

Presbytery of Nevada Handbook for New Commissioners and Committee Moderators



Presbytery of Nevada
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Presbytery of Nevada Commissioners Handbook

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A WARM WELCOME FROM THE STATED CLERK

It is my extreme pleasure to welcome you to the Presbytery of Nevada!

You are becoming a member of a unique Presbytery. We are made up of 22 churches and three (3) New Church Developments (NCDs), the most in the PC(USA). These NCDs are a targeted effort by our commitment to mission outreach to minister to the multi-cultural demographics of Southern Nevada.

We were incorporated on July 13, 1909 but have churches that have been in existence since 1861. Our Presbytery covers an extremely large geographical area which includes all of the State of Nevada (109,781.18 square miles) and the Eastern edge of California which includes four churches; Lake Tahoe Community Church; Lee Vining Presbyterian which is a small but thriving church near Yosemite; Truckee Lutheran/Presbyterian Church; and Valley Presbyterian Church located on the lands of the Sovereign Tribal Nation, the Paiute Tribe, near Bishop, CA. We are desert people and the frontier independence is in our DNA. We represent cowboy, tribal, urban and mining people and bring our unique perspectives to the Presbytery. The beauty of the Presbytery of Nevada is that however we may disagree, we always aspire to return to Unity recognizing we are all God's children made in His image and blessed by His love.

We have a long history in Nevada and are very pleased you will now become a part of contributing to that history. Being an Elder Commissioner is a unique position laden with responsibilities. You have a responsibility to stay informed and always yield to the voice of the Holy Spirit. You are in a position to affect the future of the congregations in our Presbytery and the direction the national organization will take. I hope you will not take this responsibility lightly.

We believe this handbook will assist you in becoming familiar with our wonderful and unique (and yes, sometimes quirky) Presbytery. We are proud of our Christian and cultural heritage and wholeheartedly agree with one of our many mottos, "**We Love This Place.**"

We appreciate the commitment you have made to serve our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In His Loving Service, *Joan Jeffers*

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

A WORD FROM THE PRESBYTERY PASTOR

As the Presbyterian Church (USA) continues to explore new ways of fulfilling its mission in a changing context, a number of presbyteries are seeking alternatives to the traditional role of Executive Presbyter. After a period of study and reflection, the leadership of the Presbytery of Nevada determined that what would best serve our pastors and congregations would be a “pastor to pastors” or Presbytery Pastor. With strong committee leadership, a capable Stated Clerk and a skilled Director of Finance, what remained unaddressed was the pastoral care for pastors – both active and honorably retired - across our large presbytery.

Therefore, on November 1, 2015 the Presbytery of Nevada inaugurated a new position called Presbytery Pastor, a part-time position designed to serve the pastors and congregations of our Presbytery by providing support, nurture, prayer and encouragement while building trust, bettering communication and establishing caring relationships.

It is my pleasure to serve as the first Presbytery Pastor for the Presbytery of Nevada. The Personnel Committee has made it clear that this is not an Executive position; rather a pastoral one. The Stated Clerk and Committee on Ministry will continue to be available for ecclesiastical and polity issues. My role is to provide emotional and spiritual support, to nurture and pray for our pastors and congregations, to provide pastoral care and encouragement – especially in times of crisis, transition, discernment or loss. In addition, I hope to enhance communication between pastors and congregations by sharing ideas and bringing people together.

I look forward to serving the members of the Presbytery of Nevada, as together we serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Yours in Christian love,

Rev. Hilda Pecoraro

Welcome to the Presbytery of Nevada (aka Nevada Presbytery)

The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize you with the basic operation of the Presbytery and its committees, as well as explain how Presbytery interacts with Synods and the General Assembly. Your first experience of Presbytery may seem daunting, but you will become increasingly familiar and comfortable as you attend and participate. Everyone is friendly and ready to help!

We are delighted that God has called you to participate in the ministry and fellowship of Nevada Presbytery! We believe you will be a blessing to your sisters and brothers in Christ in our Presbytery and we trust God will bless you as well.

Visit the website: www.nevadaPresbytery.org.

OFFICERS of PRESBYTERY

The officers of Presbytery are volunteers and include the following: the Moderator who conducts the meetings; the Vice-moderator who may take over for the Moderator at any time and becomes Moderator the following year; and the Moderator of Council who is the immediate Past Moderator of Presbytery. Each is elected to serve three years concurrently, one year in each position.

The chief ecclesiastical officer is the Stated Clerk, currently Joan Jeffers, who manages the office, prepares materials for meetings, and arranges details as needed. The Stated Clerk serves for a three-year renewable term.

The Director of Finance, currently Vern Manke, oversees the finances of the Presbytery. He produces budgets and reports as well as manages the Presbytery's accounts and all other financial matters.

MEETINGS of PRESBYTERY

The Presbytery meets twice a year: once in the spring (usually in the Las Vegas area), and once in the fall (usually in the Reno area). Officers are elected and installed each year at the September meeting from a slate prepared by the Nominating Committee and from the floor of Presbytery. Moderators of committees are also elected and installed at the September meeting after which they begin their respective duties.

Committees who meet prior to Presbytery meetings do most of the work of the Presbytery. Committees typically meet on Mondays and sometimes Tuesday mornings.

The semi-annual Presbytery meeting begins on a Tuesday at noon with lunch provided by the host church. The business meeting is convened at 1:00 p.m. and concludes for the day at 5:00 p.m. Dinner is served around 6:00 p.m. Dinner is followed by a worship service and communion. Then a Moderator's Reception is hosted as a way of encouraging members to meet and become acquainted with one another. The meeting resumes on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. and concludes at noon when an optional lunch is offered.

EXPLANATION of EXPENSES

The Presbytery pays for travel and lodging expenses (with some restrictions). Receipts must be attached to a voucher form provided by the Presbytery. It is typical for the Commissioners' church to pay for meals provided by the host church. (You may indicate which meals you would like on your registration form). Meals during committee meetings are covered by the committee's budget.

Call or email the host church or the Stated Clerk with any questions.

WHAT is a PRESBYTERY?

The PC (USA) is comprised of 172 Presbyteries encompassing more than 10,000 churches. Each PC (USA) congregation may select a certain number of Ruling Elders proportional to the size of the congregation who will serve as Commissioners to their respective Presbyteries. All active and retired Teaching Elders (formerly called ministers of Word and Sacrament) are members of Presbytery. The Presbytery of Nevada is comprised of church congregations and three (3) New Church Developments (NCD) in Nevada and the Eastern Sierras of California. Presbyteries must meet at least twice a year, but have the discretion to meet more often.

Only the Presbytery (not a congregation, session, Synod, or General Assembly) has the responsibility and authority to ordain church members to the ministry of Teaching Elder. It is the Presbytery that installs or removes Teaching Elders from congregations. A Teaching Elder is a Presbyterian minister by virtue of membership on a roll of a Presbytery. A pastor cannot be a member of the congregation he or she serves because his or her primary ecclesiastical accountability lies with the Presbytery. Members of the congregation generally call their own pastor with the assistance and support of the Presbytery. The Presbytery must approve the call and officially install the pastor at the congregation. Additionally, the Presbytery must approve if either the congregation or the pastor wishes to dissolve that pastoral relationship.

The Presbytery has authority over certain affairs of its local congregations. Only the Presbytery can approve the establishment, dissolution, or merger of congregations. The Presbytery also maintains a Permanent Judicial Commission, which acts as a court of appeals when called upon by church sessions, and which exercises original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases against minister members of the Presbytery.

Presbyteries have established two elected officers: a Moderator and a Stated Clerk. The Moderator of the Presbytery is elected annually and is either a minister member or an elder commissioner from one of the Presbytery's congregations. The Moderator presides at all Presbytery assemblies and is the chief overseer at the ordination and installation of ministers in that Presbytery. The Stated Clerk is the chief ecclesiastical officer and serves as the Presbytery's executive secretary and parliamentarian in accordance with the Book of Order and Robert's Rules of Order. While the Moderator of a Presbytery normally serves one year, the Stated Clerk serves three years and may be re-elected indefinitely by the Presbytery.

Committees

Committee on Ministry/Committee on Preparation for Ministry (COM/CPM)

This committee is a combination of two committees which merged into one on the recommendation of a committee reorganization task force. It is comprised of women and men Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders, from all areas of Nevada and parts of California, who provide a shepherding function for the Presbytery of Nevada.

One task is to meet with incoming Teaching Elders and make certain they meet the appropriate criteria for joining that Presbytery. COM/CPM also offers resources to local congregations: giving direction to Pastor Nominating Committees, facilitating communication between churches and pastors in times of conflict, and helping identify qualified transitional ministry leaders when pulpits are vacant.

Because some local church congregations are not able to support a full or part-time Teaching Elder, they are served by Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE). The Committee on Ministry facilitates the education of these leaders, and assists them in their role as lay pastors. The Committee on Ministry meets with each Commissioned Ruling Elder every two years. The Committee on Ministry also meets with Teaching Elders who are in validated ministries (not serving a local church, but doing God's work in another capacity). The Committee on Ministry affirms their ministry work and encourages their participation in Presbytery.

When someone is considering a call to become a Teaching Elder, we function as the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. We will shepherd them through the process until they either: 1. pursue the qualifications for ministry, receive a call and are ordained, or 2. decide to withdraw from the program.

Although the Presbytery of Nevada has not hired an Executive Presbyter, the new Presbytery Pastor, along with COM/CPM, provides shepherding care for churches and their staff.

Mission Outreach Committee

The Mission Outreach Committee of the Presbytery of Nevada oversees the resources dedicated to further the ministry of the Gospel in our local congregations and throughout the world. The committee is composed of nine members, each serving a three-year term. Each year three new members are elected and three members' terms expire. A second term is allowed with approval of the Nominating Committee.

Specifically, the Mission Outreach Committee of the Nevada Presbytery oversees the Presbytery's new church development (NCD) program and works to support ethnic fellowships within our communities. The Mission Outreach Committee also supports the work of mission groups within the Presbytery such as Amazing Grace ministry in Las Vegas, food banks in local congregations and other mission endeavors in Nevada and Eastern California. The Mission Outreach Committee works with the Presbytery of Nevada to develop mission priorities and policies that guide the Presbytery in its ongoing work.

Some of the specific tasks performed by the Mission Outreach Committee in the development of new churches include:

- Identify and evaluate worshipping groups with potential to become New Church Developments (NCD)
- Assist each NCD in the preparation of grant applications and progress reports
- Support and evaluate the progress of each NCD and provide instruction in Presbyterian polity
- Provide assistance to an NCD throughout the chartering process as well as during leadership transitions
- Encourage each NCD through prayer and financial assistance.
- Meet bi-annually with the leadership team from each NCD.

Tasks performed by the Mission Outreach Committee in the support of mission projects include:

- Identify and evaluate worthy programs that align with the values and mission of the Presbytery of Nevada in order to provide financial support.
- Evaluate and approve one-time requests for mission funds from the PC (USA) to determine availability of and eligibility for resources.
- Review and recommend the Presbytery's annual mission budget.
- In consultation with the Equipping Committee, approve grant funds for mission programs within the Presbytery of Nevada.
- Meet with leaders from the mission programs supported by the Presbytery.

Equipping Committee

The Nevada Presbytery Equipping Committee shall consist of nine (9) members: five (5) Ruling Elders and four (4) Teaching Elders for a term of three years. Each year three new members are elected and three terms expire. A second term is allowed depending on approval of the Nominating Committee and the committee member. If a commissioner is filling part of a term due to a vacancy in an unexpired term, one additional full term is allowed.

The Equipping Committee supports the following tasks:

Training for:

- * Mandatory sexual misconduct prevention workshop every five years (see website for policy www.nevadaPresbytery.org)
- * Commissioners and alternates for General Assembly every two years
- * Orientation of new commissioners to the Presbytery every six months
- * Clerks of session and treasurers, elders, deacons, and commissioners to Synod

Pastor retreats, council retreats and other retreats

Social Justice/Environmental Ministries

- * R.A.I.N. (Religious Alliance in Nevada) lobbies the state legislature on important issues such as human trafficking, health and well being of children, fair working conditions etc.

* Other ministries responding to peacemaking, hunger and restoring creation

Financial and Administrative support for Youth Triennium at Purdue University

- * A portion of each student attendee's expenses is paid out of the Equipping Committee budget
- * A committee-approved coordinator oversees registrations and travel arrangements as well as provides chaperones

Disseminates information on actions from the General Assembly

* This involves educating Presbytery members regarding overtures and amendments either being presented to the General Assembly of the PC (USA) or coming from this body. A fully informed Presbytery representative travels throughout the Presbytery between January and March to give presentations to our churches. The Presbytery of Nevada meets and votes on General Assembly Amendments and Overtures at its spring meeting.

Administers and processes grant funds to be used by groups and churches within the Presbytery.

* Applications are submitted to the Stated Clerk who forwards them to the Equipping Committee. In the event that a grant request appears to be more relevant to the Mission Outreach Committee, the moderators of the two committees will meet to decide through which committee the funds should be evaluated and distributed, if approved by committee.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is composed of six members. The Presbytery of Nevada Vice-Moderator assumes the role of Personnel Committee moderator for one year. The Presbytery Moderator, Vice moderator, and Immediate Past Moderator are all members of the committee. Three other persons are elected from the Presbytery of Nevada for terms of three years.

There are currently three paid positions: the Stated Clerk, the part-time Presbytery Pastor and the Director of Finance. Should additional staff become necessary, the Personnel Committee will seek and interview candidates and make recommendations to the council.

The committee is responsible for conducting a yearly review of all paid employees. As workplace situations arise, the committee will work together to find a resolution.

Nominating Committee/Committee on Representation (COR)

The Nominating Committee and the Committee on Representation were two separate committees that merged into one on the recommendation of a committee reorganization task force. There are six members on the Nominating/Committee on Representation. Two are Teaching Elders and four are Ruling Elders. Members are elected to one three-year term. No members shall be eligible to succeed themselves for re-election. One member of the senior class (elder/minister) is the moderator.

At present time, the committee members are on both committees with three members of the six meeting as the Committee on Representation prior to the Nominating Committee to discern, discuss and complete their tasks. The moderator of the Nominating Committee acts as moderator of both committees and is elected by the Council and therefore is a member of Council.

Unlike other committees, most of the work of the Nominating Committee is completed on the phone or via email before the Fall Presbytery meeting. They solicit, receive, and consider recommendations from Presbytery members and churches. At the fall Presbytery meeting, they submit the nominations of persons to serve as members of Presbytery Council, officers of Presbytery, and all committees of Presbytery as well as Synod commissioners.

The Committee on Representation strives to promote fair and effective representation and serves as an advocate for the participation of racial ethnic members, women, different age groups, and persons with disabilities within the Presbytery as much as possible.

All nominating procedures shall be subject to the principles of participation and representation per The Book of Order.

Presbytery Council

The Council of Presbytery of Nevada includes the Presbytery Moderator, Vice-Moderator, and immediate Past Moderator who also serves as Moderator of Council. Other members include the Stated Clerk, who functions as the Secretary of Council, moderators of all committees, one Synod commissioner, and two Ruling Elders elected by the Presbytery at large.

The Presbytery of Nevada Council meets prior to each stated meeting of Presbytery, and other times as called by the Moderator or Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

The Council has the authority as permitted in the Book of Order to act with full authority of Presbytery between Presbytery Meetings.

Members-at-large shall be Ruling Elders and sit for three (3) years, and replacement of a member-at-large whose term has not expired shall be for the remainder of that term. Members-at-large shall be ineligible to serve more than two (2) consecutive terms or portion of term. Committee moderators shall serve as members of Council for the term of their office.

Presbytery Trustees

The trustees oversee all financial matters affecting the Presbytery of Nevada. Trustees are able to approve and monitor loans for new church developments, give financial support for congregations in need, and manage all funds from all sources.

Synod

Presbyteries are organized within a geographical region to form a Synod. The Presbytery of Nevada is a member of the Synod of the Pacific. Each Synod contains at least three presbyteries, and its elected voting membership is to include both Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders in equal numbers. Synods are required to meet at least biennially. Meetings are moderated by an elected Synod Moderator with support of the Synod Stated Clerk. Synods have various duties depending on the needs of the presbyteries they serve. In general, their responsibilities might be summarized as: developing and implementing the mission of the church throughout the region, facilitating communication between presbyteries and the General Assembly, and mediating conflicts between the churches and presbyteries.

General Assembly

The headquarters of the PC (USA) is located in Louisville, Kentucky, and hosts a variety of agencies.

The Presbyterian Book of Order, which outlines a representative form of government, became the pattern for Constitution of the United States. The Moderator of the General Assembly is elected at the biennial General Assembly and serves a two-year term.