

Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Part 4 of 11

Plan for this morning:

- Briefly REVIEW BCO Preface
- Briefly REVIEW FG 1-4
- OVERVIEW of FG 5-11, the Special Offices
- STUDY FG 5-9
- QUESTIONS

REVIEW: Preface

- Three standards
 - Primary: the Bible
 - Secondary: Confession and Catechisms *of the OPC*
 - Tertiary: FG, BD, DW (comprising the BCO)
- Our Constitution
 - Secondary + Tertiary (human and amendable)
 - Secondary is seldom amended and difficult to amend
 - Tertiary is regularly and more easily amended
 - NOT the Primary (Divine and fixed)

REVIEW: Preface (cont.)

- We use the Tertiary standard *under* the Primary and Secondary standards—**not** *against* them.
- Our tertiary standards *don't* cover every circumstance but provide a *framework* within which sessions *actually lead* every circumstance. Sessions must exercise judgment—this is why ministers/elders must be men of wisdom, love, and deep faith.

REVIEW: Principles of Presbyterian government

Assembled from works of Dr. Edmund P. Clowney and Louis Berkhof

1. Christ is the only King and head of the church.
2. Christ alone is Lord of the conscience of his people in scripture.
3. Christ has endued his whole church with power.
4. Christ established special offices in the church for her edification.
5. The highest permanent *office* in the church is the preaching presbyter/minister.
6. The role of rule in the church is exercised jointly by ministers and rulers “of the people,” elders.
7. The principle of joint rule extends to the regional church and whole church.

Overall Plan for the Class: FG Main Topics

1. Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church (FG I-IV)—September 8, 15, 29
2. EXCURSUS: Receiving, Removing, and Erasure—November 24
3. The Special Offices (FG V-XI)—December 15, January 5
4. Assemblies (FG XII-XIX)—January 12, 19
5. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG XX-XXVI)—April 27, May 4
6. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG XXVII-XXXII)—May 18

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REVIEW: Foundational Doctrinal Commitments and Principles for the Government of Christ's Church (FG 1-4)

- FG 1: Christ, the King and Head of the Church
- FG 2: The Church
- FG 3: The Nature and Exercise of Church Power
- FG 4: The Unity of the Church

REVIEW, Chapter 1: Christ, the King and Head of the Church

- Resurrected and seated at the Father's right hand, Jesus gives gifts and offices to grow and perfect his church (FG I:1).
- Jesus, the only king, rules his church directly and through men that his Spirit gifts to teach and rule according to his word (FG I:2).
- The church submits to Jesus' kingship by conforming her government to the commands, pattern, and general rules of Scripture and by conducting such with decency, in order, and for edification (FG I:3).
- Jesus, who is in heaven, is truly present with his church by the Holy Spirit through whom he gave his word, saves and governs his church, and gifts men for office (FG I:4).

REVIEW, Chapter 2: The Church

- The church is the way Christ currently exhibits his reign in this world (FG II:1).
- Those who profess faith in and promise submission to Christ (and their children) comprise the universal, visible church (FG II:2).
- Scripture teaches that the universal, visible church should be organized in local and regional churches confessing a common faith and submitting to a common form of government (FG II:3).
- The work Christ has assigned his church to fulfill in fellowship with him is three-fold: divine worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness (FG II:4).

REVIEW, Chapter 3: The Nature and Exercise of Church Power

- Whole body is endowed with power by the Holy Spirit.
 - Join in the worship, edification, and witness
 - Acknowledge and desire exercise of the special offices by vote
- The only permanent special offices of oversight are minister and elder, and the NT requires them to rule jointly (FG III:2).
- The power Christ committed to this joint work of rule is strictly ministerial and declarative, not magisterial and legislative.
- The power Christ committed to this joint work of rule is entirely moral and spiritual.
- This ministerial, declarative, moral, and spiritual power to rule is Biblical and real

REVIEW, Chapter 4: The Unity of the Church

- Since the church really is one in the Triune God, she must work at unity by (FG IV:1):
 - Receiving those with the gifts of faith and repentance (along with their children),
 - ...submitting to those who have been ordained to jointly exercise Christ's power for government,
 - ...diligently learning from those with gifts for teaching the word of God.
 - As to...
 - Believers in their general office: each must use what gifts he/she has received to serve the body for her edification.
 - Special office of government: they must seek to remedy disruptions to unity.

Summary (cont.): The **Unity** of the Church

- Those who jointly share Christ's power for rule in the church must use that **power to preserve** unity of truth and practice in the church (FG IV:2).
- An essential aspect of maintaining true unity is recognizing and **separating** from teachers and organizations of false doctrine and practice (FG IV:3).
- Denominations obscure but do not destroy the unity of the church (FG IV:4).

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Special Offices (FG 5-11)

- FG 5: Offices in the Church
 - FG 6: Ministers
 - FG 7: Evangelists
 - FG 8: Pastors
 - FG 9: Teachers
 - FG 10: Elders
 - FG 11: Deacons

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Offices in the Church

Chapter 5

FG 5.1

Our Lord Jesus Christ established his church of the new covenant on the foundation of the **apostles and prophets**. The apostles were appointed to be witnesses to the risen Christ, testifying in the Holy Spirit to what they had seen and heard, heralding the gospel to the world, and grounding the church in the teaching of Christ. Together with the prophets they spoke by revelation, recording in the Scriptures of the New Testament the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. When their testimony was completed their calling and office was not continued in the church, and the powers and signs that endued and sealed their ministry ceased.

Scripture

- Ephesians 2:20, “...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...”
- 2 Corinthians 12:12, “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.”
- Hebrews 2:3b-4, “...such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

From Dr. Alan Strange's commentary:

- "...it may be said that while the office of apostle has no successor as to its extraordinary aspects, it does as to its ordinary ones: the preaching of the Word and prayer (Acts 6), reflected now in the New Testament in the office of minister especially."
- Jude 3, "...I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

FG 5.2

Our Lord continues to build his church through the ministry of men whom he calls and endues with special gifts for teaching, ruling, and serving. Some of these special gifts can be most profitably exercised only when those who possess them have been publicly recognized as called of Christ to minister with authority. It is proper to speak of such a publicly recognized function as an office, and to designate men by such scriptural titles of office and calling as evangelist, pastor, teacher, bishop, elder, or deacon. There are diversities of ministry within any office, for every man is called to be a steward of his own gifts. At the same time, a general designation of office may be applied to a group of functions within which separate offices could be distinguished.

From Dr. Alan Strange's commentary:

“Those who hold such offices do so with authority, which is to recognize that others may have such gifts without holding church office: it is not the mere possession of gifts that grants authority, but the recognition by the church of such gifts and the consequent ordination to office for the exercise of those gifts is what bestows authority.”

FG 5.3

The **ordinary and perpetual offices** in the church are those given for the ministry of the Word of God, of rule, and of mercy. Those who share in the rule of the church may be called **elders** (presbyters), bishops, or church governors. Those who minister in mercy and service are called **deacons**. Those **elders** who have been endued and called of Christ to labor **also** in the Word and teaching are called **ministers**.

SUMMARY: FG 5

- Under the new covenant, the foundational special offices are the Apostles and prophets (FG V:1)
 - The Apostles were appointed by Christ to witnesses to his resurrection and testify to his teaching.
 - The Lord provided the fullness of truth in the New Testament Scriptures through the Apostles and prophets.
- Jesus continues to gift men for teaching, rule, and service (FG V:2).
 - To better serve the church, some with strength in such gifts and commendable character should be called by the church to hold an office.
 - Public recognition of gifts and character with office increases a man's ability to benefit the body.
 - Men bring diversity of gifts to the same office.
- There are three ordinary, perpetual offices in the church: ministers, elders, and deacons (FG V:3).

Ministers or Teaching Elders

Chapter 6

SUMMARY: FG 6

- All ministers have a stewardship in the gospel; some ministers are especially fruitful in evangelism, shepherding, or teaching (FG VI:1).
- Varying strengths acknowledged, still, every minister, as a servant of Christ, should possess gifts for and seek to grow in feeding, oversight, gospel proclamation and defense, administration of the sacraments, and being an example to the flock (FG VI:2).
- Every minister should have a solid faith, be educated, be able to teach and rule, live a holy life, be wise, lead his home, and have a good reputation with everyone (FG VI:3).
- Membership of ministers (FG VI:4)
 - Ministers are members of the regional church.
 - Ministers have communicant fellowship in any local congregation of the regional church of which he is a member.
 - With his approval, a presbytery may ask a session of a congregation of the regional church to exercise pastoral care of a minister.
 - With the concurrence of presbytery, a session may grant a minister the right to vote in the congregation it oversees.

From Dr. Alan Strange's commentary

For the minister, calling is conceived as having two parts: an **internal** call and an **external** call. The **former** is that which is impressed upon the heart of one gifted for gospel ministry and involves both a **subjective awareness** of God's gifting for ministry and a sense that God wills one to pursue such ministry, **together with the desire** for such in the case of one so called. The **external** call is the **recognition and affirmation** of that call on the part of the **visible church**, brought to expression by a **call** to labor (as a pastor, for instance, in a local congregation), eventuating in **ordination and installation** with the laying on of hands, in which **all of the outward authority of the church** is brought to bear for one entering the ministerial office.

Evangelists

Chapter 7

SUMMARY: FG 7

- Some ministers are especially gifted in evangelism and are specifically called to the church as such (FG VII:1).
- Specific labors common to evangelists include (FG VII:2):
 - Foreign or home missionary
 - Stated supply in a church
 - Chaplain of an institution or of the military
 - Administrator of an agency for evangelism
 - Editor or a press or publication

Pastors

Chapter 8

SUMMARY: FG 8

- The pastor is Christ's undershepherd in a local congregation.
- He joins the elders of the church to govern her members and lead them in the service of Christ.
- His special responsibilities include:
 - conducting public worship;
 - praying for the flock and leading them in prayer;
 - reading and preaching the word with ministerial authority;
 - administering the sacraments;
 - blessing the people from God;
 - visiting and counseling members with care for the poor, sick, afflicted, and dying;
 - evangelizing the lost.

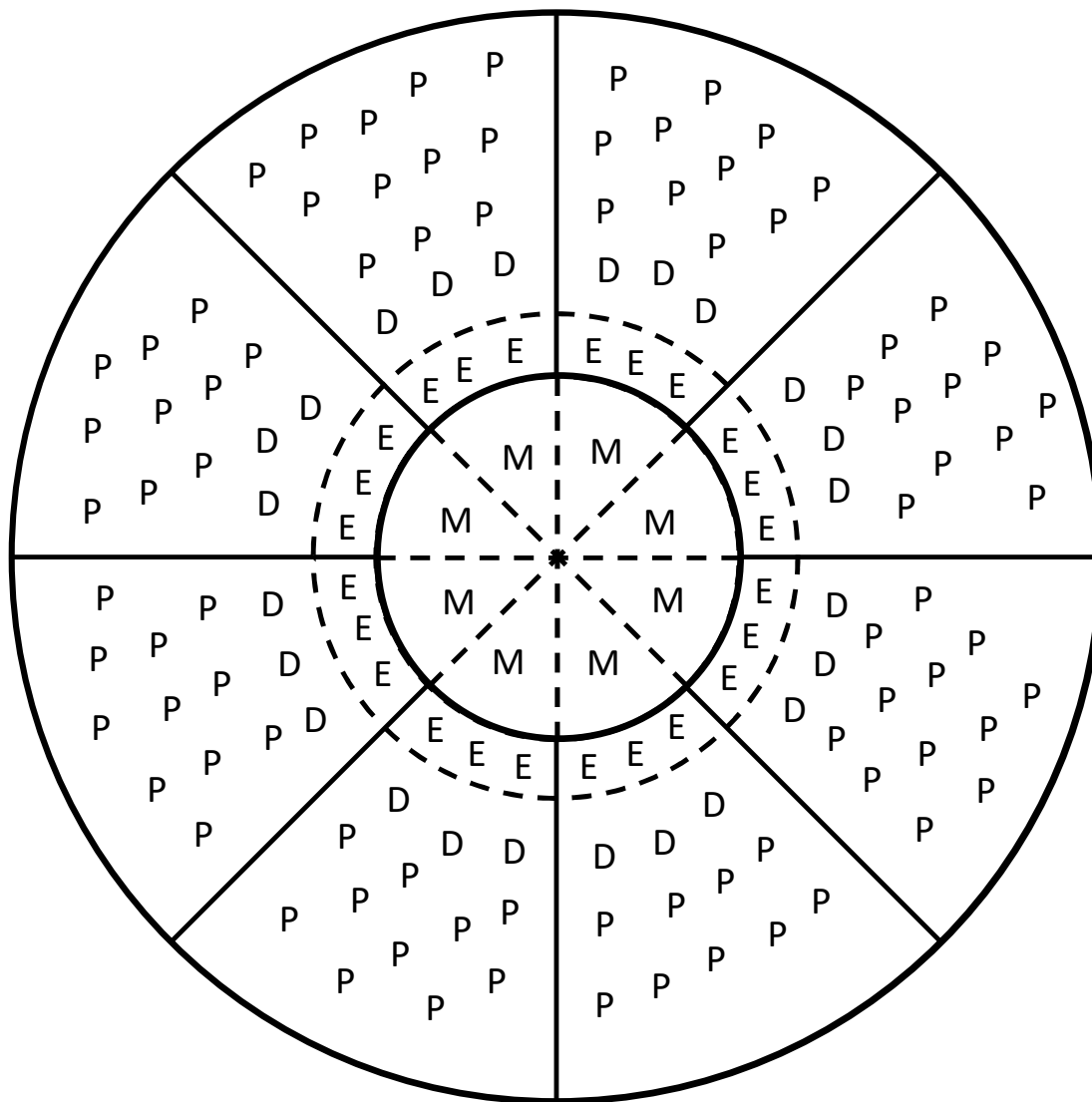
Teachers

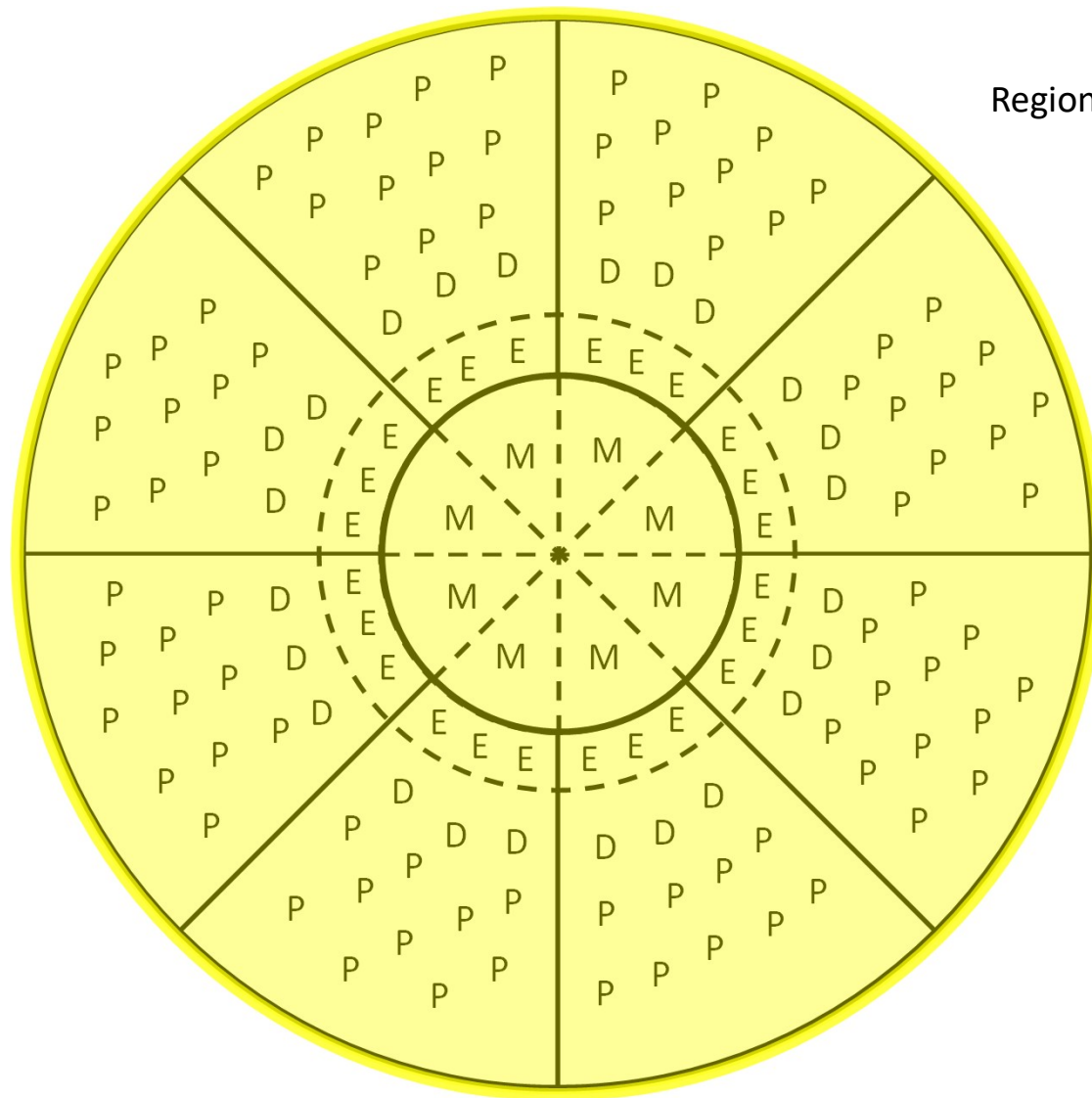
Chapter 9

SUMMARY: FG 9

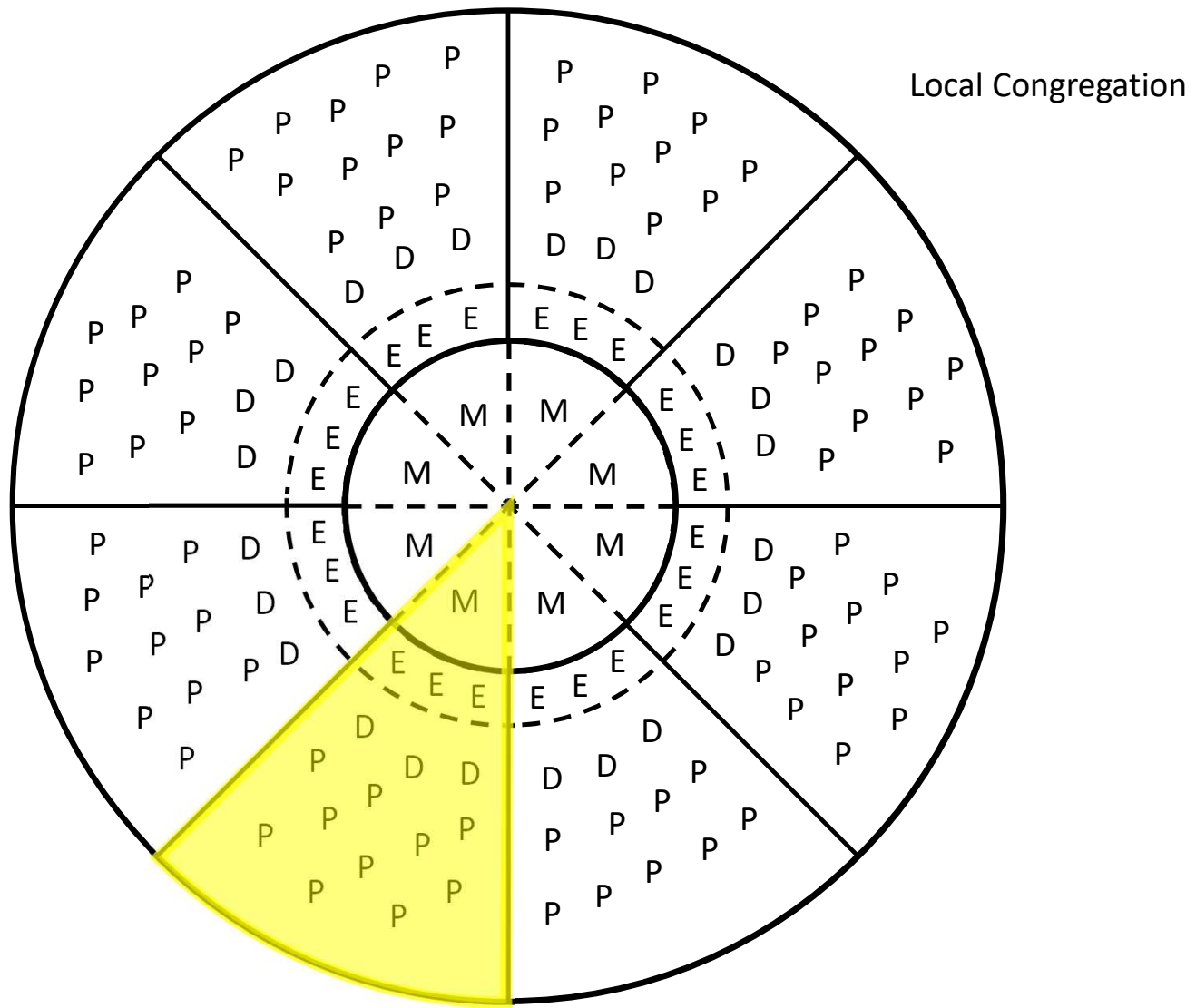
- Teachers are ministers with notable gifts for expounding Scripture, teaching sound doctrine, defending the faith, who are called by the church to labor in such areas of strength (FG IX:1).
- A minister may be called as a teacher by a congregation (when there is already a pastor), a theological seminary, a Christian school, or some other form of instruction (FG IX:2).

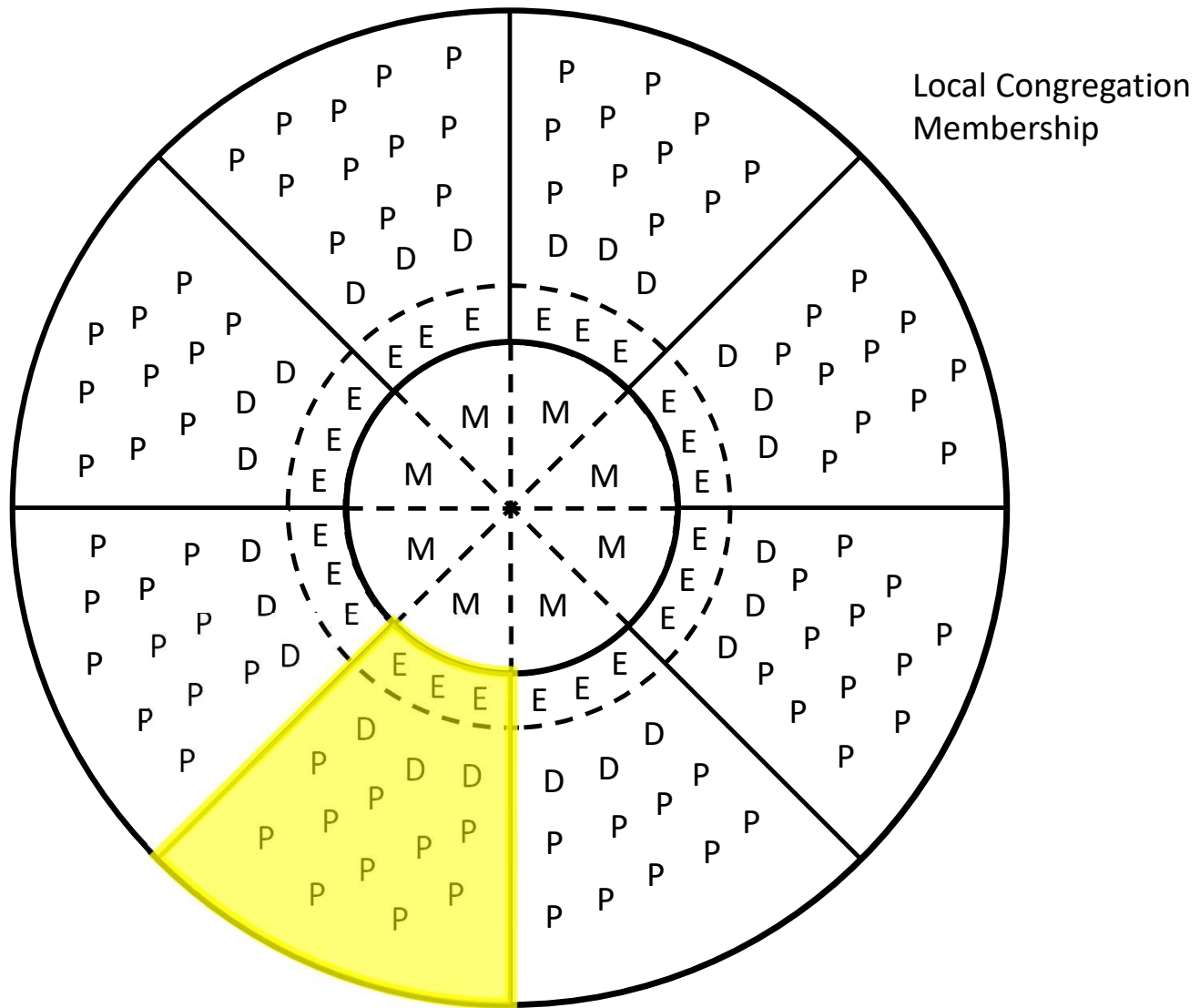
Questions?

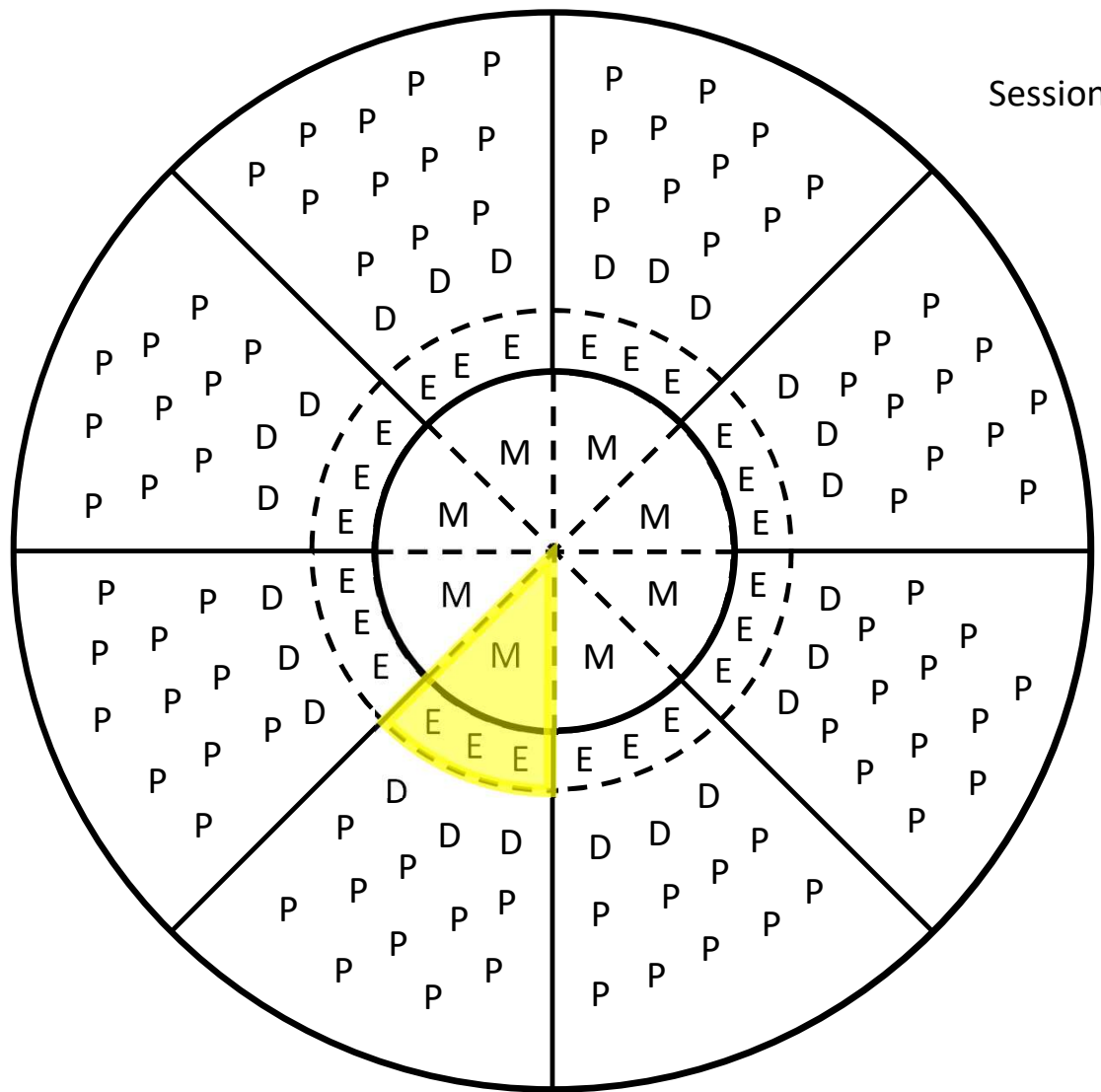




Regional Church







Session

