

*[Jesus] unrolled the scroll and . . . [read]: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

Luke 4: 17-19 (NRSV)

## B. First COR Meeting

The first meeting should include orientation to the tasks, to one another and to the structures of the council for its ministry and administration. Each committee member should leave with clarity on the functions and responsibilities of the committee on representation. If there has not been a COR recently, make sure an early activity is doing a participation audit on the council and all its structures. Include 1) the habits of the council and its meetings, 2) who is present and participating and 3) who is missing and therefore silenced. Design your initial measures and advocacy work around the issues that are exposed in that process.

The first meeting may last about 90 minutes and might include:

1. Opening Prayer, connecting the concerns in the room with the context for your gathering. 5 minutes
2. Introductions. Be creative and emphasize non-dominant cultural perspectives. An example might be using the Conocimientos exercise adapted from Eric Law's work. Get to a deeper place of connection. You may also use a brief Bible study. If you do Bible study, use a format which moves the community to action. Examples are available from GACOR. 20-30 minutes
3. Exploration of the diversity in the room, asking critical questions. Using cultural proficiency exercises is a wonderful way to connect with and get to deeper dialogue and will suggest issues for future discussions. 25-35 minutes

4. Orientation of participants to the functions of COR and the council with which it will labor. 15-20 minutes
5. Set a date for another meeting, keeping in mind how your choices affect participation, and consider the frequency of meetings. Several meetings a year keeps the COR active, continues relationships with the council and allows for all functions to be addressed. Maintaining at least one face-to-face meeting is important. Remain open to using various technologies for additional meetings. 5-10 minutes
6. Adjourn with prayer for one another, the council, its leaders, and congregations. 5 minutes

If possible, invite COR leaders from other councils and your council's wider leadership to a meeting. Mutually engage about the commitments and how COR functions will be addressed. Bringing in an outside facilitator is often helpful. For further assistance, contact GACOR.

Councils and their CORs work together, connecting and involving all God's children and their gifts, to be a whole community of faith, hope, love and witness (F-1.0301) as the Church in the world.

*. . . I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. You are one body and one spirit just as God also called you in one hope. . . . God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ."*

Ephesians 4:1b-4 (CEB)

COR members (and councils) should be familiar with the functions outlined in G-3.0103 and how the council intends to implement F-1.0403. Reports of activities and progress should be regularly requested from lower councils as the COR shares its reports with the next higher council's COR. When Committees on Representation are working best, the council is a model of diversity and unity, faithfully expressing the Body of Christ in its context.

GACOR is available to assist in providing resource materials, webinars and conducting training. For additional information, contact the GACOR member who resides in your synod, the next higher council's COR Moderator, or contact the Manager for Representation in the Office of the General Assembly.

*[Jesus said to them,] 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the One who sent me.'*

Matt 10:40 (NRSV)

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# How to Start or Revive a Mid Council



## COMMITTEE ON Representation

*" . . . To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NRSV)

"The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church's membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403). . . ."

Book of Order, G-3.0103

*" . . . let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."*

1 John 3:18 (NRSV)

"Councils above the session shall establish by their own rule committees on representation . . ."

Book of Order, G-3.0103

This brief leaflet is intended to give mid councils (those councils between the sessions and the general assembly) a place to begin when starting or reviving their CORs. The most common expression for a council COR is that of the presbytery. The General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) reminds you to also seek assistance from the website, training opportunities, and other resources

G-3.0101 “The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church.” and continues with, “The councils are distinct but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church. . . . the acts of each is subject to review by the next higher council.”

Expressing essentially who we are and our deepest connection, in the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, under Unity in Diversity (F-1.0403) the church declares:

*“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27–29).*

*The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.*

Regarding Participation and Representation, G-3.0103 states:

*The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church’s membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403). In fulfilling this commitment, councils shall give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F-3.0106).*

*Each council shall develop procedures and mechanisms for promoting and reviewing that body’s implementation of the church’s commitment to inclusiveness and representation. Councils above the session shall establish, by their own rule committees on representation to fulfill the following functions: to advise the council regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, to advocate for diversity in leadership, and to consult with the council on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403. A committee on representation should not be merged with another committee or made a subcommittee of another committee.*

This latest expression of the constitutional mandate for participation and representation became effective on July 10, 2011. Retained was the essence of what committees on representation (CORs) do, while the particulars of how those functions were implemented were left to each council to determine in its context. With renewed energy, imagination and love, the Church declares its promise to full expression, wide participation and expansive involvement of its diverse membership in decision making and its emerging life.

The role of conscience-keeper, assisting councils to be steadfast to their promises, in spirit and truth is a challenge in every context of being the church. A history of CORs is available on the GACOR website.

A council’s administrative manual (G-3.0106) should include the means by which the council intends to fulfill the functions in G-3.0103

and F-1.0403. Committees on Representation are appropriate partners in crafting the manuals that will set the guidelines, processes and policies of the council and will frame participation, access, and representation in the whole life of the council.

## A. Laying the Groundwork

You’re ready to work for justice and inclusion at your council level and you want to be a part of helping the church stand with integrity, sharing the responsibilities of decision making across all of its differences. To start or revive a COR in your context, you may:

1. Connect with the executive leader and stated clerk in your council and explore how the council is looking at the COR functions and how it will fulfill them. Volunteer to be a part of the process of making recommendations to the council and encourage them to have a separate committee. Talk to allies in this work and recruit them to participate.
2. Each council should investigate what distinct communities of difference are present in their context (see minimum list in F-1.0403) and make efforts to listen to those groups. Gather that wisdom for a wide conversation about how the council should go forward with the functions of COR. Be willing to have more than one meeting, conference call, or webinar to receive feedback and craft recommendations to the larger body.
3. Share power. Do not just consult with diverse groups but involve those groups in decision making that impacts the whole council.
4. Seek discernment as a community — engage in prayer, bible study, and listen to and be led by persons different from the dominant culture of the council. Develop a practice of engaging in reflection on one’s (individual as well as council) cultural norms, attitudes, and biases that privilege some over others and profoundly influence community life and witness.

5. Create a list of open-ended questions and resist having easy answers.
6. Ask for help. Trainings are available on many topics — cross-cultural communication, cultural proficiency, anti-racism work, multiculturalism, process observation, privilege and power, disability concerns, involving younger people (18-30), using social media, etc.
7. Assist the council in developing its implementation plan with regard to F-1.0403 and G-3.0103 (in its leadership and employment practices).
8. Develop a list of folks willing to serve and share it with whatever body is responsible for the nominating process.
9. Consider how you will measure the council’s implementation and how you will report that feedback to the council. Report to the whole body *at least* once a year.
  - a. Data collecting: Do not count just to count. Seek data useful to the life of the council.
  - b. Trending data is more helpful than discrete sets. Disaggregated data allows for a council’s complexity to be described and made visible. Prepare reports interpreting data relevant to the council’s context and consider engaging the larger council in interpretation.
  - c. Consider other measurements like process observation (how those present participate and its impact).
10. Connect with COR leaders at councils beyond your own. Maintain an accurate contact list for those leaders and councils.

*“I truly understand that God shows no partiality . . . [Jesus Christ] is Lord of all.”*

Acts 10:34, 36 (NRSV)