

Finances, Finance Committees and Trustees

Bible and Book of Order Perspectives

Biblical view of money/wealth

- Gift from God
- Invitation to give it away
- Expectation of stewardship
- To be used for the purpose of mission and ministry
- Something to regard with caution

Foundations of Presbyterian polity

Book of Order Section F

- F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ

The Church is the body of Christ. Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world (1 Cor. 12:27–28):

The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.

The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.

The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.

The Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.

Foundations of Presbyterian polity

Book of Order Section F

- F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the Church are:

the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;

the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship;

the preservation of the truth;

the promotion of social righteousness; and

the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G

- G-3.0106 Administration of Mission

The funding of mission similarly demonstrates the unity and interdependence of the church. The failure of any part of the church to participate in the stewardship of the mission of the whole church diminishes that unity and interdependence. All mission funding should enable the church to give effective witness in the world to God's new creation in Jesus Christ, and should strengthen the church's witness to the mission of God. (*middle paragraph*)

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G

- G-3.0109 Committees and Commissions

Councils may designate by their own rule such committees and commissions as they deem necessary and helpful for the accomplishment of the mission of the church, and may create such structures jointly with other councils, in consultation with the next higher council. In appointing such committees and commissions councils shall be mindful of the principles of unity in diversity consistent with the provisions of this Constitution (F- 1.0403, G-3.0103).

A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council. It shall make a full report to the council that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by that body. Committees of councils higher than the session shall consist of both ministers of the Word and Sacrament and members of congregations, in numbers as nearly equal as possible.

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-3.02 The Session

- G-3.0201c Composition and Responsibilities

c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. This responsibility shall include... encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church...

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-3.02 The Session

- G-3.0205 Finances

In addition to those responsibilities described in G-3.0113, the session **shall** prepare and adopt a budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences. It **shall** authorize offerings for Christian purposes and **shall** account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement. It **shall** provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters.

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-3.02 The Session

- G-3.0205 Finances (continued)

The session **shall** elect a treasurer for such term as the session **shall** decide and **shall** supervise his or her work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees. Those in charge of various congregational funds **shall** report at least annually to the session and more often as requested. Sessions **may** provide by rule for standard financial practices of the congregation, but **shall** in no case fail to observe the following procedures:

- a. All offerings **shall** be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;
- b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions **shall** be kept and **shall** be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;
- c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities **shall** be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-4.01 Incorporation and Trustees

- G-4.0101 Incorporation and Power

Where permitted by civil law, each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained. If incorporation is not permitted, individual trustees shall be elected by the congregation. Any such individual trustees shall be elected from the congregation's members in the same manner as those elected to the ordered ministries of deacon and ruling elder. Terms of service shall be governed by the provisions of G-2.0404.

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-4.01 Incorporation and Trustees

- G-4.0101 Incorporation and Power (continued)

The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the congregation, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted in a duly constituted meeting; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation, **all subject to the authority of the session** and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). **The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.**

The Form of Government

Book of Order Section G-4.01 Incorporation and Trustees

- G-4.0102 Members of the Corporation

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees. The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees.

Key Points

- The money entrusted to the church is meant to be used for mission and ministry, consistent with the “Great Ends of the Church.”
- All committees are responsible to the session and have no authority other than to carry out the actions of the session or to make recommendations to the session.
- Trustees only have particular financial authority over “permanent special funds,” and even that authority is subject to the overarching authority of the session.
- Trustees or Finance Committees do not have unilateral power or authority over property or finances.