

Tidewater Presbytery Bylaws

PREAMBLE

The mission of Tidewater Presbytery is to promote the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to every man, woman, and child within our bounds by shepherding and governing the regional church, planting churches, and spreading God's Word.

We acknowledge that Christ – and Christ alone – is Lord and Head of the Church, in all of her expressions (Colossians 1:18). We recognize that Jesus declared that He would build His Church (Matthew 16:18), and that He perfectly modeled the diverse aspects of His ministry through the exercise of three distinct offices: Prophet, Priest, and King. Tidewater Presbytery will seek to reflect our Lord's headship by committing ourselves to holistic ministry, which values equally all three perspectives these offices represent, as defined by the *Westminster Larger Catechism* Questions 42-45 and *Shorter Catechism* Questions 23-26.

1. COMPOSITION AND GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

- 1.1. Composition:** Tidewater Presbytery is composed of the local Churches of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which are in the southeastern counties and cities of the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the northeastern counties of the State of North Carolina, including: (from Virginia) the counties of Surry, Southampton, James City, York, Gloucester, Mathews, Isle of Wight, and the cities of Williamsburg, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach; and (from North Carolina) the counties of Currituck, Camden, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Chowan, Gates, Hertford, Bertie and the area of Dare County east of Croatan Sound and North of Oregon Inlet.”
- 1.2. Constitution:** The constitution of the Tidewater Presbytery is the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America: the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Book of Church Order* (BCO).
- 1.3. Bylaws and Amendments:** The Bylaws shall determine the structure, functions and operation of the Tidewater Presbytery in accordance with the constitution and the Rules of Assembly Operations of the PCA General Assembly where they apply.
- 1.4. Ratification of Bylaws:** These Bylaws of the Tidewater Presbytery shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the commissioners at the first meeting of the Tidewater Presbytery.
- 1.5. Changes to the Bylaws:** To amend the Bylaws of Presbytery, the proposed amendment shall be read, debated and voted upon at one

meeting of Presbytery, then docketed for the next Stated Meeting where it shall be read again, debated and voted upon. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of Presbytery present and voting is required at each reading. Suspension of any provisions of the Bylaws or Rules requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Presbytery present and voting.

1.6. Rules: The rules of order for all meetings of Tidewater Presbytery are the Rules of Parliamentary Order of the General Assembly, when these apply, and Robert's Rules of Order. Rules of Order require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of Presbytery present and voting for their suspension.

2. FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE

2.1. Meeting: The Presbytery shall hold three Stated Meetings annually, normally on the first Saturday in February, the first Thursday in June, and the first Thursday in October. Special meetings shall be called in accordance with BCO 13-12. The Presbytery meets as a court as well as for fellowship and worship.

2.2. Docket: A docket of the Presbytery meeting is to be prepared by the Executive Committee of Presbytery.

2.3. Quorum: A quorum of Presbytery may be set at each Stated Meeting of Presbytery, but it shall not be less than four Teaching Elders (TEs) and four Elders (REs). A minimum of four churches must be represented. Business can only be transacted as long as such a quorum is present.

2.4. Membership: All TEs belonging to Tidewater Presbytery and the RE representatives of its local churches comprise the membership of the Stated Meetings. Ordinarily any ordained minister of another presbytery, or any evangelical church, who is present is invited to sit as a visiting brother. Guests and observers are welcome to all open meetings of the Presbytery.

2.5. Attendance: Attendance by TEs and the RE commissioners from their respective churches is expected at all Presbytery meetings.

2.5.a. The following guidelines are valid excuses from such meetings:

1. Immediate need for pastoral care: illness, funeral, crisis counseling, and weddings.
2. Personal or family illness.
3. Business demands.
4. Extraordinary distance to travel by those laboring outside the bounds of Presbytery.
5. Honorably retired.

2.5.b. Written excuses for excused absences are to be received by the Stated Clerk no later than the beginning of Presbytery. TEs who meet the criteria of 2.5.a.4 or 2.5.a.5 do not have to submit written excuses. Excuses for early departures may be received until noon.

2.6. Budget and Funding: Presbytery shall approve a General Operating Budget each year at the fall meeting. This budget shall be funded by gifts from churches and individuals.

2.6.a. Church Planting Fund: Separate from the General Operating Budget, the Presbytery shall establish a restricted Church Planting Fund that will be used for funding activities associated with church planting including support of church plants, demographic studies, recruiting and training of church planters. Funding for the Church Planting Fund shall come from donations from churches, individuals, special offerings, and unspent church planting finds from the General Operating Budget if all other budget obligations have been met in full. Churches are strongly encouraged to fully meet their obligations to the General Budget before contributing to the Church Planting Fund. All expenditures from the Church Planting Fund shall be approved by the Missions Committee and reported to Presbytery by the Treasurer.

2.6.b. Temporarily Restricted Funds: The Treasurer may establish temporarily restricted funds, separate from the General Operating Budget, for special presbytery projects such as retreats, special missions or other projects. All expenditures from these funds shall be approved by the committee overseeing the special project and shall be reported to Presbytery by the Treasurer.

3. OFFICERS

3.1. Moderator: The Moderator serves for a term of one year. A Moderator in Nomination shall be elected annually at the Fall Stated Meeting and placed in nomination at the next stated meeting as the first order of business. The Moderator will be guided by BCO 10-3. Any Elder, TE or RE, is eligible for the office of Moderator.

3.2. Stated Clerk: The Stated Clerk shall be elected at the October meeting to a three-year term. He may be re-elected by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members of Presbytery present and voting at the meeting at which elections are held. In the event he is a RE and not a representative from his church, he may function as Stated Clerk with the privilege of the floor, but without vote.

3.2.a. The Stated Clerk shall be allowed a compensation for his services, a sum for the necessary expenses of the office and a sum for secretarial support as fixed by the Presbytery.

3.2.b. The Duties of the Stated Clerk are:

1. To keep a record of all proceedings of Presbytery and to submit the same annually to the General Assembly for review.
2. To refer all communications to the proper committees prior to the meeting of Presbytery, when practical, and report such referrals to Presbytery.
3. To report on requests for excused absences from meetings of Presbytery with recommendations on how to handle them.
4. To prepare and post on the Presbytery's website an unofficial copy of the minutes of Presbytery within forty-five (45) days after each meeting.
5. To file one copy of the minutes of Presbytery with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. Three copies will be retained for the Review of Presbytery Records Committee of the General Assembly.
6. To handle all correspondence addressed to the Presbytery and for the Presbytery.
7. To serve as an ex-officio member of the Administrative Committee.
8. To serve as Parliamentarian for Presbytery meetings, unless the Moderator appoints someone else.
9. To distribute the docket, supporting documents, and notice of meetings to include time, date, and directions to TEs and Clerks of Session ten (10) days prior to the next meeting.
10. To prepare, keep current, and post on the Presbytery's website a directory of the Presbytery.
11. To notify in writing fifteen (15) days after the meeting of Presbytery each member who has been elected or appointed to a committee of Presbytery.
12. To report to Presbytery all other communications intended for the court.
13. To properly sign and issue all papers authorized by Presbytery and to also cause to be signed all papers requiring the signature of the Moderator or Trustees of the Presbytery.
14. To maintain the Presbytery rolls and to submit the annual enrollment report to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

3.3. Recording Clerk and Assistant Recording Clerk:

3.3.a. The Recording Clerk and the Assistant Recording Clerk shall be elected at the October Meeting to a three-year term. The recording clerks may be re-elected by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members of Presbytery present and voting.

3.3.b. Duties of the Recording Clerk and Assistant Recording Clerk are:

1. To be responsible for taking accurate minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Presbytery as directed by the Stated Clerk.
2. To transmit a completed copy of the minutes to the Stated Clerk within thirty (30) days after each meeting.
3. To oversee the webmaster for the Presbytery's website.

3.4. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer:

3.4.a. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be elected at the October Meeting to a three-year term. The treasurers may be re-elected by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members of Presbytery present and voting at the meeting which elections are held.

3.4.b. Duties of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are:

1. To keep accurate records of all income and expenses for the Presbytery.
2. To disburse funds based on line items in the Presbytery budget or other specific Presbytery action or adjustments made by a Presbytery committee. A committee may adjust the line item amounts in its portion of the budget as long as the total amount budgeted to the committee is not increased and the adjustment is approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the committee present when a quorum exists. Budget adjustments are to be communicated to the Treasurer and reported to Presbytery at the next stated meeting.
3. To ensure that funding of the church plants and Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) ministries is normally to be distributed quarterly (March, June, September, December).
4. To maintain a balance of at least \$1000 in the Presbytery's bank account(s). If there are insufficient funds to meet the financial obligations of Presbytery, the Treasurer shall pay the Stated Clerk's line items and then divide the remaining available funds on an equal percentage basis between the line items for church plants and RUF campus ministries. If sufficient funds are available to fully pay church plants and RUF campus ministries, the Administrative Committee will determine the disbursement of remaining funds.
5. To serve as two individuals each authorized to sign checks.

4. PERMANENT COMMITTEES (GENERAL STRUCTURE)

4.1. The Permanent Committees of the Presbytery are:

1. Executive Committee
2. Administrative Committee
3. Membership Committee
4. Mission Committee
5. Shepherding Committee

4.2. Membership of Permanent Committees:

- 4.2.a.** The Executive Committee shall consist of the Moderator, Stated Clerk, and the Chairmen of the Administrative, Membership, Shepherding and Mission committees.
- 4.2.b.** Membership in the Administrative, Membership, Shepherding and Mission committees shall consist of three classes. There shall be two TEs and two REs per class. Each class shall serve for three years. Vacancies may be filled by Presbytery at any meeting. Committee members may serve two terms. Service beyond a second term requires approval by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of Presbytery.

4.3. Permanent Committee Chairmen and Clerks:

- 4.3.a.** The Moderator of Presbytery shall chair the Executive Committee.
- 4.3.b.** Each of the other committees shall elect a chairman and a clerk at the first meeting of the committee after the fall Presbytery meeting.
- 4.3.c.** The chairman of a committee may appoint a member of the committee he serves to temporarily serve as chairman or to attend an Executive Committee meeting in his place.

4.4. Quorum: A committee quorum shall include at least two TEs and two REs.

4.5. Reports: Committees are required by Presbytery to provide written reports to the Stated Clerk a minimum of fifteen (15) days prior to a stated meeting, to be produced and distributed by the Stated Clerk.

4.6. Expenses: The expenses of the committees are to be borne by the Presbytery.

4.7. Membership Rotation: Terms of service for each class end and begin at the adjournment of the October meeting of Presbytery.

4.8. Attendance: Attendance by TEs and REs is expected at all Presbytery committee meetings.

4.8.a. The following guidelines are valid excuses from such meetings:

1. Immediate need for pastoral care: funeral, illness, crisis counseling, and weddings.
2. Personal or family illness.
3. Business demands.
4. Extraordinary distance to travel by those laboring outside the bounds of Presbytery.

4.8.b. Requests for excused absences are to be made to the chairman prior to the meeting.

5. PERMANENT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Executive Committee

5.1.a. The purpose of the Executive Committee is to coordinate the ministries and meetings of Presbytery and to assist the Presbytery in focusing on its mission.

5.1.b. Duties:

1. To plan the docket and the schedule of activities for Presbytery meetings.
2. To review the budget requests from the Presbytery committees and prepare an annual budget for the expenses of Presbytery.
3. To submit the budget to Presbytery for approval at the October meeting.
4. To calculate the "Askings" required to fully fund the proposed budget and include this with the budget submission.
5. To function as a commission of presbytery to represent the Presbytery in any civil matters that come to Presbytery.

5.2. Administrative Committee

5.2.a. The purpose of the Administrative Committee is to support the work of Presbytery in shepherding and governing the regional church by providing administration in the areas of stewardship, nominations, reviewing church records, overtures and judicial matters that come to Presbytery.

5.2.b. Duties:

1. To review carefully the records of each session within the bounds of Presbytery once each year. Normally one-third (1/3) of the minutes are to be reviewed prior to each of the stated Presbytery meetings. The Administrative Committee will determine when a session's minutes are to be reviewed. The committee is to report to Presbytery any exceptions of substance of Sessions to observe the Constitution of the PCA or rules of Presbytery.
2. To receive, consider, and report on all bills, overtures and proposed amendments to the bylaws of Presbytery and amendments to the BCO sent down from the General Assembly. Such matters are to be submitted to the Committee in writing at least one month before the stated meeting. It will report to that meeting with its recommendations. To prepare necessary resolutions for Presbytery action.
3. To receive complaints, appeals, referrals, and other judicial matters for the Presbytery. The Administrative Committee will bring these matters to Presbytery at the next stated meeting. The Committee may bring such matters with or without recommendations on how to process these items.
4. To nominate persons to fill any classes and vacancies on committees; to nominate persons to Committee of Commissioners of the General Assembly and Permanent Committees of the General Assembly; to nominate the Stated Clerk, Recording Clerk, and Treasurer when necessary; to provide the Stated Clerk with accurate names of those elected or appointed.
5. To provide oversight of the approved budget of Presbytery. If the need arises due to a surplus or shortfall of funds, the committee shall make recommendations to Presbytery for any changes to the budget.
6. To oversee the work of the Treasurer.

5.3. Membership Committee:

5.3.a. The purpose of the Membership Committee is to examine, shepherd and make recommendations to Presbytery concerning candidates under care, candidates for licensure and ordination, and ministers who would transfer into and out of the Presbytery.

5.3.b. Duties:

1. To be responsible for shepherding candidates, interns and licentiates in their spiritual and academic preparation for the gospel ministry. The committee shall assign a committee member to shepherd each candidate who will meet with the candidate regularly.

2. To carry out the provisions of BCO 19-2a, b, d for licensure and internship and to receive letters on all licentiates annually. A Committee that hears sermons of candidates shall be selected by the Chairman of the Membership Committee and be comprised of at least two TEs and two REs, of which at least two elders are members of the Membership Committee. The recommendation of this committee to approve the sermon must be affirmed by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of Presbytery in accordance with BCO 21-4.c.4. "To oversee the internship of candidates according to the plan approved by the Presbytery."
3. To act as a commission of Presbytery (BCO 15) to dismiss licentiates and candidates under care. The Committee will inform the Stated Clerk of its actions immediately and will report its actions to the Presbytery at the next Stated Meeting.
4. To examine candidates for ordination (BCO 17) and carry out the provisions of BCO 21. The committee shall bring to Presbytery recommendations concerning the time of ordination and installation and the election of a commission to act for Presbytery in this matter.
5. To examine ministers called to churches in the Presbytery or to other approved ministries. To carry out the provisions of BCO 21. To recommend a time for the installation service and the election of a commission to act for Presbytery in the matter (BCO 15).
6. To evaluate the terms of call for a candidate for ordination or the call of a minister whose terms of call are being changed; to recommend that churches develop compensation packages that are in line with the guidelines set by the PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc. (RBI); to make recommendations to Presbytery concerning approval or needed changes in a call.
7. To present ministers being called to the Presbytery after verifying their credentials. The Presbytery will not ordain/approve a man to work outside the bounds of Presbytery until that work has been approved by the Presbytery.
8. To act as a commission in regards to the dissolution of pastoral relations between a church and her pastor.
9. To act as a Commission to approve transferring the membership of a TE to another Presbytery of the PCA, to a North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) presbytery, or to another denomination with which the General Assembly has fraternal relations.

10. To receive any changes of views that a TE brings to Presbytery and report the change in views at the next stated meeting with recommendations.
11. To act as a commission to meet with the elders and congregation of any church which inquires concerning or requests to join the Tidewater Presbytery of the PCA (BCO 13-8). The commission will report to Presbytery its findings and progress and make a recommendation to Presbytery concerning the church's relationship to Presbytery."

5.4. Mission Committee

5.4.a. Purpose of the Mission Committee is to promote the sending out of laborers to proclaim the Word of God. This will most normally occur through *saturating* our bounds with churches through church planting, *nurturing* RUFs on campuses in Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina, and *encouraging* churches to reach the nations.

5.4.b. Structure of the Mission Committee: The Mission Committee will establish three teams from among its members. Each team will be responsible for the work of the committee in the three areas of mission.

1. The Church Planting Team will consist of three TEs and three REs.
2. The RUF Team will consist of two TEs and two REs. Additional TEs and REs will be added to this team and to the Missions Committee as needed by the expansion of RUF to new campuses in the Presbytery.
3. The Mission to the World (MTW) Team will consist of one TE and one RE.

5.4.c. Generally the Mission Committee shall be responsible:

1. To oversee and shepherd the work of church planting and RUF within the bounds of Presbytery and making recommendations to Presbytery concerning these ministries.
2. To be responsible for Presbytery's relation to mission work outside the Presbytery boundaries and function as Presbytery's point of contact with MTW.
3. To delegate the specific duties of the Mission Committee to its teams, which report to the full committee.

5.4.d. The duties of the Church Planting Team are:

1. To work to identify potential target areas for church plants.

2. To approve budgets for new mission works.
3. To develop church planters from within our own Presbytery as well as recruit from outside.
4. To assist local congregations in exploring the launch of daughter churches.
5. To recommend to Presbytery the method for oversight of mission churches according to BCO 5-3.
6. To confirm that mission churches seeking particularization meet the presbytery guidelines of: 1) a minimum of thirty (30) adult communing members; 2) the congregation provides seventy-five percent (75%) of the church's funding; 3) at least three Elders.

5.4.e. The duties of the RUF Team are:

1. To serve as the Tidewater Presbytery's representatives on the joint committee for RUF in Virginia.
2. To pastorally care for the campus ministers within our bounds.

5.4.f. The duties of the MTW Team are:

1. To assist local churches in their involvement in local missions.
2. To annually publish a list of missionaries supported by Tidewater Presbytery churches.
3. To assist missionaries going forth from churches within our Presbytery, and to correspond with and encourage missionaries who are members of the Presbytery.
4. To coordinate and communicate about missions trips/efforts that are open to Presbytery church members.
5. To keep Presbytery informed of new developments in the program of the General Assembly's MTW Committee that are pertinent to Presbytery.

5.5. Shepherding Committee

5.5.a. The purpose of the Shepherding Committee is to encourage, guide, and equip our Presbytery's pastors and churches in prayer, relational integrity, and spiritual growth.

5.5.b. Duties: In light of Christ's priestly office, the responsibilities of the Shepherding Committee include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To care for the needs of the TEs and churches within Presbytery through a sensitive and caring shepherding ministry.
2. To organize monthly prayer meetings for sharing and prayer.

3. To facilitate a Presbytery retreat emphasizing fellowship, encouragement, prayer, and relationship building, as well as vision and mission for church planting.
4. To coordinate Presbytery-wide events encouraging worship and fellowship.
5. To provide continuing education and officer training for Presbytery.
6. To assist churches, at their request, with health and growth.
7. To cultivate Stewardship commitment in the churches of Presbytery, encouraging churches to give the requested amount toward Presbytery Askings. The Committee shall keep the churches aware of financial needs of the General Assembly and the Presbytery.
8. To provide oversight for all TE members of Presbytery serving out of bounds or without call and, at his request, any TE in the PCA who resides within the bounds of this Presbytery though his membership is elsewhere. A representative of the Committee shall contact the TE laboring out of bounds. The Shepherding Committee will receive the annual reports of TEs serving out of bounds (BCO 8-7).
9. To contact personally any TE with two consecutive unexcused absences from Presbytery.
10. To counsel a church without a pastor to carry out the provisions of BCO 20.
 - a. Encourage churches in setting up a search committee and compensation package according to RBI.
 - b. Refer qualified men to congregations seeking a pastor.
11. To inquire and offer counsel, at the invitation of the minister or Session, or at the instruction of Presbytery, when a congregation encounters problems or when a minister encounters problems personally or in relationship with his congregation. If it deem wise, the committee shall report on the matter to Presbytery with recommendation for further procedures.
12. To inquire and counsel with Sessions in church situations where disorder is present (per BCO 13-9f).

6. AD-INTERIM COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

- 6.1.** The Presbytery may establish Ad-Interim Committees and Commissions to deal with matters before it at any time.
- 6.2.** Ad-Interim Committees and Commissions shall function according to the following rules:

1. Each committee shall consist of at least two TEs and two REs. Each commission shall consist of at least three TEs and three REs.
2. A quorum shall consist of at least two TEs and two REs, except for a committee of four members, in which case any three members shall constitute a quorum. Presbytery may establish a larger quorum so long as it consists of an equal number of TEs and REs.
3. The Moderator shall appoint the members of a committee. Presbytery shall elect the members of a commission.
4. The Moderator shall appoint the convener of a committee or commission. At its first meeting, the committee or commission shall elect its chairman and recording clerk.
5. No committee or commission may continue past the next two stated meetings of Presbytery except as authorized by a majority vote of Presbytery at the meeting during which the term of the committee or commission is otherwise to expire.
6. The committee or commission shall report to the next stated meeting of Presbytery and each such meeting thereafter until it has submitted its final report. The final report shall contain at least a summary of actions; conclusions; and recommendations and advice, if any. The committee or commission shall strive toward submission of its report no later than two weeks prior to the meetings.