

Church Administration and Officers

Many people are a bit shocked to discover that the word "Presbyterian" does not describe some great Theological doctrine or even the founder of the denomination. Actually, the word comes from a Greek word that means "elder," and it describes a form of church government. That is, Presbyterians are governed by elders. A civics class would classify Presbyterian Churches as a representative democracy. Every year the congregation meets to elect a new group of elders who will help make the major decisions on behalf of the congregation. Indeed, several historians believe that the founders of the United States got many of their ideas for making this nation a republic from the Presbyterians. The Presbyterian system thus appeals to people who distrust investing power into the hands of one person or even just two or three. People also like it if they get impatient with congregational systems where the whole congregation has to meet and vote every time there is a major decision. Presbyterians tend to be very committee oriented, which has advantages and disadvantages too.

Presbyterian Churches are also connected to each other. That means that all the congregations have formal relationships with other Presbyterian churches on a regional, state, and national level. This connective system allows churches to pool their resources. At the local church level the governing body is called the [Session](#). It consists of 15 Elders elected to represent the congregation and the ministers. Each congregation votes on calling a minister. The Session meets monthly, usually at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. These meetings are open to the public, except on rare occasions when the Session goes into executive mode to consider a delicate matter.

Besides Elders and the minister, there is a third office in the Presbyterian Church: [The Board of Deacons](#). Deacons serve at the discretion of the Session and are assigned duties by these Elders. Historically, Deacons have concentrated on duties like property management, charity to the poor, hospitality, and matters of finance. At Hopewell there are 15 Deacons. They meet monthly, usually at 7 p.m. on the third Monday of the month.

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. consists of the Holy Bible; the *Book of Order*, containing the rules and regulations for the church on the local, regional, state, and national level; and the *Book of Confessions*, a collection of eleven statements of faith from different historical periods of the church. Either of the latter two documents would provide much more detailed information about the inner workings of the Presbyterian Church. Both are available at the Church Office.

Links To Other Presbyterian Sites

[Presbytery of Charlotte](#)

[The Presbyterian Church, USA](#)