

**the new Form of Government (nFOG)
a basic introduction**

Replacing the first 4 chapters (theological foundations)

- Foundations: 3 chapters – reorders current FOG chapters 1-4, within a missional framework
- The ecclesiological and historical commitments on which our polity rests
 - **Chapter 1: mission of the church – God’s sending in JC; marks, notes, great ends**
 - **Chapter 2: the status of confessions as part of the church’s constitutional life**
 - **Chapter 3: historical and governmental principles**
- What is new
 - Focus on the mission of God in the world - F-1.01
 - New four-part theological statement on the calling of the Church - F-1.03
 - Emphasis on “Marks” and “Notes” of the Church - F-1.0302, 1.0303
 - Stronger statement on Unity in Diversity - F-1.0403
- What is not new:
 - Jesus Christ as Head of the Church – F-1.02
 - The “Great Ends of the Church” – F-1.0304
 - The Church and Its Confessions – F-2.00
 - Historic Principles of Order and Government – F-3.01 and 3.02

Form of Government: From 14 chapters to 6:

- **Chapter 1: Congregations and membership (current G-5 and G-7)**
 - The congregation: basic form of the church; where mission take place (G-1.0101)
 - Congregations: not sufficient on their own; are bound to each other in relationships of accountability (G-1.0101)
 - Membership is a covenant between individuals, the faith community, and God (G-1.0301)
 - Familiar areas covered:
 - Organizing Covenant (G-1.0201)
 - Membership Responsibilities (G-1.0304)
 - Membership categories (G-1.04 - but no formal category for “inactive”)
 - Congregational meetings (G-1.05)
- **Chapter 2: Ordered Ministries / Other Ministries (current G-6 and G-14)**
 - All members are called to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ
 - Some are called to particular ministries established (“ordered”) by the Church “so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish” (G-2.0102)
 - Three ordered ministries / descriptive titles
 - Deacons: The Ministry of Compassion and Service (G-2.02)
 - Ruling Elders: The Ministry of Discernment and Governance (G-2.03)
 - Teaching Elders: The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.05)

- Things to note
 - Validated ministry: no specific requirement to preach, celebrate sacraments annually (G-2.0503a)
 - Associate / interim succession (G-2.0504a,b,c)
 - CPM ‘stuff’: same basics (inquiry, candidacy, final assessment), without prescribe process pieces
 - New terminology: Commissioned Ruling Elder – for Limited Pastoral Service (G-2.10)
 - Certified Church Service: treating all certified persons equally, not Certified Christian educators and others (G-2.11)

- **Chapter 3: Councils (current G-9, 10, 11, 12, 13)**
 - Council: consistent with the historic name for the gathering of church leadership to arrive at decisions
 - Work of each council ordered around the Notes of the Reformed Church – F-1.0303; repeated in G-3.0101)
 - Provides a context for the work of each council rooted in our core definition of what the church is called to do
 - Reminds us that preaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, and making disciples are not the work of the pastor, but belong to the whole church at every level
 - The rubrics force us to ask of any new responsibility under consideration, “How does this help us be the church?”
 - Functions not Structures
 - Chapter mandates core functions, but not structures
 - “Mechanisms and processes” left to the discretion of the council (G-3.0307)
 - Some notable examples:
 - COM, CPM, COR: essential work remains responsibility of councils to accomplish
 - How they do these things left to councils to do as best suits their contexts
 - Many are likely to keep the current structures as exist
 - Some councils may try different means of accomplishing this work, which may benefit all thru their example/experience

- Chapter 4: Property / Trustees / Confidentiality (current G-6, 7, 8)
 - ‘interface’ between the church and civil authority: incorporation, trustees, property, confidentiality issues
- Chapter 5: Ecumenical Relationships and Union (current G-15, 16, 17)
 - current statements about ecumenical commitment, plus descriptions of “in correspondence” and “full communion.”
- Chapter 6: Interpreting/Amending the Constitution (current G-18)
 - Interpreting / amending the constitution

(Adapted from power point at http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/amendments_219_insert.pdf)