

Proposed Change to the Meeting Days of the South Texas Presbytery (P. 11 of the current Standing Rules)

Stated meetings

Dates and times

Presbytery shall ordinarily meet in stated session on the last Friday night and Saturday morning of January and August and the second ~~Friday~~ Tuesday night and ~~Saturday~~ Wednesday morning of April and October. The time and place shall be fixed by a previous meeting of Presbytery. The hours shall normally be 6:30 p.m. (Friday or Tuesday) and 8:00 a.m. (Wednesday or Saturday) but may be changed at the discretion of the Moderator or the Court with 30-day notice ordinarily given to the members of the Presbytery.

Why a time change from weekend to mid-week?

This proposed change is driven by the MR committee's desire to better shepherd the presbytery by alleviating the burdens of weekend multiple-day meetings. While we should not change the order and structure of our meetings, this mid-week shift can help alleviate the conflicts of Friday nights and Saturdays and the burdens of Sunday preparations, which both Ruling and Teaching Elders balance during our current meeting time.

Forty-two of the PCA's presbyteries meet on Saturdays, but not all of those Presbyteries have each of their stated meetings on Saturdays—several hold presbyteries both mid-week and on weekends, alternating throughout the year. The majority meet mid-week throughout the entire year. Several Presbyteries, like South Texas, meet across multiple days, including some that follow our same Friday and Saturday pattern, while others meet both days mid-week.¹ While our order of business across multiple days is a strength of ours, dedicating specific time to fellowship and worship, it is weakened by familial and Sunday preparatory conflicts. Often, on Saturdays, our business concludes quickly, which would better serve us mid-week, allowing those who live locally to essentially have a normal work day and those who have traveled the time to re-cooperate before Sundays. Also, this shift ought to alleviate Sunday preparations being done on the floor of the presbytery.

While a strength of South Texas is our fellowship rhythm and emphasis on worshipping together, which is the sole focus of the first evening of our presbytery meetings, our weekend meetings can feel rushed on the second day. We should continue with this rhythm and continue to be served by one another in word, sacrament, and fellowship. This pattern serves our presbytery by encouraging dedicated times for worship under word and sacrament together. Our fellowship time after worship is also a notable strength of the presbytery. The MR committee would love to help host churches become more intentional with our first day of presbytery, finding distinguished speakers across the denomination to come and serve us in preaching and seminars relevant to ministry. This strength of our presbytery can be further leveraged with more undivided attention from Teaching Elders mid-week than on weekends and not feeling the rush of familial obligations to return to and Sunday preparations.

Since the majority of Presbytery attendance is Teaching Elders, who, as members of the presbytery, are required to attend, mid-week meetings better serve our families and schedules. Saturdays often conflict with familial obligations, rest, sermon writing, and other Sunday preparations. Many Teaching Elders are working on sermons or preparations for Sunday during Friday in between committee meetings, and sometimes while on the floor of the presbytery,

¹https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=ccpa70ubjj7j44gpgdqbvu3q1o@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/New_York <https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PRESBYTERY-STATED-MEETINGS-2023.pdf>

splitting their attention, neither giving it entirely to their preparation for Sunday or the work of the church. While men want to be with both their families, resting, and preparing for Sunday, and be good presbyters, these conflicts can be limited with the proposed shift. The size of our Presbytery also requires many men to travel, furthering the burden of time away from family and limited time in preparation for Sunday. While we wholeheartedly believe in the fullest participation of Ruling Elders, the representation and burdens are disproportionate to Teaching Elders. We can better serve one another with this shift and lower the cost of travel mid-week.²

This shift also encourages committees to meet before the first day of presbytery. This encourages Ruling Elders to become more involved as committees take advantage of the ability to participate and conclude committee work before the first day of the presbytery, not conflicting with mid-week work schedules. Ruling Elders already need to take time off from work on Fridays to participate in our current committee structure. This would encourage committees to meet before Presbytery and either not need to have in-person meetings or use the time to conclude any business in person required.

There is also a gap in our standing rules where the moderator or the court may change the meeting location and time of presbytery. Theoretically, the moderator could change this on their own. The 30-day provision for communication of time or location changes codifies our Standing Rules, current practice, and spirit, giving ample time to host churches and presbyters to prepare for changes.

2023- Attendance Breakdown

TE- 41 43 39 47- Total 170 Average 43

RE- 27 22 26 30- Total 105 Average 26

38% RE attendance

25% full slate of delegates

² In 2023 STP average 6 churches per presbytery meeting that sent a full slate of Ruling Elders. Several churches did not send a single RE and the significant majority to do not send their full slate. This is about 12-15 delegates per meeting.