

# Principles of Presbyterian Polity



How We Serve Decently and In Order

# Polity

- ...is the way a church governs itself.



# Presbyterian Polity is

- Representative and
- Connectional



# Ordained to connect

- “Ruling elders and deacons are men and women elected by the congregation from among its members.”  
– *G-2.0401*



Co-moderators Denise Anderson  
& Jan Edmiston

# We're connected by councils

- There are 4 kinds of councils.
  - Session
  - Presbytery
  - Synod
  - General Assembly



# Session

- Ruling Elders serve on the session.
- The session is composed of classes.
- Each class serves for a term of 3 years.
- Teaching Elders are members of session and serve as Moderator.



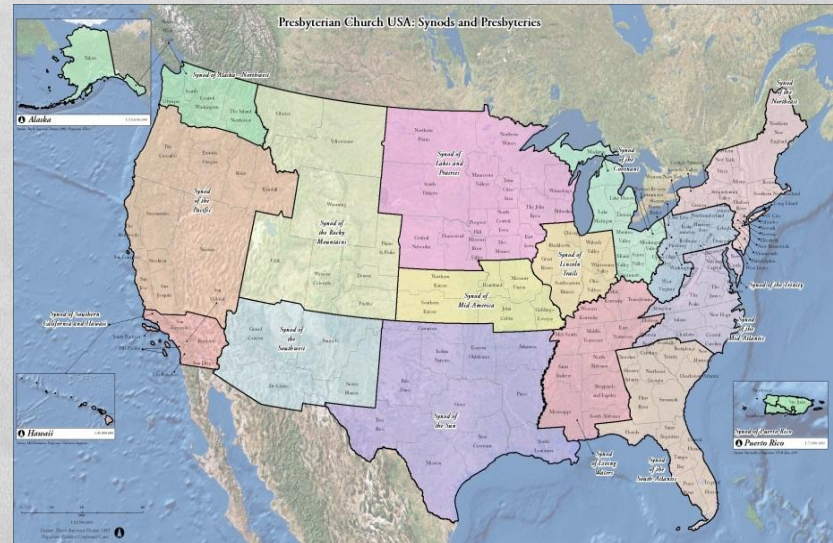
# Deacons

- The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service....
- Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board.
- Under the supervision and authority of the session.



# Presbytery

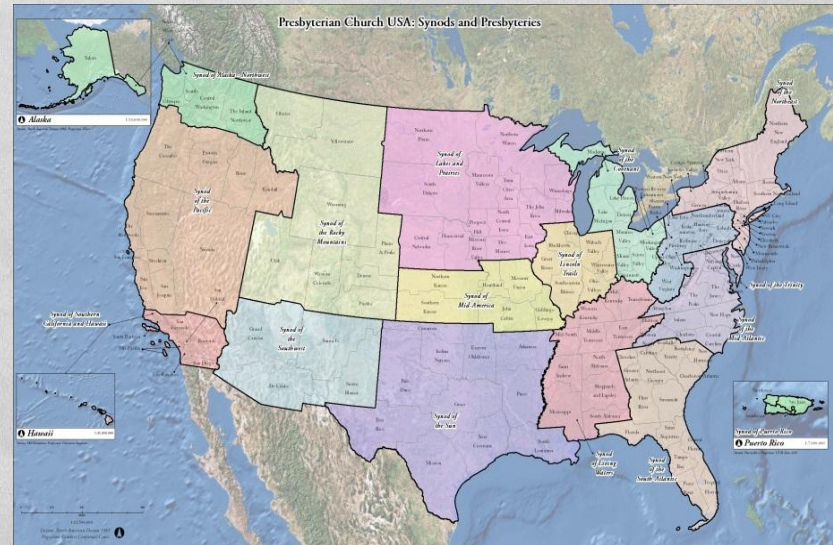
- Presbytery is the governing body of churches in a geographic region.





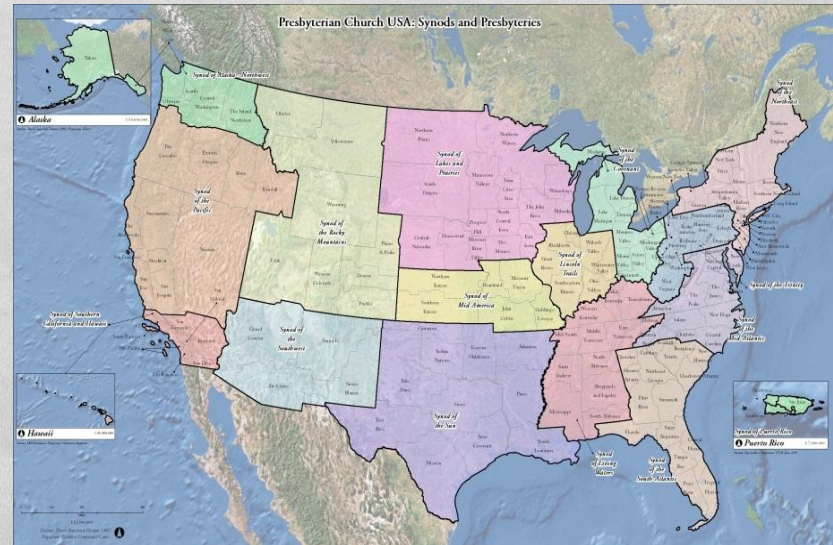
# “Presbytery is the Bishop”

- Teaching Elders (ministers) are members of Presbytery.
- Each church elects Ruling Elder commissioners to presbytery.
- Equal numbers of ministers and elders.



# Governance and Meetings

- Presbytery governs when it meets.



# Presbytery's Purpose

- From G.0301 of the Book of Order:
- *The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).*

# Presbytery's Responsibilities

- *From G-3.0301, 3.0302, and 3.0303:*
  - *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*
  - *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
  - *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*
  - *maintain regular and continuing relationships with higher councils: synod and General Assembly.*
  - *coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of our member congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community.*

# Synod

- A synod is made up of 3 or more adjacent presbyteries.



# General Assembly

- Governs when it meets.
- Meets every 2 years.
- Mainly composed of presbytery representatives.



# PCUSA Agencies

- Office of the General Assembly (Louisville, KY)
- Presbyterian Mission Agency
- Board of Pensions
- PC(USA) Foundation
- Presbyterian Investment & Loan Program
- Presbyterian Publishing Corporation





## How councils govern

How do we make decisions decently and in order?



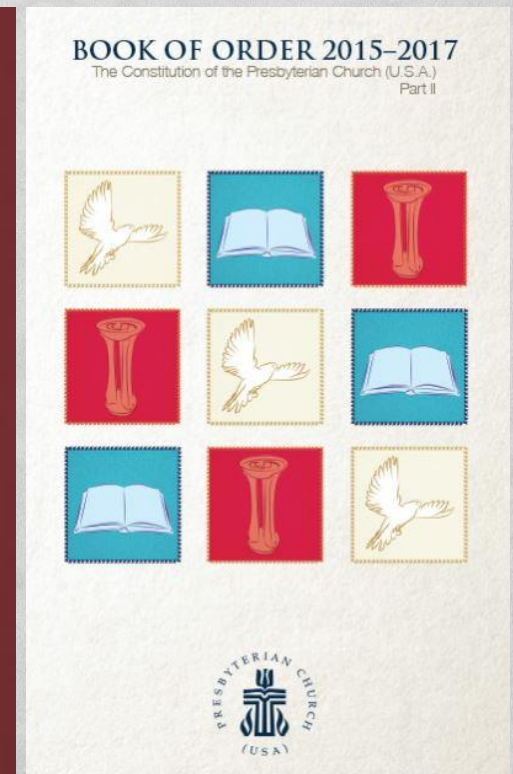
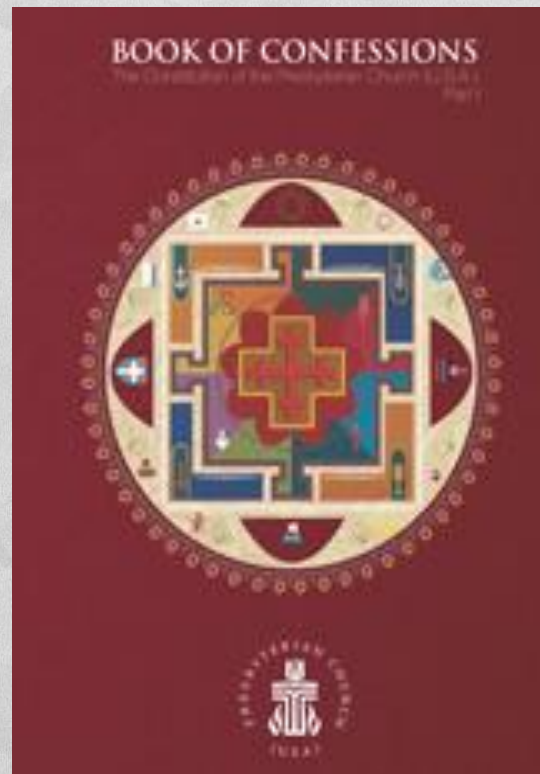
# We are servants of the Triune God

- We are servants of God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.
- Christ calls the church into being and gives it life.
- We listen for the direction of the Holy Spirit.



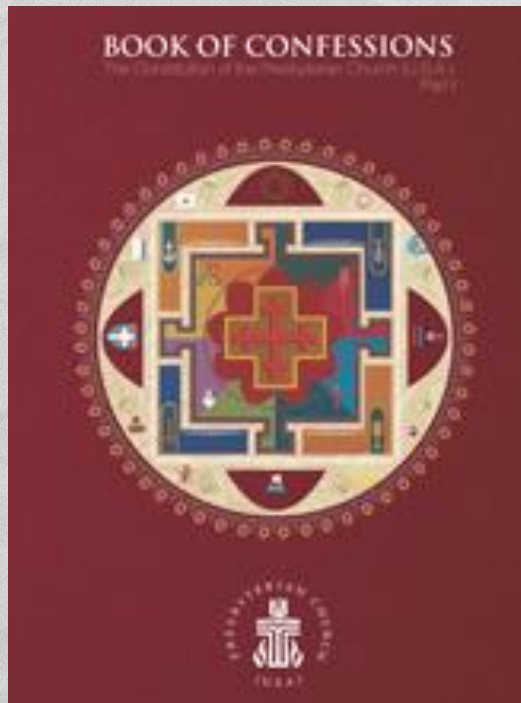
# We are governed by our constitution

- Governed by our 2-part constitution.
- Book of Confessions.
- Book of Order.



# The Book of Confessions

- 12 statements that guide our theology.



- Nicene Creed
- Apostles' Creed
- Scots Confession
- Heidelberg Catechism
- Second Helvetic Confession
- Westminster Confession
- Shorter Catechism
- Larger Catechism
- Barmen Declaration
- Confession of 1967
- Belhar Confession
- A Brief Statement of Faith

# The Book of Order



- Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- Form of Government
- Directory for Worship
- Rules of Discipline

# We are guided by Robert's Rules of Order

- Guided by Parliamentary Procedure.
  - Always allow for discussion.
  - Always protecting the rights of the minority.
  - Always respecting the vote of the majority.
- Always praying and listening.



# We are all part of one body

- We are the local expression of the universal church.
- When we act, we act on behalf of all Christ's church.
- The bonds of Christ are stronger than any division.



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