

Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Part 10 of 10

Plan for this morning:

- Scant Review of FG 1-26
- Study FG 27-32
- 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)
2. The Special Offices (FG 5-11)
3. Assemblies (FG 12-19)
4. Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)
5. Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)—May 18

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Foundational doctrinal commitments and principles for the government of Christ's church (FG 1-4)

- FG 1—**Christ is King**: exalted; offices; word; Spirit
- FG 2—**Church**: visible kingdom; organized as congregations; work is worship, edification, and witness
- FG 3—**Power**: whole body; general office acknowledge special officers.
 - Ministerial and declarative
 - Moral and Spiritual
 - Christians are commanded to submit themselves to this government.
- FG 4—**Unity**: under Christ; under **special officers** of rule; discipline

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The Special Offices (FG 5-11)

- FG 5: **Offices** in the Church: New Covenant foundational special offices discontinued; NC **ordinary & perpetual** special offices
- FG 6: **Ministers**: **rule + stewardship in the gospel**; regional church membership
 - FG 7: Evangelists: particular gifts for evangelism/church planting
 - FG 8: **Pastors**: especially suited to congregational ministry of word and sacraments + shepherding/rule with elders in a **local church**
 - FG 9: Teachers: more suited to the seminary, school, or publication
- FG 10: **Elders**: apt to teach but the focus is really on **rule**
- FG 11: **Deacons**: serving and offering **leadership in mercy and mutual service** in the body

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Assemblies (FG 12-19)

- FG 12—General Principles: all have *same* rights and powers; “original jurisdiction”; neither “episcopal” (implying *different* power) nor “congregational” (because the act of one is act of all)
- 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

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Ordination and Installation to Special Office (FG 20-26)

- Ordination and Installation (FG 20): **not self called** but church
- Ministers (FG 21-24)
 - **Licensing** Candidates to Preach the Gospel (FG 21)—**probationary**
 - **Calling** a Minister (FG 22)
 - **Ordaining** and **Installing** Ministers (FG 23)
 - **Dissolving** Ministerial Relationships (FG 24)
- Electing, Ordaining, and Installing **Ruling Elders** and **Deacons** (FG 25)
- **Divesting** from Office (FG 26)—**administrative** not judicial

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Good Order in Miscellaneous Matters (FG 27-32)

- Missions (FG 27)
- Ministers Laboring outside the Church (FG 28)
- Organizing and Receiving Congregations (FG 29)
- Organizations of Members of the Church (FG 30)
- Incorporation and Corporations (FG 31)
- The Constitution and Its Amendment (FG 32)

Missions

Chapter 27

Missions (FG 27)

- Sessions, presbyteries, and general assembly have their respective responsibilities for the work of missions (FG 27:1). “Each congregation and presbytery, as well as the general assembly, is obligated to pursue the task of evangelism within its respective bounds.”
- *Normally* the general assembly may not initiate mission works in regional churches (FG 27:2).
- A minister laboring in missions within a regional church shall place himself under the jurisdiction of that presbytery (FG 27:3).

RF Outreach Spreadsheet from 2009

- Green (The best way to hear the gospel and learn about RF is to help people find us and visit worship. Relatively easy to execute. Meaningful impact.)
 - Website - 9
 - Google Advertising - 8
 - Mailings - 7
 - Redirection from other websites - 7
 - Sharing Sermons in some way - 5
 - Better Signage - 4
 - Yellow Pages - 4
- Magenta (Are we ready to welcome them when they visit? Involves members. Requires change of mindset. Requires training.)
 - Prayer - 10
 - Preparing the congregation to receive them - 9
 - Nursery - 8
- Orange (May have to do with looking to the next generation. Ongoing shift from “we are a home-schooling church.” What time of life does the Lord often open people’s hearts?).
 - Social networking - 7
 - College/student outreach – 6
 - Monthly movie night - 5
 - Viral advertising - 5

Ministers Laboring outside the Church

Chapter 28

Ministers Laboring outside the Church (FG 28)

- Laboring outside the OPC to establish churches of Reformed and Presbyterian testimony is permissible (FG 28:1).
- Such labor must in no way diminish his ordination commitments; presbyteries do not install men in such works; and presbyteries must maintain oversight of such work (FG 28:2).
- The same provisions apply to the relationship of ministers to nonecclesiastical religious organizations (FG 28:3).
- Such a minister must report to his presbytery at least once each year (FG 28:4).

Organizing and Receiving Congregations

Chapter 29

Organizing and Receiving Congregations (FG 29)

- The process and rules for organizing a mission work toward a new congregation are described (FG 29:A).
 - A group of believers meeting for worship on the Lord's Day under the jurisdiction of a session or presbytery, but not yet an organized congregation, is designated a “mission” (FG 29:A.1).
 - A group of believers may be organized as a separate congregation of the OPC *only under the supervision of a presbytery* (FG 29:A.2).
 - The process for organizing (as a particular congregation) a mission work of an existing congregation (FG 29:A.3), of a presbytery (FG 29:A.4), and neither (FG 29:A.5) is described.
- The process of receiving an existing congregation outside the OPC as a new congregation of the OPC is described (FG 29:B).

Organizations of Members of the Church

Chapter 30

Organizations of Members of the Church (FG 30)

- Members may associate to for specific purposes in the exercise of their common calling in their general office; however, such organizations *should not normally assume the prerogatives or exercise the functions of the special officers* of the church (FG 30:1).
- Constitutional means should be undertaken to reform *the church if it fails to perform any of its divinely given tasks*, yet allowance is made for Christians to *informally* carry out ecclesiastical tasks if reformation isn't possible (FG 30:2).
 - *Why do you think this is in the FG?*
- Organizations wishing to represent a church, presbytery or the whole church must obtain approval and be subject to the applicable judicatory (FG 30:3).

Incorporation and Corporations

Chapter 31

Incorporation and Corporations (FG 31)

- Assemblies may maintain corporations (FG 31:1): “...agents of the respective authorities to handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities.”
- Rules for membership of such corporations and voting are specified (FG 31:2).
- Guidelines for determining the membership of a board of trustees and the nature of their duties are described (FG 31:3).
- Limitations on corporation charters and bylaws are specified (FG 31:4).
- Each congregation is allowed to own its own property, donate it, and retain it in case it withdraws from the OPC (FG 31:5).
 - Why do you think this provision may be in our FG?

The Constitution and Its Amendment

Chapter 32

The Constitution and Its Amendment (FG 32)

- The Constitution of the OPC is its Confession, Larger Catechism, Shorter Catechism, Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God; this constitution is subordinate to Scripture (FG 32:1).
- The FG, BD, and DW may be amended (FG 32:2) as follows:
 - Majority vote of a general assembly (#1) that proposes the amendment to the presbyteries, then...
 - ...a majority of presbyteries must support the amendment, then...
 - ...a majority vote of the next general assembly (#2).

The Constitution and Its Amendment (FG 32)

- The Confession, Catechisms, and forms of subscription to them may be amended (FG 32:3) as follows:
 - **Majority** vote of a general assembly (#1) to determine that a proposed amendment is “worthy of consideration.” If that happens...
 - ...that general assembly (#1) shall appoint a committee to consider the amendment and bring back a recommendation to the next general assembly (#2). If the committee brings back a recommendation to adopt the amendment...
 - ...that general assembly (#2) may propose the amendment to the presbyteries by a **2/3rds** vote.
 - **2/3rds** of the presbyteries must support the amendment, then...
 - ...a **2/3rds** vote of the next general assembly (#3) is required to adopt the amendment.
- The process for amending the Confession and Catechism is to be followed in the case of organic union of the OPC with another denomination (FG 32:4).
- Neither FG 32:3, 32:4, nor 32:5 can be amended except by the procedure required in FG 32:3!

Questions?