

Book of Church Order

Sandy Springs OPC summer Sunday school class • July 25, 2021

updated class schedule

- lesson 1 (June 6): class introduction, *Form of Government* I (pp. vii-2)
- lesson 2 (June 13): *Form of Government* II-IV (pp. 3-7)
- lesson 3 (June 20): *Form of Government* V-XI (pp. 8-15)
- lesson 4 (June 27): *Form of Government* XII-XIX (pp. 16-30)
- lesson 5 (July 4): *Form of Government* XX-XXII (pp. 31-43)
- lesson 6 (July 11): *Form of Government* XXIII-XVI (pp. 44-77)
- lesson 7 (July 25): *Form of Government* XXVII-XXXII (pp. 78-90)
- lesson 8 (August 1): *Book of Discipline* I-II (pp. 91-97)
- lesson 9 (August 8): *Book of Discipline* III-IV (pp. 98-109, 169-173)
- lesson 10 (August 15): *Book of Discipline* V-IX (pp. 110-120, 174-180)
- lesson 11 (August 29): *Directory for Worship* I (pp. 121-132)
- lesson 12 (September 5?): *Directory for Worship* II (pp. 133-140)
- lesson 13 (October 24?): *Directory for Worship* III-V (pp. 141-168, 181-211)

recap of FG XXIII-XXVI

Presbytery **ordains** licentiates who are **called** by the church, finish probation, pass more tests, and take more vows. Ministerial relationships can be **dissolved** for non-judicial reasons, but only with presbytery approval and follow-up. Local churches choose elders and deacons from among their eligible members to serve for three-year terms—or life. Elders and deacons are **nominated** by a member, trained and **certified** by a session, and **elected** by a congregation. Ministers, elders, and deacons can be **divested** of (incl. voluntarily “demitting”) their office for non-judicial reasons.

FG XXVII: Missions

1. sessions, presbyteries, GA each have a duty and sphere of evangelism; foreign missions are usually GA
2. if GA sponsors home missions, it must respect the jurisdiction of the relevant presbytery
3. ministers doing home missions must transfer their credentials to the relevant presbytery

FG XXVIII: Ministers Laboring outside the Church

1. rarely, OPC ministers may labor—and OPC licentiates be ordained to labor—in non-OPC settings
2. rules for OPC ministers laboring outside the OPC
 - a. they may not do labor that contradicts OPC doctrine, worship, government, or discipline
 - b, c, f. they remain under ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the OPC, not the institution where they labor
 - d, e. OPC ministers may pastor non-OPC churches under these rules, but not vice-versa
 - g. goal of any ministry outside the OPC must be to establish Presbyterian and Reformed churches
3. OPC ministers may serve non-ecclesiastical organizations under the rules of §2
4. OPC ministers who are authorized to labor outside the OPC must report annually on their work

FG XXIX: Organizing and Receiving Congregations

A. Organizing Congregations

1. mission work = a group of worshipers, overseen by a session or presbytery, enrolled elsewhere
2. only presbytery may organize (i.e., make a separate congregation out of) a mission work
3. if a session's work: call a cong. meeting; list willing members; elect officers; petition presbytery
...whose “recognition & installation” service includes one congregational vow and officers’ installation
4. if a presbytery's work: same as §A.3, except presbytery calls the meeting of “members-at-large”
5. if self-made: presbytery is petitioned; it examines “members,” oversees elections, holds service

B. Receiving Congregations

1. existing, non-OPC congregations may join the OPC by petitioning the relevant OPC presbytery
2. steps similar to §A.5, but add examinations and subscription vows of existing elders and pastor

FG XXX: Organizations of Members of the Church

1. non-church organizations can be a good use of members' "general office," but may not act as churches
2. non-church organizations may do the church's God-given tasks only temporarily, if proper avenues fail
3. non-church organizations may not use a church's name without that church's approval and oversight

FG XXXI: Incorporation and Corporations

1. churches or their courts may incorporate to handle property and civil matters
- 2, 4. corp. membership, meetings, rules: no broader than church's own; may be narrower if law requires
3. if a church has trustees, the majority must be elders and deacons, and they must have session oversight
5. OPC has no right to a local church's property, unless latter goes extinct—apart from judicatory action

FG XXXII: The Constitution and Its Amendment

1. defining "constitution": doctrinal standards (WCF/WLC/WSC), and BCO (FG/BD/DW), under Scripture
2. to amend BCO: GA proposes (w grounds), majority of presbyteries ratify; effective next year ending 0/5
3. to amend WCF/WLC/WSC or subscription vows: GA + committee + GA + $\frac{2}{3}$ of presbyteries + $\frac{2}{3}$ at GA
4. to merge with another denomination: use procedure of §3
5. to amend §§3-5: use procedure of §3

NEXT LESSON: *Book of Discipline* I-II (pp. 91-97) – basic concepts of discipline; jurisdiction