

4A. - SESSION OPERATING PROCEDURES

The session has responsibility for governing and guiding the congregation. Those serving on session are leaders by word, example, and attitude. Session members faithfully support church activities and participate in a variety of ways, including active worship attendance.

The officers of the session are the moderator and the clerk of the session. The moderator is the Pastor and will convene and preside at all meetings of the session. The moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and conducting efficiently the business of the session. For good order, the session should be generally guided by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* as needed. The moderator shall report to the session any problems that relate to the health and welfare of the congregation. The moderator will serve as an ex-officio member and resource of all committees and subcommittees of the session and may vote on matters undertaken by such committees and subcommittees at their discretion, unless the foundational documents of the committee or subcommittee state otherwise. For the purpose of determining a quorum for committee and subcommittee meetings the moderator shall not be counted.

The moderator is a member of session and may, at their discretion, vote on any motions or matters voted on by the session at a Stated or Called Session Meeting or in a sanctioned Email vote.

The clerk is elected annually by the session and must be a ruling elder. While it is preferred that the Clerk not be an active member of session, an active session elder may serve as clerk in the event no other ruling elder in the congregation agrees to fill this position. If the clerk is not an active member of session, the clerk may not vote or enter into discussion or debate, but may answer direct questions, ask for clarification of motions, and present the clerk's report.

Stated meetings of the session will be at such time that the session determines would be best for all. Called meetings of the Session shall be at the request of two members of the Session, or the moderator, or the Presbytery for any reason within the Book of Order, provided sufficient notice is given. The business conducted at a called meeting will be only that for which the meeting is called. A quorum of the session for meetings shall include the moderator and such additional members as required to constitute at least 51% of the session. On an exception basis, a session member, not able to attend a meeting, may be allowed to teleconference in, with the approval of the moderator, and will be included in the quorum. Two elders plus the moderator is a quorum for the reception of new members.

Voting may be done by voice, written, or between meetings, email. Voting is allowed by those present and those teleconferencing. A simple majority is required to pass a motion (e.g., if 10 are at a meeting, 6 "yes" votes are required to pass a motion.) Voting by proxy, note, or email at a meeting is not allowed.

Email vote (e-vote) requests, approved by the moderator and sent out solely by the clerk of session, are allowed between meetings when necessary. The clerk's email should clearly state the motion and include any background information. Any questions to the clerk and responses from the clerk or others should be sent to all session members. E-voting is to be open for 2 days from the time of the clerk's email, unless a quicker response is required and explicitly stated in the email. In no event shall a response be required in less than twenty-four hours from the time of the email request. E-votes must be sent only to the Clerk. A simple majority of all session members is required to pass a motion (same as a meeting with all attending). If any elder requests further discussion of the motion at a meeting, the e-vote must be delayed until a regular or called meeting is held. (E-voting on money/financial motions are allowed with this provision in place.) The clerk will notify session of the results after (i) a majority is reached, (ii) after 2 days (or such shorter prescribed voting period), or (iii) if a meeting is required. The motion and results are to be reported in the minutes of the next session meeting.

Attendance at meetings of the session is mandatory when circumstance allow. If a member is unable to attend any meeting, the clerk shall be notified. If an elder has two unexcused absences in a year, or more than three excused absences at stated session meetings, the clerk will notify the moderator for review to determine whether further action or discussion with the elder is required.

The session is composed of the moderator and twelve duly elected and installed Ruling Elders, divided equally into three classes. A youth elder may also be elected for a one-year term, making a possible total of 13 elders on session. Elders are appointed to ministry assignments by the moderator for a period of one year, with no limit on the number of years they can serve in a ministry assignment. The session term begins January 1 of each calendar year.

Session meetings are open to the congregation, unless the session votes to go into Executive Session to discuss confidential business. Session members are advised to keep details of session business confidential. Paid staff members working for St. Mark are not allowed to become members of session because of the potential for conflict of interest. Spouses and immediate family members of session elders shall not serve on session at the same time.

In all of its operations and actions, the Session shall comply with the Congregational By-Laws and all policies adopted and approved by Session including, without limitation, the Conflict of Interest Policy.

The Session has standing committees, and may appoint special committees, task forces or sub-committees to fulfill its purpose and responsibilities.

The Session may, at its discretion, change the number and titles/responsibilities of standing committees at any time through approval of a motion detailing such changes at a Stated or Called Session Meeting.

The session shall call a special meeting of the congregation in the last half of October each year to elect members to serve as Deacons, Elders, Trustees, members of the Congressional Nominating Committee, and any other office requiring congregational vote. This allows sufficient time for these individuals to be ordained (as necessary), trained and oriented before their term of office begins. The Session nominates the Trustees pursuant to the By-Laws for the Congregation, and two Session-nominated members of the Congregational Nominating Committee pursuant to the Congregational Nominating Committee Operating Procedures. The Session shall use the attached procedure to select, and provide to the CNC, its Elder nominees for Trustee and CNC Member positions.

The session shall ensure that there shall be an annual meeting of the congregation early in the calendar year at which the following business shall be presented:

- Annual Report containing reports from session committees and organizations
- Financial report from the preceding year
- Budget for the current year (for information, not voting)
- Vote on changes in terms of call for the pastor
- Any other matter of sufficient relevance to the congregation

Section G-3 of the Book of Order, and the St. Mark Congregation By-Laws, outline additional information about session.

Attachment: Procedure to Select Trustee and CNC Member