

Church Mission Task Force

Opening Statement

The Church has been established by God through the life of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Church is to serve the will of God. Those who are members of the Church gather in gratitude toward their Creator in order to discern God's will and do it.

The process of discerning God's will has always been a difficult and uncertain process for imperfect human beings. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ perfectly discerned God's will; therefore a life modeled after the life of Jesus will best reflect God's will. However, Jesus himself modeled the need for differing cultures to respond to God in different ways. Hence, for us to follow his model means that we also must seek to find what it means to serve God in our own time and place without simply copying what our ancestors did.

The Presbyterian Church is founded on some key polity issues regarding the process for discerning God's will. As the name implies, the Presbyterian Church is ruled by elected "elders." This principle is based on the premise that everyone is a sinner, that all fall short of the glory of God, that all persons are imperfect and subject to temptation; therefore, power should be spread broadly and not concentrated into the hands of a single person. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The functioning of the church should always seek to spread power broadly without becoming excessively inefficient.

Presbyterian polity establishes that the congregation is best governed by a board of elected elders who are ultimately responsible for all decisions made by the church. These elders are chosen by the voice of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the congregation during elections, so that the authority of the elders is delegated to them directly by God. All decisions made by elders should reflect their best efforts of discerning God's will in the matter.

The Session

The board of elders is called the Session, and the Session is moderated by the pastor. The pastor organizes the meetings according to Presbyterian polity and gives advice. However the pastor is not the decision-maker in a Presbyterian Church, nor is the pastor to be held responsible for the Session's decisions.

Session shall discharge its task of making all decisions on behalf of a church under the guidance of the following principles. Most of the Session's work will be done by committees working with authority delegated to them by the Session. The Session will provide all such sub-committees clear guidelines regarding the scope of their work. In all cases, sub-committees will summarize and report back to the Session regarding any decisions made and any actions taken, understanding that the Session retains the authority to overrule any sub-committee decision or to direct the sub-committee to follow a different path in the future. The Session should seek to delegate as much of its work as possible so that the Session itself should only need to consider those matters that are the most weighty and/or most controversial. Most of the Church's work will merely be reported to the Session and reviewed.

In most cases, sub-committees of Session will be chaired by current Session members. However, this is not required if there are exceptional circumstances. Sub-committees are given great latitude and freedom to be creative and inventive within the scope of their particular ministry fields. This freedom includes, but is not limited to, the potential for establishing lower sub-committees, as long as those lower sub-committees follow analogous reporting procedures. However sub-committees should take care not to overstep the bounds of their ministry fields. In all cases, sub-committees should report their major decisions and actions *via* minutes to the session. In some cases, it will be appropriate to orally highlight something from the minutes for the benefit of the whole session. In rare cases, it will be appropriate to seek the specific endorsement of the Session on a given action or decision. The chair of the sub-committee shall decide the relative significance of all

matters based on the number of people affected and the potential for disagreement, and shall choose the level of reporting accordingly (minutes only, oral report, motion for endorsement).

Though the session governs all aspects of Church life, and it does this primarily by delegating authority to sub-committees, there are two sub-committees that are in special categories as defined by the Book of Order. These sub-committees are called the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees, and their duties are fairly rigidly defined in the Book of Order.

Board of Deacons

The role of the Board of Deacons is established in section G-6.04 of the Book of Order, using Acts 6:1-6 as a basis. Deacons are primarily responsible to heal hurts, be they physical, emotional, spiritual, or material. Deacons are friends to the lonely, the sick, the outcasts, the poor, the prisoners, and the needy. They are to emulate the love that Jesus showed toward the hurting.

The Deacons' acts of mercy and love on behalf of the needy shall include both the congregation and those beyond the congregation. The forms of ministry will ordinarily differ for these two groups, but Deacons will always remember Christ's call for us to show love to all persons, even our enemies.

Because this ministry is so crucial to the gospel, it is given a special place in the church, and Deacons are to be elected by the voice of the congregation and ordained to this service. Though they labor under the supervision of the session and shall accept any duties assigned to them by the session, their membership is not appointed by the session.

To recognize the importance of their ministry, deacons also should be given a special place in the worship services of the Church. They should be particularly visible in all service aspects as they pertain to worship. This visibility shall include, but not be limited to, participation in the serving of the Lord's Supper. This visible service during worship functions as a reminder of the Deacons' service beyond worship.

The spiritual gifts especially needed by deacons shall include a caring spirit and a willingness to serve the needy in Christ's name.

Board of Trustees

The role of the Board of Trustees is established in section G-7.04 of the Book of Order. Trustees are primarily responsible for maintaining Church property in order to facilitate the ministry that is established by the Session. Trustees oversee the maintenance of all of the church's physical assets, utility usage, corporate legal matters, capital improvements, and church insurance.

Some specific tasks include: building opening/closing routines, security, building upkeep, musical assets upkeep, preschool upkeep, landscaping and yard maintenance, snow removal, etc. The Trustees also make specific recommendations to the session regarding significant decisions in the area of capital improvements and building usage policies. They also frequently tackle minor repair jobs themselves, but also must be capable of overseeing contractors and/or employees who do much of the larger jobs.

Their membership is elected by the congregation, though the function of Trustee is not an ordained function. The gifts that are helpful to have amongst those who are trustees include: minor repair skills, skills in negotiating with contractors, legal/corporate skills, and knowledge of insurance. Trustees should have a willingness to get dirty once in awhile, a sensitivity to those aspects of church property that carry hallowed traditions, and an appreciation for the fact that in matters pertaining to the church's physical plant, it is not possible to please all persons all the time.

The Committees of Session

The Session delegates its responsibilities and authorities to sub-committees of Session as well as the Boards of Deacons and Trustees as noted above. The primary standing committees answering directly to Session will have the following names:

- Christian Education and Youth
- Fellowship
- Finance
- Evangelism and Membership
- Nominating
- Personnel
- Stewardship
- Worship and Music

In addition, the Session will appoint other ad hoc committees and task forces for particular duties as the need arises. Such ad hoc committees will generally focus on matters largely external to the church's ministry and/or tasks that are of a limited duration.

The primary standing committees will have their missions defined as follows.

Christian Education and Youth

FUNCTION: to provide to people of all ages a variety of experiences in which they can learn about God and the Creation of which we are a part. The Committee oversees any classes or study groups conducted at RPC, and seeks to encourage our church family to view Christian education as an enjoyable and rewarding life-long pursuit of enlightenment.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: Sunday School for all ages, confirmation class, Wednesday Night Live! programming, Men's Forum, Women's Forum, and Bible studies; providing curriculum and teaching staff where appropriate for such classes; providing support and direction of all paid staff in the areas of Christian Education and Youth activities such as Junior and Senior High Youth Groups, including child care during church functions; oversight of the church's Child Protection Policy; oversight of the church's scouting groups, and maintenance and promotion of the church library as a tool for continued learning.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: a love of learning and sharing what one has learned with others, organizational and administrative skills, a good understanding for what the congregation feels are appropriate and interesting materials and activities, an enthusiasm for working directly with children, and the ability to work in conjunction with other committees when appropriate.

Fellowship

FUNCTION: to promote the building of Christian Community through fellowship within our church family and the greater community. Fellowship builds bonds of caring and enables church members to better know, support, and minister to each other as God would want us to do. Through fellowship activities, we can help the church to foster a welcoming atmosphere, making both members and visitors feel at home at RPC.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: the recruiting, scheduling, and training of coffee fellowship hosts; oversight of all fellowship activities at RPC including, but not limited to, the Strawberry Social, the all-church picnic, potluck meals, family nights, and church outings; maintenance of the church kitchen and stocking of basic supplies and staples needed for fellowship events.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: a sense of hospitality, welcoming, and service, talents in the areas of cooking, baking, shopping, organizing and planning of fun and meaningful activities that would be of interest to the congregation, the ability to communicate well in a variety of ways, publicizing events, and the ability to work in conjunction with other committees of RPC and possibly organizations outside of our church.

Evangelism and Membership

FUNCTION: to encourage higher levels of participation in the life of the church. We encourage seekers to visit the church; visitors to explore programs and fellowship opportunities within the church; regular visitors to become members; members whose participation has diminished to renew their commitment to the church; *etc.*

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: reviewing welcome book sheets from worship and following up with a contact; sending welcoming letters to prospective members; calling on prospective members and distributing printed materials; encouraging visitors to attend fellowship hours and introducing members with similar interests to visitors; encouraging the pastor(s) to contact specific prospects; arranging for new member classes and inviting certain prospects to those classes; reviewing the role of members and contacting those whose attendance has diminished for a significant period of time; helping new members become involved with the church in their specific areas of interest; and assisting with the creation of a pictorial directory, and other promotional materials as the needs arise.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: an outgoing/gregarious personality, strong socializing skills, a strong sense of self-confidence even in the face of a great many rejections, and a familiarity with the informal “networks” of persons in the local area.

Finance Committee

FUNCTION: the supervision of all financial transactions, using generally accepted accounting principles, as a means of providing maximal allowable transparency and disclosure to all interested parties. The committee will also make specific recommendations to Session, and to other committees regarding particular actions needed in light of the financial status of the church.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: maintaining a detailed book of accounts, identifying all receipts and disbursements of the Church, and segregating such transactions according to various categories; producing a monthly financial statement detailing transactions and balances (reconciled with all bank statements), and regular acknowledgment statements sent to all who contribute financially to the church; and supervising the work of any employees who are responsible for the payment of bills, or the recording and depositing of income.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: strong attention to detail, ability to communicate clearly and succinctly, familiarity with generally accepted accounting principles, and knowledge of financial practices used in other settings.

Nominating Committee

FUNCTION: to recruit appropriately qualified members of the congregation to serve terms on the Session, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee and Endowment Committee. In addition, the Nominating Committee is responsible for forming special committees (e.g. Pastoral Nominating Committee) on an as-needed basis.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: While most of the work of the Nominating Committee takes place in the fall, the committee may be active at other times during the year, if needed. Committee members will meet to identify potential candidates for open positions. They will then contact candidates, describe the responsibilities of the position that they have been targeted for, and ultimately ask them to consider accepting the nomination. The Nominating Committee presents the slate of candidates to the congregation for approval.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: Members of this committee should be knowledgeable about the membership of our church in order to be able to recommend individuals for positions which best utilize their gifts and skills. Attributes of an ideal Nominating Committee member would include being well-known within the church community, an outgoing personality, ability to persuade people, and a positive attitude about service to the church.

Personnel Committee

FUNCTION: the maintenance of all needed staff job descriptions; the supervision and review of employees in light of those job descriptions; the generation of all policies that govern employees; and the facilitation of all conflict resolution and problem-solving that pertains to employees. In all aspects, this committee must operate with a high respect for confidentiality.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: finding appropriate staff, maintaining their relationships with the church, and facilitating employment transitions. Specific committee members will serve as liaisons to specific employees to facilitate their relationships. The committee will also hear any suggestions or complaints that pertain to a particular employee if the employee has not offered satisfactory response to an individual appeal.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: mediation skill, knowledge of job markets and human resource policies, an ability to maintain confidentiality and to oppose all idle gossip, and an ability to find creative solutions to the unique challenges that individuals bring to the church.

Stewardship Committee

FUNCTION to raise the funds needed to support the missions of the church. This not only includes the annual pledge drive, but also all fund-raising for special purposes. All church committees and groups will funnel their fund-raising requests through the Stewardship Committee.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: development and implementation of all fund-raising activity related to the general church operating budget. This includes the annual pledge campaign as well as special offerings throughout the year with consideration of those suggested by PCUSA (One Great Hour of Sharing , Pentecost, Peacemaking and Christmas Joy offerings). The Stewardship Committee will review for approval any request for fund-raisers for special purposes, such as Pre-school, Scouts and Youth Mission Trip, but organization and implementation of any approved projects will be the responsibility of the group making the request.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: Members should be creative, detail-oriented and organized. They must be able to communicate effectively with other groups and have good leadership skills. They should be consensus-builders and have the ability to mediate differences within and between groups. Effective Stewardship Committee members should have a solid record of personal stewardship and be enthusiastic about encouraging others to support the church financially.

Worship and Music

FUNCTION: to provide for consistently excellent programs of worship that will lift worshipers' hearts up to God in accordance with our Presbyterian theology and polity. We will seek to encourage broad participation by including creative opportunities for members and/or guests to offer their unique gifts in praise of God. We will seek to be inclusive, thought-provoking, spirit-lifting, and emotionally joyful in our approach to worship.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS: oversight of all music ministries and their functioning in worship; recruiting and training of ushers, communion servers, liturgists, preachers, guest musicians, and all other worship leaders; maintenance of the decorations and appearance of the worship space; and providing feedback/suggestions to all worship leaders (including the pastor).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS NEEDED: a good grasp of the variety of worship forms that are considered meaningful by various members and potential members; skill in recruiting and training those who will offer their various gifts to enrich the worship of God; and skill in mediating between persons who would prefer to worship God in various conflicting ways.