

B. Meetings

Presbytery Council may meet as often as necessary, but shall meet at least three times a year, on its own appointment or by call of the Chairperson of council or by request of any two members of council, or at the direction of presbytery. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the Presbytery Council, provided that two Teaching Elders and two Ruling Elders are in attendance, and four churches are represented.

C. Functions

1. Presbytery Council shall have as its responsibility the strategic planning for mission and program and the consideration and recommendation to presbytery of all financial matters including the preparation and oversight of the budget.

2. Presbytery Council may be given other responsibilities by presbytery.
3. Presbytery Council shall serve concurrently as trustees of the presbytery corporation. Book of Order (G-4.0101) As trustees, the Presbytery Council shall consider requests from congregations to buy, sell, or lease property, in accordance with the Book of Order and presbytery policies; and shall recommend to presbytery or, for the sake of timeliness, act on these requests with the decision reported to the next stated meeting of presbytery. Those authorized to sign official and legal documents shall be the Chairperson of Presbytery Council, the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, Moderator and Vice Moderator of Presbytery.

V. PERMANENT COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS MANDATED BY THE BOOK OF ORDER

A. Committee on Representation

1. The Presbytery shall elect a Committee on Representation as described by the Book of Order. (G-3.0103)
2. The Committee on Representation shall consist of three members with at least one man and one woman and at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder.
3. The duties of the Committee on Representation shall be those described in the Book of Order G-3.0103. This Committee shall report annually to Presbytery. This report shall also be forwarded to Synod by action of Presbytery.
4. The members of the Committee on Representation are to serve for terms of three years being, elected in three classes.
5. Election shall be at the November stated meeting of Presbytery. Nominations may also be made from the floor provided the nominee has agreed to serve and comes from the proper category of Presbytery membership. Members may be elected for 2 three-year terms [which might include election to an unfinished term] with a limit of 6 years served. At least one year shall elapse before that person shall be eligible for re-election. The Committee on Representation shall elect its own chairperson from its membership to a one-year term, but he/she may succeed herself/himself.

B. Committee on Representation

1. The Presbytery shall have a process for nominating persons to serve in positions requiring election by the Presbytery. Book of Order (G-3.0111).
2. The Committee on Representation shall nominate persons to "fill all vacancies on continuing committees, councils, boards, and other bodies that require election by the Presbytery or Synod," unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Rules. The Committee on Representation shall report directly to the Presbytery.

3. The Committee on Representation shall be composed of nine members to be elected upon motion by the Presbytery Council. The COR shall be representative of the member churches of the presbytery. The membership of the committee shall consist of as close to equal numbers of teaching elders and lay persons as possible. Committee leadership shall be elected by the Committee from its membership. Members of the COR are to be elected for three year terms by classes. A person may be elected to two three-year terms (which might include election to an unfinished term) with a limit of six years served.
4. No member of the Committee on Representation shall be nominated for any office, committee, or Presbytery Council while that person is serving on COR. After her/his term of office is completed, that person may be nominated for any office, committee or Presbytery Council.
5. When any member of the Committee on Representation resigns, that person shall not be nominated for any office, committee, or Presbytery Council until six months have elapsed.

C. Committee on Ministry

1. The Presbytery shall elect a Committee on Ministry in order to fulfill responsibilities described in Book of Order (G-3.03).
2. The Committee on Ministry shall serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral services, and certified Christian educators; and settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient. Book of Order (G-3.0307).

The Committee on Ministry shall exercise oversight of teaching elder members, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators. It shall exercise oversight of congregations during pastoral transitions. It shall monitor terms of call and contracts for pastoral services in regard to salary, benefits, continuing education and professional development. It shall serve as liaison between the Board of Pensions and the Presbytery. It shall report regularly to Presbytery and make appropriate recommendations as necessary.

The Committee on Ministry shall be constituted as an Administrative Commission of the Presbytery authorized to examine Book of Order (G-3.0306) and receive teaching elder members, approve calls for pastoral services, including provision for installations; approve contracts for temporary pastoral services; dissolve pastoral relationships in cases where the congregation and pastor concur; dismiss members Book of Order (G-3.0307); grant permission to labor within or outside the bounds of the presbytery Book of Order (G-3.0306); place the names of teaching elders on the appropriate validated rolls of Presbytery; validate, when appropriate, special ministries Book of Order (G-3.0306); approve, when appropriate, ministers of other denominations in full communion with PC

(USA) to serve in ministries in congregations of this presbytery; appoint moderators to sessions of churches without pastors or when the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator Book of Order (G-3.0201); authorize specific ruling elders to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper in accordance with Book of Order (G-3.0301b); and act on matters related to and to grant the status of honorably retired to those teaching elders requesting it Book of Order (G-2.0503c.). These actions shall be taken at duly constituted meetings and reported to the next stated meeting of John Knox Presbytery as actions of the Administrative Commission. Book of Order (G-3.0109).

3. The Committee on Ministry shall be composed of nine ruling elders, and nine teaching elders elected with attention to the Presbytery's diversity. Membership shall be organized into three equal classes.
4. Election shall be at the November stated meeting of presbytery upon nomination by the Nominating Committee. Nominations may also be made from the floor provided the nominee has agreed to serve and comes from the proper category of presbytery membership. Members may be elected to 2 three-year terms [which might include election to an unfinished term] with a limit of 6 years served. At least one year shall elapse before that person shall be eligible for re-election. The Committee on Ministry shall elect its own chairperson from its membership to a one year term; the chairperson may succeed herself/himself.
5. The Committee shall be responsible for determining its own structure and operating procedures.

D. Committee on Preparation for Ministry (*Revised 08/15/2020*)

1. Presbytery shall elect a Committee on Preparation for Ministry whose purposes shall be.
  - a. "to guide, nurture and oversee the process of preparing to become a minister of the Word and Sacrament." (G-3.0307), according to the Book of Order and John Knox Presbytery policies.
  - b. to carry out the functions of recruitment, training, encouragement, and examination of the Presbytery's Ruling Elders Commissioned to Pastoral Service (G-2.10), according to the Book of Order and John Knox Presbytery policies.
2. It shall be composed of nine members: ministers and elders nominated by the Nominating Committee to serve terms of three years and being elected in three classes.
3. Election shall be at the November stated meeting of presbytery. Nominations may also be made from the floor provided the nominee has agreed to serve and comes from the proper category of presbytery membership. Members may be elected for 2 three-year terms [which might include election to an unfinished term] with a limit of 6 years served. At least one year shall elapse before that person shall be eligible for re-election. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall elect its

own chairperson from its membership to a one-year term, but he/she may succeed himself/herself.

- E. **Permanent Judicial Commission**  
Presbytery shall elect a Permanent Judicial Commission to be composed of four ministers and three elders to serve for a term of six years. These persons shall be elected in three classes. All details of election, organization, powers and procedures are given in the Book of Order (Rules of Discipline, Chapter V.). Ordinarily, they shall meet at least once each year to organize themselves.

## VI. PERMANENT COMMITTEES MANDATED BY THE PRESBYTERY BYLAWS

- A. **Presbytery Personnel Committee**
1. Presbytery shall elect a Presbytery Personnel Committee composed of two ministers and two elders, to be elected for three year terms, in classes. In addition, Presbytery Council shall appoint, each year, one of its members to this committee. No person may serve more than six consecutive years.
  2. The Presbytery Personnel Committee shall be responsible for the oversight and review of the work of any staff hired by Presbytery, shall make salary recommendations to Presbytery Council, and shall report to presbytery at least annually.
  3. The Presbytery Personnel Committee shall serve as the committee of the Presbytery to evaluate the work of the stated clerk. It shall also be the committee to nominate the stated clerk and shall present one candidate for election by the Presbytery at the appropriate time.
- B. **Bills and Overtures Committee**
1. The Presbytery shall have a Bills and Overtures Committee composed of the Commissioners to the immediate past General Assembly and the Commissioners-elect to the next General Assembly.
  2. The terms of the Committee members will begin immediately following the election of Commissioners to General Assembly. The terms are two years.
  3. The purpose of this Committee is to review Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) And to offer its advice to the Presbytery with regard to action taken on them; and to consider proposed Overtures to the General Assembly, making recommendations to the Presbytery on them. The Committee may also be asked to consider and advise on other matters of policy within the Presbytery. This Committee will be staffed by the Stated Clerk.

## VII. SPECIAL COMMITTEES, TASK FORCES AND COMMISSIONS

- A. **Programmatic Committees**  
Programmatic Committees may be created by Presbytery. Normally they shall have six members divided into three classes. Members may serve for two terms and shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by Presbytery.
- B. **Special Committees and Task Forces**  
Special committees and task forces may be created by presbytery in any appropriate manner to accomplish a task that presbytery wishes to have done. These committees and task forces shall be dissolved at the completion of the task. Each special committee and task force shall be responsible to Presbytery through the Presbytery Council.
- C. **Administrative Commission**  
An Administrative Commission may be appointed by presbytery as provided in the Book of Order. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the commission provided that at least two churches are represented by an elder Book of Order (G3.0109b).
- D. **Representatives to Ecumenical Bodies**  
The John Knox Presbytery shall from time to time elect, appoint, nominate representatives to the various ecumenical groups and undertakings. These persons shall serve no more than 6 years, whether elected to a class or to individual consecutive yearly terms. These persons shall report to Presbytery annually, the mode of this reporting to be determined by the Presbytery Council.

## VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

- A. **Resignations and Terminations**
  - 1. All elected committees, task forces and commissions who wish to resign shall submit their resignations to the body of which they are a member, which shall refer it to the original electing or appointing body. The resignation shall become effective when accepted by action of the original electing or appointing body.
  - 2. Absence from three consecutive meetings of the Presbytery Council, committees, task forces or commissions by a member of said body may be cause for termination of the membership of that person by action of the original electing or appointing body upon recommendation of the body of which that person is a member.
- B. **Expenses**  
The necessary travel expenses of officers of presbytery, members of Presbytery Council, and members of committees, task forces, and commissions incurred in the performance of their office shall be established annually by presbytery upon recommendation of the Presbytery Council at the time of budget presentation. Expenses will be paid only when submitted on an authorized voucher.
- C. **Commissioners to Synod and General Assembly**  
Nominations and elections of commissioners to Synod and General Assembly shall be made at the November stated meeting of presbytery. Nominations for commissioners shall be made by the Nominating Committee for inclusion in the

notice of the November stated meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

IX. AMENDMENTS - SUSPENSION - INTERPRETATIONS

A. Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws may be made by two-thirds vote of the members present at a stated meeting, official notification of the proposed change having been made at the previous meeting.

B. Suspension of Bylaws

The Bylaws of presbytery (except for quorum provisions and amendments to the bylaws) may be temporarily suspended at any time by two-thirds of the members present.

C. Interpretations

In cases where these bylaws do not apply, or where there seems to be no bylaw to cover the situation, the moderator shall rely on the Book of Order. In the conduct of the presbytery meeting the moderator shall rely on the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order. (Book of Order G-3.0105).