



## **PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION (PJC) POSITION AND PERSON DESCRIPTION**

**NWC Presbytery's Mission is** *to engage, equip, and encourage congregations and their leaders, dispersed yet connected throughout the region, as together we faithfully serve Jesus Christ to transform the world.*

### **PURPOSE/OVERVIEW OF PJC**

THE PURPOSE of the PJC is best expressed in the Preamble to the Rules of Discipline: D-1.0101 - Church Discipline

Church discipline is the church's exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. **The church's disciplinary process exists not as a substitute for the secular judicial system, but to do what the secular judicial system cannot do.** Thus, the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to uphold the dignity of those who have been harmed by disciplinary offenses; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. **In all respects, all participants are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process,** and it is the intention of these rules so to provide.

**CASES:** The Permanent Judicial Commission adjudicates two kinds of cases:

- **Remedial** - in which an irregularity or a delinquency of a lower council or an entity of the General Assembly may be corrected by a higher council.
- **Disciplinary** - in which a church member or a person in an ordered ministry may be censured for an offense.

### **PERSON DESCRIPTION**

1. Members must be able to maintain a state of "compassionate objectivity," that is respecting and carefully following the process provided by the Rules of Discipline while remaining objective in what sometimes becomes an emotional climate
2. Members must be persons of faith, with a discerning spirit, able to understand how imposing discipline is a gift from God for the health of the Church that glorifies God when properly and justly executed.
3. Good listening and analytical skills and a deep sense of fairness, justice and reconciliation are critical.
4. Members must be able to read, understand, affirm and follow the Rules of Discipline.
5. A legal background is not necessary. Familiarity with the civil legal process can both help and hinder. The ecclesiastical system is similar and yet different than what Americans experience in the media, serving on juries, or as an officer of the court. Those with a legal background are sometimes better able to understand legal concepts and processes, but they also may grow frustrated with the differences and become problematic when they attempt to impose the civil system on the ecclesiastical system.



6. The PJC depends on extensive use of e-mail and web communication, tele-conferencing, video-conferencing, and cloud-based file sharing. Members should be comfortable with basic internet skills.

#### **PRAGMATICS**

- **MEETINGS** - All cases begin with a complaint being filed and an ensuing investigation. If the investigation produces probable cause for a violation of the Constitution or Scriptures, formal charges are filed, which activates the PJC, which meets only when a case has been brought before it. Service is unpredictable. Up to three cases have been brought in a single year. Some PJC members never heard a case over a six-year term. Cases may be dismissed after a short review or involve many hours of deliberation. Training is completed by the Stated Clerk when a case is being brought.
- **OFFICERS** - The commission elects from its members a moderator and a clerk (when a case arises).
- **RECUSAL** - When a church or lower council is a party to a case, members of a permanent judicial commission who are members of that church, or of that lower council, or of churches within that lower council shall not participate in the trial or appeal of that case.
- **FORMER MEMBERS** - Members whose terms have expired may be called for six years if a quorum cannot be obtained for a current case.