

## ELECTRONIC MEETINGS

### 2023-2025 BOOK OF ORDER PROVISION:

**In accordance with the requirement of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, congregations and their committees may meet electronically at the discretion of their sessions, provided that the technology employed allows for all members present to hear and be heard simultaneously. This includes joining one or more persons electronically to an otherwise in- person meeting. Congregations should adopt special rules of order and standing rules to govern such meetings. (G-1.0501)**

### ADVICE FROM “A GUIDE TO PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE IN THE PCUSA.”

As the use of technology increases, more and more meetings employ electronic elements, including either joining one or more people to meetings electronically, or holding meetings entirely by phone or the internet. The latest edition of RONR (*Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*) has a significantly expanded section on electronic meetings (pp. 97–99). The two most important guiding principles for electronic meetings are that they must be authorized in an organization’s governing documents (our *Manuals of Administrative Operations*), and the technology employed must allow for “the opportunity for simultaneous aural communication.” Otherwise, the decisions being made have not had the benefit of real discussion. Additionally, RONR urges organizations that meet electronically to adopt special rules related to ensuring quorums, seeking recognition from the chair, and other aspects of meetings that work differently when participants aren’t all in the same room together—and that will likely need to be written to apply to the specific technology being employed.

### SAMPLE ELECTRONIC MEETING POLICY:

Meetings of the congregation, session, or church committees should ordinarily be in-person. With the approval of the session, unless a simple majority of the body requests an in-person meeting, all such meetings, including voting on matters therein, may also be conducted virtually via video or telephone conferencing, or as a hybrid meeting in which one or more of the group attend either in person or virtually. Virtual or hybrid meetings must provide, at a minimum, conditions of opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members, equivalent to those of meetings held in one room or area, and shall abide by the same policies and procedures, including the manner of voting, as an in-person meeting.

Session may authorize the limited use of electronic communication (email or text messaging) for votes in circumstances when an immediate decision is necessary, and where the following conditions are met:

- written notice prepared by the clerk of session to verified contacts of all session members,
- an agreed span of time in which particular email votes will be considered,
- three quarters of elected Session members respond,
- there are no negative votes or substantial questions concerning the action being taken.

Any objection or negative vote expressed by a Session member will terminate the email vote and an virtual, hybrid, or in- person meeting shall be called. Decisions made by electronic communication shall be reported by the Clerk of Session, affirmed at the next Session meeting, and recorded in its minutes.

Erwin F. Goedicke, Stated Clerk

10/6/23