

# Rio Grande Presbytery Standing Rules

## [Approved August 2018]

### I. Introduction

A. Vision: The Rio Grande Presbytery is an intermediate court of the Presbyterian Church in America functioning under the constitution of the PCA. By conviction, we are a connectional body of elders and churches covenanted together in the gospel as humble servants of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church. We worship God together, provide pastoral care, mutual accountability, fellowship to our members and churches, and partner to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the intermediate court of the church, we are entrusted with the protection of our distinctive confessional standards, the integrity of our ministers, and the health of our churches.

### B. Implementation of Our Vision

1. Comportment: We believe that Jesus intends for his church to be a covenantal body. Our covenant standards mean we are not alone. The gospel compels us to humility, respectful discussion, prayer, and earnest commitment to the faith. The gospel compels us not to hide our weaknesses, but to allow ourselves to be served by others. We desire our gatherings to be a Spirit-filled, prayerful and deliberative meetings in which the gospel is central to all we do with our eyes focused on Christ continually. We further desire the Rio Grande Presbytery to be known for its enthusiasm, collegiality, and joy in the LORD, and its humble submission to the Scriptures. May God use our Presbytery for his glory!

2. Worship: We gather to work which begins and ends in worship as the means of our honoring Christ our King . When we come together, we seek the Lord in prayer, commune with Christ, build each other up by his Word and sacrament, and strengthen one another to engage in the work of His Kingdom with greater zeal. The Moderator or Stated Clerk will coordinate with the host church for the specific details of the group worship 30 days prior to the stated meeting date.

3. The Purpose of Our Standing Rules: These Standing Rules are meant to be an organizational supplement to , and in conformity with The Book of Church Order, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Our desire is for these Rules to be clear yet flexible and simple in application as they seek to provide orderly, efficient, clear, effective operation of our Presbytery. Our intent is to meet as brothers and fellow-workers in Christ. Robert's Rules of Order Parliamentary procedures are a servant to our work and are meant to assist our communication and orderly decision making.

### C. Operational Details

1. Meetings: Three stated meetings will be held each year. Ordinarily meetings will be held during the fourth week of January, April, and August. The meeting will be on the Monday

and Tuesday after the third Tuesday of each month. The meeting date, convening time and location will be set by the Presbytery before adjourning its previous meeting.

The annual Corporation meeting will be held at the regular January meeting. Special meetings will be convened as necessary per BCO 13-2. Every minister and all church sessions are expected to attend all stated meetings. Written excuses will be given for providential hindrances and recorded by the Stated Clerk for approval by the Court. The moderator will determine that a quorum is present to consist of at least three Teaching Elders and Three Ruling Elders.

2. Docket for Meetings: The docket for each Presbytery meeting will be distributed at least 14 days prior to the meeting by the Stated Clerk. Our Committees should submit draft docket inputs no later than 30 days prior to the stated meeting date. This initial input will contain as much of their specific content as possible including proposed motions so that the Stated Clerk can consolidate the inputs and distribute the docket prior to the meetings. Motions moving new business that were not submitted prior to the fourteen (14) day deadline will be considered as changes to the Stated Meeting Docket and added with the consent (51%) of the sitting court.

### 3. Presbytery Commissions & Committees

a. Presbytery Commissions: The Rio Grande Presbytery has one standing commission: the Executive Commission. This commission's scope and authority is limited to 1) Authorizing expenditures for urgent and special needs; 2) Approving the findings of the reviews of session minutes; 3) Making changes to approved hosting arrangements when necessary, and 4) And may, in order to meet GA deadlines, approve and submit nominees and appointees to General Assembly Committees and duties; and 5) Approving the award of Presbytery educational scholarships. The term of the commission is one year beginning with the election of the New Moderator and will consist of the Moderator, Stated Clerk, and Treasurer and any appointed members of Presbytery.

b. Presbytery Committees: The Rio Grande Presbytery has four standing committees: Administration, Shepherding, Ordination, and Missions. Their membership will include both teaching and ruling elders who are nominated by the Administration committee and elected by the Presbytery for a term of at least 3 years.

4. Ad Hoc Commissions & Committees: The Presbytery may form temporary commissions or committees as necessary with specific charters. This may include committees or commissions that advise churches during a transition in leadership, seek to assist members or member churches to apply the peacemaking guidelines of BCO Appendix I, or serve a church in a time of conflict to investigate for the purpose of establishing facts and recommending actions, ordain and/or install pastors, particularize mission churches, or address other matters as deemed appropriate. Judicial Commissions may be established by the Presbytery with specified judicial powers and will per BCO 15. All ad hoc commissions and committees will provide reports at the stated meetings of the Presbytery and these reports will be included in the official minutes of the stated meeting.

### 5. The Work of Committees and Commissions

a. The Presbytery expects most of its work of examination, consideration, and business to be performed by its committees, then reported in summary form to the Presbytery as a whole. Required actions of the Presbytery as a whole are to be presented as motions from our committees during the meeting of Presbytery. The Presbytery calls each of its

Committees to due diligence so that its work is trustworthy and complete thereby avoiding the necessity of redoing its work during the Presbytery meeting. These committees should consist of no less than four presbyters with at least one RE or one TE with a quorum of three.

b. Committee chairmen are appointed by the Moderator to lead their Committees in a way that is faithful to its responsibility and to the trust given to the Committees by the Presbytery.

## 6. Presbytery Officers

a. The Moderator is elected to serve for one year. Besides fulfilling the duties of BCO 10-3, he oversees the preparation of the docket and appoints chairmen and members for Committees. The Moderator shall also be responsible to ensure that the execution of the docket and the ethos of the meetings is according to the vision of Presbytery. If the Moderator is unable to fulfill his duties, the previous moderator will serve in his place, until a new Moderator is elected by the Presbytery. If the previous Moderator is not available to serve, the Stated Clerk will preside in the election of a new Moderator. If the Stated Clerk is not available to serve, the Treasurer will preside.

b. The Stated Clerk serves for three years. In addition to the duties prescribed in BCO 10-4, he handles all matters of correspondence within the presbytery. The Stated Clerk may enlist others to help him in his work. For his labors, the Stated Clerk shall receive a stipend of \$500 per year , or as otherwise approved in the Presbytery's annual budget.

c. The Treasurer serves for three years. He will keep an accurate record of the Presbytery's finances, work with the Administration Committee to develop annual budgets which must be approved by the Presbytery at large, and disburse funds per the approved budget or as specifically directed by the Administration Committee.

## 7. Finances

a. We long to see Christ exalted and unbelievers reconciled to God, therefore the bulk of Presbytery's financial assets will be used to support the work of the Missions Committee. The assets will also be used to support needful travel, lodging, hosting, and administration costs attendant with the function and good order of the presbytery.

b. God has been extravagantly generous to us in the gospel, not sparing his own Son but giving him up for us all. Through his poverty, we have become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). God has also been generous to us financially, abundantly blessing us in a fruitful land. Because of the riches of God's grace toward us, we will urge each church to give generously according to its means (2 Cor. 8:2-3) toward the work of Presbytery.

c. We are a connectional body, with each part contributing to the work of the whole. We suggest that every church consider contributing a percentage of its previous calendar year's general operating receipts to the general budget.

d. In addition, to further support church planting in our region, we encourage each church to partner with the Presbytery in its joint cooperation agreement with the Southwest Church Planting Network including the financial responsibility inherent in these labors.

8. The Standing Rules may be suspended or amended by an affirmative vote of 51% of the members present and voting.

## II. Standing Committees

A. Administrative Committee: This committee is composed of the officers of Presbytery (Moderator, Stated Clerk, and Treasurer), as well as men who have volunteered to serve, and is chaired by the moderator. This Committee is responsible for all administrative matters, as well as matters that do not ordinarily come under the charter of the other Committees. These matters include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Planning for Presbytery: Prepare and distribute the docket and consolidate the input of other Committees. Coordinate locations, times, and schedule for Presbytery meetings. Ensure that information needed by presbyters for God-honoring decision making is prepared and distributed in advance of the meeting.

2. Matters of Record

- a. Record and maintain the minutes of Presbytery meetings.
- b. Maintain committee rosters for Presbytery's standing Committees.
- c. Maintain the roll of Presbytery members and churches.
- d. Maintain the Presbytery's website and e-mail systems.
- e. Appoint and nominate men to General Assembly positions and prepare the necessary paperwork.
- f. Oversee annual review of the Session minutes of the Presbytery's churches.
- g. Prepare and issue the annual Presbytery Directory.

3. PCA/GA Correspondence: Review and recommend responses to correspondence from higher courts, such as proposed BCO amendments, communication from the Review of Presbytery Records and annual statistical report, etc.

4. Fraternal Relations: Encourage, invite and send representatives to recognized Churches with fraternal relations to the PCA.

B. Ordination Committees: This committee is delegated with the responsibility of dealing with all pastoral dismissals, resignations, transfers, calls, and all issues relevant to the training, examining, and processing calls for candidates, licentiates, and ministers as explained in BCO Chapters 18-20.

1. The committee will develop clear processes for assessment of candidates and will report these processes to the Presbytery for approval.

2. The committee will make every effort to ensure that candidates are thoroughly examined in matters of faith and life as well as in doctrine (1 Tim 4:16). This includes things such as speaking to Sessions, candidates' wives, references, background checks, etc.

3. The committee will make every effort to complete as much of this examination as possible prior to the Presbytery meeting at which he will be presented. The committee will present a written summary of their work in an electronically distributed form at least fourteen (14) days

prior to the Presbytery meeting. All supporting materials such as a candidate's graded written exams, theological papers, stated differences from our standards, etc., are to be distributed as well at least fourteen (14) days prior to the Presbytery meeting.

4. The Ordination Committee will present a summary of its evaluation indicating the candidates strengths and weaknesses, and their recommendation to Presbytery.

5. The Committee will require and review annual reports from all candidates and present the summaries of these reports at the April stated meeting of the Presbytery as required by BCO 18-6.

C. Shepherding Committee: This committee is responsible for the pastoral care of the Presbytery (BCO 13.9 ) This includes awareness of the spiritual health of local churches and ministers (except judicial matters, which must be addressed by a specially formed commission). However, the activities of the Shepherding Committees must also carefully preserve the Session's jurisdiction and integrity (BCO 11-3 and 11-4).

1. The Committee will serve all ministers by establishing and encouraging local/regional supportive relationships among the pastors. It will provide resources for external counseling to churches and pastors as requested by either the pastor, church session, or the congregation.

2. The Committee will provide care for all ministers without a call and those laboring out of bounds. The committee will require annual reports each January meeting from these ministers and make summary reports to the Presbytery as a whole.

3. The Committee will encourage connectionalism among our churches by receiving prayer requests from churches and pastors and disseminating them as desired by those making the request.

4. The Committee will encourage each church in the Presbytery to make a presentation at a Presbytery meeting approximately every 3 years to describe their church, their goals, the needs, and the blessings received, the challenges faced and their needs before the brothers for an extended season of prayer and encouragement.

D. Mission Committee: This committee is responsible for proposing, defining, implementing, and overseeing the Presbytery's work to make Christ known both within and outside our bounds. The Committee will recommend to the Presbytery, mission goals and priorities, including the allocation of its resources to maximize effectiveness in carrying out the Mission Mandate. The Committees's activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Church Planting Mission: The Missions Committee will develop plans and recommend implementation of new Church plants to the Presbytery. It will train, pray, and fund church plants along with our partner the Southwest Church Planting Network, which is a joint subcommittee of the participating MNA and Missions Committees of PCA Presbyteries in the Rio Grande, Arizona and Texas regions.

2. Home Missions: The Missions Committee will encourage the implementation of ministries of mercy, diaconal outreach to the poor and needy, widow and fatherless, stranger and indigenous people of our area.

3. Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) Chapters: The Committee will recommend new RUF chapters to the Presbytery and develop detailed plans for their implementation. It will train, pray and support the campus ministers, oversee and direct RUF chapters as a partner with the RUM Committee of PCA.

4. International Mission Works: The Mission Committee will recommend short term missions and member church missionaries to the regions beyond our bounds to the Presbytery. It will plan and implement conferences for prayer and support of these outreaches.

5. The Renewal of Missions: This Committee will coach pastors and churches, missionaries and evangelists in the purpose of the Church mission in our setting and the strengthening of all our missions through retreats and conferences.