

Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Part 7 of 10

Plan for this morning:

- SCANT survey of FG 1-11 topics
- REVIEW of FG 12-13
- REVIEW of Governing Assembly Diagram
- STUDY of FG 14-19
- QUESTIONS

Overall Plan for the Class: FG Main Topics

1. Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church FG 1-4: *Christ the King; Church; Power of the church; Unity of the Church*
2. The Special Offices FG 5-11: *Ordinary and Perpetual; Minister (Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher); Elder; Deacon*
3. Assemblies (FG 12-19)—January 12 & 19
4. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)—April 27, May 4
5. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)—May 18

Overall Plan for the Class: FG Main Topics

1. Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church FG 1-4: *Christ the King; Church; Power of the church; Unity of the Church*
2. The Special Offices FG 5-11: *Ordinary and Perpetual; Minister (Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher); Elder; Deacon*
3. Assemblies (FG 12-19)—January 12 & 19
4. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)—April 27, May 4
5. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)—May 18

Overall Plan for the Class: FG Main Topics

1. Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church FG 1-4: *Christ the King; Church; Power of the church; Unity of the Church*
2. The Special Offices FG 5-11: *Ordinary and Perpetual; Minister (Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher); Elder; Deacon*
3. Assemblies (FG 12-19)—January 12 & 19
4. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)—April 27, May 4
5. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)—May 18

Overall Plan for the Class: FG Main Topics

1. Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church FG 1-4: *Christ the King; Church; Power of the church; Unity of the Church*
2. The Special Offices FG 5-11: *Ordinary and Perpetual; Minister (Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher); Elder; Deacon*
3. **Assemblies (FG 12-19)—January 12 & 19**
4. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)—April 27, May 4
5. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)—May 18

Assemblies (FG 12-19)

- FG 12—General Principles
- Specific Governing Assemblies
 - FG 13—The Local Church and Its Session
 - FG 14—The Regional Church and Its presbytery
 - FG 15—The Whole Church and Its General Assembly
- Congregations
 - FG 16—Congregational Meetings
 - FG 17—Congregations without Pastors
- Officers of Governing Assemblies
 - FG 18—Moderators
 - FG 19—Clerks

REVIEW: Last week we covered...

- FG 12—General Principles
- Specific Governing Assemblies
 - FG 13—The Local Church and Its Session
 - FG 14—The Regional Church and Its presbytery
 - FG 15—The Whole Church and Its General Assembly
- Congregations
 - FG 16—Congregational Meetings
 - FG 17—Congregations without Pastors
- Officers of Governing Assemblies
 - FG 18—Moderators
 - FG 19—Clerks

REVIEW: Governing Assemblies (12)

- All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers (12:1). The assemblies aren't "episcopally" arranged.
 - "... to maintain truth and righteousness..."
 - "...to oppose erroneous opinions and sinful practices that threaten the purity, peace, or progress of the church."
 - "...to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline..."
 - "...to obtain evidence..." e.g. "...called by any assembly to give testimony."
 - "...to...inflict censures."
 - "...only...the assembly having jurisdiction over..." a person can require that person to appear to be charged with an offense.

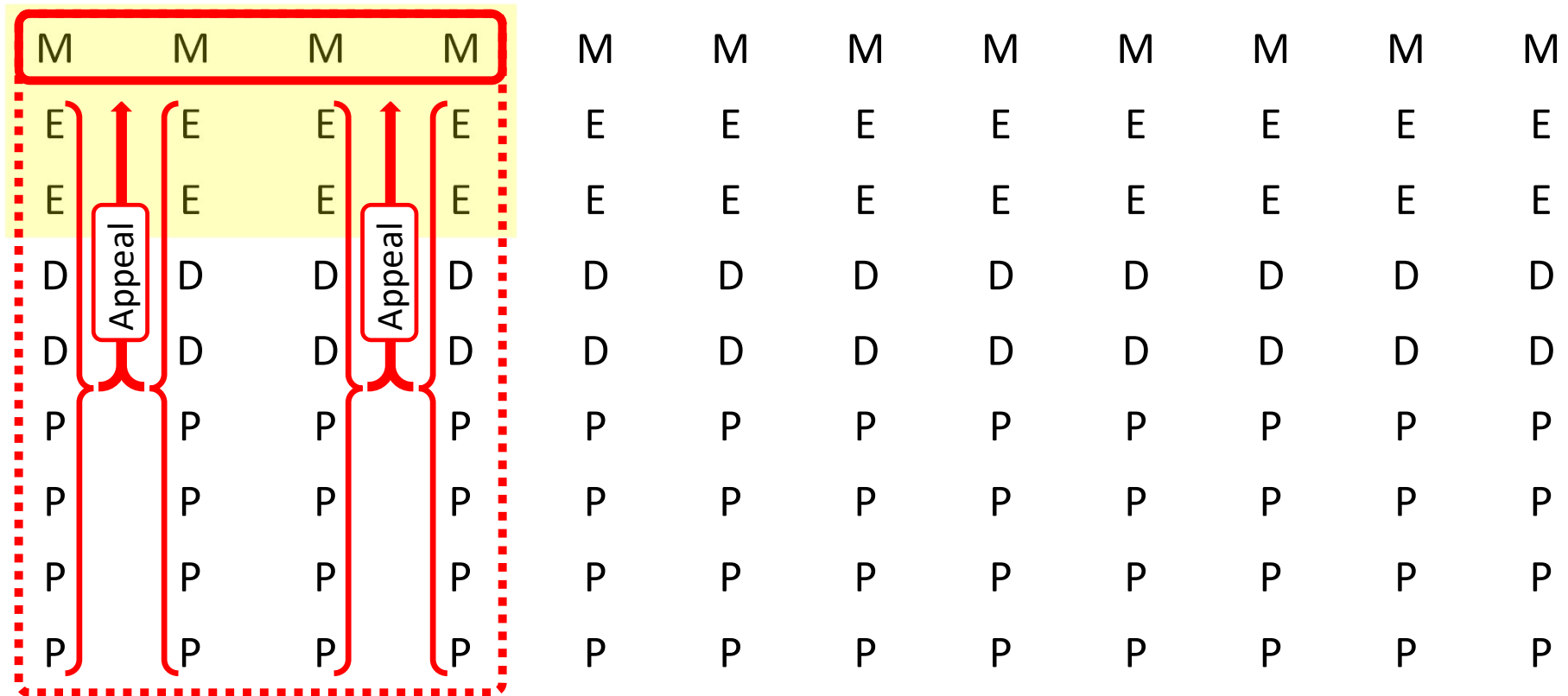
REVIEW: Governing Assemblies (12)

- All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers (12:1). The assemblies aren't "episcopally" arranged.
- Each governing assembly exercises **exclusive "original jurisdiction"** over all matters belonging to it (12:2).
 - "Original Jurisdiction" = "first right to rule/govern"
 - **Horizontal: discipline** of members
 - **Down: review** the actions lower judicatories
 - **Up: appeal** to higher judicatories from the actions of lower judicatories

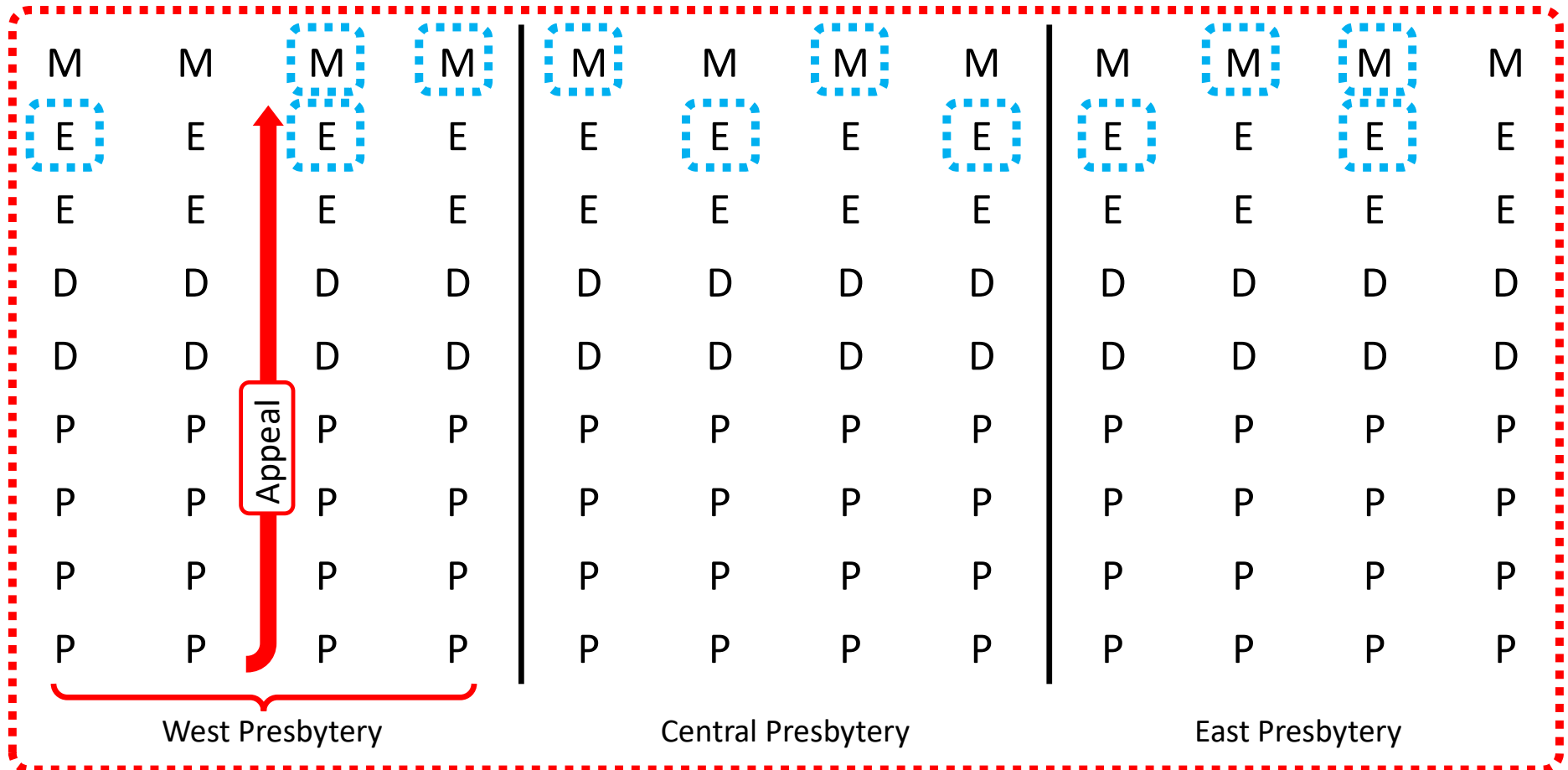
Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a Session (over membership)

[illegible]

Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a Presbytery (over membership)



Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a General Assembly (Note: No Membership)



REVIEW: Governing Assemblies (12)

- All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers (12:1). The assemblies aren't "episcopally" arranged.
- Each governing assembly exercises exclusive "original jurisdiction" over all matters belonging to it (12:2).

NOTE: Sessions, presbyteries, and a general assembly are not independent but have a *mutual relationship*; *every* act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate body.

SO, governing assemblies are **NEITHER "episcopal"** (ascending power) nor **"congregational"** (independent of each other).

REVIEW: Governing Assemblies (12)

- All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers (12:1). The assemblies aren't "episcopally" arranged.
- Each governing assembly exercises exclusive "original jurisdiction" over all matters belonging to it (12:2).
- Assemblies have the authority to erect committees and commissions and to delegate to them specific interim powers (12:3).

REVIEW: Governing Assemblies (12)

- All governing assemblies have the same kinds of rights and powers (12:1). The assemblies aren't "episcopally" arranged.
- Each governing assembly exercises exclusive "original jurisdiction" over all matters belonging to it (12:2).
- Assemblies have the authority to erect committees and commissions and to delegate to them specific interim powers (12:3).
- Voting by proxy is not allowed in these assemblies (12:4).

REVIEW: The Local Church and Its Session (13)

- The local church consists of a definite membership organized as a distinct congregation with its officers (FG XIII:1).
- A church consists of communicant and noncommunicant members; each is defined (FG XIII:2).
- The officers in a local congregation are ministers, elders, and deacons, their quantity varying depending on the church (FG XIII:3).
- The session consists of the pastor, other ministers, and ruling elders; it elects a moderator each year (FG XIII:4).
- Rules for convening a session and establishing a quorum are described (FG XIII:5).

REVIEW: The Local Church and Its Session (13)

- Options for how a session can meet when the pastor is absent are described (FG XIII:6).
- The responsibilities of the session are described (FG XIII:7).
 - Oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship
 - Arrange best measures for promoting spiritual growth and evangelistic witness
 - Receive, dismiss, and exercise discipline over members of the church
 - Supervise the activities of the diaconate, the board of trustees, and all other organizations of the congregation
 - Have final authority over the use of the church property
 - Appoint ruling elder commissioners to higher assemblies

REVIEW: The Local Church and Its Session (13)

- Options for how a session can meet when the pastor is absent are described (FG XIII:6).
- The responsibilities of the session are described (FG XIII:7).
- The **records** a session is required to maintain are described (FG XIII:8).

REVIEW: The Local Church and Its Session (13)

- Options for how a session can meet when the pastor is absent are described (FG XIII:6).
- The responsibilities of the session are described (FG XIII:7).
- The records a session is required to maintain are described (FG XIII:8).
- Instructions for adding and removing names from the roll of members are summarized (FG XIII:9).

REVIEW: The Local Church and Its Session (13)

- Options for how a session can meet when the pastor is absent are described (FG XIII:6).
- The responsibilities of the session are described (FG XIII:7).
- The records a session is required to maintain are described (FG XIII:8).
- Instructions for adding and removing names from the roll of members are summarized (FG XIII:9).
- Instructions for adding to or temporarily **augmenting a session** that has ceased to exist or become so small as to be ineffective are described (FG XIII:10).

Local Church

[illegible]

Session – Standing Governing Assembly of a Local Church

[illegible]

Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a Session (over membership)

[illegible]

Assemblies (FG 12-19)

- FG 12—General Principles
- Specific Governing Assemblies
 - FG 13—The Local Church and Its Session
 - FG 14—The Regional Church and Its presbytery
 - FG 15—The Whole Church and Its General Assembly
- Congregations
 - FG 16—Congregational Meetings
 - FG 17—Congregations without Pastors
- Officers of Governing Assemblies
 - FG 18—Moderators
 - FG 19—Clerks

Assemblies (FG 12-19)

- FG 12—General Principles
- Specific Governing Assemblies
 - FG 13—The Local Church and Its Session
 - FG 14—The Regional Church and Its presbytery
 - FG 15—The Whole Church and Its General Assembly
- Congregations
 - FG 16—Congregational Meetings
 - FG 17—Congregations without Pastors
- Officers of Governing Assemblies
 - FG 18—Moderators
 - FG 19—Clerks

The Regional Church and Its Presbytery

Chapter 14

The Regional Church and Its Presbytery

- The regional church is **defined**, and requirements for the formation of a regional church are specified (FG 14:1). All the members and ministers within a geographical district.
- The **presbytery** is the **governing body** of a regional church; its members are all the ministers and ruling elders within a regional church (FG 14:2). Elders are commissioned for each meeting.
- **Every minister and one elder from each congregation may vote** in a given presbytery meeting; quorum rules are specified (FG 14:3).
- Rules for **electing** the **moderator** are specified (14:4).

The Regional Church and Its Presbytery

- The **right and responsibilities** of a presbytery are described (FG 14:5).
We'll come back to this in the next slide!
- Rules for presbytery **records** are described (FG 14:6).
- Rules for determining stated and calling **special meetings** of presbytery are described (FG 14:7).
- Each day's session shall be opened and closed with **prayer** (FG 14:8).
- Rules and allowances for **corresponding mem**bers are described (FG 14:9).

The Right and Responsibilities of a Presbytery

- Order whatever pertains to the **spiritual welfare** of the churches under its care (respecting guaranteed liberties of congregations)
- **Evangelism** within the bounds of its region, especially areas not in the sphere of any one congregation
- Foster **fellowship in worship and nurture** in the church as a whole
- **Organize and receive congregations**, and unite and dissolve cong.
- **Visit churches** to ascertain their state and redress evils in them
- **Examine session records** to approve or censure them
- **Receive and issue appeals**
- **Resolve questions of doctrine or discipline** and condemn erroneous opinions
- **Take under its care, examine, and license ministry candidates**
- **Ordain, install, remove, and judge ministers.** (About 47% of FG!)

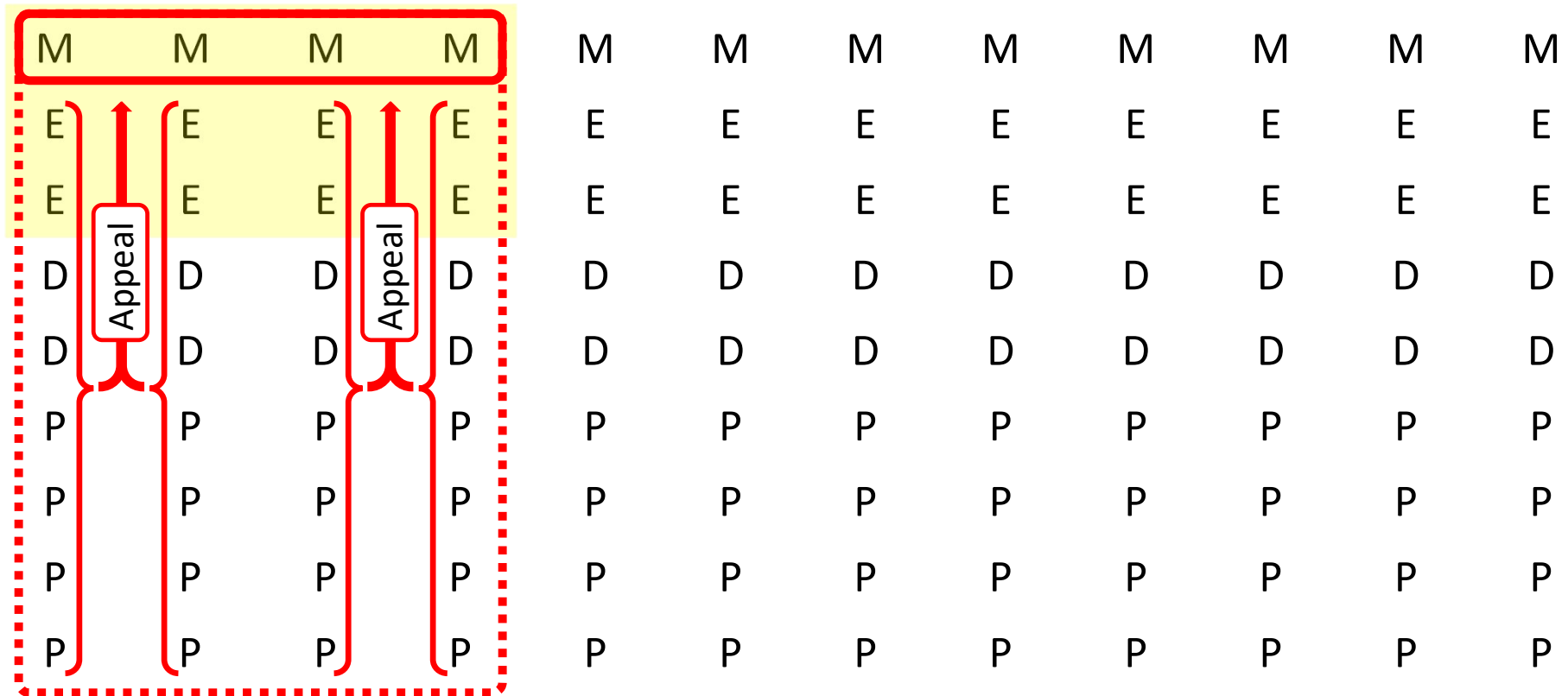
Regional Church

M	M	M	M
E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E
D	D	D	D
D	D	D	D
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P

Presbytery – Standing Governing Assembly of a Regional Church

M	M	M	M
E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E
D	D	D	D
D	D	D	D
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P

Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a Presbytery (over membership)



The Whole Church and Its General Assembly

Chapter 15

The Whole Church and Its General Assembly

- The whole church consists of all the members of its regional churches (FG 15:1).
- The number and make-up of the members of a general assembly are specified (FG 15:2): not more than 155 voting members.
- The frequency of general assembly and rules for establishing a quorum are described (FG 15:3). GA meets at least once every year.
- An overview of the proceedings is described (FG 15:4).

The Whole Church and Its General Assembly

- Rules for calling a special general assembly are described (FG 15:5).
- Responsibilities of general assembly are specified (FG 15:6).
 - Advance worship, edification, and witness of the whole church
 - Resolve doctrinal and disciplinary questions brought before it
 - Promote the unity of the church with other churches
- The unique duties of general assembly are specified (FG 15:7).
 - Organize regional churches
 - Review records of presbyteries
 - Calling ministers or licentiates to missionary or other ministries of the whole church
- The nature of pronouncements and authority of the general assembly are described (FG 15:8).

Whole Church

M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

West Presbytery

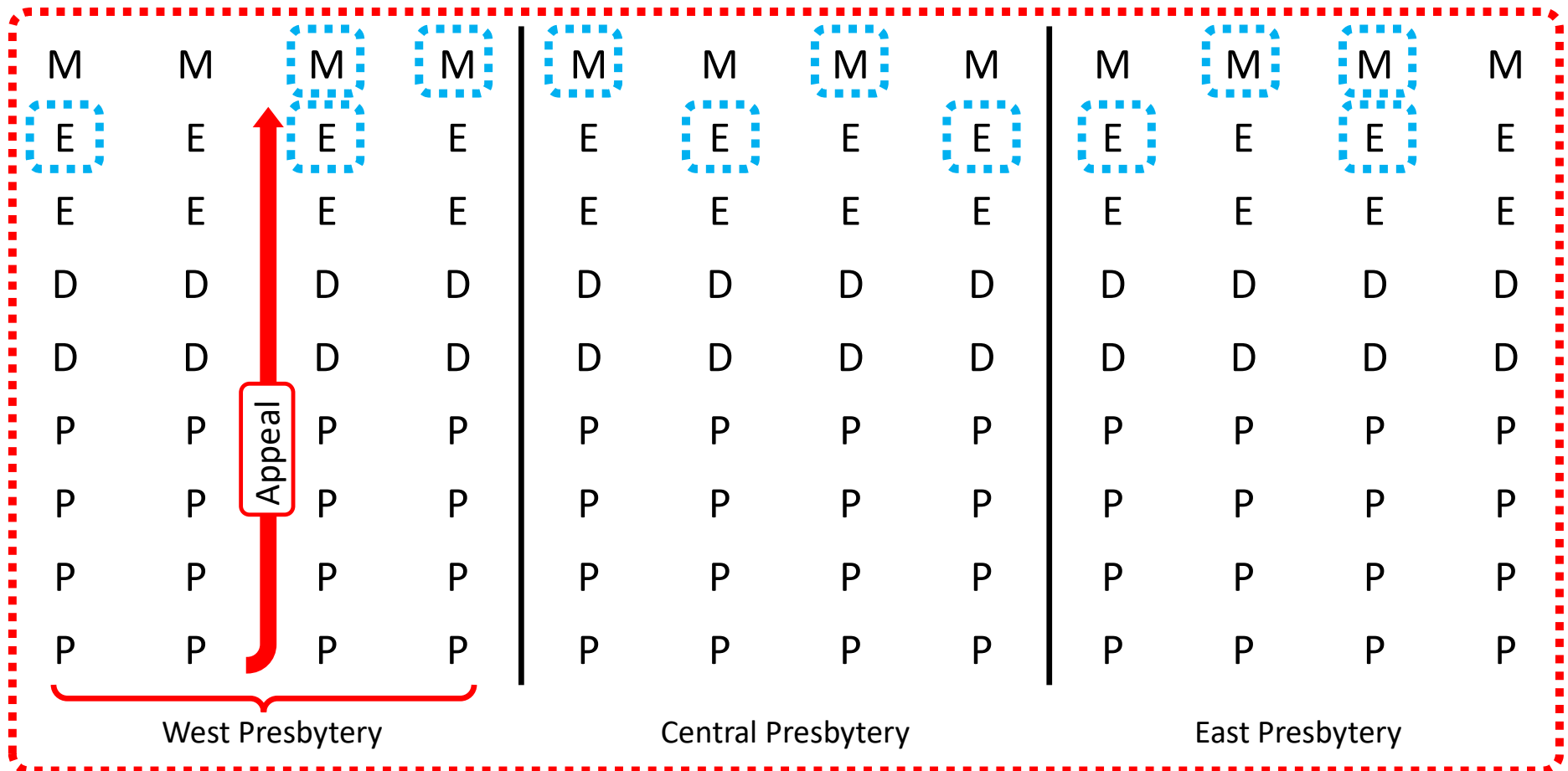
Central Presbytery

East Presbytery

General Assembly – Occasional Governing Assembly of the Whole Church

M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
West Presbytery				Central Presbytery				East Presbytery			

Original Jurisdiction or “First Right to Rule” of a General Assembly (Note: No Membership)



Congregational Meetings

Chapter 16

Congregational Meetings—General Considerations

- I've lumped FG12-19 under the heading "Assemblies."
- Sessions (FG13), presbyteries (FG14), and general assembly (FG 15) are all *governing assemblies*.
- The meeting of a congregation (FG 16) is an "assembly," but it is *not* a ***governing*** assembly.
- Only the session, as the governing body of a local church, can call a congregational meeting. The session proposes business to the congregation for its approval and support.
- Should the congregation defeat any session-proposed business, the matter returns to the session for its consideration an/or reconsideration.
- Since it isn't a governing body, a congregation can't propose business that has the effect of usurping the governing role of the session.

Congregational Meetings

- Congregational meetings are called by the session, with a stated meeting called at least once each year (FG 16:1).
 - One-fourth of the communicant members may request the session to call a meeting.
 - Only communicant members in good standing may vote.
 - Voting by proxy is not allowed.
- A way to apply 16:1 to mission works is described (FG 16:2).
- Rules to announce a congregational meeting are described (FG 16:3).
- Rules for the moderator and clerk of a congregational meeting are specified (FG 16:4).

Congregational Meetings (cont.)

- Responsibilities of the clerk and rules for approving the minutes are described (FG 16:5).
- Rules for congregational meetings when corporation business is conducted are specified (FG 16:6).
- Rules for when a congregation contemplates withdrawing from the OPC (FG 16:7).

Congregations without Pastors

Chapter 17

Congregations without Pastors

- Congregations without a pastor shall continue to meet for public worship, and guidelines for doing so are specified (FG 17:1).
- Ways a presbytery may supervise a church that is without a pastor are described (FG 17:2).
- Rules for pulpit supply are described (FG 17:3).

Moderators

Chapter 18

Moderators

- Each judicatory shall have a moderator (FG XVIII:1).
- The authority of moderators is described (FG XVIII:2).

The moderator is to be considered as possessing, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary for the preservation of order, for convening and adjourning the judicatory, and directing its operations according to the rules of the Church.

- The moderator may vote if he is a member of the body over which he presides (FG XVII:3).

Clerks

Chapter 19

Clerks

It shall be the duty of the clerk to be accountable for the recording of the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required....

Questions?