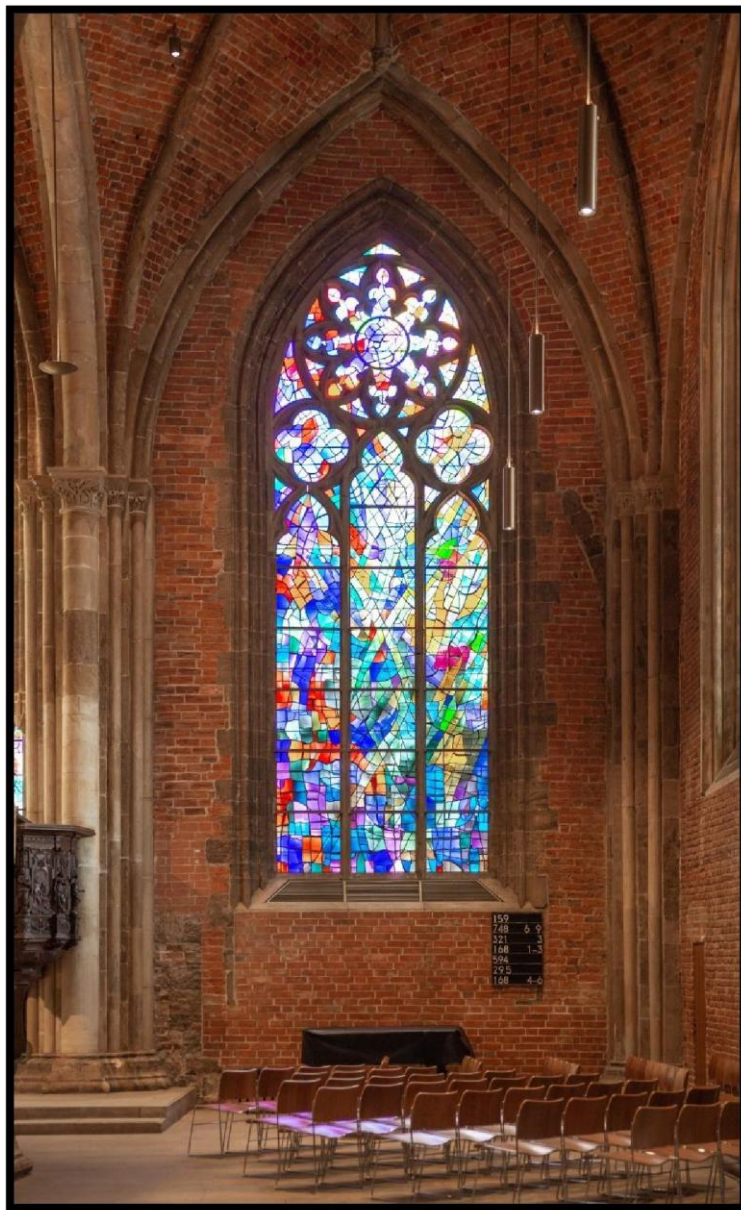


# Palo Duro Presbytery's Manual of Operations 2025



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# Vision Statement

## Chapter 1 – Palo Duro Presbytery Guiding Vision: Living in Relationship

### *I Corinthians 12:12-27*

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ! For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body" that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body" that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

### *Micah 6:8*

*He has told you, O Mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?*

Palo Duro Presbytery is called to be the Reformed expression of the body of Christ in this time and place. This expression of the body, like the human body, is made up of many different members, each of which is in relationship with the others.

The one God is revealed in relationship--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--and calls us into this covenant relationship as persons, congregations, and presbytery. It is this covenant relationship that brings life, hope, faith, and salvation and enables faithful living in Christ.

### **Called to Live in the Love of Christ.**

Living in relationship means we focus our energy and efforts so singularly upon the love of Christ that an atmosphere of mutual love and respect permeates all our activities, an atmosphere where matters of disagreement are always secondary.

Living in relationship with God means we are called to learn and practice the Christian disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship, witness, and discernment in all aspects of our life together.

Living in relationship means that support and care for one another as congregations is our primary, mutual responsibility. In congregations, we are called, as leaders and members, to support and care for one another. The same is true of us as a presbytery. “If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” As the body of Christ, it is the role of staff and structure of our presbytery to support and to enable such relationships of mutual care.

Living in relationship means we act out of compassion and love rather than out of fear and retribution. We seek to learn about each other to share one another’s suffering and one another’s joy. We search for opportunities for God to do something new through us as we foster faith-full relationships with one another.

### **Called to Seek and Do God’s Will.**

Living in relationship means we are constantly seeking God’s will for our life together and are willing to set ourselves aside so that God’s will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Living in relationship means we value and need each other’s unique gifts and skills, talents, and points of view. “Indeed, the body does not consist of one part, but of many.” Seeking God’s will as good and faithful people, we will sometimes agree and other times differ with each other. We acknowledge that God’s ways are often different from our own. Thus, seeking and doing God’s will involves discerning, discussing, agreeing, and differing in the context of relationships, in which we commit ourselves together to the law of love.

### **Called to Faithful Witness.**

Living in relationship means we are called to proclaim the Gospel of Grace, known in Jesus Christ-God’s amazing, undeserved love for all people and all of creation. This Gospel is the unique message we are called to both embody and share, in words and deeds.

Living in relationship means we are in partnership with persons, organizations, and ministries that proclaim and share the love of Jesus Christ in their witness, whoever they may be.

Living in relationship means we are passionate about the health and growth of congregations and teaching elders (ministers) and commit ourselves to enabling faithful and fruitful ministry in every setting.

**Standing Rules**  
**PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**  
Approved: January 2021

**Chapter 1 – Definitions**

- 1.1 This presbytery is known as Palo Duro Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); hereafter referred to as PDP.
- 1.2 The area of PDP includes the following Counties of the State of Texas: Archer, Armstrong, Bailey, Baylor, Borden, Briscoe, Brown, Callahan, Carson, Castro, Childress, Clay, Cochran, Coleman, Collingsworth, Comanche, Cottle, Crosby, Dallam, Dawson, Deaf Smith, Dickens, Donley, Eastland, Fisher, Floyd, Foard, Garza, Gray, Hale, Hall, Hansford, Hardeman, Hartley, Haskell, Hemphill, Hockley, Hutchinson, Jack, Jones, Kent, King, Knox, Lamb, Lipscomb, Lubbock, Lynn, Mitchell, Montague, Moore, Motley, Nolan, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Roberts, Scurry, Shackelford, Sherman, Stephens, Stonewall, Swisher, Taylor, Terry, Throckmorton, Wheeler, Wichita, Wilbarger, Yoakum, Young.
- 1.3 Palo Duro Presbytery operates under the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which consists of the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

**Chapter 2 – Presbytery in Session (Meetings)**

- 2.1 Officers and Quorum:  
The officers of PDP shall be the moderator, vice-moderator, stated clerk, assistant clerk (optional), and treasurer. All officers shall be nominated only after their consent has been obtained.
- 2.2 A presbytery moderator shall be elected at the last stated meeting of each calendar year. The term of office shall be one year, beginning with the opening of the first stated meeting following the election. The moderator may be nominated for a second one-year term.
- 2.3 A vice-moderator shall be nominated to the presbytery by the moderator upon taking office.
- 2.4 An assistant clerk may be nominated by the stated clerk and elected by PDP.
- 2.5 A quorum for a meeting of the presbytery shall consist of at least three ministers of Word and Sacrament and ruling elders from at least three congregations.
- 2.6 Number of meetings:  
PDP shall hold two stated meetings per year and adjourned or special meetings as needed. At least one of these meetings shall be onsite.

2.7 Date and Time of Meetings:  
Stated meetings of PDP shall take place on the date and time determined and approved by the presbytery.

2.8 Place of Meetings:  
The place for stated meetings shall be selected by PDP. The presbytery aims to meet in each of the four areas by rotation, in no particular order. Presbytery may meet for stated meetings virtually at least one of these times.

2.9 Procedure:  
PDP shall be governed in its meetings by the *Book of Order* and the most recent revision of *Robert's Rules of Order*. In cases when the *Book of Order* and Robert's Rules seem to conflict, the body will follow the *Book of Order*.

2.10 Docket and Schedule of Activity:  
PDP shall adopt its docket and schedule of activities at each meeting upon recommendation of the presbytery's Common Life Ministry. The first stated meeting of each calendar year may include a meeting of the Corporation of the Amarillo Children's Home in Amarillo, the election of trustees of that corporation, and a report on the program of the home.

2.11 Membership:  
When PDP meets, each resident teaching elder (minister) is expected to be present. Each session shall be represented by ruling elders commissioned by the session, according to membership as follows:

Membership up to 150	1 Commissioner
Membership of 151-250	2 Commissioners
Membership of 251-500	3 Commissioners
Membership of 501-1000	4 Commissioners
Membership of 1001+	5 Commissioners

2.12 Expenses of Commissioners:  
Each church is responsible for the expenses of its commissioners, ministers of Word and Sacrament, commissioned pastors, and ruling elders to meetings of PDP.

2.13 Papers for Meetings:  
As a goal, all overtures, recommendations, resolutions, reports, etc. shall be in the stated clerk's hands at least one week before each stated meeting, for distribution to commissioners five days prior to the meeting. The meeting packet is posted virtually and may be updated daily up to the date of the meeting. Commissioners should verify that they have the most recent version before the meeting begins.

2.14 Committees:  
Palo Duro Presbytery will do its work through a committee structure. Committees will consist of the Committee on Ministry, Common Life Ministry, Council of Ministries,

Nominations and Representation Ministry, Preparation Ministry, Resources Ministry, and any other committees or task forces determined by the presbytery and the Council of Ministries. No committee chair or member is eligible to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms (six consecutive years).

2.15 Other Commissions and Committees:

PDP shall name administrative commissions or judicial commissions as may be necessary and advisable to act for the presbytery in the organization of churches, the ordination and installation of teaching elders (ministers), the adjudication of disputes within particular congregations, and any other situations which may arise and may be constitutionally delegated to a commission. The presbytery shall be responsible for setting the size of each commission, mandating the scope of its powers, and electing the persons to serve.

2.16 PDP, its Council of Ministries, and ministry teams are expected to meet regularly throughout the year to accomplish their tasks in the life of the presbytery. These meetings may be conducted on-site or virtually via an electronic platform such as Zoom, with opportunities for interaction and discernment together.

2.17 **Virtual Meetings:** PDP, its Council of Ministries, ministry teams, and task groups may use a virtual communication system (including videoconferencing technology, the internet, and conference calls) to meet if:

- a. The system provides access to the meeting in a manner or using a method by which each person participating in the meeting can communicate concurrently with each other participant; and
- b. If voting is to take place at the meeting, the entity must implement reasonable measures to verify that every person voting at the virtual meeting is sufficiently identified and keep a record of any vote or other action taken; items approved by virtual vote shall be reported to and affirmed by the whole group at their next regularly scheduled onsite meeting.

2.18 Email voting may be used for a single item that has been previously debated in a duly called meeting or for an item that is presumed to be noncontroversial. It is understood that if one person objects to the email vote, the matter will be considered by the full council ministry at the next onsite or virtual meeting. Deliberation via email is not permitted. Items approved by email vote will be reported to and affirmed by the whole group at the next regularly scheduled onsite or virtual meeting. (Please note that items that require action of PDP must be addressed in either a stated meeting or a called special meeting of the presbytery.)

2.19 In the event that a ministry cannot achieve a quorum during a meeting, those who are able to meet may act as a task group to work through the docket and present its work to the full ministry or council as a recommendation for approval via an email vote of the ministry or council.

2.20 The Council of Ministries, ministry teams, and other task groups shall develop their policies to determine the kind of work they will conduct in onsite and electronic meetings.

### **Chapter 3 – Staff**

- 3.1 There shall be an executive presbyter called by PDP. The executive presbyter shall be responsible to the presbytery through the Council of Ministries for oversight of the presbytery's office and staff operations. The position is for an indefinite term.
- 3.2 There may be other professional staff as determined by the presbytery. All other staff shall be under the supervision of the executive presbyter and responsible to PDP through the Council of Ministries.
- 3.3 PDP shall elect a stated clerk and treasurer. (See Appendix A and Appendix B for guidelines.)
- 3.4 The executive presbyter position will be reviewed by the Council of Ministries, and the executive presbyter will review staff annually and will share results with the Council of Ministries.

### **Chapter 4 – Presbytery's Office**

- 4.1 PDP may have a central office location. It should deploy its program opportunities, resources, and meetings across the presbytery's geography.
- 4.2 Taking into account the factors of geographical centrality and accessibility of public transportation, especially air travel, the presbytery office shall be located in Lubbock, Texas.
- 4.3 **Manuals of Operations:**  
An operations manual shall be written and submitted to PDP by each of the following: Palo Duro Presbytery, Committee on Ministry, and Preparation Ministry. Upon approval, the manuals shall guide the operations of these presbytery units.

### **Chapter 5 – The Corporation of Palo Duro Presbytery**

- 5.1 PDP shall cause a non-profit corporation to be formed according to the laws of the State of Texas.
- 5.2 PDP shall elect three trustees of the corporation who shall serve for three years and may be eligible for re-election for multiple terms. They shall take office upon election.
- 5.3 The stated clerk shall serve as secretary of the corporation.
- 5.4 The trustees shall receive, hold, encumber, and transfer property and facilitate the civil affairs of the presbytery as the presbytery may from time to time direct, and are hereby vested with such authority as may be necessary to execute on behalf of the corporation

deeds, contracts, leases, and all other types of legal documents. The trustees shall function as an ongoing task group of the Council of Ministries and shall report their actions through the Council of Ministries.

## Chapter 6 – Suspension and Amendment

- 6.1 Any Standing Rule of the presbytery, except that providing for the amendment of the Standing Rules, may be suspended for a particular meeting upon the consent of two-thirds (2/3) of those present, provided the rule is specifically cited.
- 6.2 Any proposed amendment to the Standing Rules must be presented in writing to the Council of Ministries before being considered by the presbytery. The Council of Ministries shall include the proposed amendment in its report to the presbytery with a recommendation. The amendment must be approved by the presbytery before becoming effective.

## Chapter 7 – Judicial Process

- 7.1 Initiation: The disciplinary process begins when a written statement alleging that an active member of a congregation or a minister of the Word and Sacrament, commissioned pastor, or ruling elder leader of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has committed an offense is submitted to the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the member. (D-7.0102) No written allegation shall be filed later than five years from the time the alleged offense was discovered, except in cases of sexual abuse of another person as defined in D-7.0901, in which case the five-year time limit shall not apply. There is also no time limit to file an allegation that a person who knew or reasonably should have known of the reasonable risk of sexual abuse of another, as defined in D-7.0901, failed to take reasonable steps to minimize the risk. (D-7.0201a)
- 7.2 Referral to Investigating Committee: When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of the presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the **person** accused or the nature of the alleged offense and **shall** refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry. **Pursuant to G-4.0302, the clerk shall report to civil legal authorities any knowledge of harm, or risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or adult lacking mental capacity.** (D-7.0501) The Presbytery's moderator, with full consent of the Stated Clerk or Clerk of Session and the moderator of the Committee on Ministry, shall appoint an Investigating Committee. An investigating committee shall have no more than five but no fewer than three members and may include members from another council. Sessions shall not appoint elders currently on the session to an investigating committee. All members of an investigating committee shall be members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (D-7.06)

- 7.3 Process: The investigating committee shall hold its first meeting within sixty days of its appointment. (D-7.1101) The investigating committee shall conduct a thorough inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the alleged offense in accordance with the process outlined in Chapter 7 of the Rules of Discipline in the Constitution.
- 7.4 Rights of the Accuser: The investigating committee shall inform the person submitting the allegation of the following rights: the right to be treated with fairness and respect; the right to be accompanied by an advocate whenever asked to meet with the investigating committee, the prosecuting committee, and the session or permanent judicial commission (The role of the advocate is to provide support and pastoral care. The advocate shall not be permitted to address the committee, session, or permanent judicial commission on behalf of the accuser.); if charges are filed, the right to reasonable and timely notice of, and to be present at all public proceedings related to the charges, unless the prosecuting committee determines that testimony by the accuser would be materially affected if they heard other testimony at trial. (D-7.1001)
- 7.5 Rights of the Person Alleging Harm: When it is possible to do so while also maintaining appropriate confidentiality, the investigating committee shall notify individuals named in the allegation who are alleged to have been harmed by the offense of the following rights: the right to be treated with fairness and respect; the right to be accompanied by an advocate whenever asked to meet with the investigating committee, the prosecuting committee, and the session or permanent judicial commission (The role of the advocate is to provide support and pastoral care. The advocate shall not be permitted to address the committee, session, or permanent judicial commission on behalf of those alleged to have been harmed.); if charges are filed, the right to reasonable and timely notice of, and to be present at all public proceedings related to the charges, unless the prosecuting committee determines that testimony by those alleged to have been harmed would be materially affected if they heard other testimony at trial. (D-7.1002)
- 7.6 Rights of the Accused: At the beginning of each and every conference with an investigating committee, the prosecuting committee, and the session or permanent judicial commission, the person against whom an allegation has been made shall be informed by the investigating committee of the following rights: the right to remain silent throughout the entire disciplinary process; the right to be treated with fairness and respect; during the investigation, the right to be represented by counsel at their own expense and to be accompanied by an advocate (The role of the advocate is to provide support and pastoral care. The advocate, if not also counsel, shall not be permitted to address the committee, session, or permanent judicial commission); if charges are later filed, the right to reasonable and timely notice of, and to be present at, all public proceedings related to the charges, to be represented by counsel (D-7.0104), and to have counsel appointed if unable to afford counsel. (D-7.1003)

**Ministry Teams**  
**PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**Chapter 1 – Presbytery in Session**      *(Reference Standing Rules page 5 Chapter 2)*

- 1.1 Election of Presbytery Moderator
- a. Any session or any area of PDP may submit the name of a nominee to the stated clerk of the presbytery between January 1 and July 31. The moderator shall be a teaching elder (minister) or ruling elder.
  - b. If the stated clerk has received no such nominations by July 31, the presbytery's Nominations and Representation Ministry shall be informed and shall move to nominate one or more persons for the office of moderator.
  - c. The names of nominees for presbytery moderator submitted before the last stated meeting of the presbytery will be circulated to the presbytery by electronic mailing before that meeting.
  - d. Nominations may be made from the floor at the appropriate time in the last stated meeting of the year.
  - e. No person shall be nominated for the office of moderator by any of the above procedures unless prior consent has been secured from the person to be nominated and the person has indicated willingness to serve if elected.
  - f. In the event of multiple nominations, a majority of those present and voting is required for election.

**Chapter 2 – Presbytery's Organization and Structure**

- 2.1 Council of Ministries
- a. Membership and Election: The Council of Ministries will have one member from each ministry, the moderator and vice-moderator of PDP, the executive presbyter, and the stated clerk.)
  - b. Officers and Quorum: The moderator of the presbytery shall serve as the moderator of the Council of Ministries. The stated clerk shall serve as clerk of the Council of Ministries.
  - c. Functions:  
The Council of Ministries will be responsible for coordination, communication, and accountability between the ministries. In addition, the Council of Ministries will be responsible for assessing progress, keeping the vision alive, and modifying it as needed.
  - d. Operations: The Council of Ministries shall:
    1. Organize its own internal operation to accomplish its functions subject to the Standing Rules and the Manual of Operations adopted by PDP.
    2. Meet as needed and upon the call of the moderator when necessary.
    3. Oversee the work of its committees.
    4. Publish and distribute the actions and minutes of the Council of Ministries to its members, teaching elders (ministers), and session commissioners in the presbytery packet.

5. Oversee the Human Resources function of the presbytery office. The council will appoint one person on the committee to act as the liaison; the liaison should ideally have HR experience and acumen.

## 2.2 Common Life Ministry

- a. Membership and Election: The Common Life Ministry will have eight members, ordinarily with two from each of the four areas of PDP.
- b. Officers and Quorum: A moderator will be elected from among the members of the ministry. A quorum of four will be required for action.
- c. Functions:  
This ministry will have responsibility for matters that affect relationships within the entire presbytery. This ministry will have responsibility for presbytery meetings, the docket, and special events. This ministry will be creative in worship and community building, offer educational and inspirational opportunities, and provide occasions for members to share life and ministry with one another. This ministry includes the functioning of the four geographical areas of the presbytery.
- d. Operations: The Common Life Ministry shall:
  1. Organize its own internal operation to accomplish its functions, subject to the Standing Rules and the Manual of Operations adopted by PDP.
  2. Oversee the work of its committees/task forces.
  3. Publish and distribute the actions and minutes of the Common Life Ministry to its members, teaching elders (ministers), commissioned pastors, and session commissioners in the presbytery packet.

## 2.3 Resources Ministry

- a. Membership and Election: The Resources Ministry will have eight members, ordinarily with two from each of the four areas of PDP.
- b. Officers and Quorum: A moderator will be elected from among the members of the ministry. A quorum of four will be required for action.
- c. Functions:  
This ministry has primary responsibility for assessing PDP's resources and making them available to the members of the body. The ministry has primary fiscal responsibility for financial stewardship, budgeting, and reporting. This includes guiding PDP toward a sustainable budget. This body will coordinate and share the information in conjunction with the professional staff. It will develop partnerships with people and congregations who have resources to share, propose a presbytery budget, promote presbytery mission, and encourage financial support of presbytery ministries.
- d. Operations: The Resources Ministry shall:
  1. Organize its own internal operation to accomplish its functions, subject to the Standing Rules and the Manual of Operations adopted by PDP.
  2. Oversee the work of its committees/task forces.
  3. Publish and distribute the actions and minutes of the Resources Ministry to its members, teaching elders (ministers), commissioned pastors, and session commissioners in the presbytery packet.

## 2.4 Nominations and Representation Ministry

- a. **Membership and Election:** The Presbytery shall elect a Nominations and Representation Ministry consisting of eight persons. The composition of the committee shall meet the requirements of G-3.0103. Each area of the presbytery should be represented on the committee.
- b. **Officers and Quorum:** A quorum of one-half of the membership of the committee plus one shall be necessary to conduct business. The moderator of the Nominations and Representation Ministry shall be elected annually by PDP from the committee's membership and may serve up to three years.
- c. **Functions:** The Nominations and Representation Ministry shall fulfill the functions indicated in the *Book of Order* (G-3.0111), implementing principles of participation and inclusiveness and fair representation.
  1. Common Life Ministry (8 members).
  2. Resources Ministry (8 members).
  3. Committee on Ministry (12 members).
  4. Preparation Ministry (8 members).
  5. Nominations and Representation Ministry (8 members).
  6. Trustees (3 members).
  7. General Assembly commissioners and alternates (clergy and lay) and Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD) every other year.
  8. Synod commissioners and other synod personnel.
  9. Moderator of the presbytery.
  10. Permanent Judicial Commission.
  11. Other personnel as directed by the presbytery.
- d. The Nominations and Representation Ministry shall take care to maintain representation from all four areas among the persons it nominates for presbytery's work to assure implementation of principles of participation, inclusiveness, and fair representation.
- e. The Nominations and Representation Ministry should devise ways to involve sessions in identifying capable leaders for the work of presbytery and maintain an active file of leadership in the presbytery's office, if possible.
- f. **Schedule of Nominations and Representation Ministry**
  1. The following positions will be elected at the last regular meeting of the calendar year: presbytery moderator, synod representatives, members of all committees, the Permanent Judicial Commission, and trustees.
  2. In the year prior to the year in which the General Assembly will be meeting, GA commissioners, including Young Adult Advisory Delegates, shall be elected at the last regular presbytery meeting of the year. Nominees shall rotate among the four areas of the presbytery, and emphasis will be given to diversity and inclusiveness when selecting/electing GA commissioners. Alternate commissioners will not automatically become the commissioner at the next GA meeting. Nominations from the floor of presbytery will be accepted provided the nominee has agreed prior to the meeting, and a biography of the nominee is distributed to the body.
  3. At any meeting, nominees may be elected to any other group as requested by PDP and to fill vacancies caused by resignations.

4. All committee members begin their terms on January 1 and conclude their terms on December 31. The only exception to this is that GA commissioners serve until the next General Assembly.

#### 2.5 Preparation Ministry

- a. Membership and Election: The Preparation Ministry will have eight members, ordinarily with two from each of the four areas of PDP.
- b. Officers and Quorum: A moderator will be elected from among the members of the ministry. A quorum of four will be required for action.
- c. Functions: This ministry shall include the work outlined in the *Book of Order* (G-2.06).
- d. Operations: Publish and distribute the actions and minutes of the Preparation Ministry to its members, teaching elders (ministers), commissioned pastors, and session commissioners in the presbytery packet.

#### 2.6 Committee on Ministry

- a. Membership and Election: The Committee on Ministry will have twelve members, ordinarily from each of the four areas of PDP.
- b. Officers and Quorum: A moderator, vice moderator, and secretary will be elected from among the members of the ministry. A quorum of seven will be required for action.
- c. Function: The responsibilities of this ministry are itemized in the COM Manual.

#### 2.7 Presbytery Staff

- a. There shall be an executive presbyter as per the “Standing Rules of Palo Duro Presbytery.”
- b. There shall also be a stated clerk. This position is for a two-year term. Persons can be re-elected for unlimited subsequent terms.
- c. PDP staff should especially have the following competencies:
  1. Leadership development, especially in creating an open style of decision-making as used in the planning process for the presbytery.
  2. Pastoral concern for ministers as well as congregations.
  3. Collegial approach to ministry.
  4. Administrative ability.
  5. Ecclesiastical experience.

### **Chapter 3 – Area Operations**

#### 3.1 The presbytery shall be divided into four areas as follows:

**AREA 1:** Amarillo, St. Luke; Borger, First; Canadian, First; Canyon, First; Dumas, First; Hereford, First; Pampa, First; Perryton, Trinity.

**AREA 2:** Colorado City, Days of Grace Chapel of the PC(USA); Lamesa, First; Littlefield, First; Lubbock, Covenant, First, and Grace; Plainview, First; Post, First (a federated church); Snyder, First; Tulia, First.

**AREA 3:** Bowie, First; Childress, First; Graham, First; Jacksboro, First/Jacksboro

Parish (a federated church); Seymour, First; Vernon, First; Wichita Falls, New Hope.  
**AREA 4:** Abilene, First Central and Westminster; Breckenridge, First; Brownwood, Union; Coleman, United (a federated church); Eastland, First; Haskell, First; Santa Anna, First; Stamford, Central; Sweetwater, First.

#### **Chapter 4 – Suspension and Amendment**

- 4.1 Any provision of the “Manual of Operations of Palo Duro Presbytery” may be suspended by PDP for a particular meeting upon majority vote of those present, provided the rule is specifically cited.
- 4.2 Any proposed amendment to the “Manual of Operations of Palo Duro Presbytery” must be presented in writing to the Council of Ministries before being considered by PDP. The Council of Ministries shall include the proposed amendment in its report to the presbytery with a recommendation. *Changes to the Operations Manual of Palo Duro Presbytery do not require that the changes be read at two successive meetings.*
- 4.3 If any provisions of the Manual of Operations of a committee or ministry conflict with what is contained within this document, this document (Palo Duro Presbytery’s Manual of Operations) shall take precedence.

# **All Appendices**

## Guidelines for the Stated Clerk PALO DURO PRESBYTERY

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. The *Book of Order* identifies a "clerk" as one of the officers of each council, and when the body is a presbytery, calls that person a "stated clerk." Among the duties of the stated clerk are to:
  - A. Record the transactions of the council.
  - B. Keep its rolls of membership and attendance.
  - C. Preserve its records carefully.
  - D. Furnish extracts from them when required by another council.
  - E. Make recommendations to the council for the permanent safekeeping of the council's records.
  - F. Call special meetings of the presbytery under certain conditions.
  - G. Submit records of the proceedings of the presbytery annually to the synod for review and control, and to provide other reports the synod may require.
  - H. Submit annually to the General Assembly, lists of teaching elders (ministers) and churches, as well as other statistical information as may be required.  
Maintain rolls of ministers as follows:
    1. Active members
    2. Members-at-large
    3. Those deleted from the other rolls
  - I. Enroll newly ordained teaching elders (ministers) as members of the presbytery and notify the session of the particular church of which the candidate has been a member of such action.
  - J. Deliver calls to teaching elders (ministers) or candidates either to the clerk of the presbytery of which the candidate or minister is a member, or to the Committee on Ministry of the clerk's own presbytery, as appropriate. In disciplinary cases, D-7.0000 and D-8.0000 provide guidance for the stated clerk in:
    1. receiving and reporting accusations
    2. receiving and reporting charges
    3. receiving and reporting judgments
- II. The stated clerk of Palo Duro Presbytery is expected to fulfill the various constitutional requirements set out above.
- III. Additional Duties
  - A. In Relation to the Council of Ministries
    1. Assist the executive presbyter in proposing a docket for stated meetings of PDP.
    2. Transmit official correspondence to the council as appropriate.
    3. Transmit reports, recommendations, and all other pertinent information from the council to teaching elders (ministers), commissioned pastors, and ruling elder commissioners, at least five days prior to stated meetings.

4. Serve as secretary for meetings of the Council of Ministries.
- B. In Relation to the Committee on Ministry (COM)
  1. Deliver to the committee all appropriate communications and papers related to its work.
  2. Deliver to other stated clerks and other appropriate parties, all papers from the COM regarding calls, ordinations, installations, dismissals, etc.
  3. Deliver to PDP all appropriate reports, actions, and recommendations of the COM for presbytery action prior to the opening session of stated meetings.
- C. In Relation to Presbytery Meetings
  1. The stated clerk may nominate an assistant stated clerk who will record minutes of stated meetings.
  2. Record or arrange for the recording of minutes of special meetings.
  3. Deliver to PDP all official communications from other governing bodies, for referral or action.
  4. Transmit to other governing bodies as appropriate, all communications, overtures, actions, recommendations, and requests of PDP.
  5. Publish complete minutes of stated and called meetings of PDP for limited distribution as required.
  6. Serve as parliamentarian during meetings of PDP.
- D. In Relation to the Presbytery
  1. Maintain a list of congregations that have (between 1983 and 1991) voted to hold their property under the provisions of the *Book of Church Order*, P.C.U.S., 1 982-83, rather than under the provisions of the *Book of Order*, G-4.0203.
  2. Coordinate the work of an assistant stated clerk in relation to minutes of presbytery and the review of minutes of session.
  3. Assist PDP in its work of studying overtures and proposing presbytery action upon them, and report to the appropriate governing body, the action of the presbytery on such overtures.
  4. Publish and distribute an annual roster that provides statistical and personnel information to inform the work of PDP.
  5. Publish and distribute presbytery Standing Rules, Manuals of Operations, and other documents which guide PDP in its work.
  6. Inform PDP when information from congregations indicates that the requirements of G-2.0401 have not been met regarding the election of "men and women" to the office of elder and deacon.

Adopted 10/19/87

Amended 01/1994, 10/2011, 09/2025

**Guidelines for the Treasurer  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The *Book of Order* contains no provisions regarding the office of treasurer beyond those relating to the treasurer of a congregation. Palo Duro Presbytery has adopted the following guidelines and requirements for its treasurer. The ethic of Palo Duro Presbytery is to provide transparency and make any data available upon request.

**II. FIDELITY BOND**

The treasurer, assistant treasurers, and all other presbytery personnel who deal with financial matters shall be covered under a fidelity bond during their tenure, at presbytery expense.

**III. ANNUAL INDEPENDENT AUDITS**

The treasurer shall arrange for and cooperate in the preparation of an annual independent audit of all receipts and disbursements and all other assets of PDP. The audit shall be completed by an independent Certified Public Accountant, at the presbytery's expense. The audit shall be supplied to the Resources Ministry. It shall be available to other presbyters as needed. The Management Letter provided in connection with the audit shall be made available to the Resources Ministry, which has responsibility for the oversight of presbytery financial matters. The treasurer shall work with the presbytery's CPA on all matters pertaining to PDP's finances.

**IV. INTERNAL CONTROL**

All vouchers for routine expenditures shall be verified for accuracy by the bookkeeper, an independent contractor of the presbytery's CPA, and approved for payment by the executive presbyter, stated clerk, or treasurer either before or at the time the check is signed.

**V. The Resources Ministry may provide an "INTERNAL AUDIT" sub-group which shall:**

- A. Review bank reconciliations.
- B. Review paid vouchers.
- C. Prepare a report of the review for the auditor.

**VI. RECEIPTS FROM CONGREGATIONS**

It is the current practice of PDP that all receipts from congregations, whether for general mission, General Assembly per capita, special offerings, special gifts, or designated contributions are remitted through the presbytery office.

**VII. OTHER RECEIPTS**

The presbytery office receives, deposits, and accounts for certain fees related to presbytery-sponsored events and activities, such as camps and conferences, retreats, schools for leadership development, Celebration Scholarship, etc. The presbytery

office also occasionally receives deposits and accounts for designated contributions from individuals or agencies, such as special gifts or reimbursement of travel expenses, etc. These items are "outside the budget" and are accounted for as "other income" in reports to the presbytery. Another source of "other income" is the payment (or crediting) of interest income earned on capital funds or operating funds invested with financial institutions at interest.

#### VIII. AUTHORIZATION FOR DISBURSEMENT

The executive presbyter, stated clerk of the presbytery, and one other person (to be determined) are authorized to write and sign checks of any amount, with only ONE signature required on all checks when any one of the following conditions is met:

- A. The check represents the payment of all or a part of a line item in the budget adopted by the presbytery and currently in force.
- B. The check represents the payment of a properly executed voucher for travel, meals, motel, and other approved incidental expenses, for which the presbytery has provided funds in its adopted budget, and for which the payee is eligible for reimbursement.
- C. The check represents payment of an item specifically authorized by the Council of Ministries or the Committee on Ministry, with the action reflected in appropriate minutes and representing expenditure of funds over which the authorizing body has discretionary control.
- D. The check represents payment specifically authorized by PDP, reflected in its minutes, and represents an expenditure from an identified fund, over which the presbytery has discretionary control.
- E. The check represents payment authorized by a task group of the Council, from budgeted funds over which the task group has some discretionary control.
- F. The check represents the payment to a "second party" of budgeted funds, e.g., deposit of IRS/FICA funds withheld from employees' salaries.
- G. The check represents a missional, denominational, or other "pass-through" payment of unbudgeted funds received from an individual or an agency and designated to a particular third-party payee. PDP follows fund accounting for non-profits that support pass-through payments.
- H. The check represents a non-budget, non-group authorized payment in the case of an emergency need of a member of the presbytery or a lay member of one of its work units and is authorized by the executive presbyter or the appropriate moderator of a presbytery work unit.
- I. The check represents an "advance payment" of a budgeted expense, e.g., a travel advance prior to receipt of a travel voucher, for persons on presbytery business; or e.g., a salary advance to an employee of PDP, limited to no more than one month's salary, when, in the judgment of the treasurer/assistant treasurer, and with the concurrence of the moderator of the Resources Ministry, such advance payment is needed and justified.

#### IX. REPORTING BY THE TREASURER

- A. The treasurer shall report to each stated meeting of PDP all receipts and disbursements, to date; and shall provide an annual report of receipts and disbursements in the first stated meeting of the presbytery each year.

B. The treasurer shall report to the Resources Ministry and to the Council of Ministries, as requested, shall regularly furnish a quarterly income report. Reports of disbursements shall be made as requested, to the groups named above, and to any other work unit of the presbytery for which funds are budgeted.

X. OVERSIGHT

The treasurer is accountable to PDP through the Resources Ministry and the Council of Ministries for the performance of duties as treasurer. As a member of the staff, the treasurer is also accountable to the executive presbyter and the Resources Ministry for matters related to the administrative budget and to other members of the staff.

Adopted 10/19/87

Amended 01/1994

Updated 12/2000, 10/2011, 09/2025

## **Guidelines for Worship at Meetings PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

Councils shall worship regularly and shall order that worship in accordance with the principles of this directory. Each council should establish a group charged with responsibility for and oversight of its worship. It may also adopt guidelines for planning and conducting worship at its meetings.

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Worship is at the heart of the church's life and mission. In worship, we return to the wellsprings of the faith and are engaged in communion with God who calls us. We discover new relationships of love and peace with each other and are sent to enter in the world in the name of Christ." (*Supplemental Liturgical Resource 1: Service for the Lord's Day*, 1984: 1)

Worship should always offer opportunities for disciples to renew the commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ and his mission in the world. As the Holy Spirit has graced each member with particular gifts for strengthening the body of Christ for mission, so worship should provide opportunities to recognize these gifts and offer them to serve Christ in the church and in the world. (W-2.5002)

We worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, because God has created us for worship, and it is at the heart of our reason for being. Reformed worship is characteristically "according to God's Word." This means our worship shall be faithful to God's Word revealed in scripture. When we worship, our minds are enlightened by the Spirit, our lives are cleansed by the Christ, and our hearts are warmed by the love of God. Worship is then transformed from mere human work into divine work. It is part of God's saving work among us. It is God's work of building up the church of Jesus Christ. (adapted from *Supplemental Liturgical Resource 1 - Service for the Lord's Day*)

### **GUIDELINES**

- A. For each presbytery meeting, the Service for the Lord's Day worship, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion, shall be planned by the Common Life Ministry of PDP. In planning the worship service, the group shall include representatives of the host church, incorporating the church musician(s), layperson(s), and minister(s). A variety of worship forms and styles appropriate to evening, morning, and midday prayer may be used. Eucharistic worship may be celebrated at a variety of places within the context of a presbytery meeting. Centering our decision-making within the context of worship leads us to seek God's will. Worshipful work helps us listen for God's call and what God would have us be and do.
- B. Care should be taken to be inclusive of language in matters of God in worship. The liturgy in general should be scriptural and firmly rooted in the Presbyterian Reformed

tradition. The leadership of worship shall be representative of PDP. Care should be taken to include people of different races, genders, and ages.

- C. The primary resources for the order of worship are found in the *Book of Order's* Directory for Worship and the *Book of Common Worship*. Other worship planning materials are available at the presbytery office.
- D. All music in worship shall serve the purposes of worship and represent the best that God's people have to offer. In worship, music is not to be for mere entertainment or artistic display. (W-1.0204<sup>21</sup>.)
- E. The Common Life Ministry is responsible for inviting and securing a preacher for worship.

Approved 10/24/98

Updated 12/2000, 10/2011, 09/2025

**Ministerial Guidelines for Leaving a Congregation  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**WHEN SHOULD I ANNOUNCE MY RESIGNATION?**

Under normal conditions of leaving a congregation, four to six weeks' notice is adequate. This will allow sufficient time to tie up loose ends and say goodbye.

Giving notice of more than six weeks can make for an inordinately long period for everyone concerned, having to hold onto grief feelings prior to the final termination, not unlike a prolonged period between a death and the funeral or memorial service. However, too short a time between the announcement and the departure is unfair to all affected, but especially to the congregation. The time after a teaching elder (minister) has announced his or her intention to move is a period of extremely important pastoral care: that which is extended by the departing pastor to the congregation and its members, and that which is extended to the departing pastor and family by the congregation.

A teaching elder (minister) anticipating a move would do well to read the following Alban Institute resources: *Running Through the Thistles*, Roy Oswald; *Ending Well, Starting Well*, Roy Oswald; *Saying Goodbye*, Ed White

**WHOM SHOULD I TELL, WHEN, AND IN WHAT ORDER?**

- A. You should promptly notify the stated clerk or executive presbyter of PDP and/or the moderator of the Committee on Ministry of your intention to resign.
- B. You should share the news with your session before sharing it with others in the church or community. Ask them to call a congregational meeting to concur with your resignation.
- C. You should announce your resignation officially and personally at a public worship service. Be positive and open in your announcement.
- D. You should notify the Committee on Ministry and/or the office of presbytery in writing of your resignation and the congregational action concurring with your request.
- E. If possible, you should arrange for an exit interview with the area Committee on Ministry representatives.
- F. It is your responsibility to see that your congregation understands that you will no longer be their pastor. You need to make it very clear to them that you are no longer available to preach or perform any pastoral tasks for them. See: "Standards of Ethical Conduct" (1998) 210th GA.
- G. You need to be supportive of the presbytery's pastor search process and encourage the congregation to work closely with PDP during their search for a new pastor. The Committee on Ministry will appoint one of its members to be a liaison to the church prior to the vacancy, as well as designate another teaching elder (minister) as moderator of the session, once you have left.

- H. It is your responsibility to assure yourself that everything pertaining to receiving the call through the hand of your own presbytery has been followed to your satisfaction.
- I. You should make sure that the manse property is left in good condition, with all dirt, rubbish, etc., removed.
- J. You should put all files and records of the church in order and leave them intact so that your successor may easily find all necessary records and equipment.
- K. When you leave a congregation, you should affirm the good that has been accomplished.  
**DO NOT LEAVE ON A NEGATIVE NOTE.**

### **GUIDELINES FOR RELATING TO YOUR FORMER CONGREGATION FROM A DIFFERENT LOCATION**

- A. Even though former pastors and their families may continue to have friendships in the congregation, former pastors ordinarily should not perform weddings, conduct funerals, or counsel members of the congregation unless asked to do so by the session and moderator of session.
- B. A former pastor should not participate in any way with the function of the Pastor Nominating Committee.
- C. The former pastor should make every effort to be supportive of his/her successor. Encourage persons who might contact you with concerns about your successor to address them to their new pastor, the session, or the Committee on Ministry. Avoid drawing conclusions about your successor or interpreting his/her behavior and words. Encourage openness and opportunities for growth.
- D. Should you and your family return for a visit or for vacation, make a friendly phone call to the pastor soon after your arrival.

### **GUIDELINES FOR RETIRING PASTORS**

The Board of Pensions suggests that the process of retiring begins six to nine months before the anticipated date of retirement, and so six months' notice to the congregation would be appropriate.

Teaching Elders (ministers) anticipating retirement should call the Board of Pensions at 800-PRESPLAN to speak with a BOP retirement programs specialist who will walk you through key considerations, resources, and options. Other educational resources, including *Planning to Retire: Your Benefits Options at Retirement*, are available at <https://www.pensions.org/for-members-planning-to-retire>.

Up to five years before retirement, you should send a request for a pension quote to the Board of Pensions as well as a request for a Social Security benefits quote to the local Social Security office. Presbytery must certify retirement to the Board of Pensions, taking such action at one of the stated meetings. Be sure enough time is allowed to ensure the application can be acted on in a timely manner. The Board of Pensions suggests requesting a retirement application three to four months prior to retirement, but a longer time may be wiser. Also, if you elect one of the

joint survivor options, the appropriate form must be submitted to the board at least three months prior to the retirement date. Six to nine months before the anticipated retirement date, you should contact the local Social Security office to begin the application process for benefits.

## **GUIDELINES FOR PASTORS AND FAMILIES WHO REMAIN IN THE AREA AFTER LEAVING A PASTORATE**

- A. A former pastor who chooses to remain in or return to the area in which he/she has served as pastor needs to deal realistically with his/her own needs for fellowship and church life apart from the former congregation.
- B. You and your family can be most helpful to your successor and family in being accepted in their new situation. You and your family can also be the most difficult problem your successor and family must face. Be sensitive to them, encourage them, and help them in any way you can, even if it means physically withdrawing yourselves from the congregation for a period of time.
- C. A former pastor should refrain from pastoral functions and not accept any position of leadership in his/her former church, nor attend meetings of the session, deacons, or trustees unless invited by the session and moderator of session.
- D. A former pastor should not officiate at any sacraments, weddings, funerals, or other functions involving members of his/her former church, or within its properties, unless invited by the session and moderator of session.
- E. An invitation to officiate or perform pastoral functions in a former church is an opportunity to demonstrate your support and loyalty to your successor. Offer to assist rather than officiate. Avoid any functions or requests that will isolate or exclude your successor from the people God has called him/her to serve. Spouses and families of former pastors also need to demonstrate their support of the new pastor and family in the manner suggested for former pastors.
- F. A former pastor should avoid formal or informal participation in or comment on the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee.
- G. Regarding continued worship in the church from which a pastor retires, the Committee on Ministry encourages clergy and families to seek alternate worship sites and opportunities, especially during the first several months after the new pastor and family arrive. This will enable you to return as a longtime friend and help avoid the inevitable comparisons that can cause so much pain when old relationships are severed and new ones are formed.

These guidelines are intended to serve as help to pastors and churches as they go through difficult times of adjustment. They are provided as an attempt to prevent a long, devoted pastoral relationship between a pastor and a church from becoming a source of dissension within a congregation and a source of pain for a succeeding pastor and family. The Committee on Ministry is available to counsel pastors, their families, and congregations regarding these guidelines as needed in their particular situations. If you have questions, please contact the moderator of the Committee on Ministry.

Approved 10/2001  
Updated 10/2011, 09/2025

**Background Check Policy  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**RATIONALE**

For the safety of all persons of Palo Duro Presbytery, the presbytery will require background checks on each new and existing member of PDP, as well as those who work in any way with children and youth in presbytery-related events.

**PERSONS NEW TO THE PRESBYTERY OR THOSE CALLED TO SERVE WITHIN A CONGREGATION OF PDP**

- A. For every teaching elder (clergyperson), commissioned pastor, parish associate, interim/transitional pastor, or those in temporary positions, beginning work with a particular congregation in PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check will be required.
- B. Required background checks must be completed and evaluated before a Pastor Nominating Committee can present a name to its congregation for consideration to be called to a pastoral position in the presbytery, or before any session can offer any kind of pastoral relationship to an individual (temporary or stated supply, CP, interim, parish associate).
- C. Evaluation of the required records will be the responsibility of the executive presbyter. In the event that a check discloses anything other than a clear record, the executive presbyter will consult with representatives of the Committee on Ministry team and the individual involved before clearing the report or denying approval.

**EXISTING MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY**

- A. For all existing teaching elders (clergypersons), temporary or stated supplies, CPs, interims/transitional, or parish associates relating in any way to a specific congregation in PDP at the time this policy becomes effective, a national, state, and county background check will be required, including the sexual offender registry list.
- B. For teaching elders (ministers) serving in validated ministries of PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check will be required.
- C. For teaching elders (ministers) in at-large positions, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check may be required if they are in leadership positions with congregations, sessions, or congregation members.
- D. If a clergyperson refuses to submit to such checks, PDP may dissolve the pastoral relationship with the congregation, provided that due process is followed in such a decision. Those in other relationships for which the presbytery has oversight and control, such as parish associate, temporary or stated supply, interim, or CP, or any other formal relationship to a congregation, may be removed from those relationships if they refuse to submit to such checks, provided that due process is followed in such a decision.

- E. Evaluation of the required records will be the responsibility of the executive presbyter.

### **PRESBYTERY STAFF**

For all persons working as paid or volunteer staff of PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry background check is required.

### **PERSONS WORKING IN PRESBYTERY-RELATED EVENTS**

- A. All persons who work with youth or children in presbytery-related events must submit to a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check.
- B. No one will be permitted to be a part of the leadership of presbytery-organized events involving children or youth who have not been cleared by PDP to serve in such capacity.
- C. Events covered under this policy shall include, but not be limited to, the Buffalo Gap camping program, annual youth retreat, Youth Triennium, presbytery youth mission trips, and other occasional youth and children's events.

### **MAINTENANCE OF FILES**

After the initial evaluation, copies of the reports will be maintained in the presbytery office under lock and key and will be made available only to the person for whom the check was made or to someone who has a signed release from the person whose record is requested. No record will be released to anyone without written permission from the individual whose record is requested.

### **GENERAL**

- A. For each clergyperson, temporary or stated supply, CP, interim/transitional, parish associate, and person who work with youth or children in presbytery related events for whom such checks are required, the sponsoring organization/governing body will be asked to pay the costs of the check at the current rate for national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list. Those serving in presbytery-related events shall provide a copy of their background check to PDP. If such a check is needed, individuals should contact their local congregation (if they are representing their congregation at such an event) or contract with PDP for such a check at their own expense.
- B. Records may be transferred from council to council as required, but only with signed permission from the individual whose record is requested.
- C. Individual congregations may request background checks as approved in their policies for laypersons within their congregation. These records will be evaluated and maintained by the local congregation in accordance with its own policies, at the congregation's expense. Teaching elder (minister) records will be maintained by the presbytery.
- D. The presbytery recommends the use of IntelliCorp for the process and will use that company for background checks it authorizes. However, a congregation has the option of using any company it chooses to meet the requirements indicated in this policy.

## **DISQUALIFIERS**

- A. Active indictments alleging the following offenses, or any conviction of the following offenses, will disallow a teaching elder (minister), temporary or stated supply, CP, interim, parish associate, or adult leader from serving in PDP.
  - 1. Murder
  - 2. Aggravated assault
  - 3. Sexual abuse
  - 4. Sexual assault
  - 5. Aggravated sexual assault (rape)
  - 6. Crimes against children (e.g., injury to a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor)
  - 7. Family violence assault
  - 8. Cruelty to animals
  - 9. Arson
  - 10. Hate crime
  - 11. Lewd behavior
  - 12. Possession with intent to distribute illegal drugs within the past ten years
- B. All other felony and Class A & B misdemeanor convictions, deferred adjudications, charges, criminal investigations, or indictments for crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the executive presbyter. The review should encompass issues such as circumstances, rehabilitation, the time elapsed since the offense, the individual's ministry, and any unresolved personal issues that might lead to misconduct.
- C. Instances of sexual harassment will be reviewed by the executive presbyter. The review should encompass issues such as circumstances, rehabilitation, the time elapsed since the offense, the individual's ministry, and any unresolved personal issues that might lead to misconduct. The provisions of the Palo Duro Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and Procedures will be used in this review.

Appeals of the decision of the executive presbyter may be brought to the stated clerk, the Committee on Ministry, and the presbytery.

Approved: 02/25/06

Updated: 08/2011, 09/2025

**Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and Procedures  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of Palo Duro Presbytery (hereinafter referred to as the Presbytery) that all church members, church officers, non-member employees, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the Church within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles in Scripture, and of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationships. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

**STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because, through these representatives, an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world."<sup>1</sup>

The basic principles of conduct guiding this policy are as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- A. Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.
- B. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.
- C. Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare, including children. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

<sup>1</sup> (G-2.0104a).

<sup>2</sup> ... As [God] who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; [1 Peter 1:15]

... Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, . . . not under compulsion but willingly, ... not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge but be examples to the flock. [ 1 Peter 5:2-3]

... You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. [James. 3:1] (Source: NRSV)

## DEFINITIONS

- A. **Sexual Misconduct** is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:
1. **Child sexual abuse:** including, but not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced, whether consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.
  2. **Sexual abuse** as defined in the *Book of Order*: “Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position.”<sup>3</sup>
  3. **Sexual harassment:** defined for this policy is as follows: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
    - a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or their continued status in an institution.
    - b) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual.
    - c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
    - d) an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
  4. **Sexual conduct** is offensive, obsessive, or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching, or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
  5. **Sexual Malfeasance** is defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.
  6. **Misuse of technology** is the use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.
- B. Other Definitions
1. **Accused** is the term used to represent the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

<sup>3</sup> D-7.0901.

2. **Accuser** is a term used to represent the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not have been the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct. A person, such as a family member, friend, or colleague, may be the accuser.
3. **Church**, when spelled with the initial capitalized, refers to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Church, when spelled with the initial in lowercase, refers to local churches. The word "congregation" is used loosely to refer to members and participants.
4. **Employee** is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the Church, the Presbytery, or churches for salary or wages.
5. **Entity** is the term used to refer to any program or office managed by a board, committee, council, or other body whose membership is elected by a council.
6. **Council** is a representative body composed of ruling elders and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament: sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. A council may establish entities such as day-care centers, conference centers, camps, or homes for the aged. A council may have both church members and nonmembers as employees.
7. **Inquiry** is the term used in the Rules of Discipline to determine whether charges should be filed based upon allegations of an offense received by a council.
8. **Mandated Reporter** includes a person under the PC(USA) constitution who is mandated to report to the civil authorities any reasonably held belief that there will be future harm, and is also described by some states' laws as a person who is required to report any and all suspected incidents of child abuse, including child sexual abuse that come to their attention. State laws vary from defining "all persons having knowledge" as mandated reporters to specifying very limited lists of professions whose members are required to report.
9. **Persons Covered** by this policy include church members, church officers, Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and nonmembers who are employees or volunteers of the Presbytery. All other councils or entities of the General Assembly are urged to create a sexual misconduct policy using the guidelines set out in this policy.
10. Response is the action taken pursuant to this policy when a report of sexual misconduct is received. It may include (1) an inquiry into facts and circumstances, (2) possible disciplinary action (administrative or judicial or both), (3) pastoral care for victims and their families and others, and (4) pastoral care and rehabilitation for the accused and care for their families.
11. **Civil Authorities** are the governmental bodies, whether city, county, state, or federal, that are given the responsibility to investigate, criminally prosecute, and/or bring civil charges against individuals accused of sexual crimes or offenses against adults and children.
12. **Victim** is a person who claims to have been harmed and/or abused by a person covered under this policy.
13. **Volunteer** is the term used for unpaid persons who provide services for the Presbytery. Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees, and other groups. For purposes of this policy, volunteers are treated the same as employees.

## RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

### A. Principles

1. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of the Presbytery should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected, and the confidentiality of communications should be maintained.
2. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of the Presbytery should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.
3. The Presbytery has jurisdiction over its members, officers, and employees such that if a member, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense against Scripture or the *Book of Order*, it has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community. Allegations of sexual misconduct are always considered allegations of offense against Scripture or the *Book of Order* that trigger the disciplinary processes of the Presbytery in the *Book of Order*. In the case of an active non-member who is employed or volunteers with the church, the procedures of the written personnel policies of the council or entity will cover the individual.
4. If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer a member, officer, or employee of the Presbytery, but the conduct occurred while the person was acting on behalf of the Presbytery, the Presbytery or church does not have jurisdiction to correct the behavior, but it does have a duty to hear the allegations of offense and to take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm. The Presbytery may appoint an administrative committee or commission to hear the allegations of sexual misconduct. The Presbytery may also take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm through education and policy.
5. Prohibited behavior addressed by this policy may result in criminal and/or civil charges filed under secular law.

### B. Reporting Requirements

1. Reporting Sexual Misconduct.
  - a) A person needing to report that a member, officer, employee, or volunteer subject to this policy has committed sexual misconduct is encouraged to seek guidance from a PC(USA) minister of the Word and Sacrament or ruling elder regarding filing the report.
  - b) Congregation: If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a member, ruling elder, deacon, volunteer, or employee of a congregation, the report of allegations should be made to the Minister of the Word and Sacrament, the clerk of session, or the chair of the personnel committee. If the accused is a member or officer of the church, the church will respond by using the procedures in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the accused is a non-member employee or volunteer, the church will respond by using procedures set forth by the session of the congregation.

- c) Presbytery: If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a Minister of the Word and Sacrament member, the report of allegations should be made to the stated clerk of the Presbytery. If the report of allegations is placed in writing, the Presbytery will respond by using the procedures in the *Book of Order*. If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a volunteer or non-member employee of the Presbytery, the report of allegations may be made to any of the staff or volunteers of the Presbytery. The Presbytery will respond by using procedures set forth by policy or bylaws of the Presbytery.
  - d) A report should be made regardless of the application of disciplinary or secular statutes of limitation.
2. Receiving Reports of Sexual Misconduct
- a) Because a council or entity cannot control to whom the victim of sexual misconduct will speak first, it is important that officers, employees, and persons highly visible to church members, and visitors understand how reports of incidents are channeled to the proper person. The allegations may come from persons who have or who do not have a formal relationship with the Presbytery and may be made to a variety of officers or leaders within the Presbytery. It is the duty of these officers to see that any allegation of sexual misconduct is reported appropriately, keeping in mind the mandatory reporting requirements for allegations of child abuse.
  - b) Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the victim, the accused, and the church. Reports of allegations should be dealt with as matters of the highest confidentiality, both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.
  - c) The first person to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the victim or the accused unless the incident is divulged in the process of pastoral care, counseling, or a therapy session. If the victim is hesitant to talk to “higher authorities,” the person who has received the initial report has a special pastoral responsibility to build trust and willingness to speak with the accuser, lest the church be unable to respond because no one is able to give firsthand information.
  - d) The person receiving the initial report of allegations of sexual misconduct shall analyze the relationship of the person accused of sexual misconduct with the Presbytery and shall make sure that the allegations of offense are filed with the council with jurisdiction over the person accused. This may be done by the person alleging harm or by any member of the Presbytery.
  - e) If the report is made orally, the person receiving the report of allegations should request that the person making the report of allegations place it in writing. A report of allegations of sexual misconduct in writing from a member of the Presbytery alleging another member or officer of the Presbytery committed an offense must be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If a clerk or stated clerk receives a

report of allegations in writing from a non-member of the Presbytery alleging another member or officer of the Presbytery committed sexual misconduct, the report also should be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the person who makes the report is unwilling or unable to place it in writing, any member of the Presbytery may make the written statement that will automatically trigger the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*.

3. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

- a) Requirements of the *Book of Order*. All ruling elders, deacons, Certified Christian Educators, and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament must report knowledge of child abuse to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities according to the *Book of Order*. The *Book of Order* requires that “Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.” (G- 4.0302)

Further:

“In the exercise of pastoral care, Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders who have been commissioned by a presbytery to limited pastoral service (G-2.10), shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a Minister of the Word and Sacrament or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A Minister of the Word and Sacrament or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may reveal confidential information when she or he believes that there is a risk of imminent bodily harm to any person. <sup>4</sup> Texas law imposes an additional responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect regardless of the existence of a pastoral relationship. See subparagraph b immediately following. All persons covered by this policy have an additional duty to report knowledge of child sexual abuse to the employing entity, supervisor, or council representative. These reports should be made within a reasonable time of receiving the information.

<sup>4</sup> G-4.0301.

- b) Reporting Requirements of Civil Authorities. The preceding provisions of the *Book of Order* attempt to balance conflicting moral duties for officers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). However, Texas law requires the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect without regard to any privilege between the minister and the person receiving pastoral care.<sup>5</sup>

C. Responding to a Report of Sexual Misconduct

The proper council or entity response will vary according to the relationship of the Presbytery with the person who is accused of sexual misconduct. Church members and officers are subject to inquiry and discipline (censure and correction) under the *Book of Order*. Non-church member employees and volunteers are subject to oversight and correction by the council or entity that employs them.

1. Cooperation with Secular Authorities. Councils and entities must cooperate with civil authorities in an investigation of child sexual abuse or other criminal sexual misconduct. Church disciplinary proceedings cannot interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities and may have to be suspended until these are completed.
2. Accused Covered by *Book of Order*
  - a) When an allegation of offense of sexual misconduct has been received by the clerk of session or stated clerk of the Presbytery, the clerk of the council will report to the council that an offense has been alleged and that the council will proceed according to the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. The council should appoint an investigating committee to inquire into the allegations. The investigating committee must promptly begin its inquiry into the allegations. Delay may cause further harm to the victim and/or the accused.
  - b) Session original jurisdiction. The session has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving members, ruling elders, and deacons of the church, each congregation having jurisdiction only over its own members.
  - c) The Presbytery's original jurisdiction. The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. A presbytery may dissolve a pastoral relationship when the "Word imperatively demands it."<sup>6</sup> However, a presbytery may only place a Minister of the Word and Sacrament on administrative leave when allegations of child abuse have been received and the Presbytery has followed the *Book of Order* procedures to conduct its risk evaluation to determine whether or not a Minister of Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Pastor member accused of child abuse should be placed on administrative leave (D-7.0902). Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) members who will conduct this risk evaluation based upon the allegations and a hearing will seek secular legal advice, as necessary.
  - d) Commissioned Ruling Elders/Commissioned Pastors. The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving commissioned pastors.

<sup>5</sup> Texas Family Code Sec. 261.101.

<sup>6</sup> (G-2.0904).

- e) Renunciation of jurisdiction. When a church officer renounces jurisdiction, the clerk or stated clerk shall report the renunciation at the next meeting of the council and shall record the renunciation in the minutes of the council. The status of any pending charges may be shared with the council at that time.
- 3. Accused Not Covered by *Book of Order*.
  - a) When an accusation of offense of sexual misconduct is made against a non-member employee or volunteer, the council shall be responsible for the inquiry. If a council does not have a human resources committee, it may appoint either a committee or an administrative commission for the review of the allegation.
  - b) The committee or commission that will respond to the allegation of offense of sexual misconduct will do the following:
    - (1) Determine whether the allegation gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of sexual misconduct by the accused.
    - (2) If so, gather additional information necessary to decide about correcting the behavior.
    - (3) Determine any remedies, including limiting ministry, suspension, or termination, necessary and advisable under the circumstances. If the accused is a member of another denomination, that denomination will be notified of the allegations and the response.
    - (4) Inform the victim and the accused of the remedy.
    - (5) In all cases, the committee shall prepare a written report, which shall be included in the accused's permanent personnel file. The accused shall be allowed to attach any written statements to said documents, also for permanent inclusion in the permanent file.
    - (6) All procedures shall follow the guidelines set forth by the council, employing agency, or entity of the General Assembly.
- D. Council or Entity Record Keeping
  - 1. The council or entity should keep detailed records of its actions and minutes of its deliberations and its conversations with the accuser, the accused, and other parties involved, correspondence, and copies of the reports received from committees or commissions. Such records will be kept confidential as far as possible.
  - 2. In Case # 208-6, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) interpreted the Rules of Discipline to say that a council or entity may share the contents of inquiry reports with other councils or entities of the Presbytery when necessary.
  - 3. The clerk of the council or director of the entity will maintain the records while the inquiry is in process.

## **PREVENTION AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Implementation**

The *Book of Order* requires that all councils adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy (G-3.0106). The General Assembly has urged all councils and related entities to

establish policies and procedures that make it a violation of the employer's work rules to engage in sexual misconduct and encourage reporting of sexual misconduct. The Presbytery will take appropriate steps to inform members, employees, and volunteers of the sexual misconduct policy, the standards of conduct, and the procedures for an effective response when a report of sexual misconduct is received.

**B. Employment Practices**

1. **Record Keeping.** Accurate record keeping is an essential part of hiring and supervision practices of the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall maintain a personnel file on every employee, including Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The file should contain the application for employment, any employment questionnaires, background checks, references responses, and all other documents related to an employee's employment, except records that may be required by law to be kept in separate files.
2. **Prescreening Applicants**
  - a) The Presbytery will follow thorough and consistent hiring practices. If an applicant is unknown to the employer, the employer should confirm the applicant's identity by requiring photographic identification such as a driver's license. A background check, including a national criminal background check, shall be performed on all applicants who may interact with children and youth.
  - b) The pre-employment screening should include specific questions related to discovering previous complaints of sexual misconduct.
  - c) **References.**
    - (1) The employing entity is responsible for contacting references for prospective.
    - (2) Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, employees, or volunteers. A written record of conversations or correspondence with references should be kept in the Minister of the Word and Sacrament or the employee's personnel file.
    - (3) The Presbytery will delegate responsibility for previous employer reference checks to the Executive Presbyter or other appropriate person.
    - (4) The Executive Presbyter is authorized to give a reference and is obligated to give truthful information regarding allegations, inquiries, and administrative or disciplinary action related to sexual misconduct of the applicant.
    - (5) If false or misleading information is given by the applicant, or relevant information is withheld, the applicant should be eliminated from consideration.
  - d) Applicants should be informed of negative comments regarding sexual misconduct and shall be given an opportunity to submit additional references or to give other evidence to correct or respond to harmful information obtained from a reference.

## **EDUCATING AND TRAINING AWARENESS**

### **A. Distribution**

Copies of this policy and its procedures shall be made available to all council and entity offices. It is intended as guidance for this mid-council, churches, and related entities, and if properly implemented by them, it can be used by church members, church officers, employees, and volunteers. This policy and its procedures should be made available to persons who accuse others of misconduct, including those who are or claim to be victims of sexual misconduct and their families.

### **B. Training.**

1. Since the issue of sexual misconduct has become an ever more present reality, there is an emerging need to educate and train a wide variety of persons. Persons needing this specific education include Ministers of Word and Sacrament; Commissioned Pastors; volunteers; officers; nonprofessional and professional staff; ministerial candidates; professionals who will be working with this issue within the denomination; members of the congregation; and council staff, including supervisors, employees, and stated clerks.
2. Education for these persons and groups will be different on a group-by-group basis. A primary requirement for ministers, pastors, and camp leaders shall be sexual misconduct prevention or boundaries training at least every thirty-six months. (G-3.0106)
3. Much of a congregation's education currently happens in response to an actual case of sexual misconduct. However, it is recommended that the congregation be as proactive in this area as offering education in a variety of settings. There are already numerous resource materials available that could be adapted to a congregation's setting.
4. Employing entities need to make sure all employees are well acquainted with, understand, and abide by their policy and procedures. Employing entities should offer additional training and resources, such as a workshop during a staff meeting, a lunchtime discussion group, articles and books made available, etc.

Approved 02/25/06

Updated 08/2011, 09/2025

**Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policy  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

*The members of Palo Duro Presbytery believe that we are called to create a safe haven for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care, nurturing, protecting, and empowering them through faith and trust. This commitment includes taking appropriate steps to reduce the risk to the young people and vulnerable adults in our care. The following policy was established to minimize the risk of any of our children, youth, or vulnerable adults being subjected to sexual, physical, mental, or financial abuse. These policies and procedures are also intended to respect the rights and afford due process to persons accused of improper conduct.*

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**Definitions**

*The following list of definitions and terms is intended for use in the Policy and for the purpose of this Policy:*

**Child/children:** A person between the approximate ages of 0-11 and or prior to the completion of 5<sup>th</sup> grade/elementary school.

**Youth:** A person who is the age of 11+ years old and is currently enrolled in grades 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and/or participating in the event as a student

**Minor:** A person who is 0-17 years of age.

**Child/youth worker:** Any person, volunteer, paid staff, or contractor who participates at any level at Palo Duro Presbytery entity-sponsored events or activities involving children/youth. This includes chaperons who accompany children/youth to and during meetings, events, and activities covered by this policy. They may also be referred to as sponsors throughout this Policy.

**Common Life Ministry (CLM):** The Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Ministry Committee (CYVAPMC) shall be a subcommittee of the CLM. This is a group of adults and youth from the presbytery who serve a one- to three-year term and plan and oversee events and activities in Palo Duro Presbytery.

**Vulnerable Adult:** Those who are 65 or older and those 18 to 64 with mental, physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities that substantially impair their ability to live independently or care for or protect themselves.

**Sexual Conduct:** Offensive, obsessive, or suggestive language or behavior; unacceptable visual contact, unwelcoming touching, or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.

**Sexual Malfeasance** is defined by broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.

## **SCREENING AND SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF**

### **A. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND EVENT LEADERSHIP:**

1. The Presbytery will not allow a Presbytery event involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults or where childcare or vulnerable adult care is offered to be held at a church unless the host church has a sufficient Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy in place.
2. A Volunteer Information Form must be completed by each member of the Event Leadership Team unless they can provide documentation that a background check has already been completed by their congregation or governing body. These forms will provide personal and confidential information necessary to perform criminal background and reference checks on each applicant, which will be completed by the designated Presbytery staff person. The CYVAPMC will review and update these forms annually.
3. The Volunteer Information Form authorizing Palo Duro Presbytery to conduct criminal background checks will be kept on file at Palo Duro Presbytery.
4. The designated Palo Duro Presbytery staff person, on behalf of the appropriate presbytery committee or task group, will conduct the background checks and may consult with the moderator of the committee or task group concerning the results of any background check. Background checks will be destroyed when a decision has been made regarding that person's involvement with the planned conference or event. Names, dates of birth, dates of background checks, and Social Security numbers of cleared persons will be kept on file at the Palo Duro Presbytery Office. (If a church or other entity has already conducted such a background check, further efforts will not be necessary.)
5. "Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a person from participating in the leadership or sponsorship of any children's, youth, or vulnerable adult activity or program related to Palo Duro Presbytery:
  - Any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse; sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child or vulnerable adult; incest; indecency with a child or vulnerable adult; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance with a child or vulnerable adult; possession or promotion of child or vulnerable adult pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials or prohibited substances to a minor or vulnerable adult; employment harmful to children or vulnerable adults; or abandonment or endangerment of a child or vulnerable adult. All other convictions or charges for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the appropriate committee seeking to secure the particular employee or volunteer."

**B. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS, ADVISORS, AND/OR SPONSORS:**

1. The Presbytery strongly urges each local church to adopt its own screening procedure, which includes a security background check to ensure the safety and protection of its own children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The Presbytery relies on the local church session to fulfill its own responsibility to its children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
2. Ordinarily, adult volunteers and advisors/sponsors will only be permitted to serve as sponsors at presbytery events if they have been members of the local church for a period of not less than six months, unless the adult volunteer or advisor/sponsor is transferring from active membership in another church where references can be attained.
3. All volunteers and adult advisors/sponsors for Palo Duro Presbytery Youth Events are required to sign a Covenant of Conduct Form, which includes a question about previous infractions regarding sexual misconduct.
4. Each church must annually (by October 1<sup>st</sup>) submit an “Acknowledgment of Child Abuse Prevention Form,” which lists those adults who have had security background checks and are approved to serve as leaders and sponsors in order to participate in Presbytery events. A file will be kept at the Presbytery office and can be amended throughout the year.
5. All forms will be reviewed and updated annually by the CYVAPMC.
6. An Information Form, along with a Consent Form, will be completed by each individual who is volunteering for CYVAPMC events unless they can provide documentation that a background check has already been completed by their congregation or governing body. The form collects personal and confidential information necessary to conduct criminal background and reference checks. Consent Forms authorizing Palo Duro Presbytery to conduct criminal background checks will be kept on file at Palo Duro Presbytery. The designated Palo Duro Presbytery staff person, on behalf of the appropriate presbytery committee or task group, will conduct the background checks on CYVAPMC Volunteers and may consult with the moderator of that committee or task group concerning the results of any background check. Background checks will be destroyed after a decision has been made regarding that person’s involvement with the planned conference or event. Names, dates of birth, dates of Background checks, and Social Security numbers of cleared persons will be kept on file at the Palo Duro Presbytery Office. The designated presbytery staff person, or their designee, will contact references by telephone or mail.
7. At each retreat or overnight event, an orientation will be held for volunteers and sponsors, which will include the subject of preventing sexual abuse. “Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the criminal background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a person from participating in the leadership or sponsorship of any children’s, youth, or vulnerable adult activity or program related to Palo Duro Presbytery: Any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse; sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child or vulnerable adult; incest; indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance with a child or vulnerable adult; possession or promotion of

child or vulnerable adult pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials or prohibited substances to a minor or vulnerable adult; employment harmful to children or vulnerable adults; or abandonment or endangerment of a child or vulnerable adult. All other convictions or charges for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the appropriate committee seeking to secure the particular employee or volunteer.”

## **SUPERVISION OF ADULT VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF**

- A. “Two Adult Rule”  
As often as possible, there should be at least two adults in each small group. At Planning Team planning sessions and on the retreat or conference grounds, make sure, insofar as possible, that an adult is not left alone one-on-one with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. This should be emphasized at the organizational meeting of the Planning Team and Sponsors Meeting at the event. *If an adult needs to be alone with a young person or vulnerable adult, that contact should take place in a public setting and with the knowledge of another staff member (for example, at the far end of a dining hall or on one end of the basketball court away from activities.)*
- B. Safety suggestions: always meet in a public space when only one youth (or vulnerable adult) and one adult are present; remain in sight of others; make sure that at least one other adult is aware of what is taking place.
- C. Adults should always use appropriate language, boundaries, and report any prohibited behavior or acts to the appropriate leadership immediately.

## **PROHIBITED ACTS**

*“The following acts are prohibited by this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any Palo Duro Presbytery Activity or Program. Any observations or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the Moderator of the Session, Director of the Event or Program, or designated program staff representing Palo Duro Presbytery after the safety of the child, children, youth, or vulnerable adult involved has been assured.*

- A. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by an adult;
- B. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
- C. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between a youth and a child (or vulnerable adult);
- D. Threat of infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
- E. Physical neglect of a child, children, youth, or vulnerable adult, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the presbytery;
- F. Causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children, youth, or vulnerable adult;
- G. Possessing or viewing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of Palo Duro Presbytery, with the exception of sex education materials (NOTE: Palo Duro Presbytery does not consider sex education materials to be obscene or pornographic, especially those which have been produced by the denomination for use in church-related programs.);

- H. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal or controlled substance while leading or participating in a children's, youth, or vulnerable adult function of the presbytery."

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL SAFETY**

*We live in a digital age, and we have the opportunity to use social media to enhance ministry. Social media and digital communication can keep the conversation going and cultivate positive relationships. These tools can be used to reach people in ways physical space cannot. As we seek to use social media and digital communication, we must do so recognizing the possible danger it poses. When using social media in ministry, we need to be intentional and careful. We approach the use of social media and digital communication with the understanding that:*

- The digital world is not private, and posted content can be stolen and used in ways not intended by the originating person or organization.
- The digital world is at risk for abuse.
- The digital world is rapidly evolving, creating the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in the digital world.
- These policies are intended to be applied to any digital communication and social media platform.

## **DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES**

- A. All policies of the physical world will apply to the digital world, including the "Two Adult Rule".
- B. During a video call involving adults and youth/children/vulnerable adults, if the "Two Adult Rule" cannot be followed, the call must be recorded.
- C. Additional Policies pertaining to social media and digital communications
- Digital communications, as much as possible, should include the entire group.
  - When private communication needs to take place outside of standing programming information, parents, guardians, or another responsible adult needs to be informed that the conversation is happening. Confidentiality must be maintained unless the need to report arises.
  - Platforms that automatically delete content should not be used for ministry.
  - Communications and interactions should be public and not deleted.
  - Policy regarding sharing photos or images will be followed. Permission to post photos must be obtained.
  - Youth, children, and vulnerable adults will not be identified by the adult posting. Youth or vulnerable adults may self-tag and share the post.

## **REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS**

- A. **REPORTING ALLEGATIONS**
1. At an orientation session, all volunteers and adult sponsors will be informed of incident reporting procedures and the requirements of state laws regarding the reporting of child and vulnerable adult abuse or neglect. If you have questions about reporting, contact the Director, your local Child or Adult Protective

- Services or Police Department.
2. Anyone who becomes aware of any abuse, neglect, or inappropriate contact involving a child, youth, or vulnerable adult at an event must immediately report the incident to the Director of the event or any adult member of the Planning Team. The person receiving the report shall report the incident to the Director.
  3. The person witnessing or reporting an incident should first secure the safety of the youth, child, or vulnerable adult, and the youth, child, or vulnerable adult should not be left alone.
  4. The Director of the event must immediately notify all appropriate persons, including: the appropriate Presbytery staff persons, the onsite camp manager or host pastor, and, if warranted, Child or Adult Protective Services.
  5. The person initially contacted by the alleged victim, or who observed the incident, should immediately fill out a written "Incident Report."
  6. The Presbytery Representative should prepare a list of agencies to be contacted for each event. (For example: Presbytery, Child or Adult Protective Services, local police) This list should be attached to the "Incident Report" Form.
  7. Any new accusation made after the initial reported incident should be directed to the Response Team (see below) through the office of the General or Executive Presbyter.

B. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

*A Response Team shall be formed in response to allegations that require legal counsel or notification to Child or Adult Protective Services.*

1. A Response Team composed of the Executive Presbyter, representative of CYVAPMC, Stated Clerk, and appropriate Presbytery staff will be appointed by the General or Executive Presbyter.
2. The Response Team should immediately contact the presbytery's legal counsel and insurance company.
3. The Response Team should immediately inform the accused and the accuser (or their legal guardian if either one is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult) that they have the right to retain their own legal counsel. The presbytery's counsel will represent the presbytery but not the accused or the accuser.
4. The Response Team should contact the parent or legal guardian of the alleged victim and the accused (or legal guardian if the accused is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult) to communicate action already taken. ("Here's what's already been done; here's what is going to be done.") The ongoing pastoral care for the alleged victim and family, and for the accused, needs to be provided by two separate people, always someone outside the Response Team, such as a pastor or social worker.
5. All presbytery staff and event leadership should be instructed that all communications about any incidents are confidential and come only from the Response Team. The Response Team should prepare a statement for possible use with the media.
6. If the accused is a member of the clergy, s/he is also subject to the "Rules of Discipline" of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Presbytery's "Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct".

## **CONSEQUENCES**

- A. Any person accused of committing a Prohibited Act, whether a staff member, employee, member, or volunteer, will immediately be reassigned to responsibilities without direct child or vulnerable adult contact. If the investigation supports the accusations, the accused person will be suspended from participation in all children's, youth, or vulnerable adult activities and programs of Palo Duro Presbytery. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the church and/or law enforcement or child or adult protection agencies.
- B. Any person found to have committed a Prohibited Act shall be prohibited from future participation in children's, youth, and vulnerable adult activities and programs of Palo Duro Presbytery. If the person is a staff member or employee of the presbytery, such conduct will result in termination of employment.
- C. As required by Texas law, all reports of abuse will be forwarded in a timely manner by Palo Duro Presbytery to the appropriate child or vulnerable adult protection and law enforcement authorities. Such reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
- D. Failure to timely report a Prohibited Act to the designated person shall be considered a violation of this Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and shall be grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee and suspension and dismissal from participation in all children's, youth, and vulnerable adult activities and programs of Palo Duro Presbytery by any person.
- E. When the allegations involve a member of the clergy, the provisions of Palo Duro Presbytery's "Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct" and the guidance of the church's discipline will be followed.

Approved 09/2025

## APPENDIX G.1

### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF A CHILD

In Texas, the legal requirements concerning the legal requirements for reporting suspected abuse or neglect of a child are primarily found in Chapter 261 of the Family Code.

#### 1] DEFINING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

“Abuse” (§261.001(1)) is defined to include a broad laundry list of acts and omissions that could cause or permit mental or emotional or physical injury to a child, including harmful sexual conduct or use of a controlled substance. Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent physical injury or harmful sexual conduct is also defined as abuse.

Similarly, “neglect” (§261.001(4)) is broadly defined as leaving a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation where the child could be exposed to substantial risk of physical or mental harm.

#### 2] REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT

##### A. WHO?

“**A person having cause to believe** that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person **shall immediately** make a report”(§261.101(a)). This includes, without exception, individuals whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, such as clergy, attorneys, doctors, social workers, etc. (§261.101(c)). Generally, the identity of the person making the report is confidential unless disclosed by order of a court or provided to a law enforcement officer conducting a criminal investigation. (§261.101(d); §261.201) While a professional cannot delegate to or rely on another person to make the report, it appears that other persons can (§261.101(b)).

##### B. WHEN?

When a person has cause to believe there has been abuse or neglect, a report shall be made “immediately”. (§261.101(a)) A professional must make a report within 48 hours after the professional “first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected.” (§261.101(b))

##### C. WHAT?

The report should reflect the reporter’s “belief that a child has been or may have been abused or neglected”. (§261.102) The report shall identify, if known,

1. Name and address of the child;
2. Name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody or welfare of the child; and
3. Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect. (§261.104)

**D. TO WHOM?**

A report shall be made to:

1. Any local or state law enforcement agency;
2. The Department of Protective and Regulatory Services; or
3. The state agency that operates or licenses the facility in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred. (§261.103)

Regardless of where the report is initially made, it will be referred to and investigated by the Department if it involves abuse or neglect by a “person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare” or by law enforcement agencies if it involves alleged abuse or neglect by someone else. (§261.105)

**E. IMMUNITIES**

A person who acts in good faith to report, investigate, testify, or otherwise participate in a judicial proceeding or investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability. (§261.106) If a frivolous claim is brought against a person for reporting, the person may recover reasonable attorney’s fees and other expenses related to their defense. ( §261.108)

**F. PENALTY FOR FALSE REPORT**

It is a Class A misdemeanor to knowingly or intentionally make a false report. It is a felony if the person has been previously convicted of making a false report. (§261.107)

**G. PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO REPORT**

It is a Class B misdemeanor if a person “has cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report.” (§261.109)

## **APPENDIX G.2**

### **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF A VULNERABLE ADULT**

In Texas, the legal requirements concerning the legal requirements for reporting suspected abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult are primarily found in Chapter 48 of the Human Resources Code.

#### 1] **DEFINING ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

(1) "Elderly person" means a person 65 years of age or older.

(2) "Abuse" means:

(A) the negligent or willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical or emotional harm or pain to an elderly person or person with a disability by the person's caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with the person; or  
(B) sexual abuse of an elderly person or person with a disability, including any involuntary or nonconsensual sexual conduct that would constitute an offense under Section 21.08, Penal Code (indecent exposure) or Chapter 22, Penal Code (assaultive offenses), committed by the person's caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with the person.

(3) "Exploitation" means the illegal or improper act or process of a caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with an elderly person or person with a disability that involves using, or attempting to use, the resources of the elderly person or person with a disability, including the person's social security number or other identifying information, for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain without the informed consent of the person.

(4) "Neglect" means the failure to provide for oneself the goods or services, including medical services, which are necessary to avoid physical or emotional harm or pain or the failure of a caretaker to provide such goods or services.

(5) "Protective services" means the services furnished by the department or by another protective services agency to an elderly person or person with a disability who has been determined to be in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation or to a relative or caretaker of an elderly person or person with a disability if the department determines the services are necessary to prevent the elderly person or person with a disability from returning to a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. These services may include social casework, case management, arranging psychiatric and health evaluations, home care, day care, social services, health care, respite services, and other services consistent with this chapter. The term does not include the services of the department or another protective services agency in conducting an investigation regarding alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or person with a disability.

(6) "Protective services agency" means a public or private agency, corporation, board, or organization that provides protective services to elderly persons or persons with disabilities in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

(7) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 4.465(a)(55), eff. April 2, 2015.

(8) "Person with a disability" means a person with a mental, physical, or intellectual or

developmental disability that substantially impairs the person's ability to provide adequately for the person's care or protection and who is:

- (A) 18 years of age or older; or
- (B) under 18 years of age and who has had the disabilities of minority removed.
- (9) "Legal holiday" means a state holiday listed in Subchapter B, Chapter 662, Government Code, or an officially declared county holiday.
- (10) "Volunteer" means a person who:
  - (A) performs services for or on behalf of the department under the supervision of a department employee; and
  - (B) does not receive compensation that exceeds the authorized expenses the person incurs in performing those services.
- (11) "Home and community-based services" has the meaning assigned by Section 48.251.

2] REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT

A. WHO? Sec. 48.051. REPORT.

- (a) Except as prescribed by Subsection (b), **a person having cause to believe** that an elderly person, a person with a disability, or an individual receiving services from a provider as described by Subchapter F is in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation **shall report** the information required by Subsection (d) **immediately** to the department.
- (b) If a person has cause to believe that an elderly person or a person with a disability, other than an individual receiving services from a provider as described by Subchapter F, has been abused, neglected, or exploited in a facility operated, licensed, certified, or registered by a state agency, the person shall report the information to the state agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility for investigation by that agency.
  - (b-1) This subsection applies only to a provider under the home and community-based services (HCS) waiver program or the Texas home living (TxHmL) waiver program, an intermediate care facility licensed under Chapter 252, Health and Safety Code, a state supported living center as defined by Section 531.002, Health and Safety Code, or a home and community support services agency licensed under Chapter 142, Health and Safety Code. Except as provided by Subsections (a) and (b), a person, including an officer, employee, agent, contractor, or subcontractor of a facility or provider subject to this subsection, having cause to believe that an individual receiving services from the facility or provider is in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall immediately report to the commission the information required by Subsection (d). Notwithstanding Section 48.0021, in this subsection, "commission" means the Health and Human Services Commission.
- (c) The duty imposed by Subsections (a), (b), and (b-1) applies without exception to a person whose knowledge concerning possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation is obtained during the scope of the person's employment or whose professional communications are generally

confidential, including an attorney, clergy member, medical practitioner, social worker, employee or member of a board that licenses or certifies a professional, and mental health professional.

- B. WHEN? Sec. 48.051(a)  
“Immediately”
- C. WHAT? Sec. 48.051(d)
- (a) The report may be made orally or in writing. It shall include:
    - a. the name, age, and address of the elderly person or person with a disability;
    - b. the name and address of any person responsible for the care of the elderly person or person with a disability;
    - c. the nature and extent of the condition of the elderly person or person with a disability;
    - d. the basis of the reporter's knowledge; and
    - e. any other relevant information.
  - (b) If a person who makes a report under this section chooses to give self-identifying information, the caseworker who investigates the report shall contact the person if necessary to obtain any additional information required to assist the person who is the subject of the report.
- D. TO WHOM? Sec. 48.051(a)
- (1) Any local or state law enforcement agency;
  - (2) “the department” meaning  
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES,
  - (3) specifically Adult Protective Services, Call: 1-800-252-5400
- E. IMMUNITY Sec. 48.054(a)
- (a) A person filing a report under this chapter or testifying or otherwise participating in any judicial proceeding arising from a petition, report, or investigation is immune from civil or criminal liability on account of his or her petition, report, testimony, or participation, unless the person acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose.
- F. PENALTY FOR FALSE REPORT Sec. 48.053
- (a) A person commits an offense if the person knowingly or intentionally reports information as provided in this chapter that the person knows is false or lacks factual foundation.
  - (b) An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.
- G. PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO REPORT Sec. 48.02
- (a) A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that an elderly person or person with a disability has been abused, neglected, or exploited or is in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and knowingly fails to report in accordance with this chapter. An offense under this subsection is a Class A misdemeanor.

**Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY  
COVERAGE**

The policy applies to all employment policies and practices including recruiting, selection, benefits, compensation, performance reviews, promotion, transfers, corrective action, training, and separation will be administered without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, pregnancy or related conditions, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, self-identified or perceived sex, transgender status, creed, protected disability status, citizenship status, genetic information, uniformed service (e.g. U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard), status as a Vietnam Era or special disabled veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws, or veteran status, or religious affiliation (except where a category is determined to be a bona fide occupational qualification) or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. The Employer strongly opposes and does not tolerate any form of discrimination by or towards its employees, especially when discrimination is based upon categories protected by federal, state, or local law.

**ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

The Employer strongly opposes and does not tolerate any form of harassment (which can be a form of discrimination) and unwelcome conduct by or towards its employees, especially when victims are harassed because they are in a category protected by local, state, or federal law (ex. race, color, national origin, etc.). This policy includes, but is not limited to, harassing comments, behaviors, or conduct based upon the protected categories (e.g., race, color, national origin, and so forth). Harassment includes sexual harassment, which is a form of sexual discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

*Quid Pro Quo Harassment*

A submission to such conduct or communication is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment (ex. “Sleep with me, and I will get you a promotion.”); Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual (“If you do not come to my hotel room for sex, I will make sure you are fired!”).

*Hostile Environment Harassment*

Such conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s employment or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment (ex. telling offensive sexual jokes loudly and more than once near someone’s office, rubbing against someone more than once “accidentally”).

Sexual harassment can occur between males and females or between persons of the same sex or gender. Harassment that occurs because of the victim’s gender identity or gender expression (including transgender status) is also unlawful.

Examples of harassing behavior (See Sub-Appendix H.1) may include, but are not limited to:

- A. insulting, obscene, or profane language (e.g., mocking someone with a disability; calling someone a “geezer”);
- B. unwelcome and insulting comments about physical appearance, manner of dress, attire (ex., “Wow - you look hot today!” “Why don’t you learn to speak English?”); unwelcome jokes, innuendo; unlawful sexual stereotyping; displaying inappropriate cartoons, photographs, computer screen savers, or wallpaper;
- C. unwelcome and/or inappropriate touching of another employee’s body (e.g., touching someone in a sexual way; laying your hands on a pregnant woman’s abdomen without permission); and
- D. any other harassing behavior that is abusive or offensive to another reasonable person and which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Harassing communication can be verbal, written, or electronic (ex. email or text messages). The scope of this policy is not limited to the physical location of the office where an employee works and relationships with other employees at this location. It includes contacts anywhere in connection with the work of the Presbytery and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and relationships with employees, volunteers, and members of the PC(USA), councils, entities, committees, and/or related entities. In other words, discrimination and harassment can happen outside the employee’s assigned office (ex. a local congregation).

## **REPORTING DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT**

Any employee who is a victim of or witness to discrimination, harassment, or perceived discrimination or harassment must report it immediately. Reports may be verbal or written and may be signed or anonymous.

Supervisors and managers who witness incidents of harassment should tell the harasser to stop the harassing behavior and report the incident(s) immediately. Similarly, supervisors and managers who receive reports of harassment should immediately report the incidents to the executive presbyter or stated clerk.

## **REPRISAL AND RETALIATION ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED**

Employees can submit reports, complaints, or questions, act as witnesses, participate in investigations or proceedings, oppose harassment, or encourage fellow employees to report harassment in good faith without fear of retaliation. Retaliation against a person for submitting a report, complaint, or asking a question or giving information about discrimination or harassment, whether that individual is a victim or witness to it, is a serious violation of this policy and will be treated as a separate and distinct cause for complaint and may result in more strict corrective action than the harassment or discrimination itself. Examples of retaliation include, but are not limited to, termination, demotion, threats, unwarranted poor annual evaluation, negative reference, or any other act that is intended to or does dissuade an employee from making a report or complaint of harassment or supporting a complaint or report of harassment by a co-worker. In

addition to being a violation of this policy, retaliation is also unlawful. Any acts of retaliation must be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ANY FORM OF DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, OR RETALIATION**

The Employer is committed to providing a work environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and inappropriate conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, disruptive, or retaliatory. Employees who believe they have experienced discrimination or harassment, whether the person who is discriminating or harassing the employee is a colleague, co-worker, or third party (e.g., Board member, volunteer), should review this policy and make a report without fear of retaliation. The Employer values and respects its employees, and it takes all reports, complaints, or questions of discrimination or harassment seriously. The Employer will not tolerate unlawful or improper conduct by any of its employees or by any third-party, non-employee toward its employees.

An employee who wishes to report or has a question related to discrimination or harassment, as defined in this policy, should immediately submit a complaint, report, or question, using the process described in this policy. However, employees are not limited or restricted to submitting a formal complaint form.

### **A. What May Be Included in a Complaint or Report**

If you are the employee submitting a complaint, report, or have a question about discrimination or harassment, you are encouraged, but not required, to write down your complaint, report, or question in as much detail as possible, including names, dates, witnesses, and incidents. Please sign and date any written report and submit it as described below in section B.

### **B. How to Submit Reports and with Whom**

1. If the report, complaint, or question is not about the executive presbyter or the stated clerk, you may submit it to either of them.
2. If the report, complaint, or question is about the executive presbyter or stated clerk, you may submit it to the Synod Leader/Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Sun.
3. Reports, complaints, or questions about harassment or discrimination by persons who are not employed by the Employer may be made to either the executive presbyter or stated clerk.
4. Reports, complaints, or questions may be verbal or written, with your name attached or anonymous. Anonymous reports will require independent verification.

## **DUTY OF SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS TO REPORT DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

Supervisors and managers who witness discrimination or harassment or who receive reports of discrimination or harassment should:

- A. If they witness discrimination or harassment, tell the person who is engaging in the discrimination or harassment to stop.

- B. Immediately report what they witness or the information they receive to the executive presbyter or stated clerk.

### **INVESTIGATION AND APPEAL PROCESS**

- A. If the report, complaint, or question is written, the stated clerk will send the accused and the appropriate executive-level supervisor a copy. If the report, complaint, or question is oral, a summary will be provided.
- B. The executive presbyter and/or stated clerk will determine if the accuser or the accused needs to be placed on administrative leave until the investigation or the process is concluded.
- C. The executive presbyter and/or stated clerk will evaluate the report, complaint, or question to determine if the information provided warrants an investigation. If so, the executive presbyter and/or stated clerk will investigate the allegations. A confidential written report from the investigators will be provided to the Council of Ministries.
- D. The Council of Ministries will issue a decision setting forth its conclusions regarding whether policy(ies) was/were violated and, if so, any appropriate disciplinary or other corrective or remedial action. A summary of the Council's decision will be given to the parties. If this decision is not timely appealed, it is final.
- E. Either party may appeal the Council's decision to the executive presbyter, stated clerk, or their designee (who is selected by the Council of Ministries) within five business days of the date of the decision. The appeal should:
  - 1. be made in writing and submitted to the executive presbyter and stated clerk;
  - 2. include in detail the basis for the appeal of the Council's decision; and,
  - 3. include relevant documents or other materials. The executive presbyter or designee will decide the appeal and issue a decision.A summary of the decision will be given to the parties. The decision of the executive presbyter or designee is final.
- F. If the party submitting a report or complaint reports directly to the executive presbyter and the report or complaint is about the executive presbyter, the party may appeal the Council's decision to the Synod Leader/Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Sun, who will be asked to mediate or initiate a judicial complaint process.
- G. Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination, whether that person is a victim of harassment or discrimination or a witness to it, is a serious violation of this policy and will be treated as a separate and distinct cause for complaint and may result in more strict disciplinary action than for the harassment or discrimination itself. No employee is allowed to retaliate against anyone who submits a report, is a witness in a matter, or is otherwise involved in a report of discrimination or harassment. Any acts of retaliation must be reported immediately to the executive presbyter and/or stated clerk, and it will be promptly investigated.

### **ADDITIONAL PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

- A. If counseling for either party is recommended by a final decision, counseling may be obtained through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or through mental health coverage.

- B. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct did occur and the accused is a Minister of Word and Sacrament, the final decision and any related corrective action shall not be considered exclusive of any actions that may be taken under the *Book of Order*. The Employer will inform and fully cooperate with the mid-council of jurisdiction.
- C. Any investigation, report, question, complaint, documents, administrative records, reports, findings, responses, and appeal materials that are related to the investigation, reporting, and appeal process are confidential. All parties, witnesses, and participants shall respect the confidentiality of the process and shall not discuss the fact of the investigation or any matters known to them or discussed by them in the investigation to anyone except those responsible for the investigation and appeal process or legal counsel. All paperwork and materials related to the process will be placed in the care and custody of the stated clerk. Breach of confidentiality by participants in the investigation, decision-making, or appeal process can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- D. Implementation of this procedure by an employee does not limit the right of the Employer to proceed with any disciplinary action related to the reporting employee, as long as that action is not in retaliation for the use of the procedure.

**Additional Material**

Appendix H.1: Sample Actions that Describe Harassment

Appendix H.2: US EEOC Definition of Harassment

Approved 02/02/24

Updated 09/2025

### **Sub-Appendix H.1: Sample Actions that Describe Harassment**

Sample actions of conduct that could be prohibited in a “Preventing Harassment” policy may include, but are not limited to:

- Spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Intimidating a person.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person’s work.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Removing areas of responsibility without cause.
- Constantly changing work guidelines.
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail.
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information.
- Making jokes that are ‘obviously offensive’ by spoken word or e-mail.
- Intruding on a person’s privacy by pestering, spying, or stalking.
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload that are unfavorable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure).
- Underwork – creating a feeling of uselessness.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.
- Belittling a person’s opinions.
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment.
- Blocking applications for training, leave, or promotion.
- Tampering with a person’s personal belongings or work equipment.
- Using racist slang, phrases, or nicknames.
- Making remarks about an individual’s skin color or other ethnic traits.
- Displaying racist drawings or posters that might be offensive to a particular group.
- Making offensive gestures.
- Making offensive reference to an individual’s mental or physical disability.
- Sharing inappropriate images, videos, e-mails, letters, or notes in an offensive nature.
- Offensively talking about negative racial, ethnic, or religious stereotypes.
- Making derogatory age-related comments.
- Wearing clothing that could be offensive to a particular ethnic group.

## Sub-Appendix H.2: US EEOC Definition of Harassment

### II. Harassment

Harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, (ADEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, (ADA).

Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy), national origin, older age (beginning at age 40), disability, or genetic information (including family medical history). Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws; or opposing employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws.

Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people.

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name-calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance. Harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, an agent of the employer, a co-worker, or a non-employee.
  - The victim does not have to be the person harassed but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
  - Unlawful harassment may occur without economic injury to, or discharge of, the victim.
- Prevention is the best tool to eliminate harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take appropriate steps to prevent and correct unlawful harassment. They should clearly communicate to employees that unwelcome harassing conduct will not be tolerated. They can do this by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process, providing anti-harassment training to their managers and employees, and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains. Employers should strive to create an environment in which employees feel free to raise concerns and are confident that those concerns will be addressed.

Employees are encouraged to inform the harasser directly that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. Employees should also report harassment to management at an early stage to prevent its escalation.

#### A. Employer Liability for Harassment

The employer is automatically liable for harassment by a supervisor that results in a negative employment action, such as termination, failure to promote or hire, and loss of wages. If the supervisor's harassment results in a hostile work environment, the employer can avoid liability only if it can prove that: 1) it reasonably tried to prevent and promptly correct the harassing behavior; and 2) the employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of any preventive or corrective opportunities provided by the employer.

The employer will be liable for harassment by non-supervisory employees or non-employees over whom it has control (e.g., independent contractors or customers on the premises), if it knew, or should have known about the harassment and failed to take prompt and appropriate corrective action.

When investigating allegations of harassment, the EEOC looks at the entire record, including the nature of the conduct and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. A determination of whether harassment is severe or pervasive enough to be illegal is made on a case-by-case basis. If you believe that the harassment you are experiencing or witnessing is of a specifically sexual nature, you may want to see EEOC's information on [sexual harassment](#).

**Parental and Family Leave Recommendations  
for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastors  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

These recommendations are provided to help churches develop and implement policies for Parental Leave and Family Leave for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastors (hereafter referred to as MWS and CP). These recommendations are meant to open conversations among sessions, human resources committees, and professional staff members to discern appropriate policies. This may also be a stepping stone for policies for an entire church staff. This is not a mandatory policy but a set of guidelines for good pastoral care of our pastoral leaders. Many churches may not afford full-time ministers or Board of Pension dues, and so these guidelines are not policy, but they help recruit and retain quality employees and ministers for our churches. These guidelines aim to address Parental and Family Leave, which now incorporates issues once solely called maternal leave, to be inclusive of the other parent; it now incorporates and respects the time to address adoption, miscarriage, stillbirth, and fertility care.

**THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING**

God created us to be in relationship with one another, to care for one another, and to participate in families. “Children are indeed a heritage from the Lord.” (Psalm 127:3) and

“Reconciled to God...parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality.” (The Confession of 1967, 9.47) and

“We respond to God’s grace in the context of personal relationships...Congregations are encouraged to nurture and equip households and families...” (W-5.0104).

We are required to honor our parents and to care for our children. As congregational leaders, we are to encourage healthy families and healthy priorities. Parental leave gives the mother or father a chance to establish a healthy connection with her or his child and model good family life for the congregation.

As part of the minimum compensation recommendations of Palo Duro Presbytery, every call to a Minister of Word and Sacrament (MWS) or Commissioned Pastor (CP) may consider following Parental and Family Leave provisions as a minimum.

**PURPOSE**

- A. To provide sessions and other employing agencies with a guide for minimum standards for an MWS and CP parental and family leave guidelines to be included in all call packages. It is anticipated that individual churches and employers will not feel limited by these guidelines and will respond to the need for family leave responsibly and generously.

- B. To ensure that MWS or CP receives fair and equitable leave when required. It is anticipated that an MWS or CP will use this policy only when needed and will not abuse the generosity of the church.
- C. Maternity Leave is when a female professional staff member gives birth to a child; at the discretion of the staff member, maternity leave may begin before one's due date, in consideration of the health of the mother and child.
- D. Paternity Leave is when a male professional staff member's spouse gives birth to a child, or he is involved in the pre- or post- care of a mate having a prenatal, birthing, or postnatal critical event.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTAL LEAVE

- A. **MATERNITY LEAVE.** It is recommended that at least twelve weeks' leave with full pay and benefits, excluding travel expenses or allowances, be included in the terms of each call.
- B. **PATERNITY LEAVE.** It is recommended that at least twelve weeks of paternity leave with full pay and benefits, excluding travel expenses or allowances, be included in the terms of each call. This leave does not require the MWS or CP to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.
- C. Other arrangements may be negotiated by the MWS or CP and session/council to extend the leave beyond the initial period. Upon completion of the leave, the MWS or CP will be entitled to return to his/her position. The position will not be filled during the leave except on a temporary basis.
- D. **ADOPTION LEAVE.** Recognizing that the adoption of a child requires as much of a transition as the birth of a child, it is recommended that an MWS or CP who is adopting be granted leave commensurate with maternity or paternity leave. If additional leave is necessary, the Session or employing agency will be consulted, and it will be arranged under the terms of the Family Leave policy.
- E. An MWS or CP desiring parental leave will submit a written request to her or his session, ordinarily thirty days prior to the start of the leave.
- F. **MISCARRIAGE.** In the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth, the MWS or CP will be granted the same parental leave she/he would have received had the pregnancy been carried to term with no complications.
- G. The MWS or CP should be relieved of all ministry responsibilities for the duration of the parental leave. The session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during this time. Session should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, a session moderator, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation, and continuation of teaching and programming for which the pastor was responsible.
- H. Vacation time may be added to Maternity or Paternity Leave time with full pay and benefits. Requests for additional Parental Leave time due to the individual circumstances of each birth or adoption may be negotiated with the session and with the assistance of the Commission on Ministry. This leave does not require the MWS or CP to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.
- I. **FERTILITY.** Personal time off is allowed and respected for medical visits, including those which may be out of town, for all the issues imagined above, but also to include fertility or infertility medical conversations and treatments apart from other time off. This time

- can be measured in hours, days, or weeks based on a confidential conversation with the session.
- J. **In General.** The COM should be informed when a Parental or Family Leave option is exercised by an MWS or CP so that the COM may be of assistance in securing appropriate pulpit supply, pastoral care, and administrative assistance during the MWS or CP absence. Additionally, the COM and executive presbyter may be helpful, if needed, in advising the session on how they may continue the mission of the congregation while the MWS or CP is absent.

Congregations are encouraged to respect the boundaries and privacy of a Minister or a Commissioned Pastor while he or she is away on Parental or Family Leave.

Approved 02/2024  
Revised 11/2024, 09/2025

**Human Resources Policy**  
**PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**  
(Added to the Manual of Operation, September 2025)

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Palo Duro Presbytery is directed in all its work by mission intentions, which are expressed through the goals of the presbytery, the work assignments, and an annual budget.

The policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is that all its governing bodies will not discriminate in employment policy or practice except where religious affiliation is determined to be a bona fide occupational qualification.

The Council of Ministries represents the presbytery in all personnel matters. All employees are accountable to and through the Council of Ministries. All employees serve in one of three staff distinctions: Professional Staff, Support Staff, and Contract Personnel.

The presbytery, as an employer, shall:

- A. Define and establish professional staff positions with requirements and/or qualifications
- B. Recruit and select qualified personnel for support staff positions
- C. Seek to provide a safe, healthy work environment
- D. Establish and maintain a human resources policy
- E. Along with the Committee on Ministry, set compensation and benefits
- F. Provide for performance review in consultation with employees
- G. Establish grievance procedures
- H. Establish a separation policy

All policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and all civil laws shall apply.

**PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

- A. The Presbytery's Professional Staff includes the positions of Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk. Their purpose is to give focus, leadership, and support to the presbytery as specified in *the Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the goals and objectives of the presbytery.
- B. Job Descriptions: The general job descriptions of professional staff are outlined in the Position Descriptions adopted by the presbytery. Professional position responsibilities, duties, and functions will be clearly stated in the terms of call.
- C. Performance Review: An annual performance review and evaluation will be conducted for staff by the executive presbyter in consultation with the employee. The executive presbyter will be evaluated by the Council of Ministries via a liaison.
- D. Special Relationships: In the case of Professional Staff, a special relationship exists with the Committee on Ministry.

1. Search Procedure: A liaison from the Committee on Ministry shall serve on the Search Committee. The Committee on Ministry may provide names of possible candidates. Background checks shall be made by the Search Committee in consultation with the Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry shall participate in the interview process of candidates.
  2. Presbytery action: The Committee on Ministry is responsible for the examination and certification of terms of call to the presbytery. The Committee on Ministry shall be responsible for the ordination and/or installation of Professional Staff.
  3. Relationship Building: The Council of Ministries shall convene and facilitate representatives from the Search Committee responsible for the staff person's call and the Committee on Ministry to meet with new Professional Staff at the end of six months of employment for the purpose of relationship building.
  4. The Council of Ministries shall provide pastoral care to all Professional Staff.
  5. Dissolution Process: A dissolution process determined by the presbytery shall be followed.
- E. Separation Policy  
Voluntary separation or resignation requires a minimum of one month's notice for Professional Staff. This may be done in full use of the process of the presbytery in consultation with the Committee on Ministry.
1. Dismissal for cause of Professional Staff will follow the provisions of the Rules of Discipline, D-7.01.
  2. All vacations provided for in the call of Professional Staff shall be taken each year and cannot be accumulated. Study leave can only be accumulated as stated in terms of call. Study leave does not accrue a financial benefit.
- F. Grievance Process  
A complaint or grievance by Professional Staff concerning an alleged violation of approved policy of the presbytery or any civil law shall be dealt with promptly and fairly. The complaint shall be taken to the Council of Ministries in writing. The Council of Ministries shall have the final decision in matters of non-ordained personnel. In the case of ordained personnel, there will be recourse to the discipline process outlined in the Rules of Discipline, D-7.01.
- G. Crisis intervention  
The Council of Ministries may seek alternate networks of resolution, including the Committee on Ministry and/or a trained professional facilitator.

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

Support staff in Palo Duro Presbytery includes a full-time Administrative Assistant and any other part-time non-exempt personnel.

Palo Duro Presbytery, through its Council of Ministries, shall:

- A. Establish positions necessary to meet the needs of the presbytery.
- B. Establish and maintain position descriptions, modifying them as necessary. Modifications shall be negotiated between an employee's supervisor, Council of Ministries, and the employee. Each employee shall be provided with a current copy of

his/her position description. Each employee shall be responsible for the requirements of that description.

- C. Establish position requirements and/or qualifications in consultation with the executive presbyter and the Council of Ministries.
- D. Recruit and select qualified personnel for support staff positions in consultation with the executive presbyter and Council of Ministries.
- E. Seek to provide a safe, healthy work environment for all employees.
- F. Hold employees responsible for all provisions of the Human Resources policy included in the Manual of Operations.
- G. Set compensation and benefits. Compensation and benefit policies are:
  1. Salary shall be determined annually.
  2. Benefits may be offered through the benefits plan of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including major medical coverage and pension (including death and disability coverage), or major medical and death and disability. Participation in either option is at the will of the employee. All dues will be paid by PDP, and the cost will either be deducted from the cash salary or be included as a part of the employment package in lieu of salary, as negotiated at the time of hire. Board of Pensions also offers optional coverage, including dental, death, and retirement savings to enrolled participants. If elected, dues for these optional coverages are at the employee's expense. Employees may choose their own medical coverage independent of the presbytery or the Board of Pensions.
  3. Annual vacation of ten working days shall be granted after one complete year of service. After five years of continuous service, fifteen working days vacation; after ten years of continuous service, twenty working days shall be granted.
  4. Unavoidable Absence Benefit (UAB) will accrue at the rate of one day per month of service up to a maximum of thirty days. UAB is to be used for employee illness, funerals, family emergencies, and other necessary absences approved by the employee's supervisor. Accumulated UAB is not vacation time. UAB is not part of compensation that is paid out at the end of an employment relationship.
  5. Leave without pay will be negotiated with the employee's supervisor and the approval of the Council of Ministries.
  6. The Presbytery office is closed on the following holidays:
    - New Year's Eve
    - New Year's Day
    - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
    - President's Day
    - Good Friday
    - Memorial Day
    - Juneteenth
    - Independence Day
    - Labor Day
    - Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
    - Christmas Eve
    - Christmas Day

- Should a holiday fall on Saturday or Sunday, the Friday or Monday nearest to the holiday will be observed. Employees shall receive full pay for these days.
7. Family leave shall be provided at a maximum allowance of twelve weeks with pay. Benefits will continue to be paid by Presbytery and the employee if participating in optional coverages.
  8. Continuing education shall be negotiated with an employee's supervisor and the Council of Ministries.
- H. Establish and implement the performance/evaluation process. Annual performance review shall be conducted by the employee's supervisor. Conclusions will be shared with the Council of Ministries and the employee.
- I. Establish grievance procedures. The Council of Ministries shall process all complaints and grievances submitted to it by the employee in writing. The Council of Ministries shall act expediently and finally.
- J. Establish separation policy. Employees shall submit a voluntary resignation in writing, providing a minimum of ten working days' notice. Dismissal for cause may include, but shall not be limited to:
1. unsatisfactory performance
  2. insubordination
  3. misuse of presbytery property or funds
  4. violation of confidentiality
  5. sexual misconduct, as defined in the presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy.
- K. Palo Duro Presbytery shall establish work hours for all employees. Work hours for full-time support staff shall be Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Part-time support staff shall have their work hours established in consultation with the executive presbyter.

## **CONTRACT PERSONNEL**

All contract employees shall be employed under the provisions of a contract. Each contract shall be written in response to specific needs, with the terms of the contract having clear assignments and termination provisions. No contract may be merged or amended without a new agreement approved by the Council of Ministers.

[Approved and added to the Manual of Operations, 09/2025](#)

**Receipt and Acknowledgment  
of Palo Duro Presbytery Human Resources Policies**

These Human Resources Policies are an important document intended to help you become acquainted with Palo Duro Presbytery. This document will serve as a guide; it is not the final word in all cases. Individual circumstances may call for individual attention.

Because the general ministry atmosphere of Palo Duro Presbytery and economic conditions are always changing, the contents of these policies may be changed at any time at the discretion of Palo Duro Presbytery. No changes in any benefit, policy, or rule will be made without due consideration of the mutual advantages, disadvantages, benefits, and responsibilities such changes will have on you as an employee and on Palo Duro Presbytery.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of the Palo Duro Presbytery Human Resources Policies and Job Description.

- \* I have received and read a copy of the Palo Duro Presbytery Human Resources Policies. I understand that the policies, rules, and benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of Palo Duro Presbytery at any time. I understand that this manual replaces (supersedes) all other previous policies for Palo Duro Presbytery as of September 26, 2025.
- \* I further understand that my employment is terminable at will, either by me or Palo Duro Presbytery, regardless of the length of my employment or the granting of benefits of any kind.
- \* I understand that no contract of employment other than "at will" has been expressed or implied, and that no circumstances arising out of my employment will alter my "at will" employment relationship unless expressed in writing, with the understanding specifically set forth and signed by me and the appropriate entities of Palo Duro Presbytery.
- \* I am aware that, during the course of my employment, confidential information may be made available to me. I understand that this information is critical to the ministry of Palo Duro Presbytery and must not be given out or used outside of Palo Duro Presbytery's premises or with non-Palo Duro Presbytery employees. In the event of termination of employment, whether voluntary or involuntary, I hereby agree not to utilize or exploit this information in any way.
- \* I understand that, should the content be changed in any way, Palo Duro Presbytery may require an additional signature from me to indicate that I am aware of and understand any new policies.
- \* I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and have received a copy of the Palo Duro Presbytery Human Resources Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The signed original copy of this agreement should be given to your supervisor; it will be filed in your personnel file.

**Standards for Ethical Conduct  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry, and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

**I**

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore, I will:

- A. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
- B. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
- C. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
- D. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
- E. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
- F. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
- G. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
- J. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

**II**

I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore, I will:

- A. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
- B. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
- C. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
- D. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
- E. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
- F. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
- G. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;

- H. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due, and observe copyrights;
- I. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and
- J. Accept the discipline of the church.

### III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore, I will:

- A. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
- B. Show respect and provide encouragement for sisters and brothers in Christ;
- C. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
- D. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

## **LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH: STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

### I

I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore, I will:

- A. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
- B. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
- B. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
- D. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
- E. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

### II

I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore, I will:

- A. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
- B. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
- C. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
- D. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
- E. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;

- F. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
- G. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
- H. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
- I. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position, speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
- J. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
- K. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable;
- L. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
- M. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
- N. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:  
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR  
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry, and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore, I will:

- A. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
- B. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
- C. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
- D. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
- E. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
- F. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
- G. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
- H. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore, I will:

- A. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;

- B. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
- C. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
- D. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
- E. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by PC(USA) policy;
- F. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
- G. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
- H. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
- I. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
- J. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
- K. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
- L. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
- M. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
- N. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor, and upon leaving a ministry or office, speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- \*\* O. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired, only as directed by presbytery;
- \*\* P. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served, only as directed by the presbytery, and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- \*\* Q. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

### III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore, I will:

- A. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
- B. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
- C. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
- D. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

*\*\* These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.*

Approved by Presbytery 10/15/2011  
Added to Manual of Operations 03/26/26

**A COVENANT BETWEEN AMARILLO CHILDREN'S  
HOME AND  
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

I. The Nature of the Covenant

A. Definition

This covenant is a voluntary agreement between the Presbyterian Home for Children in Amarillo (here called "Amarillo Children's Home" or "ACH") and Palo Duro Presbytery (here called the "Presbytery") to make explicit a historic and continuing relatedness between the two bodies. We choose the term "covenant" as a way of indicating that Amarillo Children's Home and the Presbytery are related to each other in a unique way and as a way of stating the seriousness of our intentions and hopes. Both Amarillo Children's Home and the Presbytery recognize that upon adoption and ratification, this will become the written affirmation of our relationship.

B. The purposes of this covenant are:

1. To clarify the relationship between Amarillo Children's Home and the Presbytery.
2. To maintain the relationship through regular review and renewal.
3. To provide a means of resolving practical and legal questions in the future about the relationship.
4. To affirm mutual trust, concern, and mission.

C. Parties to the Covenant and Their History

Amarillo Children's Home began with the gift by Mr. and Mrs. Allen Early, Sr., of what had been the Lowry-Phillips School properties, additional lots, and \$10,000 as an initial endowment to the Central Presbyterian Church of Amarillo (now First Presbyterian Church). That congregation offered the property to Amarillo Presbytery on April 5, 1923. The Amarillo Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America accepted the gift on April 10, 1923, and appointed a Board of Directors to run the school on June 5, 1923. Presbyterian Home for Children in Amarillo was chartered on November 20, 1924. W. N. Stokes in 1953 wrote:

"... the Amarillo Presbytery appointed the Board of Directors and assumed a benevolent interest in the welfare of the children's home (sic) being operated by said corporation under said trust, and has continued to appoint the directors and advise, direct and visit the home and consulted with its Board of Directors at will and on numerous occasions throughout the period of its existence..."

Thus, Amarillo Children's Home and the Presbytery have been related since the inception of the home. The charter is styled, "The Presbyterian Home for Children in Amarillo," and ACH operates under the name "Amarillo Children's Home."

The original intent of the charter for Amarillo Children's Home was to operate a charitable institution "for orphan and otherwise needy children."

Palo Duro Presbytery is a governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is the legal successor organization of the Amarillo Presbytery and the later Plains Presbytery of the same denomination. It is an ecclesiastical organization covering 72 counties in West Texas.

The Covenant with the Palo Duro Presbytery continues the charitable public trust that was established with the Amarillo Presbytery after it became the Palo Duro Presbytery in the 1983 reunion, which established the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Presbytery accepted the responsibilities of operating and maintaining the property as a charitable public trust when it accepted the gift that originated with Mr. and Mrs. Early. The commissioners of Palo Duro Presbytery constitute a class of members of the corporation, and all members of the corporation will hold one meeting annually for the purpose of hearing a report of the operations and programs of Amarillo Children’s Home. The operation of Amarillo Children’s Home is in the full control of the Board of Trustees of the Amarillo Children’s Home, subject to the public trust. In the unlikely event, and only if the organization can no longer fulfill its basic mission of caring for children, the assets of the organization shall revert to the corporation of which Palo Duro Presbytery is currently the trustee.

#### The Role and Mission of Amarillo Children’s Home

Amarillo Children’s Home offers admittance and provides residential facilities for dependent, neglected, abused, and orphaned children from age five into young adulthood. The aim of ACH is to provide for the basic needs of children and to help each child feel secure and know himself or herself to be a person of value in a healthy, home-like atmosphere. While there are explicit entrance requirements, ACH is operated as a non-sectarian facility, providing services as a licensed child-care facility under the Texas Department of Human Services.

The Presbytery meets regularly and reviews its mission work, and typically adopts its budget annually. The Presbytery has declared:

“Palo Duro Presbytery is the body of Christ, a broken but redeemed community of faith in the Reformed tradition, called by God to live and serve in covenant relationship with God, God’s people, and God’s creation. In response to God’s call, guided by the Holy Spirit, prayer and Bible study, the faith communities of Palo Duro Presbytery proclaim the Gospel of grace and love in word and deed. Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” and Mark 12:28-31 “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’

Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Connected by grace and love, we who are Palo Duro Presbytery, seek to nurture and support our communities of faith as we discern God’s call to mutual care and opportunities for growth and service.”

Palo Duro Presbytery's mission embraces the specific institutional mission of Amarillo Children's Home.

II. Responsibilities

A. The Parties and Their Relationships to Each Other

On the grounds of history and common mission, ACH and the Presbytery establish this covenant relationship as the basis for fulfilling a common ministry to children in the name of Christ and his Church and continuing to trust in each other in improvement of this work. In establishing this covenant, ACH acts through its Board of Trustees, and the Presbytery acts through its commissioners. These commissioners constitute the membership of the nonprofit corporation known as the Amarillo Children's Home in Amarillo. Presbytery's delegated committee for management of Presbytery work is the Council of Ministries, through whom ACH or its Trustees may communicate conveniently with Presbytery.

Both parties agree that the life of each will be enriched and made more dynamic by recognizing that each party has its distinctive role, which can be strengthened through contacts with each other in appropriate ways. The Board of Trustees of ACH and Presbytery recognize the need for mutual counsel, support, and encouragement. While each group has its unique role, both affirm that they share common ground.

B. The Common Ground: The Affirmation This Covenant affirms that:

1. The two parties acknowledge that faith in Christ provides the context for each to move into the future with new hope rooted in Christ.
2. Amarillo Children's Home is non-sectarian in service, yet Presbyterian in heritage. Not devoted to one sect in service – yet Presbyterian – Reformed in Heritage.

C. Corporate Integrity of Each Party

Both ACH and the Presbytery are chartered under the laws of the State of Texas. The bylaws of ACH provide that the corporation has members, and one class of members are the current elected commissioners of the Presbytery. One stated meeting each year shall serve as the annual meeting of the members of the Corporation. The members of the Corporation may hear reports, ask for information, and elect members of the Board of Trustees. Trustees need not be members of the Corporation or of the Presbytery, but at least one member of Board of Trustees shall be an active member of the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall appoint a liaison through the Council of Ministries to communicate concerns between the Council of Ministries and the Board of Trustees of the Amarillo Children's Home when necessary. This liaison may also serve as member of the Board of Trustees.

It is our understanding that if ACH should be dissolved for any reason, it would devolve on the members of the Corporation (the Presbytery) to determine what disposition would be made of the residual assets of ACH, mindful that the original donation was for the care of "orphan and needy children."

The Board of Trustees of ACH agrees to place in the office of Palo Duro Presbytery a copy of its charter and articles of incorporation. Minutes of Amarillo Children’s Home’s Board of Trustees meetings will be made available to the Presbytery office upon request.

**D. Operational Relationships**

Two sorts of linkage embody the Covenant. In order to fulfill its obligation as the trustee of the common law trust, the Presbytery shall, at a Stated Meeting of the year, docket a corporate meeting of ACH for the purpose of hearing a report of conditions at ACH, including assurances of compliance with regulatory authorities. ACH will have appropriate personnel to present this report since this is an opportunity for ACH to “tell its story” to the Presbytery in ways that will foster the “sense of belonging” envisaged by this covenant. (For other linkage see III A). There will also be a time set aside for questions and answers between ACH and the Commissioners at such meetings of the Presbytery.

**E. Review and Renewal Cycle**

There shall be a review of the Covenant every four years to consider modification of the Covenant made appropriate by changes in circumstances in the intervening years. The Board of Trustees and the Council of Ministries will each name two people to participate in the review, together with a chairperson selected by ACH and Presbytery. The Executive Director of ACH and the Executive Presbyter may be ex officio members of the Review Team. ACH will provide to the Review Team appropriate Trustees' Minutes and copies of any audits of financial records performed in the interim.

The Covenant Review Team shall evaluate the health of the covenant relationship, address emerging issues related to the Covenant Relationship, and propose to both ACH and the Presbytery amendments to the covenant appropriate to these ends. Other non-covenant issues should be addressed in a timely fashion through the Liaison (See II C) and the Council of Ministries of Palo Duro Presbytery.

**III. Mutual Understanding and Resourcing**

Both Amarillo Children’s Home and the Presbytery shall show mutual concern and support for each other. ACH shall be a resource for the Presbytery regarding residential care for at-risk children, interpreting as requested the challenges of ministry in this specialized area of social witness and ministry. ACH may also be a means for educating the Presbytery to the changing dynamics and practices in the field of residential childcare, maintaining a witness to the need for sensitivity in serving this special population.

The Presbytery will be a resource to ACH by providing specific channels of communication and counsel on specific matters as ACH may request, providing ACH with regular mailings of publications regarding the life and work of the Presbytery, including current editions of the “Presbytery Directory.”

It is understood that ACH will continue to seek funds from Presbyterians and others who wish to support this ministry.

The Presbytery and ACH express concern regarding the policy and practices of ACH regarding the Christian nurture of its residents. It is the Presbytery's view that children admitted to ACH should experience the Christian faith and attend a church as a cottage family unit. It is the desire of ACH and the Presbytery that the children from at least one cottage attend a PCUSA church or partner with a church in other projects consistent with the purpose of the trust. It is the hope of ACH and the Presbytery that other churches in Amarillo become involved in the life of ACH and the children. ACH will notify the Presbytery if there are any changes in the relationship between an individual cottage and the local Presbyterian church.

IV. Formal Approval

This document establishes and contains all the terms of the Covenant Relationship between the Palo Duro Presbytery and The Presbyterian Home for Children in Amarillo. By formal action, the Board of Trustees, acting for Amarillo Children's Home, and the Presbytery, on recommendation of the Council of Ministries, may adopt this Covenant and pledge themselves to carry out its provisions.

The formal ratification of the Covenant shall be done at a meeting of the Corporation following approval by the above bodies. A brief ceremony of Covenant Making may be conducted to celebrate this new relationship between these two groups.

Revised January 1986  
Updated August 1993  
Updated January 2011  
Updated January 2017  
Updated January 2023