

**PC(USA) Polity**

**Presbyterian USA Constitution**

Book of Confessions

Book of Order

- Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
- Form of Government
- Directory for Worship
- Rules of Discipline



**Structure of Governing Councils**

Session	The governing council of the local congregation. Composed of Teaching Elders (Ministers) and Ruling Elders
Presbytery	The governing council of a regional group of congregations. Composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders with the goal of parity between them in mind.
Synod	Governing council of several presbyteries. Vary on number of functions.
General Assembly	Governing council of the denomination. Meets every other year. Composed of equal numbers of Teaching and Ruling Elders.

**F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms, within the context of its commitment to the Church universal, a special commitment to basic principles of Presbyterian polity:

*F-3.0201 One Church*

The particular congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church, called the church.

*F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters*

This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders. Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and

to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Teaching elders shall be committed in all their work to equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.

*F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils*

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller.

*F-3.0204 Seek and Represent the Will of Christ*

Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.

*F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote*

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.

*F-3.0206 Review and Control*

A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal.

*F-3.0207 Ordination by Council*

Presbyters (ruling elders and teaching elders) and deacons are ordained only by the authority of a council.

*F-3.0208 Shared Power, Exercised Jointly*

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.

*F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils*

Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.