

Polk Presbyterian Church
By-Laws 2022
(File with the Presbytery as per G-1.0201)

Explanation of Markings:

In order to differentiate between various church documents, the abbreviation (PB) will be used to distinguish each of the statements in this document as a statement from the Polk By-Laws.

Each Chapter will appear in **bold** and will be listed as **PB-#**. Within each chapter distinction, each statement will be appear underlined and will be listed after the decimal point as PB-#.##.

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PB-1 Statement of Purpose and Mission:

PB-1.01—General Mission:

The Congregation of Polk Presbyterian Church in Polk, Pennsylvania has been called by God and organized to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, to minister to the needs of members of the Congregation and residents of the community, and to promote peace and justice in the world. (F-1.01)¹

PB-1.02—Standing Mission:

To carry out that divine calling of mission, Polk Presbyterian Church has adopted the mission statement to be continuously, “Striving to know Christ more deeply ourselves and working to make Him known to others.” (F-1.0205)

PB-2 Relation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

PB-2.01—Affiliation with a Presbytery:

The Polk Presbyterian Church, as a local congregation, has voluntarily entered into communion with the Presbytery of Lake Erie—to which it sends commissioners. (G-1.02)

PB-2.02—Association with a Synod:

Overseeing the actions of the Presbytery of Lake Erie is the next highest council of the church—the Synod of the Trinity. Polk Presbyterian Church may send delegates, through the Presbytery of Lake Erie, to the Synod. (G-1.0103)

PB-2.03—Organization of the General Assembly:

The Synod of the Trinity is one of the 16 Synods organized under the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-3.0302)

PB-3 Fundamentals of Governance:

PB-3.01—Governing Documents:

This church shall be governed directly by the revealed Word of God through the Holy Scriptures, in accordance with Book of Confessions (BOC): Part 1 of Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as outlined by the Book of Order (BOO): Part 2 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). Consistent with that Constitution, these By-Laws shall provide specific guidance for this church. Policy Guidelines and other strategic statements shall be drafted in accordance with the requirements of these By-Laws. Roberts Rules of Order may be used as the mechanism for parliamentary guidance. (G-1.0401)

¹ All parenthetical citations follow the citations found in: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Part II, *The [Book of Order, 2019-2021](#)*

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PB-3.02—Governing Structures:

In order to maintain proper ecclesiastical polity—in harmony with the reformed tradition—and to ensure that all the diverse forms of missions are sufficiently carried out, this church will be governed at the local level by the members of the congregation. These members will be either ordained or commissioned to service in diverse church offices and organized into separate and distinct governing bodies. (G-2.01)

Church offices shall consist of: Elders, Deacons, Secretary/Clerk, Trustees, and Financial Secretary/Treasurer. (G-2.0104)

Governing Bodies shall consist of: The Board of Session (hereafter referred to as “the Session”), The Board of Deacons (hereafter referred to as “the Deaconate”), and the Board of Trustees (hereafter referred to as “the Trustees”). (G-3.0109)

Standing Committees and Special Commissions should be utilized to assist the church officers and the governing bodies in the cooperative oversight of church governance. (G-3.0109)

PB-4 Church Offices:

PB-4.01—Teaching Elders:

Teaching Elders shall maintain their membership in the Presbytery as outlined in the BOO. When a Teaching Elder is called to serve this congregation, they shall fill the role of the Pastor of the Congregation as well as the Moderator of ecclesiastical meetings. (G-2.05)

PB-4.02—Ruling Elders:

Ruling Elders are called to ordained service following their election by the congregation. These Elders shall be responsible for the emotional and spiritual needs of the congregation. Elders shall consistently pray over the souls of the individuals in the congregation as well as for the collective soul of the congregation. Elders shall act with spiritual discernment in their decision making process. There is no age requirement for Elders; one must simply be an active member of the congregation in order to be ordained. (G-2.03)

PB-4.03—Deacons:

Deacons are similarly called to ordained service following their election by the congregation. Deacons shall be responsible for the physical and emotional needs of the members of the congregation. Deacons should seek out the needs of the congregants in their care, address these needs personally when possible, and share these needs appropriately with the other officers of the church as needed. There is no age requirement for Deacons; one must simply be an active member of the congregation in order to be ordained. (G-2.0201)

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PB-4.04—The Secretary/Clerk:

The Clerk is an ordained Ruling Elder who is commissioned to serve as the secretary at all stated and special meetings of the church. The Clerk shall be responsible for recording, maintaining, and submitting all minutes from meetings of the church. (G-3.0104)

PB-4.05—The Trustees:

Trustees are officials of the church that are commissioned through their election by the congregation to represent the church's corporate affairs in dealing with civil authorities. While Deacons are responsible for the physical needs of the congregation, the Trustees are responsible for matters consisting of—but not limited to—buildings and grounds investments and maintenance, financial holdings, communications with civil authorities, and internal audits. It is not necessary for Trustees to serve in ordained office to be elected as a Trustee. (G-4.0101)

PB-4.06—The Financial Secretary/Treasurer:

The Treasurer is the Financial Secretary elected to serve by a vote of the Session. The Treasurer is responsible for carrying out the financial transactions of the church as directed by the Session. The Session can delegate the supervision of these responsibilities to the Deaconate or to the Trustees based on the type of financial transactions that are being recorded. (G-3.0205)

PB-5 Governing Bodies:

PB-5.01—The Board of Session/"The Session": (G-3.0201)

- A. **Election:** The Congregation shall elect 6 Elders—divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term.
- B. **Term Limits:** No Elder shall serve for more than 2 consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. An Elder having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the Session for a period of at least one year.
- C. **Ordination Status:** Once an individual is ordained as an Elder, their service status may change but they will always remain an Elder of the Church.
- D. **Limitations:** Spouses should not serve terms on Session simultaneously.

PB-5.02—The Board of Deacons/"The Deaconate": (G-2.0201)

- A. **Election:** The Congregation shall elect 3 Deacons—divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term.
- B. **Term Limits:** No Deacon shall serve for more than 2 consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A Deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the Board of Deacons for a period of at least one year.

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- C. Ordination Status: Once an individual is ordained as a Deacon, their service status may change but they will always remain a Deacon of the Church.
- D. Assumption of Responsibilities: In the instance where electing 3 Deacons separate from the 6 Elders is impractical, the Ruling Elders serving on the Session shall be required to assume the responsibilities of the Board of Deacons.
- E. Reporting to the Session: In instances where the Board of Deacons is separate from the Elders serving on Session, the Board of Deacons shall submit a report to the members of the Session. The Board of Deacons will not be required to attend Session meetings unless the Session specifically requests their attendance.

PB-5.03—The Board of Trustees:

The Board of Trustees shall be comprised of 4 individuals, who are active members of the congregation over the age of 18, who have been elected by the corporation to serve a one year term. There shall be no term limits established for these elected Trustees upon the condition of annual reelection. While serving on the Board of Trustees, a Trustee may simultaneously serve as an Elder on the Board of Session. (G-4.0101)

PB-6 Incorporation

PB-6.01—Need for Incorporation:

In accordance with the laws of the state of Pennsylvania, the congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed. This process provides a mechanism for the church to interact with the Civil Authorities (G-4.01).

PB-6.02—Leadership of the Corporation:

Establishing a Corporation and oversight of corporate dealings shall be under the supervision of the Board of Trustees. (G.4.0102)

PB-6.03—Conducting Corporate Business:

Consistent with the laws of this state, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same Meeting of the Congregation but it is up to the Moderator to determine the permissible agendas for these meetings. (G-1.0503)

PB-7 Meetings of the Church:

PB-7.01—Significance of Meetings:

In the spirit of the Reformed tradition, meetings of the church provide for: the diversity in spiritual gifts, increased input, more complete participation, and unity of spiritual discernment. As such, all meetings of the church—both casual and formal—shall be opened and closed in prayer. (G-1.05)

PB-7.02—Monthly Meetings of the Board of Session:

There shall be monthly meetings of the Board of Session. These meetings shall be called and scheduled by the Session and should occur no less than once per month. It

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is permissible for the Session to cancel/reschedule these monthly meetings—with appropriate notice—in the occurrence of extenuating circumstances. (G-3.0203)

PB-7.03—Special Meetings of the Board of Session:

Special Meetings of the Session may be called by any member of the Session in coordination with the moderator. Such calls shall clearly state the purpose of such Special Meetings, and business shall be restricted to that which is specified in the call. (G-3.0203)

PB-7.04—Annual Congregational Meeting (October):

There shall be an Annual Meeting of the Congregation on the 2nd Sunday of October at which at least the following business shall be presented: candidates to be elected to be ordained and/or installed as Elders and Deacons for the following year and candidates to be elected to serve on the established Standing Congregational Committees. (G-1.05)

Following the selections made at this meeting regarding Elders and Standing Committees, the Elders on Session shall formally reorganize themselves as necessary to carry out their work. It is the responsibility of the Elders to be accountable for all other officers, committees, and boards within the congregation. (G-1.05)

PB-7.05—Annual Corporation Meeting (October):

There shall be an Annual Meeting of the Corporation on the 2nd Sunday of October, in coordination with the Annual Congregational Meeting, at which at least the following business shall be presented: candidates to be elected to serve on the Board of Trustees and a candidate to be elected as Treasurer. (G-1.05)

PB-7.06—Annual Congregational Meeting (January):

There shall be an Annual Meeting of the Congregation on the 2nd Sunday in January, at which at least the following business shall be presented: annual reports from committees/individual entities/and the session (information only), financial reports for the preceding year, budget for the current year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s), and the Nominating Committee report for church officers (G-1.05).

At the first Session Meeting following this Congregational Meeting, the Session shall officially convene with the new class of Elders, the new Clerk, and the new Treasurer. At that same meeting of the Session, the updated committee assignments will take effect. (G-1.05)

PB-7.07—Annual Corporation Meeting (January):

There shall be an Annual Meeting of the Corporation on the 2nd Sunday in January, in coordination with the Annual Congregational Meeting, at which at least the following

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business shall be presented: annual report from the Trustees followed by time for discussion and questions from members of the corporation. (G-1.05)

At this meeting, the Corporation will officially elect the Treasurer chosen by the Session to serve as the Treasurer for all corporate matters. The treasurer will coordinate with the Session regarding all account information and expenditures. The Trustees will ensure that there are official and unofficial audits of the reports of the Treasurer. (G-1.05)

PB-7.08—Additional Congregational/Corporation Meetings:

In addition to the Annual Meetings, additional Congregational and Corporation Meetings can be called when it is necessary to address urgent business. Additional Congregational Meetings may be called by the Board or Session; additional Corporation Meetings may be called by the Board of Trustees. Both calls require coordination with an appropriate Moderator. The Congregation may petition these Boards to hold these meetings, but individual members of the congregation/corporation can not call for a meeting apart from the actions of the Board of Sessions or the Board of Trustees. (G-1.0501)

PB-7.09—Informal Meetings:

Committees of the church, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Deacons should maintain the practice of holding meetings to discuss issues and form policies. These meetings may be set at the discretion of these bodies. (G-1.05)

PB-8 Notice of Meetings:

PB-8.01—Requirements:

Adequate public notice of all Congregational Meetings, Corporation Meetings, and Session Meetings shall be given, including notice given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting; the minimum notification specified shall be no fewer than 14 days. (G-1.0502)

PB-8.02—Exceptions from Advanced Notice:

Special Meetings of the Board of Sessions do not require the 14 day period for advanced notice and may be called directly before a meeting is held.

All meetings of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Deacons, and all committee meetings are held at the discretion of those specific bodies and may be held without advanced notice. (G-1.0502)

PB-9 Minutes of Meetings:

PB-9.01—Documenting Minutes:

Meetings of committees, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, and all other informal meetings should be kept in a manner of that bodies choosing and should be relayed to the Session as appropriate.

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An official recording of the minutes shall be required for each Session, Congregational, and Corporation Meetings. These minutes shall include: notations of attendance, time of opening/closing, all measures that required a vote, and all other items that the Clerk is instructed to include. (G-1.0505)

PB-9.02—Submission of Minutes:

The minutes of the all meetings recorded by the Secretary shall be signed by the Secretary as well as the Moderator, recorded in the Minute Book of the Session and be electronically preserved in through the appropriate forum. (G-3.0107)

PB-10 Moderators:

PB-10.01—Moderators of Ecclesiastical Meetings:

The Pastor shall moderate at all Session and Congregational Meetings. If there are co-pastors, they shall alternately preside at meetings. When the church is without a Pastor, the Moderator appointed by the presbytery shall preside. (G-3.0104)

PB-10.02—Substitutions for Moderators:

If it is impractical for the Pastor, or the Moderator of the Session appointed by the presbytery to preside, the Pastor shall invite—with the concurrence of the Session—another minister of the presbytery to preside. When this is not expedient, and when both the Pastor or the Moderator concur, a member of the Session may be invited to preside. (G-1.0504)

PB-10.03—Moderators of Corporation Meetings:

Because the Pastor is not an active member of the Corporation, a current Ruling Elder serving on Session or a current member of the Board of Trustees shall moderate all Corporation Meetings. (G-1.05)

PB-11 Secretary/Clerk:

PB-11.01—Selection of a Clerk:

The Congregation, at its annual meeting, shall elect an Elder to serve as Clerk of Sessions. If this individual is not yet an Elder, he/she must be ordained as an Elder prior to serving as Clerk. (G-3.0104)

While it is recommended that the Clerk should serve in addition to the 6 Elders on Session, it is permissible for one of the Ruling Elders serving on Session to simultaneously serve as Clerk. (G-2.0404)

PB-11.02—Service of the Clerk:

The Clerk of Session shall serve as secretary at all Session, Congregation, and Corporation meetings. If the Clerk is not present or is unable to serve, the body present for the meeting shall elect a secretary who will serve at that meeting as the Clerk of Session Pro Tempore. (G-3.0104)

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PB-12 Quorums for Meetings:

PB-12.01—Requiring a Quorum:

At all meetings, the Secretary shall determine that a quorum is present prior to the meeting being opened. The appropriate distinction for a quorum will be specified based upon which type of meeting is being held. (G-1.0501)

PB-12.02—Quorum of Session Meetings:

The quorum of a Meeting of the Session shall be the Moderator, the Secretary, and no less than 50% of the Elders serving on session. If a Session member is serving as Secretary, that individual is included in the tally of Session members for satisfying the quorum requirements. These meetings are open to all members and guests who may be permitted to speak at the discretion of the Moderator. All Elders currently serving on session are entitled to vote, but voting is limited to these Elders. (G-1.0501)

PB-12.03—Quorum of Congregational Meetings:

The quorum of a Meeting of the Congregation shall be the Moderator, the Secretary and the Polk Presbyterian Church members, but under no circumstances shall it be fewer than 50% of the active members of the congregation. These meetings are open to all members and guests who may be permitted to speak at the discretion of the Moderator. All active members are entitled to vote at these Annual and/or Special Congregational Meetings. (G-1.0501)

PB-12.04—Quorum of Corporation Meetings:

At Meetings of the Corporation, consistent with the laws of the state of Pennsylvania, a quorum shall be 50% of active members on corporate matters. These meetings are open to all members and guests who may be permitted to speak at the discretion of the Moderator. Consistent with the laws of the state of Pennsylvania, voting at corporation meetings is restricted to active members age 18 or above. Voting by proxy is not allowed. (G-1.0501)

PB-13 Standing Committees:

PB-13.01—Formation of Standing Committees:

The Congregation should be organized by committees to further the function and ministry of the church. These committees shall be comprised of 2 Session members and 2 active members of the congregation at large. Each Session member shall serve on 2 committees. (G-3.0103)

PB-13.02—Reports of Committees:

All committees and boards of the church operate under the authority of the Session. As such, each subordinate body shall make either formal or informal reports of their work to the Session to be presented at Monthly Session Meetings. The Session should review minutes of all boards and committees at least annually.

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In instances where the responsibilities of the Deacons has been assumed by the members of Session, the Session will appropriately report on these matters as a part of the Standing Congregational Committees. (G-3.0204)

PB-13.03—Responsibility of Committees:

Each Standing Committee shall be responsible for annually producing and/or editing: a Committee Calendar, Committee Guidelines, and policies pertaining to their work. (G-3.0106)

PB-13.04—Description of Standing Committees: (G-3.0109)

The Standing Committees shall be formed in the following manner:

- A. Christian Education: Accountable for the creation, development, organization, funding, oversight, and continuance of all forms of Christian Education and spiritual development. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Sunday School, Children’s Church, VBS, Kids Club, Leadership Trainings, Catechisms, Officer Trainings, etc.
- B. Internal Missions: Accountable for the mission work designed for the physical, emotional, and spiritual benefit of those within the congregation. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Coordinate with the Board of Deacons as well as arrange Fellowship Outings, Fellowship meals, Family Programs, Congregant Visitations, Assistance Requests, Fellowship Hall usage, Weddings/Memorials, encouraging membership, review of membership rolls, etc.
- C. External Missions: Accountable for the mission work that is done in the community at the local, national, and global levels: Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Discerning which organizations to coordinate with, promoting awareness of organizations, fundraising campaigns, organizing volunteers, evaluating the effectiveness of mission work, stressing evangelism, etc.
- D. Administration: Accountable for the functional operation of the congregation and the corporation. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Coordinating with the Trustees, oversight of personnel, supervising building/grounds projects, maintaining appropriate licensures, oversight into office related purchase requests, inform the Session of various correspondences, serve as the core of the Nominating Committee, etc.
- E. Worship: Accountable for maintaining Bible-based instruction in harmony with the Reformed tradition. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Coordinating with the Pastor(s) to establish the annual liturgical calendar, schedule special services (baptisms, communion, reaffirmations, etc.), selection of pew Bibles and Hymnals, obtaining appropriate worship implements, providing worship materials, coordinating the aesthetics/decoration of the sanctuary, encouraging worship participation, reviewing the effectiveness of the Ordo and the Liturgies, establishing/adjusting the atmosphere of worship offered, provide for access of worship, etc.
- F. Special Focus: Accountable for the creation of and adherence to an annual vision focus derived from the congregation’s mission statement. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Creating an annual statement, promoting this

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annual focus, suggesting trainings/missions/activities/programs that correspond to this vision, evaluate the effective adherence to the annual vision focus, etc.

PB-14 Nominating Committee:

PB-14.01—Purpose of the Nominating Committee:

For the purpose of electing Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and members for Standing Committees as well as in the need of a Pastoral Search Committee, the congregation shall form an annual Nominating Committee. (G-2.0401)

PB-14.02—Election to the Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee shall be elected at an appropriately regulated Congregational Meeting. (G-3.0111)

PB-14.03—Composition of the Nominating Committee:

There shall be no fewer than 4 active members on the nominating committee—consisting of the 2 Session members and 2 congregation members at large serving on the Administration Committee.

Additional members may be added to the nominating committee. But there should be an equal number of Session members and congregation members at large.

The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote. (G-2.0401)

PB-14.04—Outside Nominations:

Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the Congregational Meeting by any active member of the congregation. (G-2.0401)

PB-15 Vacancies:

PB-15.01—Filling Vacancies:

Vacancies on the Session, the Board of Deacons, or the Board of Trustees may be filled at a Special Meeting of the Congregation or at the Annual Meeting, as the Session may determine. (G-2.0404)

PB-15.02—Term Limits:

When vacancies are filled, the individual continuing a term remains part of that year's class. The act of filling vacancies must adhere to the term limits previously established for that specific office. (G-2.0404)

PB-16 Amendments:

PB-16.01—Requirements for Amendments:

These bylaws may be amended subject to the Articles of Incorporation, the laws of the state of Pennsylvania and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by a two-thirds vote of the voters present, providing that the proposed changes—in printed

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form—shall have been distributed at the same time as the call of the meeting at which the changes are voted upon. (G-6.01)

PB-16.02—Process for Amendments: (G-6.01)

Any amendments to by-laws shall be presented at the Congregational meeting as individual actions. In presenting a proposed amendment, the congregation should have access to the original language as well as the language being proposed as an amendment. Amendments can be proposed in the following way:

- A. Striking Out: Any wording or phrase that is deemed undesired, repetitive, or confusing may be stricken from the by-laws by simply removing that section without the alteration of any other words or phrases remaining in the by-laws.
- B. Adding: In any instance where additional language is needed to address an issue or topic, language may be added to a previous section or may be included in a new section providing that the new language does not contradict anything previously recorded in the by-laws.
- C. Revising: Any language that is insufficient in its present form may be revised by: striking out, adding, and or altering the existing language simultaneously. Any revised language being proposed as an amendment should not contradict anything remaining elsewhere in the by-laws.

PB-16.03—Replacing By-Laws:

In the case that these by-laws are deemed null and void by a unanimous vote of a Congregational Meeting with an established quorum of active members, new by-laws can be drafted and approved by a subsequent unanimous vote of the Congregation with an established quorum of active members. (G-6.01)