

OPEN MEETING POLICY*

Approved by the 209th General Assembly (1997)¹

1. The work of the church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust. Church members have a basic right to know about the work done and the decisions made by entities within the church. Church leaders have a basic responsibility to honor that right by conducting their business with a spirit of openness and vulnerability to public scrutiny. Therefore, open meetings shall be the norm for all such entities.

2. It is the policy of the General Assembly; the General Assembly Council, its Ministries Divisions and [Mission Support Services], and of the entities and work groups related to them, that their meetings shall be open to all interested persons.

3. In certain circumstances, when the confidentiality of the subject matter is impeding the open work of the group, meetings of these entities may be closed. The following requirements apply:

a. Subjects dealt with must be limited to property negotiation, personnel, civil and criminal litigation, or security.

b. Closed meetings may be authorized only after serious consideration and by a majority vote of the members present. Such closure must be limited in time and scope to matters in 3(a) above.

c. In closed meetings, only voting members and other persons invited by the group to serve it are to be present.

d. The reason(s) for closing must be announced before closure and also must be recorded in the minutes.

e. The decisions reached shall be recorded in the minutes, and shall be made public as soon as possible following the end of the closed meeting.

4. Since staff groups have neither authority nor responsibility for establishing policy, their meetings are not subject to these provisions. This does not preclude them from opening their meetings.

5. The provisions of this policy shall apply to visitors and to representatives of both church and public media, including print, electronic, and photographic journalists.

6. All the provisions of this policy are to be applied equitably to all persons and groups.

7. The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is responsible for resolving questions relating to the application and interpretation of the open meeting policy.

*The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the following statement in regards to the Open Meeting Policy:

The General Assembly Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the PC(USA) shall be exempt from this open meeting policy in order to go into closed session solely for the purpose of exchanging views on sensitive theological issues in cases where it is determined by two-third's vote of the members of the task force present in a duly called and constituted meeting. (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 23)

1. *Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 212–13.