

Clerks' Tip of the Month

Constitutional Amendments from the 222nd General Assembly—Overtures for the 223rd General Assembly



Two important things for clerks to be aware of: All sixteen constitutional amendments proposed by the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been ratified by a majority of presbyteries. They will take effect on June 25, 2017—one year from the adjournment of the 222nd General Assembly. Shortly, a new edition of the Book of Order containing the changes will be published. **AND THE TIME IS NOW TO BEGIN PREPARATION FOR THE 223RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY.**

The big change from the 222nd General Assembly is that there will be a whole new Directory of Worship. The biggest substantive change in the Directory will be that the unbaptized, who should be extended an invitation to baptismal preparation, are welcome to the Table.

The Form of Government will now require all councils (sessions, etc.) to have a child (already required) “and youth” protection policy. This may require some action by your session if you don’t already have one.

Another change is to ordered ministry titles— “teaching elder” has generally been changed back to “minister of the Word and Sacrament,” (although both are used in the Book of Order).

In the Rules of Discipline, a teaching elder who had renounced jurisdiction while in the disciplinary process can now rejoin the church if he or she resubmits to the original disciplinary process.

“[C]aring for God’s creation” will now be added to the list of involvements of members included in the ministry of Christ’s Church.

As we wrap up the 222nd General Assembly business, it is time to start getting ready for the 223rd. Alert those persons in your church who might be thinking about an overture and encourage them to get started. Besides getting the overture adopted by the session and the presbytery, overture sponsors must find another presbytery to concur with their overture. This takes time and effort. One of NCP’s overtures did not get a concurrence last time and so was never considered by the General Assembly. Due dates for supplying proposed overtures to the Bills & Overtures Committee involving changes to the Book of Order might be as early as late summer. So, do not tarry.

To help people get ready, I will do, as I did prior to the last General Assembly, a tutorial on how to do an overture at the **Open Space prior to the May 23rd presbytery meeting**. I encourage anyone who might be doing an overture and is new to the process, even if not a commissioner to the presbytery meeting itself, to come and get sample templates and information. And feel free to call me with any questions.

Peace and blessings,

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