

Questions raised during the March 9 Zoom Conversation

1. Does the new Church Discipline (22-GG) include the provisions from the other discipline-related amendments (22-CC – 22-FF)?

Yes and no. 22-GG offers a complete re-write of the Book of Discipline, entitled Church Discipline. If 22-GG is adopted, 22-CC through 22-FF are moot. If 22-GG is not adopted, the individual votes on the other 4 amendments would then become meaningful. Generally speaking, 22-GG offers an updated version of rules that have been in place for decades and seeks to reflect the learning and depth of understanding that has been gained over time as well as make the document more accessible to all readers. This [PowerPoint presentation](#) gives a nice summary of the new Church Discipline.

Amendment 22-CC proposes continuation of a disciplinary process when a person has renounced jurisdiction of the PC(USA). It is worth noting the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises against adopting this amendment because it's a contradiction of terms. If a person has renounced jurisdiction, then the church no longer has jurisdiction and cannot continue disciplinary proceedings. The new Church Discipline as 22-GG likewise states jurisdiction ends when an accused person has renounced jurisdiction but does make provision for pastoral inquiry and care to continue for the accuser(s). More information can be found near the bottom of page 11 on this side-by-side [comparison](#).

Amendment 22-DD is a grammatical change intended to clarify the subject. This would become moot with the rewrite.

Amendment 22-EE proposes the Stated Clerk to give notification to both the person accused and the one who brought the accusation if charges will not be filed. The current Book of Order indicates notice is given only to the one who brought the accusation. The proposed Church Discipline (22-GG) reads the same as the current Book of Order and would NOT incorporate the amended language.

Amendment 22-FF asks for replacing “the accused” with “the person accused” where found in the current Book of Discipline. A cursory read of the proposed Church Discipline indicates “the accused” language will be used.

2. What was the rationale and conversation around Amendment 22-I? It seems an unmanageable requirement for smaller churches that would ultimately prohibit young pastors with families from seeking a call in a small church.

The background and rationale for this proposed amendment can be found [here](#). The intention is for each Presbytery to draft policy providing for twelve-week family medical leave:

- to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child.

- to provide care to an ill or disabled family member.
- to heal following a loss or tragic event

Though it is a wonderful way to provide additional support to a pastor during a time of significant transition, this would be difficult for churches with limited resources to be able to provide. Additionally, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises not adopting this amendment on the grounds it introduces administrative detail to a constitutional document which is intended to lay out general requirements.

3. What about all those actions that seem so controversial relative to Israel, LGBTQ, racial injustice, etc.? Aren't we voting on those?

No, we are not. We are voting only on the 33 proposed amendments to the PC(USA) Constitution. This question references other actions taken during the course of the General Assembly; a summary of those actions can be found [here](#). Over the course of its history, the General Assembly seeks to address the current issues alive in the world at the time and explore ways our faith informs and intersects those issues. These statements and calls to action encourage repentance and awareness of conditions that are all around us. They are ideological in nature and frequently change from assembly to assembly.

4. What is the rationale for removing “honorably” from honorably retired in 22-E?

According to the rationale provided in Amendments Full Text, although many if not most ministers serve their congregations very well without major blemish, some ministers retire under less-than-ideal circumstances. In instances where some questionable behavior has negatively impacted a congregation, for that minister to be “honorably” retired serves to further the pain inflicted. According to Youth Advisory Delegate to the 225th GA, Kemper Dyson, simply removing the adverb “honorably” so the status would simply be “retired” was preferable to having two designations side-by-side. In other words, having available a “retired” and “honorably retired” status would involve setting up a process of deciding who deserves which designation. Should the amendment be adopted, “retired” status would only be applied to ministers who retire AFTER the effective date (i.e. July 9, 2023) and “honorably retired” would continue to apply to those who retired before the effective date.