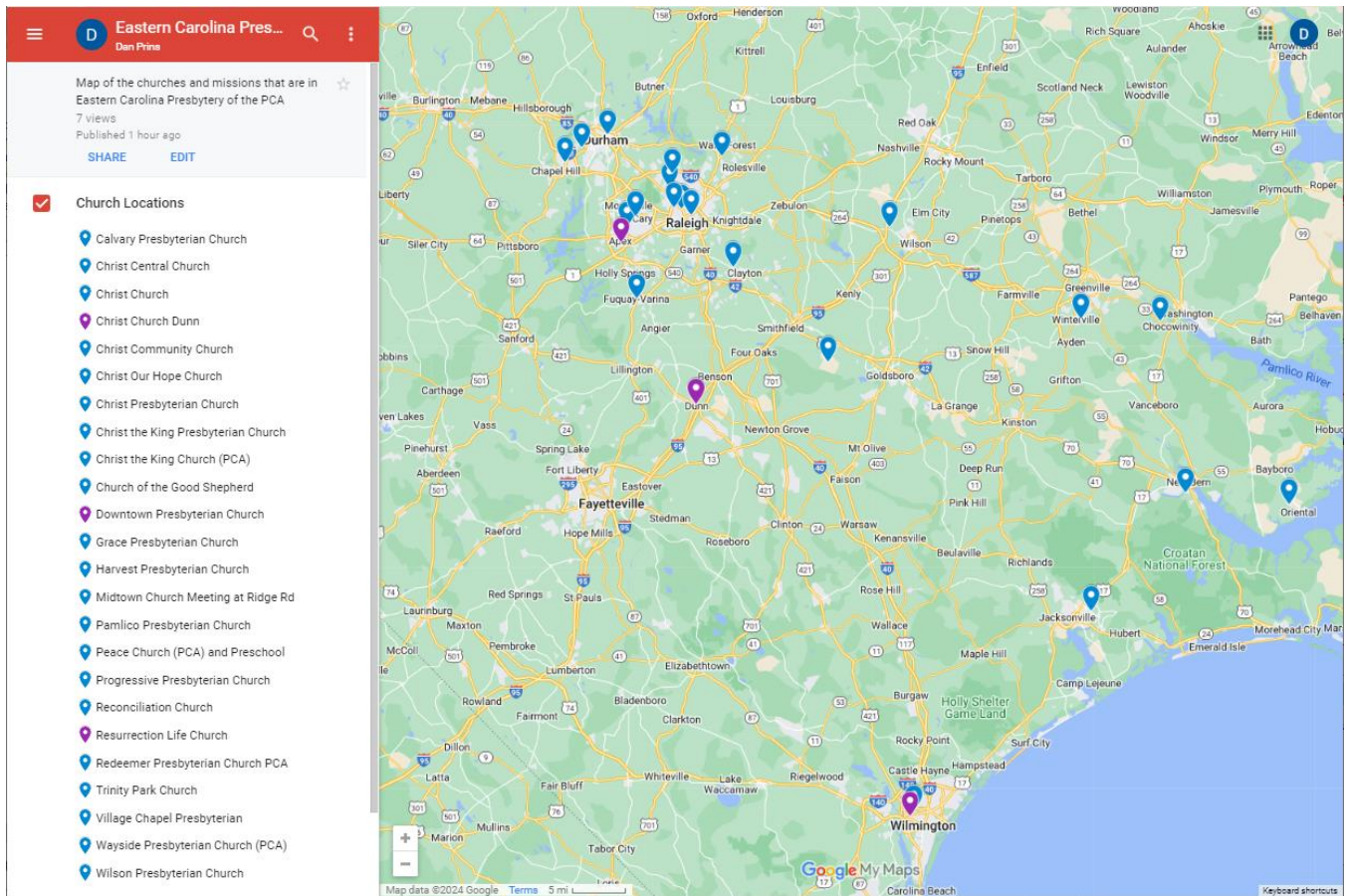


Eastern Carolina Presbytery

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Manual of Operation

With Changes Approved October 19, 2024



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I. HISTORY AND STANDARDS

A. Preamble

Eastern Carolina Presbytery (ECP) currently includes the North Carolina counties east of and including Person, Orange, Chatham, Harnett, Sampson, Bladen, and Columbus; but, not including the northeastern counties of Currituck, Camden, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Chowan, Gates, Hertford, Bertie, and the area of Dare County east of Croatan Sound and north of Oregon Inlet, which are part of James River Presbytery.

Carolina Presbytery, our parent presbytery, was organized on February 15, 1974, in the Northside Presbyterian Church in Burlington, N.C., by four ministers and six ruling elders from five churches in central and eastern North Carolina that had recently withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The presbytery was organized as a provisional presbytery of the National Presbyterian Church at the first General Assembly of that denomination in Birmingham, Ala. The second General Assembly of that denomination, meeting on September 17-20, 1974, in Macon, Ga., officially received Carolina Presbytery and approved its boundaries as encompassing eastern and central North Carolina west to and including the counties of Surry, Yadkin, Iredell, Catawba, Lincoln, and Gaston. The second General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church also changed the name of the denomination to the Presbyterian Church in America.

Within four years, Carolina Presbytery grew from five to eighteen churches and two missions. Eastern Carolina Presbytery was organized from Carolina Presbytery in June 1978, by an action of the Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, after Carolina Presbytery voted to divide the presbytery on April 22, 1978.

On May 28, 1983, ECP released the Northside Church in Burlington and Westminster Church in High Point to Central Carolina Presbytery with the approval of General Assembly (1983 Minutes, page 125). ECP then encompassed the counties that were east of and including Person, Orange, Chatham, Wake, Johnston, Sampson, Bladen, and Columbus.

On January 27, 2007, ECP approved the transfer to James River Presbytery of the northeastern North Carolina counties of Currituck, Camden, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Chowan, Gates, Hertford, Bertie, and the area of Dare County east of Croatan Sound and north of Oregon Inlet, to facilitate more rapid and effective establishment of PCA congregations in these areas. The 2007 General Assembly (Minutes of the 35th General Assembly, Recommendations 11 and 12, pp. 106 and 108) approved this change.

The 2009 General Assembly approved a change in the boundaries of Eastern Carolina Presbytery and Central Carolina Presbytery so as to include Harnett County within the bounds of Eastern Carolina Presbytery. As a result, Countryside Presbyterian Church was received as a member church of Eastern Carolina Presbytery. Countryside Presbyterian Church has since left the PCA.

B. Purpose and Doctrinal Standards

ECP was organized reaffirming that Jesus Christ is the King and Head of the Church and the only lawgiver in Zion, that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God written, that we are committed without reservation to the Reformed Faith as set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, and that the ultimate purpose of the Presbytery and the churches therein is to glorify God in carrying out the Great Commission and winning souls to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

C. Book of Church Order

All actions of this Presbytery shall at all times be in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* of the Presbyterian Church in America.

II. MEETINGS

A. Stated and Called Meetings

ECP shall have four stated meetings each year on the fourth Saturday of January and on the third Saturdays of April, July, and October. Stated Meetings begin at 9:00 a.m. Called Meetings shall be in accordance with the *BCO*. The Stated Clerk with the concurrence of the Moderator may reschedule any stated or called meeting of Presbytery in the event of an emergency or imminent danger that would make attendance at the scheduled meeting a dangerous obligation. The rescheduled meeting would usually be set for seven (7) days later than the originally scheduled meeting. Ordinarily, Presbytery meetings shall be conducted in person. However, a meeting of Presbytery (*BCO* 13-12) may be held online in accordance with the restrictions and provisions outlined in Appendix E.

B. Attendance

All ministers who are members of the Presbytery shall be required to attend the stated meetings. Exception to this requirement shall automatically be granted to retired ministers and to ministers serving outside the geographical bounds of ECP. The session of each church that is a member of ECP shall be required to send one or more ruling elders as representatives to each stated meeting in accordance with the *BCO*. All presbyters should present to Presbytery an adequate excuse in the event of a necessary absence. The Moderator and Stated Clerk are empowered to approve or disapprove the excuses for the purpose of recording the roll at any meeting of Presbytery.

C. Quorum

Any three (3) ministers with at least three (3) ruling elders from at least four (4) churches belonging to ECP, meeting at the time and place appointed, shall be competent to proceed to business.

D. Worship

Each stated meeting of ECP shall include a sermon in accordance with the *BCO*. The sermon will be preached either by the Moderator or someone appointed by him. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be observed following the sermon and as part of the worship service at the Spring Stated Meeting.

E. Place of Next Meeting

The place of the next stated meeting of Presbytery shall be decided by Presbytery as the last item of business at each stated meeting. In the event no invitation has been extended, the place of the next meeting shall be arranged by the Moderator and the Stated Clerk and reported to Presbytery through the upcoming docket.

III. OFFICERS

The officers of the presbytery are: Moderator, Vice Moderator, Stated Clerk, Assistant Clerk (optional), Parliamentarian, and Treasurer. The officers shall be elected annually at the Fall Stated Meeting of Presbytery in accordance with the BCO. Their term of service shall be for the following calendar year beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31.

A. Moderator

The Moderator's duties shall be those set forth in the *BCO*. The Moderator is a member and the chairman of the Executive Committee. The Moderator and Stated Clerk, in conjunction with the rest of the Executive Committee, will prepare the docket for each Presbytery meeting. The Moderator shall also have authority to appoint standing and *ad interim* committees as needed. When vacancies occur on the permanent committees of Presbytery and replacements are needed before the next stated meeting, he shall have authority to make interim appointments subject to the approval of Presbytery at its next stated meeting. The Moderator cannot succeed himself without an intervening year (*BCO* 10-3).

B. Vice Moderator

The Vice Moderator shall be a Ruling Elder when the Moderator is a Teaching Elder and vice-versa. He shall moderate the meeting in the absence of or at the request of the Moderator. He shall be the presumptive nominee for the office of Moderator the following year. He is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.

C. Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk's duties shall be those set forth in the *BCO*. The Stated Clerk is a member and the de facto secretary of the Executive Committee. The Moderator and Stated Clerk, in conjunction with the rest of the Executive Committee, will prepare the docket for each Presbytery meeting. The Stated Clerk shall be responsible to correspond on behalf of Presbytery, assist the Moderator during Presbytery meetings, complete the minutes for Presbytery meetings. Additionally, he shall be responsible for the Book of Ministerial Obligations, this *Manual of Operation*, and the *Directory* of Presbytery members and their status, churches, candidates, licentiates, officers, and committees.

When the Stated Clerk or, in his absence, the acting clerk, has no one available to assist with taking the minutes of a meeting, the lone clerk is permitted to make a recording of the meeting. The sole purpose for which such a recording may be used is to assure that the minutes are accurate. The recording is to be destroyed once the minutes are approved.

The Stated Clerk shall post and maintain proposed dockets (with committee and commission reports) and minutes on the Presbytery website (at <https://easterncarolina.org>). He shall post the proposed docket not less than seven (7) days prior to each stated meeting, and shall post the draft minutes of each meeting within one (1) month following each meeting. He shall periodically post the Directory.

ECP members, officers, and session commissioners shall be responsible to obtain proposed dockets and minutes in a timely manner from the Presbytery website. The Stated Clerk shall make reasonable efforts to remind ECP members, officers, and session commissioners of the availability of these documents as they become available on the Presbytery website.

D. Assistant Clerk (optional)

An Assistant Clerk is not required. However, experience shows that this position is very helpful to the Stated Clerk and serves as good training for a future Stated Clerk.

The Assistant Clerk is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. He may substitute for the Stated Clerk at a meeting of the Presbytery when the Stated Clerk is unavailable. At the Stated Clerk's request, he may assist with any of the Stated Clerk's duties, which commonly include recording the Minutes of a meeting of Presbytery, composing correspondence, maintaining the Book of Ministerial Obligations,

maintaining the Directory document, maintaining the Manual of Operation document, and entering updates on the PCA Clerk's website.

E. Treasurer

The treasurer may be any member of Presbytery or one of the churches in the Presbytery. The Treasurer is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. The work of the Treasurer is supervised by the Administration Committee.

1. He/she shall keep an accurate record of Presbytery's funds and disburse them in accordance with the instructions of Presbytery.
2. The Treasurer shall present a written financial report at each stated meeting of Presbytery. This report shall be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not less than two (2) weeks prior to each stated meeting of Presbytery.
3. In his/her report, the Treasurer shall distinguish between the annual budget and restricted funds, only the latter of which may carry over balances into the next budget year.
4. The Treasurer will ensure that committees disburse money only as allocated to their specific line items in accordance with the approved Presbytery budget unless otherwise approved by Presbytery.
5. The Treasurer's books shall be audited annually by a special committee appointed by the Moderator or by an outside auditor at the discretion of Presbytery. This audit shall be completed and reported to Presbytery at its spring Stated Meeting.
6. Bonding of the Treasurer shall be at the discretion of Presbytery.

F. Parliamentarian

The Parliamentarian is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. The Parliamentarian is expected to attend each meeting of Presbytery. In the absence of the elected Parliamentarian, the Moderator shall appoint a parliamentarian to serve at that meeting of Presbytery.

IV. COMMITTEES

The committees of Presbytery are structured as a special executive committee, temporary committees, and permanent committees. The executive committee is composed of the officers and the chairs of the permanent committees. The other committees of Presbytery shall ordinarily be composed of ministers and ruling elders; and, insofar as possible, parity will be maintained on all committees.

Given the time constraints of a given Presbytery meeting, committees that are not coming to Presbytery with items for action, should refrain from giving oral reports that restate exactly the information already available in their written reports.

Committees and commissions, if necessary, may hold meetings by electronic means such as telephone conference, video conference, or online discussions.

A. Executive Committee

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide a greater level of coordination among the permanent committees, especially with regard to prioritizing the order of the docket.

The Executive Committee is composed of the chairs of the permanent committees, the Moderator, and the Stated Clerk as members and the other officers as ex-officio members. The terms of service on the committee are according to the term each person fills the specific position or office.

Its duties shall be:

1. Meet at least 2 weeks prior to each stated meeting of Presbytery, when the overall scope of the business at hand is available, to prioritize the order of the reports in the docket as well as the timing of any orders of the day. They may recommend a suggested time to adjourn. They may recommend to the Moderator to skip over committees that have written reports with no actions.
2. Meet prior to September 1 of each year in order to compose a proposed spending budget for the following year based on the input from the various permanent committees. This proposed spending budget will be forwarded to the chair of the Administration Committee.
3. Recommend ways to promote stewardship within the churches of Presbytery.
4. Make recommendations for the efficient operation of Presbytery.
5. Nominate members to the Nominating Committee at the Fall Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

B. Temporary Committees

Standing committees shall be appointed by the Moderator as needed to function for a particular purpose, normally during the Presbytery meeting.

Special and *ad interim* committees may be appointed or elected to function for a particular purpose and usually for a limited time, normally between meetings of Presbytery. Chairmen of standing committees shall be appointed by the Moderator. Chairmen of special and *ad interim* committees may either be appointed by the Moderator or elected by Presbytery.

There are two standard temporary committees as follows:

1. Standing Committee on Thanks

A Committee on Thanks and its chairman will be appointed by the Moderator at each meeting of Presbytery. Its duty shall be to make an oral report of thanks to the host church at each stated Presbytery meeting.

2. Financial Oversight Committee

The Financial Oversight Committee is a special committee that shall consist of two teaching and two ruling elders. The Moderator shall appoint the committee and designate its chairman at the Winter Stated Meeting. The committee shall review the financial records (quarterly reports and monthly bank statements) of the

Presbytery for the previous fiscal year to ascertain that they are in order and report in writing on its findings at the Spring Stated Meeting of Presbytery.

C. Permanent Committees

Presbytery shall have the following permanent committees:

- Administration
- Candidates, Licentiates and Interns
- Continuing Education
- Examinations
- Mission to North America
- Nominations
- Reformed University Fellowship
- Shepherding
- World Missions

The Examinations, Mission to North America, and Shepherding Committees shall each consist of eight (8) members who are organized into four (4) classes of one TE and one RE arranged so that one class expires each year, with each person serving a term of four (4) years. For the Shepherding Committee, at least two of the members, one TE and one RE, must be from the eastern region of the presbytery to ensure sufficient capacity to shepherd in that region.

The remaining permanent committees shall each consist of six (6) members who are organized into three (3) classes of one TE and one RE arranged so that one class expires each year, with each person serving a term of three (3) years.

Elections to fill terms that expire at the end of the year are conducted at the Fall stated meeting. Terms of service begin January 1 and end December 31.

Committees shall elect their own chairmen and determine their quorums, providing the quorum be not less than one-half (50%) of the committee membership. The chairman shall give reasonable notice of committee meetings and accurate minutes of each meeting (which are subject to review by Presbytery) shall be taken either by the chairman or an elected secretary. Should the need arise, each permanent committee is authorized to meet at each stated meeting of Presbytery without a call by the committee chairman.

Limitations. The chairman shall serve a term of one (1) year, but may be re-elected for as long as he remains on the committee. No presbyter may serve on more than two (2) permanent committees or chair more than one permanent committee. Members who have served for a full term, or for at least two (2) years of a partial term, shall not be eligible to succeed themselves on the same permanent committee until a period of one (1) year has lapsed.

Reports. All reports to Presbytery shall be provided to the Stated Clerk not less than two (2) weeks prior to the Presbytery meeting at which such reports are to be made, in order that they may be made available to teaching elders and clerks of sessions seven (7) days prior to the meeting of Presbytery. Written reports not published by the Stated Clerk's office to teaching elders and clerks of sessions prior to the meeting of Presbytery cannot be presented to Presbytery except by a two-thirds vote of those present.

The permanent committees and their duties are as follows:

1. Administration

Its duties shall be:

- a. To supervise the work of the Stated Clerk and Treasurer of Presbytery and to nominate individuals to fill these offices.

- b. To recommend an annual budget for the Presbytery's consideration and adoption at the Fall Stated Meeting.
 - (1) By the April stated Presbytery meeting of each year, the Administration Committee shall inform all churches in the Presbytery of their share of the next year's budget "askings" (a minimum is determined by averaging the last three years' income received from ECP churches divided by the total number of communicant members within ECP as of the previous year's statistical reports).
 - (2) By the July stated Presbytery meeting of each year, each church session shall inform the Administration Committee Chairman of their specific monetary commitment to the next year's budget.
 - (3) By September 1 of each year, the Executive Committee shall submit a proposed spending budget (total budget broken out into specific line items) to the Administration Committee Chairman.
 - (4) The Administration Committee will then work to reconcile the churches' giving commitments with the committees' spending requests, and at the October stated Presbytery meeting will present a proposed budget for Presbytery to vote on.
- c. To review the records of sessions in Presbytery annually and report their findings to Presbytery (*BCO* 40). The procedure shall be as follows:
 - (1) Every stated clerk of session shall email a PDF file of all sessional records (no blank pages and pages sequentially numbered) including the Statistical Report and approved annual budget for the preceding calendar year to the chairman of the Committee on Administration by March 1.
 - (2) At a meeting in March, the Committee on Administration shall review all sessional records according to the "Guidelines for Keeping and Examining Session Minutes" approved by Presbytery (see Appendix B to this manual).
 - (3) Each session's records shall be read by two (2) members of the Committee.
 - (4) The whole Committee shall vote on the final report to be given to Presbytery in the same concise form that the Committee on the Review of Presbytery Records uses at the General Assembly (*Rules of Assembly Operation [RAO]*).
 - (5) Presbytery, after hearing the report of the Committee at the Spring Stated Meeting each year, shall approve, disapprove, or correct the records of sessions in the same form that the General Assembly uses with presbytery records (*RAO*).
 - (6) Sessions shall respond to Presbytery on any exceptions of substance taken to their records by the next Stated Meeting of Presbytery following the form of *RAO*.

2. Candidates, Licentiates and Interns

Its duties shall be:

- a. To provide care and guidance to candidates under care of Presbytery (*BCO* 18).
 - (1) This Committee shall interview and examine potential candidates for the Gospel ministry and make recommendations to Presbytery (*BCO* 18-3).
 - (2) This Committee shall require of each candidate a written annual progress report of his studies, life and ministry (*BCO* 18-6) and shall submit said report at the Summer Stated Meeting of Presbytery.
- b. To provide guidance to licentiates and to applicants for licensure (*BCO* 19 1-6).
- c. To ensure those seeking ordination to the ministry of the Word have been tested as to their gifts and ability to lead as teaching elders (*BCO* 19-7).
 - (1) This Committee shall review internship proposals and make recommendations to Presbytery regarding said proposals (*BCO* 19-7).
 - (2) This Committee shall report to Presbytery on every intern at each stated meeting (*BCO* 19-12).
 - (3) When circumstances warrant (*BCO* 19-16), this Committee will review previous experience, and make a recommendation on whether to accept it as equivalent to internship.

3. Continuing Education

Its duties shall be:

- a. To identify desirous topics for discussion or instruction for the Presbyters.
- b. To sometimes organize lectures presented by prominent seminary professors or other desired speakers outside our Presbytery to address these topics.

- c. To sometimes organize facilitated discussion during our meetings in order to address these topics.

The organization of the aforementioned lectures and discussions shall be coordinated by the Executive Committee. The time limit allotted in the docket for continuing education purposes should be no more than one hour, and the occasion should be limited to three stated meetings per calendar year.

4. Examinations

Its duties shall be:

To examine candidates and ministers seeking admission to ECP and candidates and elders seeking licensure, in accordance with the *BCO*. The examinations shall be conducted according to the understanding and procedure detailed in **Appendix A** of this manual.

5. Mission to North America

Its duties shall be:

- a. To promote the work of evangelism and home missions throughout Presbytery, including the establishment of new churches.
- b. To maintain liaison with General Assembly's Committee on Mission to North America and make recommendations to Presbytery.
- c. To provide for the annual oral reporting of MNA church planters to Presbytery at either the Summer or Winter Stated Meeting each year.

6. Nominations

Its duties shall be:

- a. To nominate members to serve on permanent committees, other than the Nominations Committee, whose members will be nominated by the Executive Committee.
- b. To nominate members to serve as officers.
- c. To nominate members to serve on the committees and boards of General Assembly.
- d. To nominate members to fill vacancies on permanent committees when such vacancies occur during the year, except those vacancies filled by the Moderator (see III.A.).
- e. To act as a commission of Presbytery (with a quorum of 2 teaching elders and 2 ruling elders) to approve nominees to serve on the permanent committees and boards of General Assembly (Winter meeting) and to elect members to serve on the Committees of Commissioners of General Assembly (Spring meeting), in order to fill vacancies that remain between the meeting of Presbytery and the submission deadlines set by General Assembly. The Commission shall report its actions and provide its Minutes to the Stated Clerk to be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

7. Reformed University Fellowship

The purpose of this Committee shall be to serve Eastern Carolina Presbytery in matters having to do with Reformed University Fellowship within our bounds, and to support the work of a North Carolina joint committee on Reformed University Fellowship through the participation of this Committee's members as defined by the joint committee agreement, if and when such agreement is approved by ECP.

Its duties shall be:

- a. To promote the work of evangelism and discipleship specifically on college and university campuses throughout the boundaries of Presbytery, and in the event of a joint committee agreement, throughout the state of North Carolina.
- b. To facilitate the establishment of Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) chapters by Presbytery, determining the needs and priorities of new ministries.
- c. To initiate the call for campus ministers by the Presbytery.
- d. To advise and supervise the RUF ministries that are established within our bounds.
- e. To prepare the local campus ministries' budgets and the overall budget for Presbytery approval.
- f. To maintain liaison with the General Assembly's Committee on RUF and their office.

- g. To inform the churches and the people of the Presbytery of the campus ministries available, including their purpose, progress, and needs.
- h. To participate in a North Carolina Joint Committee on RUF by electing from Committee members the required number of representatives.
- i. To report directly to the Presbytery concerning the work of the Committee and joint committee, and to present any appropriate matters to Presbytery for its approval.
- j. To provide for the oral reporting of RUF campus ministers to Presbytery at the stated meetings of Presbytery, allowing each campus minister the opportunity to share at half of the meetings.
- k. To act as a commission of Presbytery to approve the housing allowance for the campus ministers each year, with a quorum of 2 teaching elders and 2 ruling elders. The Commission shall report its actions and provide its Minutes to the Stated Clerk to be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

8. Shepherding

Its duties shall be:

- a. To assist pastors, sessions, and congregations, upon their request, with difficulties in the church. The goal of the Committee is to “build up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12) via listening, caring, helping, recommending, restoring, resolving, and rejoicing together in solutions to difficulties.
- b. To encourage pastors in life and ministry through regular contact and prayer.
- c. To advise ministers without charge within the bounds of Presbytery concerning the requirements of the *BCO* and bring a report to the Presbytery at the Spring Stated Meeting on the status of ministers without call.
- d. To encourage teaching elders who labor in needful works (*BCO* 8-4), excepting RUF ministers, and teaching elders who labor outside the geographical or jurisdictional bounds of the Presbytery (*BCO* 8-7), and to provide for their annual reports to the Presbytery (*BCO* 8-4 and 8-7).
- e. To serve as a Commission to act on requests to dissolve the pastoral relation between a Teaching Elder and his calling body at the appointment of the Moderator and Stated Clerk or of the Presbytery. The quorum for said Commission shall be 5 with a minimum of 3 Teaching Elders. The convener of said commission shall be appointed by the current chairman of the Shepherding Committee. The Commission shall report its actions and provide its Minutes to the Stated Clerk to be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

9. World Missions

Its duties shall be:

- a. To promote a concern for world missions throughout Presbytery.
- b. To assist local churches in establishing ministries for world outreach, recruiting missionary candidates, and providing missionary speakers to local churches.
- c. To maintain liaison with General Assembly’s Committee on Mission to the World and make recommendations to Presbytery.

V. RELATION TO OTHER CHURCH COURTS

A. Overtures to General Assembly

All proposed overtures to General Assembly to be considered by the next stated meeting of Presbytery shall be forwarded by the originator not less than twenty-one (21) days in advance to the Moderator, Stated Clerk, and all ministers and clerks of session in Presbytery. If the 21-day deadline is not met, they shall be received without debate at one stated meeting and docketed for action at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

B. Dissolutions, Transfers, Dismissions, and Withdrawals

Presbytery authorizes the Moderator and Stated Clerk to appoint the Shepherding Committee as a Commission to approve the dissolution of the pastoral relation between a Teaching Elder and the calling body (Church, Session, or organization). The dissolution is to be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery by way of the Commission's Minutes.

Presbytery authorizes the Moderator and Stated Clerk to sign a certificate of transfer to any minister who has accepted a call to another presbytery, provided that this Presbytery has no charges pending against him, and there is no present pastoral relationship between the minister and a church, session, or organization. His release is to be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery (see BCO, Chapter 20).

Presbytery authorizes the Moderator and Stated Clerk to provide a certificate of dismission to any candidate, upon his request, to another Presbytery, or accept his withdrawal from the care of Presbytery, provided that his Session has no charges pending against him, in accordance with BCO 18-7.

C. Churches Without Sessions

Should a previously organized church find itself without a Session, per BCO 12-1, it shall notify Presbytery of such development. Upon receiving notification, the Presbytery shall proceed to establish a temporary system of government for the church in one of the ways described in BCO 5-3. The church shall remain a particular church, per BCO 12-1.

VI. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)* shall govern the Presbytery in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this *Manual of Operation*, the *Book of Church Order*, or any special rules of order that Presbytery may adopt.

VII. AMENDMENT AND SUSPENSION OF THE MANUAL

The provisions of this manual, except for Section I ("History and Standards") may be amended by circulating the proposed amendment to the Presbytery by way of the Stated Clerk no less than 30 days prior to any stated meeting, where it will be docketed for action. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present is required for approval.

Particular provisions of this manual, other than Section I ("History and Standards") and this section ("Amendment and Suspension of the Manual"), may be temporarily suspended at a stated or called meeting of Presbytery by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of commissioners present.

APPENDIX A – Eastern Carolina Presbytery Examinations: Philosophy and Practice

1. What is the purpose of a licensure exam?
“To preserve the purity of the preaching of the Gospel” (*BCO* 19-1). There are no educational requirements for licensure, *per se*, only the licensure requirements themselves, which can be judged by Presbytery. The implication is that the level of *knowledge* need not be as great in a candidate for licensure as in a candidate for ordination. Less theological sophistication is expected in a licensure exam. It is not generally expected or encouraged in ECP that candidates for gospel ministry proceed to licensure before ordination (ref. *BCO* 18-5, 19-1).
2. What is the purpose of an ordination exam?
To determine if the call of a man is “for the good of the Church” (assuming capital “C” church = the PCA and not just the local congregation, *BCO* 21-1). Stated differently, the purpose is to judge whether the candidate be gifted, sound in the faith, and godly (*BCO* 16-3) to serve in the office of elder (*BCO* 8-9), specifically as a *teaching* elder who is “specially gifted, called, and trained by God to preach” (*BCO* 7-2). The “special” gifts, call, and training imply that a greater degree of knowledge of and ability in handling the Word is required for the *teaching* elder. Thus ordination exams should be expected to be lengthier and more rigorous. If a licentiate should come later for ordination, ECP intends normally to examine him in all areas mentioned in *BCO* 21-4.
3. What is the purpose of a transfer exam?
To make sure that all the members of Presbytery (*BCO* 13-1) share a common covenant of membership (*BCO* 13-7; 21-5). To ensure that common covenant, Presbytery examines ministers seeking admission to Presbytery from other PCA presbyteries with respect to their “views” (*BCO* 13-6), charitably assuming that the sufficiency of their “knowledge” for ordination has already been determined by a sister presbytery (*BCO* 21-4). Presbytery also requires the newly received minister to sign the covenant of membership for Presbytery (*BCO* 13-7). Additionally, with ministers seeking admission to Presbytery from other denominations, Presbytery shall thoroughly examine on knowledge and views as required by *BCO* 21-4 to satisfy itself in each case that there is indeed a common covenant of membership.
4. What is the purpose of an examining committee?
To serve Presbytery in carrying out any duties assigned to it (on analogy with *BCO* 14-1, items 7 and 8). More specifically, to serve the Presbytery by thoroughly examining candidates for licensure, internship, ordination, and transfer prior to their appearance on the floor of Presbytery to ensure that Presbytery’s time is not wasted by insufficiently gifted, called, or trained men.
The committee does not take the place of Presbytery in determining suitability for office, but will report to Presbytery its recommendation and let Presbytery either adopt or reject it.
5. What will be our practice in ECP with exams?
 - a. Candidate informs chairman of the Examinations Committee of his desire to be examined by Presbytery at least three (3) months in advance of the next Presbytery meeting to allow time for adequate preparation by the candidate, the Committee, and the whole Presbytery. In the case of a transfer, the church issuing the call informs the chairman of the Examinations Committee of the call at least forty-five (45) days prior to the Presbytery meeting at which the minister will be examined. In the cases of ordination and transfer, a copy of the call to the candidate should be included in the docket of Presbytery. It is recommended that with licensure and ordination candidates and transferring ministers, a biographical paragraph and a paragraph on the Committee’s procedure with the candidate be included in the docket to help presbyters come prepared.
 - b. As soon as the chairman of the Examinations Committee learns of the candidate’s desire to be examined for licensure, ordination, or transfer, he will send him a packet of materials containing the following:
 - (1) In case of licensure:
 - (a) his assigned sermon text;
 - (b) request for a manuscript of his sermon;
 - (c) any written exams Presbytery may have approved; and
 - (d) instructions to send all of the above back four (4) weeks prior to the meeting of Presbytery so that copies can be sent to the Committee and the call sent to Presbytery.
 - (2) In case of ordination:
 - (a) request for a formal copy of his call;

- (b) his assigned sermon text;
 - (c) request for an outline of his sermon;
 - (d) request for copies of his transcripts or diplomas;
 - (e) his assigned exegetical paper;
 - (f) his assigned theological paper;
 - (g) any written exams Presbytery may have approved; and
 - (h) instructions to send all of the above back four (4) weeks prior to the meeting of Presbytery so copies can be sent to the Committee and the call sent to Presbytery.
 - (i) The chairman shall request from the calling party a copy of a formal criminal background check on the man being called, with that man's permission for such to be provided to the Committee.
- (3) In case of transfer:
- (a) request for a formal copy of his call;
 - (b) request for a brief statement of his Christian experience (1-2 pages);
 - (c) request for a letter from the clerk of his current presbytery or denomination confirming that he is a member in good standing;
 - (d) a copy of the ordination questions from *BCO* 21-5 for the minister to sign if he can honestly answer in the affirmative after noting any exceptions to the standards he may ask to have allowed;
 - (e) for ministers transferring from other denominations, a copy of *BCO* 21-4 shall be sent and request made to indicate any exceptions of preparation and/or testing he requests and why; and
 - (f) instructions to send all of the above back four (4) weeks prior to the meeting of Presbytery so copies can be sent to the Committee and the call sent to Presbytery.
 - (g) The chairman shall request from the calling party a copy of a formal criminal background check on the man being called, with that man's permission for such to be provided to the Committee.
- c. The Examinations Committee will meet with each candidate prior to the Presbytery meeting to frame its own recommendation concerning presenting this candidate for examination and to ensure that all requirements for licensure, internship, ordination, or transfer have been met.
 - d. On days when there is a candidate for licensure, ordination, or transfer to be examined, the Examinations Committee will generally report first among the committees.
 - e. The Examinations Committee will present to Presbytery either a motion to proceed or not to proceed to examination. In the case of ministers wishing to transfer from other denominations, the Committee will present a motion to examine thoroughly on knowledge and views as required by *BCO* 21-4.
 - f. If the motion to proceed passes, the candidate will be examined in each of the three to eight areas stipulated on the floor of Presbytery, first *briefly* by a Committee member and then from the floor as long as *Presbytery* wishes. Questions from the floor should be regulated by the Moderator so that no one gets to ask three questions before another member who wants the floor has been allowed to ask one.
 - g. Each section of the exam will be concluded by a motion to arrest that portion of the exam.
 - h. After all parts of the exam have been completed, the call to the candidate is presented in writing and/or orally to Presbytery, and he is asked if he approves it.
 - i. The candidate is excused.
 - j. The motion to approve the call is made and acted on.
 - k. The motions to approve the sermon, the papers, and his educational requirements are made and acted on.
 - l. Motions to approve each area of the examination and to approve the examination as a whole and proceed to licensure, ordination, or transfer are made and acted on. In cases of ordination or transfer, the Moderator, after consultation with the ordinand or minister, then appoints a commission to preside over the installation service.
 - m. The candidate or minister is asked to return to the floor of Presbytery. The Moderator places the call in his hands and asks him to sign the book of ministerial obligations.

6. What process will ECP follow for reviewing, editing, and/or rewriting written ordination or licensure examinations?

- a. Any two commissioners to Presbytery may call for an executive session during which commissioners may state their desire to have ECP's written exams reviewed, edited, or rewritten.

- b. If Presbytery determines it is needful to edit or rewrite any or all of its exams it shall do so in the following way:
 - (1) Presbytery shall establish a Commission on Examinations consisting of 4 TE's and 4 RE's.
 - (2) The Commission shall take action to approve each exam.
 - (3) Upon completion of its work, the Commission shall report to Presbytery on its work in executive session.
- c. The Commission shall adhere to the following principles in doing its work:
 - (1) Exams should be nationally representative.
 - (2) Exams should be comprehensive but not exhaustive.
 - (3) Exams should be objectively gradable.
 - (4) Exams should be written so as not to exceed a total of ten hours of testing.

APPENDIX B – Guidelines for Keeping and Examining Session Minutes

“Minutes” are a permanent record in an orderly form.

PERMANENT:

1. All minutes should be typed or legibly written in ink.
2. All minutes should be kept in a bound volume for permanent record with the name of the church appearing on the cover of the volume. (Loose-leaf notebook is acceptable.)

RECORD:

3. The clerk should include the date of celebration of the Lord’s Supper and record births, deaths, baptisms, the manner of reception, and the dismissal of members. (*BCO* 12-8) If a member is dropped from the rolls, the clerk must state the reason and refer to the appropriate article in the *BCO* (*BCO* 12-5a).
Baptisms should include the name of the officiant. The manner of reception should be one of the following: (a) Transfer of letter (including the transferring church information); (b) re-affirmation of faith (when a letter of transfer is unavailable); (c) profession of faith (previously baptized adult or child); or, (d) profession of faith and baptism (unbaptized adult or child). Reception of children with their parents should record each child’s reception as a non-communing member and whether or not the child is baptized. Dismissal to another church should include the church information for the receiving church; and, for children who are dismissed or removed with their parents, should report their membership and baptism status.
4. A copy of the annual budget approved by the session and the annual statistical report should be attached (*BCO* 12-5). A listing of the active Ruling Elders and Deacons with contact information shall be included annually to reflect the roll as of December 31. It is recommended that an updated list be included whenever the list of active officers changes (e.g., because of rotation terms or the election and installation of new officers).
5. Joint meetings of the session and the diaconate should be recorded, keeping in mind that no joint actions can be taken (*BCO* 9-4). Therefore, any motion passed by the Session during a joint meeting should clearly indicate that only session members voted. Notations should be made when the session approves the minutes of the diaconate (*BCO* 9-4; 12-5).
6. The minutes should include the names of delegates to Presbytery or General Assembly as well as the report they make to the session after Presbytery or General Assembly (*BCO* 12-5f).

ORDERLY:

7. Every session must meet at least once quarterly (*BCO* 12-6) and submit its minutes annually for Presbytery’s review (*BCO* 12-7).
8. Parliamentary procedure is to be followed in accordance with the *BCO* and *Robert’s Rules of Order* as approved by General Assembly.
9. Each action should be put in the form of a motion, with a second and notation of whether the motion passed or failed. In no circumstance should the clerk write his personal opinion in the minutes, but notes may be made for historical purposes.
10. The minutes of each meeting should be approved at that meeting or at the following meeting. This should be done by way of a motion.
11. Each set of session minutes must be signed by the clerk. Minutes of congregational meetings must be included and signed by the Moderator and the elected clerk.

FORM:

12. Opening – At every meeting the clerk should record the date, time, and place of the meeting, the names of those present, absent, and excused. The names of visitors should be recorded. The clerk should note whether a given meeting is stated or called.
13. Pages should be consecutively numbered, leaving no blank pages between meetings and no records left unattached.
14. The minutes are to show that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer (*BCO* 12-9).
15. Presbytery’s Committee to Examine Session Minutes shall report its findings using the terminology employed by the General Assembly in its *Rules for Assembly Operations (RAO)* (exceptions of form and exceptions of substance), and sessions shall respond to exceptions of substance Presbytery finds by the same procedure specified in the *RAO*.

APPENDIX C – Teaching Elder Call to a Particular Work (Standard Form)

The _____ Church of _____,
North Carolina, being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you,

_____, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation (BCO 20-1), promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. That you may be free from worldly care and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you annually, in regular monthly/weekly payments, the following:

Salary	_____	
Housing Allowance (Utilities, furnishings, etc.)	_____	
		Salary & Housing Total _____
Benefits		
Health Insurance	_____	
Dental Insurance	_____	
Life Insurance	_____	
Disability Insurance	_____	
Social Security	_____	
Retirement Annuity	_____	
Other _____	_____	
		Benefits Total _____
Professional Expenses		
Out-of-Pocket Reimbursable Expenses	_____	
Auto/Ministry Mileage	_____	
Continuing Education	_____	
Book & Subscription Allowance	_____	
Meals	_____	
Other _____	_____	
		Expenses Total _____
		Total Annual Compensation _____
Miscellaneous		
Moving Expenses	_____	
Vacation Time	_____	
Study Leave Time	_____	
Sabbatical Leave	_____	
Other _____	_____	

These we promise during the time of your being and continuing as the pastor of this church. In testimony whereof, we, the Pulpit Nomination Committee, authorize the Chairman to sign on this date: _____.

Chairman: _____

ATTEST: I, having moderated the congregational/session meeting that extended a call to _____ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the Book of Church Order, and that the person who signed the foregoing call was authorized to do so by vote of the congregation/session.

Moderator of the Meeting _____

Form Revised 7/25/12

APPENDIX D – Report on Diaconal Practice

Ad Hoc Committee on Diaconal Practice, ECP – Dec 16, 2019

Required practice:

- That all churches ordain deacons (BCO 7-2 and 9-1) or ensure that the duties of the diaconate are effectively assumed by the elders (BCO 9-2).
- That ordainable men who meet the qualifications for deacons and serve in that role are ordained according to the BCO (7-2, 9-1, 24-6, 24-7).
- That churches clearly distinguish diaconal assistants (no matter what they are called) from ordained officers in nomenclature and installation/commissioning (BCO 9-7, 24-6, 24-7).

Prohibited practice:

- A group called a diaconate that is not ordained (BCO 7-2, 9-7, 24-6, 24-7).
- Diaconal assistants (non-officers) functioning as a diaconate without deacons (BCO 9-2, 9-7).
- Giving either non-ordained male or female diaconal assistants the title of Deacon. (BCO 7-2, 9-7, 24-6, 24-7).

Allowed practice:

- A group of helpers that is not called a diaconate or deacons, as long as there are ordained officers called “Deacons” (BCO 9-7).
- The commissioning of diaconal assistants, as long as their commissioning is distinguishable from ordination in name and process (BCO 24-6, 24-7).

Encouraged practice:

- That all churches who have a diaconate be encouraged to develop a group of diaconal assistants, male and female, to assist the deacons in their work, per BCO 9-7.
- That churches study and make use of the 2017 Study Committee Report on 'Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church' as adopted by the 45th General Assembly.

Preferences, but not binding, according to the BCO:

- The term “deaconess” is not preferred, though it is not prohibited by the BCO. While the term seeks to identify the women serving as non-ordained assistants to the deacons (BCO 9-7), it allows for no parallel, equivalent term (except for “deacons”) for the non-ordained men serving as assistants to the deacons (BCO 9-7). The term can also blur the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained.
- If a church commissions diaconal assistants, it should not do so at a service in which church officers are ordained.

APPENDIX E – Online Meetings of Presbytery

Types of Business Not Permitted

An online meeting of Presbytery shall not include the business of:

- Deliberation of guilt or innocence;
- Deliberation of a censure
- An examination for ordination or licensure

In extraordinary cases, the Administration Committee may recommend that Presbytery suspend the *Manual of Operation* to handle a case of the types above.

Technology

The technology used to conduct an online meeting of Presbytery shall ensure that all persons participating be able to hear and see each other simultaneously in order to preserve the deliberative nature of the meeting.

Personnel

Before the online meeting, the Administration Committee may appoint a person or persons to assist in the facilitation of the meeting. This includes the procurement, implementation, testing, and usage of any technology used to facilitate the online meeting. This person is not required to be a member of Presbytery, recognizing that all existing rules regarding the presence of non-members of the court still apply.

The meeting shall be conducted by a moderator. This will normally be the moderator of presbytery.

Attendance

Attendance may be recorded through electronic means.

Decorum

Prior to the meeting, members should be reminded that due to the nature of the meeting, the presbytery is placing much trust in its members to conduct themselves in a way that is honoring to God and their brothers. As such, among other items, members may be reminded to:

- Refrain from holding private or public conversations in the web conferencing chat tool
- Voting multiple times
- Have patience with the proceedings and technical challenges
-

Debate

The Administration Committee may appoint an individual to record proceedings in the web conferencing chat tool (1) to provide clarity around the actions taken by the body and (2) to assist the Stated Clerk with record keeping after the meeting has concluded. This may include (among other things) motions currently on the floor and the result of the motion after a vote. This shall not include commentary or personal opinions on speeches or motions or conversation of any kind.

Those who wish to obtain the floor should indicate their desire to speak using the software provided (e.g., “raising hand” indicating the desire to speak). The moderator should grant the floor to speakers in turn. To assist with maintaining order, the Moderator may mute all participants until the floor has been granted, at which time the moderator should unmute the speaker.

Voting

Due to the nature of the meeting, an online meeting of Presbytery should employ the use of a polling device to record votes.

Each vote in an online meeting shall be recorded as a counted vote.

In the event that a member of presbytery is unable to vote on a motion due to a technical issue (e.g., a dropped connection), the member may petition the chair to have his vote counted as long as the petition is made within 5 minutes of the vote. The chair's decision may be challenged, following the standard rules of appeal.

Record Keeping

A video and audio recording of the meeting may be retained via electronic means for the purpose of assisting the Stated Clerk with producing the Minutes. Once the minutes of the meeting have been approved by the body, the recording shall be destroyed.

Minutes of the meeting shall be produced and approved in the ordinary fashion.

This is the end of the *Manual of Operation*.