

THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

PART II

BOOK OF ORDER
2004–2005

PUBLISHED BY
THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Printed in the United States of America

Additional copies available at \$7.50 from Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS),
100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396, by calling 1-800-524-2612 (PDS).

Please specify PDS order #OGA-04-001—Standard Version
#OGA-04-010—Large Print

CHAPTER V

G-5.0000

THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS

G-5.0100

1. The Meaning of Membership

G-5.0101
Membership
Through Faith

a. The incarnation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives to the church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership. One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life. Baptism and a public profession of faith in Jesus as Lord are the visible signs of entrance into the active membership of the church.

Into Active
Membership

b. Persons may enter into active church membership in the following ways: by profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or transfer of certificate from some other church.

Baptized
Previously

c. When persons baptized as infants reach an age when they are ready to make public their profession of faith and accept their responsibility in the life of the church, the session should invite, encourage, and help them prepare for their responsibility as active church members. The age at which young persons should make such public profession is not precisely fixed. It is left to the prudence of the session to judge, after careful examination, the readiness of those who apply for active membership.

Not Baptized
Previously

d. When persons who have not been baptized desire to profess their faith in Christ and be incorporated in the life of the church as believers, they shall do so by making public their profession of faith and receiving baptism after appropriate instruction and examination by the session.

Certificate of
Transfer

e. Persons who have made a profession of faith and have been received into membership in a particular church may be received by the session upon receipt of a certificate of transfer from the church in which they have been most recently a member.

Reaffirmation of
Faith

f. It is sometimes the case that persons who previously made a profession of faith and became active members in a particular church are unable to secure a certificate of transfer or other evidence of church membership. After instruction and examination by the session, these persons shall reaffirm publicly their profession of faith and their acceptance of responsibility in the life of the church.

G-5.0102
Membership as
Ministry

A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church. Such involvement includes

a. proclaiming the good news,

- b. taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church,
- c. praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church,
- d. supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- e. participating in the governing responsibilities of the church,
- f. demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- g. responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- h. living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- i. working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.

G-5.0103
Inclusiveness

The congregation shall welcome all persons who respond in trust and obedience to God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the membership and ministry of his Church. No persons shall be denied membership because of race, ethnic origin, worldly condition, or any other reason not related to profession of faith. Each member must seek the grace of openness in extending the fellowship of Christ to all persons. (G-9.0104) Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the gospel.

G-5.0200

2. Categories of Membership

The membership of a particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) includes baptized members, active members, inactive members, and affiliate members.

G-5.0201
Baptized Member

A baptized member of a particular church is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members are entitled to the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and to participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

G-5.0202
Active Member

An active member of a particular church is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. An active member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church, including the right to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to present children for baptism, to take part in meetings of the congregation, and to vote

and hold office. Other conditions of active membership that meet the needs of the particular church and are consistent with the order and confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may be adopted by the session after careful study and discussion with the congregation.

G-5.0203
Inactive Member

An inactive member of a particular church is one who does not participate in the church's work and worship. An inactive member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of an active member except the right to speak in the meetings of the congregation and to vote and hold office.

G-5.0204
Affiliate Member

An affiliate member of a particular church is an active member of another church of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the church of active membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate governing body of that church, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of an active member except the right to vote and hold office.

G-5.0300

3. Nonmember Privileges

G-5.0301
Nonmember
Privileges

Persons not members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are entitled to the following privileges:

- a. All persons are welcome to participate in the life and worship of this church.
- b. All baptized persons, whether children or adults, even though they have made no profession of their faith in Christ, are entitled to participation in the Lord's Supper, to pastoral care and instruction of the church.
- c. Confessing members of other Christian churches may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and may present children for baptism.

G-5.0400

4. Preparation for Membership

G-5.0401
Session's Duty

The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become members of the congregation.

G-5.0402
Profession by
Children

a. While the preparation is a part of the continuing nurture of the congregation, particular care shall be taken to prepare children of members for public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Instruction shall be given in the meaning of this profession, the responsibilities of membership, and the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Profession by
Adults

b. Similar instruction shall be given to others who make a profession of faith. The session shall determine whether this instruction shall be given before or after the public profession.

G-5.0403
Reaffirmation,
Transfer

Appropriate instruction shall be offered to those who unite with a particular congregation by reaffirmation of faith or by transfer of certificate of church membership.

G-5.0500

5. Review of Membership

G-5.0501
By the Member

Accepting the privilege and responsibility of membership in the church is a commitment to Jesus Christ that binds the individual to fulfillment of the obligations of membership. Members shall, when encouraged by the session, regularly review and evaluate the integrity with which they are involved in the ministry of the church and consider ways in which their participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

G-5.0502
By the Session

The session shall review the roll of members at least annually, and shall counsel with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership.