

Committee on the Office of the General Assembly
Manual of Operations
(revisions - February 6, 2018)

Preface:

The purpose of this Manual is to set forth the membership, structure, responsibilities, and relationships of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA).

COGA is provided for by the Organization for Mission and General Assembly Standing Rules E.2. and specific responsibilities are provided in the Standing Rules of the General Assembly. It is authorized to carry out the assembly's oversight of the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly; to assure the accountability of the Stated Clerk to the General Assembly during the interim between sessions of the assembly; and to provide linkage with the General Assembly Council.

The meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and its Coordinating Committee are held in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Order*. Meetings of COGA are held in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order...

I. MAKEUP OF THE COMMITTEE

A. **Membership.** The General Assembly shall elect a Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (see *Book of Order*, G-13.0103g and SR E.2.) composed of fourteen members; the fifteenth member is the Moderator of the General Assembly. All members of COGA are corresponding members of the General Assembly. The members of the committee shall serve a four-year term and be eligible for election to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial.

The Moderator of the General Assembly shall serve as member of the committee with vote during his/her years of moderatorial service. The Vice Moderator of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the vice chairperson of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board will serve as corresponding members of the committee with voice and no vote.

B. **Leadership.** The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall elect its own officers and determine its structure, including any subcommittees (E.2.b). The COGA shall establish a work group on assembly arrangements to be composed of designated members from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk, the Moderator of the General Assembly, and the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The moderator of the Committee on Local Arrangements, and the moderator and vice-moderator of the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures (when selected) shall be nonvoting members of the committee at all meetings in which matters will be considered that affect their particular work. This work group shall be assigned responsibilities (8) through (17) in Standing Rule E.2.d.

C. **Budget.** The Committee shall be funded from the per capita apportionment and its financial activity shall be reported through a separate line in the General Assembly Permanent and special Committee Schedule. The proposed budgets of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall be submitted to the General Assembly (E.2.c).

D. **Responsibilities:** please see Standing Rules E.2.d. (1) – E.2.d. (18)

II. LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Officers of the Committee

1. There shall be a Moderator who shall preside at meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; review the Administrative Record, and be a member of and preside at meetings of the COGA Coordinating Committee; consult with the Stated Clerk on issues arising between meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; nominate to COGA committee members to serve where representation is needed and guide the committee in fulfilling its responsibilities. The Moderator shall be the representative of COGA to other assembly entities.
2. There shall be a Vice-Moderator who shall assume the duties of the moderator when called upon or when the chair becomes vacant; be a member of the COGA Coordinating Committee; review the Administrative Record and record the minutes of the executive sessions of the committee. Serve as a corresponding member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.
3. Ordinarily, the officers of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will serve for ~~four~~ ~~two~~ years – two as Vice Moderator and two as Moderator.
4. The officers shall begin to serve immediately upon the adjournment of the General Assembly and shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding General Assembly.
5. Nominations: The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly nominating committee will present nominees for Moderator and Vice-Moderator on the first day of the winter meeting preceding each General Assembly. The election will be held on the final day of the winter meeting. Nominations from the floor will be in order.
6. Elections will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

B. COGA Coordinating Committee

1. The COGA Coordinating Committee shall normally be composed of five (5) committee members. The COGA moderator and vice-moderator, and a member of each class will serve on the coordinating committee (each class will elect a member to the committee). The COGA Moderator will name a fifth person to serve on the COGA Coordinating Committee.
2. The members of the coordinating committee shall be elected each year in which a General Assembly is held at the fall meeting and shall begin service immediately. Additional at-large members may be elected to fulfill the PC(USA)'s commitment to inclusiveness.

3. Responsibilities of the Coordinating Committee. Led by the COGA Moderator, a. it plans the agenda for meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; the COGA moderator in consultation with the coordinating committee will suggest to COGA how to organize its business on a meeting by meeting basis; b. ensures follow-up of actions taken by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly;

a. consults with the GA Moderator on appointment of General Assembly committee leadership;

b. approves the COGA report to the General Assembly;

c. reviews and recommends revisions to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly Manual of Operations;

d. acts, when necessary, on behalf of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly between meetings, reporting all such actions to the next regular meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly;

e. initiates the process of End of Term/Nomination review (see Appendix A).

f. monitors and reviews the process of the election of the Stated Clerk (see Appendix B).

C. COGA Nominating Committee

1. The Nominating Committee, appointed by the COGA moderator, shall be composed of three persons from the outgoing class.

2. Responsibilities

a. To identify potential new nominees for the COGA who complement the skills represented by current members;

b. To submit to the General Assembly Nominating Committee the names of COGA members to be re-nominated to COGA;

c. To present a slate of officers for election at the winter meeting preceding a General Assembly;

d. To nominate one representative to serve on the PHS Board of Directors. The COGA representative shall serve ex officio with vote.

III. COGA ORGANIZES ITS WORK

Responsibilities: In its oversight of the work of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the Office of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have the responsibility to:

A. Support and review the role of the Stated Clerk in administration and personnel issues. To fulfill this function COGA shall:

1. Regularly consult and review with the Stated Clerk the work of each department within the Office of the General Assembly.
 2. Regularly consults and reviews with the Stated Clerk policies and practices relative to his/her custody of official records and documents of the denomination.
 3. Review the budget requests submitted by the Stated Clerk for that portion of the per capita budget administered by the Stated Clerk, and to forward the request to the Mission Support Services Office with the comments of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. Once the budget is adopted by the General Assembly, any changes to the budget must follow the most recent guidelines for amending the budget adopted by the General Assembly (1995 GA Minutes, p. 302). COGA regularly reviews budget reports at its stated meetings (Standing Rule E.2.3).
 4. Review annually the work of the Stated Clerk and be responsible for an end-of term evaluation or exit interview (See Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(d) and Appendix A of the COGA Manual).
 5. Review and approve the proposed changes presented by the Stated Clerk to the staffing rationale, the compensation plan and personnel policies of the Office of the General Assembly (Standing Rule E.2.a).
 6. Consult with the Stated Clerk regarding any proposals to the General Assembly concerning persons being recommended for election to the office of Associate Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and any persons being appointed to the office of Assistant Stated Clerk (Standing Rule G.5).
 7. Consult with the Stated Clerk on all proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and that such consultation shall occur prior to the Stated Clerk proposing any amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly (Standing Rule B.3.a).
- B. Oversee all arrangements for each meeting of the General Assembly in partnership With the Stated Clerk and the staff of the Office of the General Assembly. To fulfill this responsibility, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall:
1. Receive regular reports from the staff of the Office of the General Assembly regarding planning, budget, administration, program, structure and constitutional issues related to the meetings of the General Assembly; to meet with representatives of the Committee on Local Arrangements as required and receive reports from them (Standing Rule E.2.e).
 2. Outline the programs for future General Assemblies sufficiently in advance to ensure an orderly progression of themes and emphases and to ensure the appointment of significant speakers and other program participants (Standing Rule E.2.d.(9)).
 3. Review the work of special committees and report to each session of the General Assembly a summary of the work being carried out by special committees, including recommendations to transfer the work assigned to a

special committee elsewhere or to dismiss the committee (Standing Rules B.8.b and E.9.a).

4. Review the evaluation of each General Assembly session presented by the Stated Clerk; review referrals to the General Assembly Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (Standing Rule E.2.d.(8)).

5. Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk's proposed docket for the next session of the General Assembly (Standing Rules B.1 and E.2.d.(10)).

6. Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Business Referrals a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk's proposed referral of each item of business to an appropriate assembly committee (Standing Rules B.6 and E.2.d.(11)).

7. Coordinate the programmatic aspects of each General Assembly session, ensuring that adequate time is provided for the business that must be transacted (Standing Rule E.2.d.(14)).

8. Prepare a report from COGA, including recommendations on the docket and the referral of assembly business, to be distributed with other materials provided to commissioners (Standing Rule E.2.d.(16)).

9. Reviews and consults with the Stated Clerk on appeals regarding the preparation and distribution of the business of the General Assembly (Standing Rule B.5.b).

10. Reviews and consults with the Stated Clerk on policies, meetings, briefings, hearings, or other events of any kind during those hours when the General Assembly is in session (Standing Rule E.2.d.(15)).

11. Review the recommendations of the Stated Clerk and set the amount of per diem for sessions of the General Assembly (Standing Rule D.4).

12. Review and present to the General Assembly for its action the date and place of future GA meetings and any changes in dates and places of meetings previously set (Standing Rule D.1.a).

C. Support the leadership of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly. As it works in partnership with these officers, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall:

1. Encourage the ministries of the Moderator and Vice Moderator as each itinerates on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In exercise of pastoral concern for the Moderator and Vice-Moderator to consult with them concerning their stewardship of time, their sabbatic rest, and the expectations of the Standing Rules (Standing Rule F.4.a).

2. Receive the written report of the Moderator of the General Assembly (Standing Rule F.6).

3. Consult with the Moderator's plans regarding the planning of worship at the General Assembly (Standing Rule D.3.a).

4. Through the Coordinating Committee assists the Moderator regarding the appointment of a commissioner to be the moderator of each assembly committee and a commissioner to serve as vice-moderator of each assembly committee (Standing Rule C.3.a.(1)).

D. COGA meets in the year in which the General Assembly meets with the Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and when possible with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, to discuss items of mutual concern and interest and in order to foster coordination, communication, education and community-building between the two entities (Standing Rule E.2.d.(5)).

E. COGA elects one representative to serve on the PHS Board of Directors. The COGA representative shall serve ex officio with vote.

IV. REPORTS WHICH COME TO THE COMMITTEE

A. The Stated Clerk shall report at each meeting as to the status of the work and mission of the Office of the General Assembly, including any current or pending actions or activities of which the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly members need to be aware (Standing Rule E.2.1).

B. COGA will receive reports on the Per Capita budget at each meeting (Standing Rule 2.d.3).

C. COGA will at least annually receive a report from the Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society (*Covenant of Understanding* between COGA and PHS Board, Item #10).

D. The Committee shall receive a written report from the Moderator and the Vice Moderator of the General Assembly at each meeting of the COGA (Standing Rule F.6).

V. COGA MEETINGS AND THEIR CONTENT

A. Frequency of meeting: In addition to meeting at a stated meeting of the General Assembly, COGA shall meet ~~two (2)~~ **up to three (3)** times a year in accordance with a schedule that is established by its membership.

B. Location of Meetings/Meeting Dates:

1. All meeting dates shall be set, taking into consideration meeting dates of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the schedule of the Moderator of the General Assembly.

2. For financial considerations, to the extent practicable, the meetings shall normally be in Louisville, Kentucky, with the exception of the meeting that takes place at the Assembly site.

3. Other locations may be used as deemed necessary to facilitate the work of the committee.

4. Telephone or electronic conferencing may be used to replace or augment meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

C. The Fall meeting following a stated meeting of the General Assembly shall be organizational and instructional in nature, to include:

1. orientation of any new COGA members to COGA and OGA;
2. review of referrals from the General Assembly to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly;
3. review evaluations of General Assembly session;
4. review of preliminary GA docket;
5. review and approval of GA per Diem;
6. review of OGA budget and approval of revised budget; review and approval of changes in OGA's staffing rationale and OGA's Personnel Policies;
7. review and approval of standing rule amendments;
8. annual review of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly (see Appendix A);
9. such other matters as may come before the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

D. Other meetings shall include in their agendas the following items of business, at such times as best support the effective functioning of the General Assembly:

1. review and approval of GA docket; review of requests from entities for docket time at GA; review of requests from entities to schedule meetings during GA; review of referrals of assembly business to committees;
2. review and approval of the COGA report to the General Assembly;
3. overview and approval of Joint Per Capita budget;
4. overview and approval of OGA's budget;
5. meeting with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board's Executive Committee;
6. overview and approval of GA referrals;
7. evaluation of OGA's current goals, and review and approval of annual strategic planning for the Office of the General Assembly;
8. overview and approval of standing rule amendments;
9. conversations with staff of the Committee on Local Arrangements and the GA Moderator regarding programmatic aspects of the GA;
10. overview and approval of GA logos and themes as presented by the COLA;
11. review and approval of future assembly sites;
12. review and approval of GA Committee Leadership;
13. review the work, and approve the report of special committees;
14. electing the committee's moderator and vice-moderator, whose terms shall begin at the adjournment of the General Assembly;
15. review and recommend revisions to the COGA Manual of Operations;

16. such other matters as may be necessary and/or appropriate.

E. In the year in which a stated meeting of the General Assembly is held the Committee shall meet during the Assembly at the discretion of the Coordinating Committee to:

1. review and offer comments on Commissioners' Resolutions as appropriate;
2. address any last-minute items related to the Assembly;
3. handle such other matters as may be necessary and/or appropriate.

VI. PARTICIPATION OF COGA MEMBERS AT THE ASSEMBLY

A. Ordinarily, all members of the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly attend the biennial General Assembly. Not only does this attendance make possible an opportunity for onsite observation and training in the ways of the General Assembly, it also provides a means for utilizing committee members as facilitators, enablers, resource persons, and the like.

B. All members are corresponding members of the General Assembly. One member, ordinarily the moderator, will report to the General Assembly on behalf of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

C. Other committee members may be used in lieu of other volunteers so that financial implications will be minimal if not neutral.

VII. RELATIONSHIPS

A. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall meet together biannually.

B. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Executive Director will be an ex officio member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly without vote (see Standing Rule E.2.a).

C. Clarifying the Role of Committee and Role of Staff

1. All policies and procedures for the Office of the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly are governed by the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

2. The style of operations of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly in its work with the Stated Clerk and the staff of the Office of the General Assembly shall be a consultative relationship. The specific duties and responsibilities of the committee and staff should be developed jointly within an attitude of trust where authority, accountability, goals, and objectives are clearly defined.

D. Stated Clerk: The Stated Clerk shall be an ex officio member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and its Coordinating Committee without vote.

E. Mission Area Directors: The department directors will participate regularly in meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly with voice but without vote.

F. Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER): The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have a liaison on the Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

G. Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Historical Society: The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have a liaison on the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

H. Joint Committee on the Office of the General Assembly/Presbyterian Mission Agency Board [Per Capita] Budget Table. When needed, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall appoint three (3) of its members to the Joint COGA/GAC [Per Capita] Budget Table, one of which shall be designated co-convenor by the COGA moderator.

APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

A. Stated Clerk:

There will be two forms of assessment of the Stated Clerk's work: (1) an annual review and (2) an end-of-term evaluation.

1. Annual Review

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will annually review the work of the Stated Clerk (Standing Rule E.1.d.(2)).

The annual review will be based on work objectives developed by the Stated Clerk and approved by the committee.

At the fall meeting, the committee will meet with the Stated Clerk to review work performance for the past year, and in light of the review to consider work objectives for the year ahead.

Result of the annual review shall be given to the Stated Clerk in writing.

2. End-of-Term Evaluation

The Stated Clerk Nomination Committee will be responsible for conducting an end-of-term evaluation (see Standing Rule G.1.C.(1)(d)).

The end-of-term evaluation must include a recommendation whether the Stated Clerk should be considered for reelection.

B. Review of Other Staff:

The Stated Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the review and evaluation of all other staff is done on a regular basis. The result of the review of department directors shall be reported to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT OF THE STATED CLERK ELECTION

I. The process of electing a Stated Clerk (delineated in Standing Rule G.1.c.) outlines four responsibilities for the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA). They are as follows:

- A. Nominate three persons to serve on the Stated Clerk Nomination Committee, one of whom shall serve as the moderator of the committee (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(a)).
- B. Provide the nomination committee with a current position description for the position of Stated Clerk (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(e)).
- C. Ensure that an adequate budget for the nomination process is provided in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(f)).
- D. Designate staff services for the nomination committee and, as necessary, (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(f) and G.1.c.(2)(d)(ii)).

II. PROCESS

A. One year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk at the COGA winter meeting, the Coordinating Committee shall meet to develop a slate of three (3) nominees to serve on the Stated Clerk Nomination Committee (naming one as the moderator); and in developing the slate, the COGA Coordinating Committee, will consider the talents and skills needed for this responsibility, including knowledge and scope of OGA operations, inclusiveness, expertise/experience in personnel matters, and familiarity with the position description of the Stated Clerk. The COGA moderator will propose this slate of nominees to COGA for confirmation at its winter meeting, one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk; and, this list of nominees will then be forwarded to the General Assembly Nominating Committee.

B. The COGA Coordinating Committee will present to COGA any proposals for amending the position description for the Stated Clerk no later than its spring meeting, one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk, and this updated description will be forwarded to the nomination committee immediately following the adjournment of the General Assembly.

C. The COGA Coordinating Committee will consider any budget implications of these proposals and report such implications to the COGA winter meeting one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk.

D. Staff Services

1) Staff services for the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee will be provided by someone from outside the staff of General Assembly entities; and, that COGA search for a person in the church who is knowledgeable about OGA operations; and

2) the Coordinating Committee will present to COGA for adoption at its winter

meeting (one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk) a position description for the person who is to provide staff services to the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee; and

3) The Coordinating Committee will propose, in consultation with the chair of the Search Committee, to COGA at its spring meeting (one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk) for confirmation a name of a person to serve as staff to the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee; and

E. The moderator, vice-moderator, and staff person, will be included in the General Assembly Leadership Briefing to be held on the date scheduled in the year of the election of the Stated Clerk as preparation for the prospect of providing leadership for the Candidate Review Committee.

Appendix C:

OPEN MEETING POLICY*

Approved by the 209th General Assembly (1997)¹

1. The work of the church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust. Church members have a basic right to know about the work done and the decisions made by entities within the church. Church leaders have a basic responsibility to honor that right by conducting their business with a spirit of openness and vulnerability to public scrutiny. Therefore, open meetings shall be the norm for all such entities.
2. It is the policy of the General Assembly; the General Assembly Council, its Ministries Divisions and [Mission Support Services], and of the entities and work groups related to them, that their meetings shall be open to all interested persons.
3. In certain circumstances, when the confidentiality of the subject matter is impeding the open work of the group, meetings of these entities may be closed. The following requirements apply:
 - a. Subjects dealt with must be limited to property negotiation, personnel, civil and criminal litigation, or security.
 - b. Closed meetings may be authorized only after serious consideration and by a majority vote of the members present. Such closure must be limited in time and scope to matters in 3(a) above.
 - c. In closed meetings, only voting members and other persons invited by the group to serve it are to be present.
 - d. The reason(s) for closing must be announced before closure and also must be recorded in the minutes.
 - e. The decisions reached shall be recorded in the minutes and shall be made public as soon as possible following the end of the closed meeting.
4. Since staff groups have neither authority nor responsibility for establishing policy, their meetings are not subject to these provisions. This does not preclude them from opening their meetings.
5. The provisions of this policy shall apply to visitors and to representatives of both church and public media, including print, electronic, and photographic journalists.
6. All the provisions of this policy are to be applied equitably to all persons and groups.
7. The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is responsible for resolving questions relating to the application and interpretation of the open meeting policy.

*The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the following statement in regards to the Open Meeting Policy:

The General Assembly Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the PC(USA) shall be exempt from this open meeting policy in order to go into closed session solely for the purpose of exchanging views on sensitive theological issues in cases where it is determined by two-third's vote of the members of the task force present in a duly called and constituted meeting. (Minutes, 2003, Part I, p. 23)