



Presbytery of Lake Michigan
Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]

GA Amendment Recommendations for 2025

Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence – Stated Clerk



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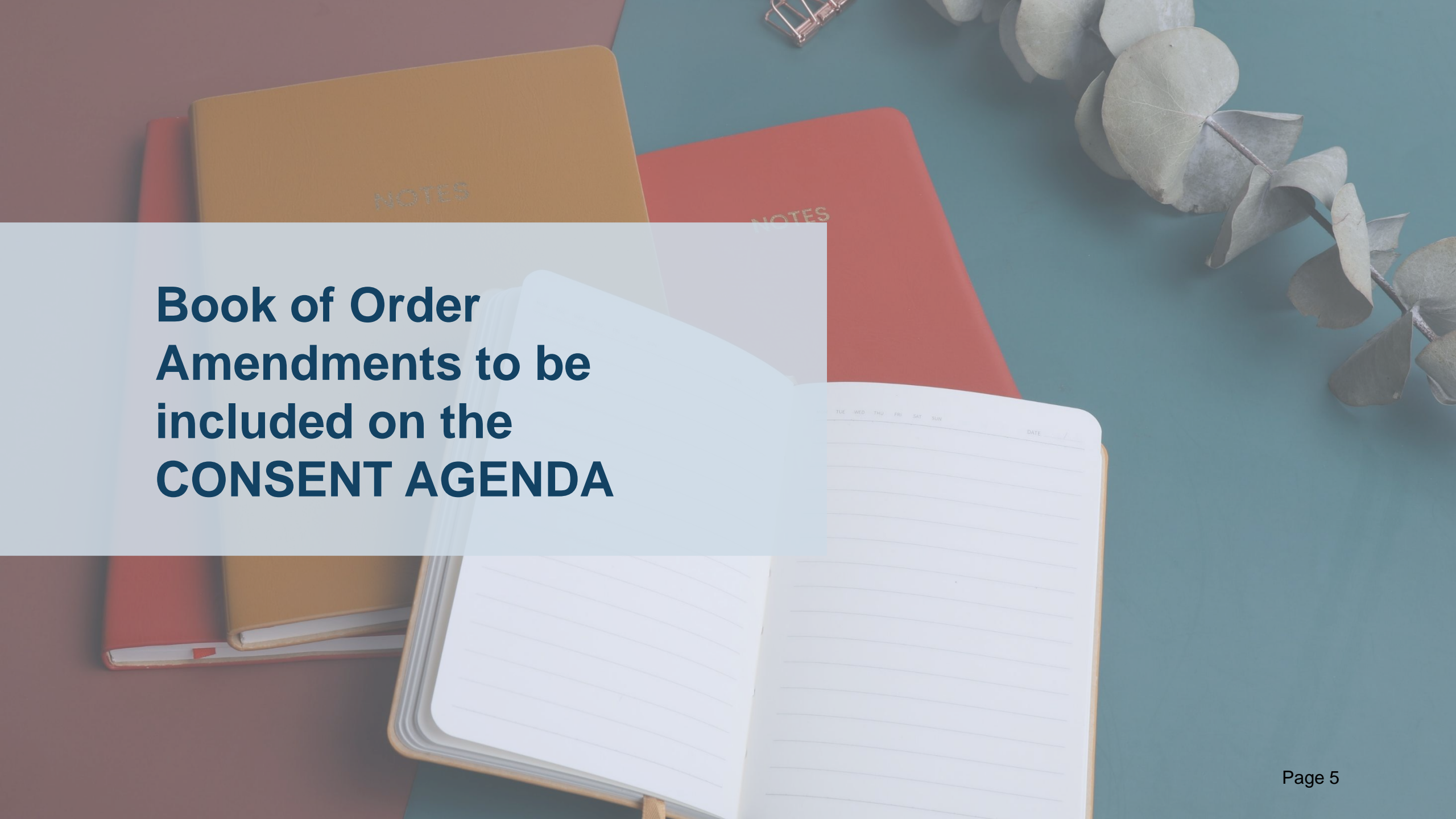
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The background features a top-down view of several notebooks. One notebook is open in the foreground, showing lined pages. Behind it are two closed notebooks, one orange and one red, both with 'NOTES' printed on their covers. In the upper right corner, there are dried, pressed leaves and a small metal paperclip. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the main text.

**Book of Order
Amendments to be
included on the
CONSENT AGENDA**

FOUNDATIONS OF POLITY

Recommendations

The change in language is being recommended in (24A) F-1.0403 so the provision is more inclusive of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexes, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, geographies, or theological convictions. The main focus of the changes is on inclusiveness in gender identity, and sexual orientation.

- ✓ The presbytery stated clerk recommends approval as this presbytery already seeks in its work to be as inclusive as possible.

24A – F-1.0403

Unity in Diversity – changes are recommended so the language we use in our governing documents includes that gender identity and sexual orientation be established as protected classes against which we must not discriminate

- ✓ The GA ACC recommends approval.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT – THE CONGREGATION

Recommendations

The proposed changes to the Book of Order address the recognition and support of New Worshiping Communities (NWCs). These NWCs offer a safe space to explore what it means to be the church in the 21st century. However, current provisions lack a churchwide system for NWC participants to receive Baptism or be recognized as church members. This absence has led to confusion, frustration, and a lack of representation in church councils.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

24B – G-1.0104

Other forms of Corporate Witness – provides a minimal, flexible, and adaptable level of historic Reformed polity for small worshiping communities that wish to identify with the larger church in worship and formation, discipleship, and mission.

The principal body responsible for discerning the appropriateness of any such groups and their activities in relationship to the PC(USA) would be the presbytery, in consultation with any sponsoring congregation, acting under the authority of Scripture, guided by the Book of Confessions, and governed by the Book of Order.

-  *The GA ACC recommends approval.*

PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

24D – G-2.0504b

Temporary Pastoral Relationships – changes are recommended that the specified period of service for temporary pastoral relationships be extended from 12 months to thirty-six months.

Eliminating the need for annual contract renegotiation would save sessions and presbyteries significant time and paperwork, allowing them to focus more on the essential work of interim and transitional ministry.

- ✓ The GA ACC recommends approval.
- ✓ The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

24E – G-2.0504b

Temporary Pastoral Relationships – states that non-disclosure agreements cannot be used when temporary pastoral relationships come to an end.

Non-disclosure agreements in pastoral relationships often lead to harmful speculation, potentially damaging both pastors and congregations. If misconduct was involved, an NDA prevents the congregation from properly processing trauma, making it harder to move forward.

- ✓ The GA ACC recommends approval.
- ✓ The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Recommendations

The overture aims to provide greater pastoral sensitivity in cases where ministry candidates need waivers from ordination requirements or alternative assessments of readiness. It seeks to remove the requirement in G-2.0610 that presbyteries record and report a “full account of the reasons” for such actions, which the rationale describes as potentially preserving a record of a traumatic experience. To achieve this, the overture proposes eliminating the final sentence of G-2.0610.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

24F – G-2.0610

Accommodations to Particular Circumstances –

The existence of any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness, with confidential details omitted, shall be communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

Editor’s note: This rationale and advice attached to the original item of business was significantly amended by the General Assembly.

-  *The GA ACC recommends approval with amendment.*

The Assembly Committee on Ordination amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item ORD-05, 37/6. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item ORD 05 by consensus.

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

Recommendations

The overture proposes amending G-2.0901 and G-2.0504b of the Constitution to explicitly prohibit non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) when dissolving installed or temporary pastoral relationships. The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GA PJC) has repeatedly ruled against such agreements, also referred to as “Confidentiality Statements” or “Confidentiality Agreements.” The Advisory Committee on the Constitution supports this change, stating that Item POL-08 strengthens the Book of Order by clearly prohibiting these contracts.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

24G – 2.0901

Congregational Meeting –

An installed pastoral relationship can only be dissolved by the presbytery, and regardless of who initiates the process, the congregation must meet to consider and consent to the dissolution. Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), which restrict the sharing of confidential information, are not permitted in these proceedings.


-  *The GA ACC recommends approval with amendment.*

The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item POL-08 1, 40/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-08 1, 393/11.

General Principles of Councils

Recommendations

Inclusion is a key value of our faith community. By extending the protection of policies to vulnerable adults, we reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and justice. This addition reflects our core values and emphasizes our mission to create a community that embraces and protects every member.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision as consistent with PLM Policy and Michigan State Law

24H – G-3.0106

Administration of Mission –

this amendment would create a constitutional mandate for all councils of the church to include vulnerable adults in our protection policies.

The amended language fosters a deeper sense of accountability. By explicitly mentioning "vulnerable adults," we acknowledge our responsibility to protect those who may be at risk due to various factors. This enhancement to the policy framework demonstrates our dedication to a comprehensive approach in upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

-  *The GA ACC recommends approval.*

The Presbytery

Recommendations

Amendments to the Constitution are intended to be part of the process of “the church reformed, always to be reforming.” (G-6.01). As such, a process for amendment that is not serving its intended purpose, is creating undue burdens on presbyters and mid council staff, and, indeed, may be presenting barriers to such reformation should be eliminated. While the amendment would remove the requirement for a concurrence, it still permits concurrences to show support.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.

24I – G-3.0302d

Relationships with Synod and General Assembly –

The request seeks to amend G-3.0302d by removing the requirement that presbyteries obtain concurrence from at least one other presbytery before submitting overtures to the General Assembly. This would overturn a 2012 constitutional amendment intended to promote collaboration among presbyteries, ensure overtures address significant church-wide concerns, and improve the quality of proposals brought before the General Assembly.

In practice, this has caused confusion over deadlines, last-minute efforts to obtain concurrence, and at least one presbytery routinely concurring with all overtures. Ultimately, this has created more challenges without effectively addressing its intended purpose.

-  *The GA ACC recommends approval.*

The General Assembly

Recommendations



Embedding the commissioner allocation formula in the Book of Order limits flexibility and makes adjustments difficult. The current system is outdated, with no presbyteries in the largest categories and more presbyteries receiving only one ruling elder and one teaching elder. As a result, fewer commissioners are elected, shrinking participation in the General Assembly's work.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of the amended recommendation.

24J – G-3.0501

Composition and Responsibility –

changes the proportions for determining the number of commissioners representing presbyteries at the general assembly

-  *The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that the 226th General Assembly (2024) disapprove the original recommendation of Item GAP-04. The committee amended the original recommendation.*
-  *The committee amended the original recommendation.*

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution acknowledges that the current system for determining the number of commissioners to the General Assembly is out of sync with the realities of shrinking presbytery membership and declining numbers of presbyteries.

Investigation

Recommendations

When a clerk of session or a presbytery's stated clerk receives an allegation, they must report only that an offense has been alleged, without naming the accused or specifying the offense, and refer the allegation to an investigating committee. *In accordance with G-4.0302, the clerk must report any known harm or risk of harm related to physical abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse of a minor or an adult lacking mental capacity to civil authorities.* Additionally, the clerk must inform the accuser about the disciplinary process and their rights and responsibilities.



The stated clerk recommends approval of the amended recommendation.

24K – D-7.0501

Referral to Investigation Committee –

outlines the process triggered when a formal accusation of a disciplinary offense is submitted, requiring the church or presbytery council to establish an investigating committee and initiate the disciplinary proceedings outlined in the Book of Order.



The Assembly Committee on Polity amended the original Recommendation significantly then approved Item POL-02, 37/0. The 226th General Assembly (2024) approved Item POL-02, 401/4.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised that the 226th General Assembly (2024) disapprove the original recommendation of Item POL-02. The committee amended the original recommendation. This edited advice is limited to those sections of the advice which apply to the approved proposed amendments.

Allegations of Sexual Abuse

Recommendations

The language in D-7.0902 was vague and inconsistent, failing to establish a clear, denomination-wide standard for administrative leave. It does not specify whether such leave is paid or unpaid, and the removal of "paid administrative leave" from D-10.0106 adds to the confusion. This ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations—either that all administrative leave is unpaid or that presbyteries can set their own policies. Without clear guidance, the provision lacks a uniform constitutional standard applicable to all ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

-  The stated clerk recommends approval of this provision.


24L – D-7.0902b

Administrative Leave –

preserves the due process rights of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament accused of sexual misconduct without diminishing the protections afforded to the alleged or potential victims of that misconduct by providing paid administrative leave until the matter is resolved Through the disciplinary process or until the commission members modify or lift the leave or restrictions.

The cost shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary.

-  *The GA ACC recommends approval.*

A close-up photograph of a person in a grey suit jacket and light-colored shirt. They are holding a brown paper folder in their left hand and pointing with their right index finger at a document on a desk. The document is partially obscured by a semi-transparent teal box containing text. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk and some office equipment.

**Book of Order
Amendments to be
included on the DOCKET**

FORM OF GOVERNMENT – ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Recommendations

This proposal may seem redundant since the ordination vows already require a commitment to follow church polity, which includes F-1.0403.

However, in practice, this commitment has not always prevented ordained individuals from engaging in discriminatory behavior based on race, age, sex, and other factors. The overture focuses on the examination process and does not seek to change the constitutional questions. Affirming participation, representation, and non-discrimination is both important and consistent with church precedent.



The stated clerk agrees the provision would be redundant but offers no recommendation as to its approval or disapproval.

24C – G-2.0104b

Gifts and Qualifications –

reinforces that gender identity and sexual orientation be established as protected classes against which we must not discriminate.

The proposed amendment, in effect, would require a candidate to acknowledge, by some means, during the examination, what F-1.0403 states regarding the unity in diversity of the Church universal when it comes to non-discrimination, and church particular when it comes to participation and representation related to membership in the Presbyterian Church (USA).



The GA ACC does not recommend approval.

The existing examination standards already mandate candidates to affirm W-4.0404e, adhere to church polity, and follow its discipline. Adding the proposed language would be redundant.

Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement of Local Sharing of Ministries

24M _____
Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries – Our current agreement allows authorized ministers from both churches to serve in each other's congregations with approval, while ensuring compliance with respective church regulations.

Although full reconciliation and interchangeability of ordained ministries have not been achieved, both denominations are committed to ongoing dialogue on mutual recognition of ministries. The agreement encourages collaboration in mission, education, and worship, and facilitated joint participation in the 2017 Churches Uniting in Christ recognition of ordered ministry. Given our growing relationship and shared faith, this group proposes deepening our partnership.

For missional purposes and in consultation between the diocesan bishop and local presbytery, a presbyter may be licensed (permitted) by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority to serve under the guidelines outlined in the Proposed Book of Amendments 2024.

Affirmation of Agreement

We affirm the validity of each other's churches in providing word and sacrament, ordered ministries, and communal oversight. However, differences in church polity and traditions currently prevent full communion and ministerial interchangeability. Despite this, we believe a path forward exists for continued collaboration and mutual enrichment in God's mission.