

PREFACE

to the Bylaws, Standing Rules, and Manual of Operation of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse

from the CREATION Team - September, 2011

Background

As the CREATION team first gathered, we looked at the task before us and felt a bit overwhelmed. We did not even all know each other, and we wondered how we would work together. The three and a half inch binder we each received was a giant collection of guides and regulations created over the last 40 to 50 years, and we were charged with digesting and reworking it all. After several meetings, we were delighted to discover that we were working in unison and moving forward in ways we can only ascribe to God's Spirit among us. By God's grace, we were listening to and trusting each other, operating in unison as five smooth stones in route to fell the giant task we had accepted. (*cf. 1 Sam 17:40*)

The design that has emerged comes from copious hours of prayer, conversation and reflection together. Each time we met, we took large tasks from our gatherings as homework. Each time we came back together, we moved forward in unison. Our work is based on input and recommendations from the Transition Team and Presbytery Council, the New Form of Government (nFOG) and existing rules and policies.

Principles of Administration

This organizational design is one grounded in

- a) the philosophical assumptions of nFOG,
- b) a structure similar to the governance of sessions in our particular churches, and
- c) relationships facilitated through modern communication.

The guiding assumption of nFOG is a total replacement of an institutional rulebook and the compromises of reunion with a minimalist structure. In the collective opinion of the CREATION Team, this represents a radical shift from 1960's redemptive C67 language to an entirely new genesis as the Church in the 21st century.

- While for decades we have added and expanded layers of rules and order, this new creation **shifts the focus** from rules and regulations to a permission giving grace.
- While we have spent a great deal of time and energy legislating how, where and when we should be in connection with each other, this new creation **returns to the historical roots** of how we were Presbyterians together in the early days of our denomination and nation.
- While many passions have become attached to many different aspects of our institutions that have grown up in our denomination and our presbytery over the decades, this new creation **trusts in “the dominion of providence** over the passions.” (*John Witherspoon, May 1776*)
- This new creation **changes the highest common denominator** from being rules and the lowest common denominator being relationships to just the opposite.

- This new creation **depends on**
 - ➔ trust among ourselves
 - ➔ responsible behavior
 - ➔ encouraging fellowship
 - ➔ seeking communion
 - ➔ choosing to do mission and ministry together as the Church
 - ➔ being community
 - ➔ making effective use of the social media revolution

This last aspect related to social media is one where we have followed the route of other church councils who are taking the lead in our denomination's organizational redesign in the 21st century. Specifically, it emerges from communication with leadership in the Middle Governing Bodies Commission, the Presbytery of Glacier and the Synod of Living Waters; both of the latter have gone "virtual" in the last few years. In both instances, they were unfailingly positive about their experiences. Among many comments regarding their experience, we note two here.

- From the Glacier Stated Clerk: "We have been functioning on a 'logical' basis rather than by a printed 'model'. Much of what Glacier is doing is using common sense."
- From the Living Waters Executive: "We now spend most of our face to face time in community instead of on business."

An effective use of the social media revolution and its concomitant technology has the potential of moving us forward to doing business in a new way, allowing for our focus to become community. For a helpful explication of the social media revolution and why both our design and staffing recommendations depend on it, we invite you to watch this two and a half minute video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SuNx0UrnEo&feature=relmfu>