

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to facilitate the use of the Presbyterian Church in America's *Book of Church Order*, particularly for the ruling elder.

It is not designed to be a statement about the philosophy of the PCA's government, nor does it attempt to provide the biblical support of each statement.

It is not designed to be an exhaustive explanation of every word and phrase of the *BCO*.

It presumes the reader understands the concepts of Presbyterianism.

The book primarily reorganizes the details of the *BCO* in graphic form and provides a short commentary to introduce the material.

Not every chapter is discussed since some do not need the facilitation this book is designed to give.

In all cases, after using this manual to facilitate the use of the *BCO*, read the complete *BCO* text before acting.

The author expresses appreciation to Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist, Stated Clerk of General Assembly, for the revisions in this edition.

DJM, 1989

Why the Regular and Proper Use of Church Government is Encouraged

Regular and proper use of church government leads to:

- I. Actual (not merely intellectual) submission to Jesus Christ as the Head of the church by each of its members.
- II. Effective administration under the Holy Spirit of His work of "testifying about me" (John 15:26).
- III. Encouragement of officers to keep their ordination vows (*BCO 21-5*).
- IV. Natural conditions in which officers may easily be, and be perceived to be, the servant/leaders.
- V. Establishing the credibility officers need in order to guard the peace, unity, and purity of the church.
- VI. Conclusion:

Church government is not an end in itself. It is an instrument through which the church's life and ministry is most effectively attained. It should be studied, appreciated, and applied in this manner.

By it the elders can exercise the leadership that the church needs and their office is intended to provide. As they live in subjection to the Holy Spirit, feeding on His Word and saturating themselves in prayer, application of the church's government enables them to lead as servants.

It constantly needs refining. It is not inspired. These who are faithfully using it must share their experience by way of teaching it and participating in the process of refining it.

It should be used!

Parliamentary Procedure

Comments

The next page gives a concise table of motions.

Almost every technical situation relative to making and processing motions is listed.

It should be noted that sessions should follow these procedures, yet the relationship of pastor as moderator is not the same as envisioned by *Robert's Rules*. The pastor must take an active role in many of the session's discussions even though he is moderator.

This is in lieu of the nature of his teaching-elder office which includes being called to serve as an equal with the ruling elders in ruling the church.

Chart of Committees and Agencies

Comments

This chart is based on the charts found on page 362 of the 9th General Assembly (1981) and on page 110 of the 11th General Assembly (1983) minutes and as restructured on page 535 of the 16th General Assembly (1988) minutes.

The graph indicates that all but five committees report through a Committee of Commissioners.

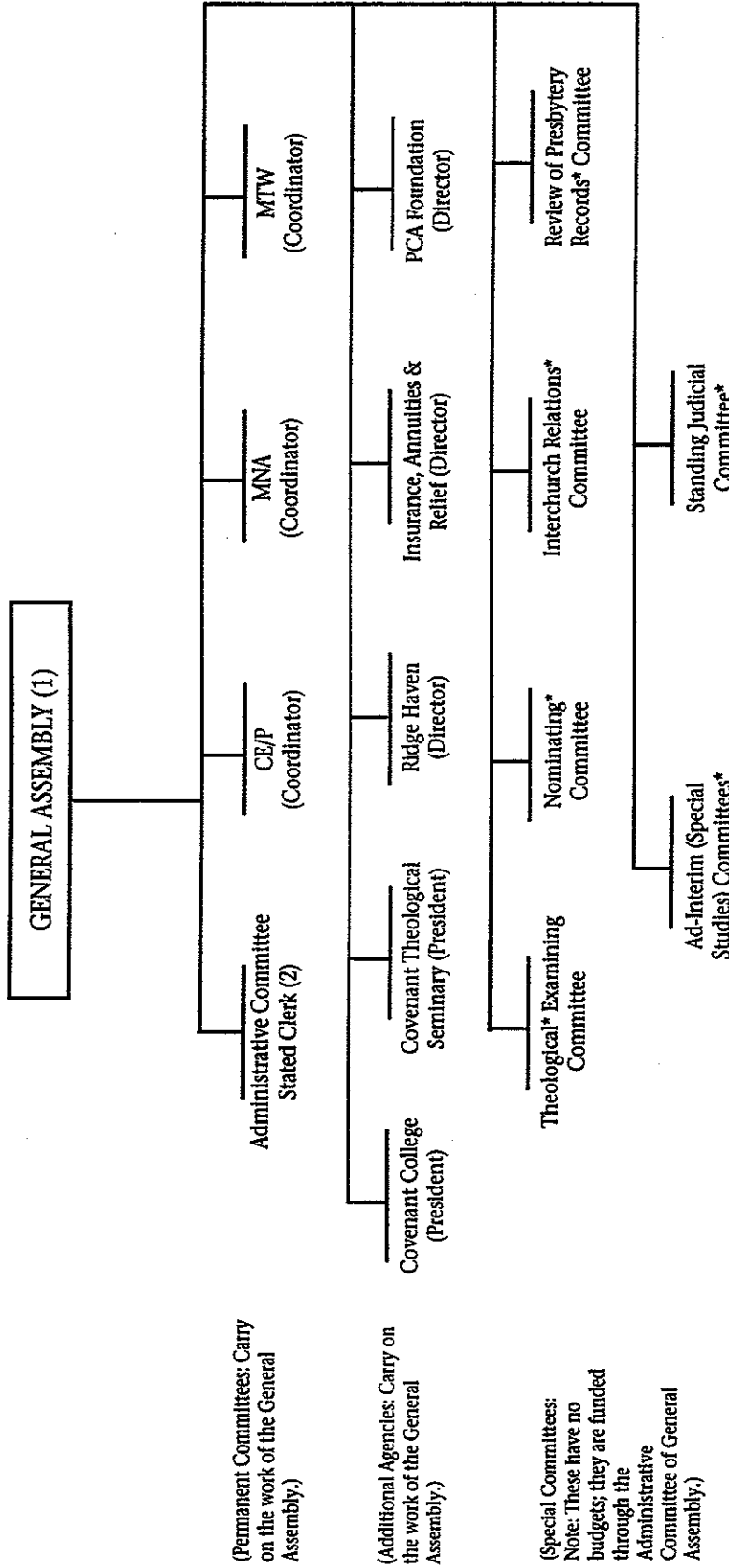
The Committees of Commissioners do three things:

1. review the reports of the committees/agencies;
2. evaluate the proposals of the committees/agencies to the General Assembly based on the directions and mandates G.A. has given them;
3. advise and recommend to the General Assembly what the committees/agencies are to do.
4. They are *not* to introduce new business.

The five committees that report directly to the General Assembly have special assignments, and the General Assembly has determined it will review and evaluate without a Committee of Commissioners serving between the committee and itself.

CHART OF COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES

Note: All committees and agencies report to the General Assembly through Committees of Commissioners except those marked with *. These committees report directly to the General Assembly.



(Permanent Committees: Carry on the work of the General Assembly.)

(Additional Agencies: Carry on the work of the General Assembly.)

(Special Committees: Note: These have no budgets; they are funded through the Administrative Committee of General Assembly.)

1) Funding: All Permanent Committees and Agencies may raise their own support. Special Committees and Ad-Interim Study Committees are funded through the Administrative Committee.

2) Offices of the G.A.: Stated Clerk. Between G.A., Stated Clerk is under direction of the Administrative Committee.

Permanent Committees and Agencies

What is the *Book of Church Order*?

The *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America is the statement of the church which it uses to direct its government and worship.

It must be in agreement at all times with the Scriptures and the Confessional Standards of the church.

It is not a codification of every detail of church government, although it contains sections which are written in code form.

It is basically a statement of principles, as indicated by the content of its Preface.

Basic principles for interpretation and use:

1. Where specific matters are addressed in detail, follow these step by step (cf. *BCO* 19-2).
2. When specific details are not given, follow principles established by analogy (see *BCO* 34-10 last sentence).
3. When *BCO* does not address a matter, each court may use its own discretion (e.g. nothing is stated about rotation of ruling elders).
4. Whenever possible leave decisions up to the lower courts. Let elders do their own thinking (cf. *BCO* 3-1).

Contents:

the Form of Government
the Rules of Discipline
the Directory for the Worship of God.

An outline by subject material of the *Book of Church Order's* Form of Government and Rules of Discipline are on the next page. It should help in finding what the *BCO* says about given subjects.

Your copy of the *BCO*:

It is necessary to have an up-to-date edition of the *BCO*. Note that at the bottom of each page, in a corner, is a "month and year" date. That indicates when that page was last published as the official text.

The easiest way to have an up-to-date edition of the *BCO* is to:

1. order a new *BCO* from the permanent Committee for Christian Education and Publications Bookstore;*
2. each year, after the General Assembly, order a packet of pages on which changes have been made and which indicate that year's date.

*1852 Century Place, Suite 101
Atlanta, Georgia 30345
1-800-283-1357

Outline of the *Book of Church Order, PCA*

Form of Government:

The Church	1-5
Church Membership	6
Church Officers	7-9
Church Courts (and Functions)	10-15
Church Orders	16-24
Church Congregational Meetings and Property	25
Amendments	26

Rules of Discipline:

Nature of Church Discipline	27
Rules for Disciplining Non-Communicant Members	28
Parts of Church Discipline Defined	29-31
Rules Governing Cases with Process:	
A. Use of process described	32-35
B. Use of censure described	36-37
Rules Governing Cases Without Process	38
Rules Governing Review by Higher Courts	39-45
Rules Determining Jurisdiction	46