

A Guide to Presbytery Meetings

The Presbytery of San Francisco is a council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a fellowship made of about 500 minister members and ruling elders.

Together, Presbytery commissioners set policy, develop plans for mission, and promote the spiritual welfare of 67 PC(USA) congregations and 16 new worshipping communities with 9,000+ members in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties. We also oversee the ministry & mission of specialized ministries, new church developments, and new worshipping communities.

More details about the ministry and mission of Presbytery and our committees are available at our website at presbyteryofsf.org.

When are Presbytery meetings?

Per our Presbytery Standing Rules, we set meetings as needed to do our work.

Each year, we typically have four quarterly meetings, but additional special meetings may be arranged as needed. Much work of Presbytery is done by smaller committees and teams which meet monthly throughout the year.

Where do we meet?

We meet both online and in-person. Our in-person meetings rotate among the congregations and other ministries of Presbytery. To learn about hosting a meeting, talk with the Presbytery Meetings Working Group or the Stated Clerk.

Who is at a meeting? Who can vote?

There are typically three types of individuals at our meetings.

MINISTERS (Can Vote)

Ministers include every Minister of Word and Sacrament who has been admitted to the Presbytery as an active or at-large member. Honorably retired ministers also retain membership.

COMMISSIONERS (Can Vote)

Congregations have two or more ruling elder commissioners elected by their session. Additional elders are also enrolled as members while in Presbytery leadership positions.

VISITORS (Cannot Vote)

Visitors may include other congregation members, ecumenical guests, other Presbyterian ministers, and students. Members of other PC(USA) presbyteries may register as corresponding members.

Who are the Presbytery officers?

There are typically four officers present at meetings.

MODERATORS

The Presbytery elects a Moderator and Vice Moderator each year for a one-year term. Either Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Ruling Elders may fill these volunteer offices. The Moderator and Vice Moderator preside at meetings and represent this body at ordinations and installations.

STATED CLERK

The Stated Clerk is an officer & parliamentarian and an employee of Presbytery. The Clerk coordinates setting the docket and other meeting planning, and makes recommendations as to the constitutionality of proposed actions. A recording clerk takes minutes of the meeting.

TREASURER

The Treasurer is an officer of the Presbytery and also a volunteer. This person serves as controller and advisor on financial matters.

How can I prepare?

1) Review Materials

Download the detailed docket from our website. Docket and reports are ordinarily posted a week before the meeting. Review the consent and omnibus motions, which include routine items from several committees. We vote on all of these items in one action early in our meeting. If you have questions or concerns about these motions, ask to have it removed for detailed consideration, and we will discuss it during the appropriate report.

2) Participate & Engage

Register for the meeting. Arrive before in-person meetings begin to enjoy opportunities for fellowship. Take advantage of breaks and meals to build relationships with others.

3) Pray for Our Meeting

Join in praise and prayer to recall that it is Christ that calls us together and joins us in unity, even when we hold diverse opinions.

How do I place a proposal before the Presbytery?

Our business is proposed by Mission & Vision Leadership, officers, committees, working groups and/or project teams of the Presbytery. New items of business may be submitted to the Stated Clerk seven days in advance of the meeting.

How do I get recognized to speak or make a motion?

Before you speak, you must be recognized by the moderator.

1) Step Up

To be recognized to speak, go to the microphone (in-person) or raise your hand (online) moderator. If you are unable to stand, ask a fellow commissioner to go to the microphone and request permission for you to speak.

2) Introduce Yourself

Once invited by the moderator, begin by stating your name, office (ruling elder or minister) and congregation/ministry. Then state your question or comment.

3) Make a Motion

If you have a suggestion for action, say, “I move...” and describe what you’d like us to do. Ask for help if you aren’t sure how to achieve your goal. Except for simple procedural motions, be prepared to write your motion and hand it to the Stated Clerk.

What are the meeting rules?

Our Presbytery follows Bylaws and Standing Rules that set forth the structure and processes of the Presbytery. These are revised by Presbytery as needed. Copies are available from the Presbytery office and on our website. The parliamentary rules of the Presbytery are Roberts’ Rules of Order, Newly Revised (11th edition).

What about follow-up?

Minutes are posted on the website. Access requires a password. All minister members, regular presbyters, and your Clerk of Session have the password. Contact the Presbytery Office if you cannot find it. Attendees are encouraged to make a report to your Session or ministry to let them know what Presbytery is doing and what resources may be helpful to them.

How does the docket work?

The Presbytery docket includes all of the items scheduled to be covered during a meeting. It is designed to guide the meeting in the most constructive way possible. Before each meeting, a detailed document will be available on the Presbytery website.

THE MAIN DOCKET

This is the primary agenda for Presbytery meetings and lists the schedule for all items of business. This includes open spaces (presentations & discussions), plenaries (business sessions), worship, meal, and any other items that need to be addressed.

1) Motions

Motions require action by the Presbytery and likely need debate, discussion, or explanation. Motions are bolded and include the wording that begins discussion. Many also have a link to other sections of the docket with additional materials.

2) Informational Items

Informational items are presented to share about the mission and ministry of presbytery, to celebrate events and people for special attention, and to provide details helpful to the life and

ministry of our congregations. They do not require action and meeting planners strive to keep these to a minimum to conserve time.

CONSENT DOCKET

The Consent Docket includes business (motions, recommendations, and reports) that is expected to be of a non-controversial or routine nature with little or no debate or resistance. All items in the Consent Docket are “Moved to Approve” and a single vote is taken to approve all items in the Consent Docket.

Any one individual may rise and ask to remove a particular item from the Consent Docket. If this occurs, the item is placed at the end of the Main Docket for debate, discussion, and vote.

OMNIBUS MOTION

The Omnibus Motion includes all of the business that comes to the Presbytery Meeting that do not require any action, usually consisting of reports, announcements, and other items that require recording them as part of the minutes. All items for the Omnibus Motion are found in the last section of the docket. The motion is to “receive” all items in the Omnibus Motion, which permits the Clerk’s office to include all of these items in the permanent record for the meeting.