

# Manual For Clerks of Session

Presbytery of Santa Fe  
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# THANKS

It goes without saying that a project of this sort took lots of helping hands. We have borrowed materials from other presbyteries, our own presbytery staff, previous Stated Clerks and a special thanks to Marcia Thornton who prepared a preliminary draft of the Manual.

Please send suggestions and correction to the Stated Clerk.

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## Time Line for Clerks

These are suggestions. Often, because of your by-laws, or practice, you may do some things at different times. However, you will see that some of the items have deadlines imposed (e.g., necrology report, Annual Report, etc.)

### **December**

Begin gathering information for the Annual Report by contacting the people who will have it and letting them know you will be asking for it. (e.g., treasurer for financial information, Christian Education leader for church school attendance, pastor or others for disability figures, and yourself for the membership numbers.)

### **January**

Complete your *annual statistical report* and submit it by the announced annual due date (usually mid-February or early March). The report only needs to be approved by the session, not the congregation.

Also prepare the presbytery's *Church Information* form and return it to the presbytery office.

The *pastor's terms of call* are required to be reviewed by the Session and congregation every year. [G-2.0804] The form that will be included in the Annual Report packet should be completed as soon as the information is available and sent back to presbytery for review by the Commission on Ministry (COM).

Prepare your **Minute Book and Register** for the annual administrative review by presbytery. Fill in the Session Record Review form with the requested page numbers for each book. Volunteer readers cannot review your records without this guide ("cheat sheet") and, if it is not included, your minutes may be returned for you to complete this.

Announce presbytery meeting dates and locations for the year.

Session elects commissioners for presbytery meeting according to the number of commissioners assigned to your church for the year. You will be informed of the number during the October meeting of presbytery. We suggest that you select commissioners (and alternates) to serve for the whole year.

It is no longer required to hold an annual joint meeting with Deacons and Session; if you choose to continue this practice, now is a good time to set the date.

### **February**

A presbytery meeting will be held towards the end of the month.

### **March/April/May**

Bring your Minutes and Register for the annual review when it is scheduled. Prepare to read the records of other Sessions (and remember to bring someone to help so you can work as a team). Plan to attend the annual clerks' training, frequently held the same day as the annual review.

Confirm that plans are in place for the annual audit/review of church finances. [G-3.0113]

### **June (possibly July depending on the dates of General Assembly)**

The summer meeting of presbytery; usually a one-day meeting.

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## **September**

Each year you are asked to turn in the names and ordination dates of the Elders in your church who have died since the last time you reported this information. It is used during the necrology report during worship at the annual meeting in October.

## **October**

The annual meeting of presbytery. This is usually a two-day meeting (usually held at Ghost Ranch).

## **November**

An annual review of the membership roll is no longer required by the *Book of Order*. Your by-laws/manual of operations may call for the Session to conduct such a review. (See G-1.0304 and G-1.04 for the new references to membership.)

## **December**

Have the Session approve the annual budget [G-3.0113, G-3.0205].

Set the date for the congregational meeting in January (unless you have another practice) to make financial reports, election of officers (if not done earlier). Give adequate notice of the meeting according to your church's manual of operations or by-laws.

Set dates for celebrating the Lord's Supper in coming year [W-2.4012].

Set dates, or have Session approve, receiving special offering for the following year. (Joy Gift, One Great Hour of Sharing, Souper Bowl, etc.)

Elect officers for the coming year: Clerk of Session, treasurer [G-3.0104, G-3.0205].

## THE CLERK OF SESSION

(Note that Sessions are now referred to as Councils in the new Form of Government, but for the sake of clarity will mainly be referred to as *Session* in this handbook)

### Job Description for a Clerk of Session

The *Book of Order* states that the “pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation,” and “Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council.” [G-3.0104] The term “Clerk of Session” is used to distinguish the Session office from those of other councils, where the officer is called the Stated Clerk. The Clerk of Session is elected by the Session “for such term as it may determine” as stated in Session by-laws. The Clerk must be a ruling elder but not necessarily serving currently on the Session. If the Clerk is serving on Session as an elder, that person retains discussion and voting rights. If the Clerk is not serving as an elder on Session, the Session may grant that person voice, but under no circumstances may that person vote.

The clerk's primary job is to record and maintain the permanent record of the Session and congregation. At the same time, it is up to the clerk to insure that proper meeting procedures are followed and that all things are done “decently and in order.” The clerk acts as liaison between the Session and the presbytery and should become familiar with the governing structure of the denomination so that proper communication is maintained.

It is important to understand that properly maintained records will help a Session and congregation accurately assess the congregation's program by enabling it to review its history. The statistics listed in Session records not only help a congregation better evaluate its own program, but also provide important data to the larger Church which will help it evaluate regional or national trends in membership and other areas.

In spite of the fact that the core functions of the clerk are “secretarial”, the Session, in electing a clerk, should seriously consider the qualifications needed to carry out the very significant “silent” function of being the senior lay officer of the congregation.

### Responsibilities at a Quick Glance

Remember that the Session is made up of the pastor (or presbytery appointed Moderator) and the active elders.

**IMPORTANT:** Know what the duties of the Session are. This will help you understand your role as a Clerk of Session. [G-3.0104]

These duties can be:

1. Record the transactions of the council
2. Keep its rolls of membership and attendance, including the rolls of all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and all Ruling Elders commissioned to particular pastoral service
3. Preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. (Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church.)
4. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers of baptized, active and affiliate members, in accordance with G-1.0401, G-1.0402 and G-1.0403.
5. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees [G-3.0204].
6. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the Session as described in the *Book of Order*, G-3.0201 and G-3.0202.
7. Notify the Session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted, in accordance with G-1.0502.

8. Be sure that the annual statistical form requested by the General Assembly is completed accurately and returned to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery by the deadline noted.
9. Submit the Session minute book to the Presbytery when requested.
10. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation [G-1.0505], seeing that the minutes are received by Session and are inscribed in the permanent Session minute book. (See *Congregational and Corporation Meetings*, p. 25.)
11. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of Session, and respond as directed by the Session.
12. Keep a list of unfinished business, including all matters referred to a committee or a staff member for later report to Session, and remind the appropriate persons(s) if not reported back to the Session.
13. Be prepared to respond to questions of parliamentary procedure in meetings if requested to be parliamentarian. (Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order, except in those cases where the *BoO* provides otherwise [G-3.0105].)
14. Receive and submit communications from/to other councils.
15. Notify the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of changes in the membership of Session.
16. Assist the Moderator in preparing the agenda for Session meetings, as requested.
17. Assist the pastor in church officer training when requested.
18. In consultation with the Moderator, prepare a statement of highlights of Session actions and reports following the meeting for information for the congregation (may be included in the next issue of the congregation's newsletter). Note: confidential matters should not be included.
19. You may moderate the congregational meeting, if requested, during the pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary clerk should be appointed.
20. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Session or Moderator.

### **Important Information**

1. The pastor or presbytery-appointed Moderator leads the meeting.
2. *No meeting can be held without the Moderator.*
3. If the Moderator cannot be present the Moderator can invite another teaching elder of our presbytery to lead the meeting; or a member of (COM) may be invited to lead; or the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator through the Commission on Ministry. [G-3.0104]
4. The Session shall meet quarterly (this means once every 3 months; not September, October, November and December of that year). [G-3.0203]  
Special meetings of the Session can be called when the Moderator feels it is necessary, when asked in writing by two members of the Session, or when directed by presbytery [G-3.0203]
5. The minutes are signed by the Clerk of Session. There is no requirement in the Book of Order for the Moderator to sign the minutes.
6. Members of the congregation may be invited to attend Session meetings but the Session is not required to permit this.
7. Reasonable notice must be given for special meetings, according to the congregation's by-laws/manual of operations. [G-3.0203]
8. A quorum, the rule for which is set by the session, is required to meet. A quorum must be present during the whole time official business is being conducted; if members leave and the number present falls below the required quorum, no official business can be conducted.
9. A quorum for a congregational meeting must be established in the church's by-laws or operational manual. If not, a church must default to the rule for a quorum in Robert's Rules of Order, which is a majority plus one.
10. Provisions for electronic meetings must be in the church By-Laws or Standing Rules before any electronic meeting may occur. Particular rules apply. See Roberts Rules Newly Revised, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, pp97-99 "Electronic Meetings."



## Responsibilities and Duties of the Session

Knowing this material will help you understand what the Session should be doing and guide you in helping the Session stay on track and act “decently and in order”.

### **G-3.0201      Composition and Responsibilities**

The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active service as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors...The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303), and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304). In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:

- a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include providing a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education and spiritual nurture; providing for regular preaching of the Word by a teaching elder or other person prepared and approved for the work; planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship; planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.
- b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.* This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord’s Supper at least quarterly and the administration of baptism as appropriate, in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship; and exercising pastoral care among the congregation; in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.
- c. *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.* This responsibility shall include receiving and dismissing members; reviewing the role of active members at least annually and consulting with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership; providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship; training, examining, ordaining and installing those elected by the congregation as ruling elders and deacons; encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

### **G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils**

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

- a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports;
- b. nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);
- c. see that the guidance and communication of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- e. propose to the presbytery, or through it to synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- f. send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

## Session Meetings

The time has arrived. It is time for the Session meeting.

There are two kinds of Session meetings:

1. regular (also called "stated") meetings, and,
2. special meetings.

### Regular (Stated) Meetings

Session is required to meet in regular meetings at least quarterly. These are on the calendar and the dates were probably set at the end of the previous year (e.g., the first Sunday of every month at 1:00 PM).

*This is not the same as "four times a year." It means once in January-March quarter, April to June quarter (well, you get the idea).*

At regular meetings all the routine business of Session- committee reports, budgeting, etc - is handled.

### Special Meetings

A special meeting of Session **may** be called:

- By the Moderator if he/she thinks it necessary.

A special meeting **must** be called when:

- The Moderator receives a written request from any two Session members, or,
- When presbytery directs the Session to meet.

Special meetings require "reasonable notice" and a clear description of the business to be discussed. The notice or call to a special meeting will be the docket for the meeting - nothing else can be added or voted on at that meeting - so it is important to be very careful in drawing up the notice for the meeting. (For example, if a meeting is called for the purpose of receiving new members, voting to repair the roof cannot be considered)

### Session Meetings

The Session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, associate pastors, and the elders in active service. Officers of the Session are the moderator and the Clerk of Session. The clerk must be a ruling elder, but does not have to be a currently active member of the Session. The clerk is elected by the Session for such term as it may determine.

As clerk, it is your task to check to make sure there is a quorum. According to the *Book of Order*, a quorum consists of the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session (G-3.0203). A minimum of two (2) ruling elder session members is recommended. The Session provides the rule for its quorum; be sure to check your by-laws/manual of operations.

All members of the Session may vote, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors. A moderator appointed by the Presbytery does not have a vote. In decisions of the Session, a majority vote rules.

Session meetings are not open meetings, and attendance is generally restricted to the members and any guests invited by Session. Members of the congregation who want to attend should ask for an invitation from the Moderator or the Clerk. The Session should convene without those who asked to be invited; the Moderator or Clerk explains the reason for the request to be invited, and Session either

affirms the invitation - by general consent or by a motion seconded and passed— or does not affirm it. It is the Session's meeting, and only the Session can open it to invitees. This is hard for many members to understand (and accept).

A Session may, if it wishes, adopt an "open meeting policy" which in effect invites any or all members of the congregation to all meetings unless a decision is made to close a particular meeting or part of a meeting.

Meetings of Session are generally conducted using basic parliamentary procedure. The parliamentary authority in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is the latest version of Roberts Rules of Order. If there is a conflict between something in *Roberts Rules of Order* and the Presbyterian Constitution (Book of Confessions and Book of Order), the Constitution always takes precedent.

## **Session Moderator**

The pastor of the church is the Moderator; where there are co-pastors, they alternate moderating the Session meetings. When the pulpit is vacant, either the Interim Pastor or another pastor (or member of COM) appointed by the Commission on Ministry (COM) will be the Moderator. The Session cannot meet in the absence of the Pastor/Moderator. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he/she can invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to moderate.

If the Session is directed to meet by presbytery, the Clerk and/or the Moderator consult with representatives of presbytery; depending on circumstances, it may be advisable for a representative of presbytery to moderate the meeting.

## **The Clerk's Duties Before the Meeting**

### **1. Plan the docket:**

It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session and the Moderator of Session to prepare the docket so that all business is handled in the most efficient manner. The docket becomes the outline for the Session minutes. Even if the Moderator always prepares the docket, pass information on from your own notes to help with this process.

### **2. Meeting notices:**

- a. Be sure that notices of the meeting are sent in advance. Don't assume people will remember even if meetings have been held on the same schedule for the past 20 years or the dates were placed on the calendar at the end of the previous year.
- b. It is helpful to accompany these notices with reminders to committee chairs of reports due and docketed, business referred, and previous assignments.
- c. The call of a special meeting must include the exact purpose for which the meeting is called and no business other than that named can be transacted.  
(The phrase, "...and such other business as may come before Session..." is not adequate in the call of a special meeting.)
- a. Most Sessions have found that written reports enable the flow of business. In such reports historical and informational material always comes first in the report and the recommendations come last. Only the recommendations appear in Session minutes unless Session orders the entire report on the minutes. Many Sessions find it very helpful for committees to have their reports ready in time to be included with the call of the meeting. So, in the notice of the meeting ask people to submit written reports. It helps keep the meeting on track, and keeps the "wanderer" from going on-and-on-and-on.

## During the Session Meeting

1. Remember the rules above about the Moderator.
2. Remember the rules above about a quorum.
3. Session meetings in most churches generally take on a certain informality. However, as clerk, require that all actions by Session be voted on. As clerk, you can require that all motions be in writing. Stop the meeting if you must until you are given the exact wording of the motion in writing. The motion that you record in the minutes (and the Session approves) is the motion that occurred, not what the motion-maker meant to say.
4. You can include the name of the maker of each motion made but do not have to; there is no need to include the name of the person who seconded the motion, unless there is some compelling reason to do so.
5. You may find it necessary to help members of Session word their motions. Helpful questions to ask about every Session action are:
  - What exactly is going to be done?
  - Who is going to do it?
  - When will it be completed or reported?
  - How much will it cost?
  - Where will the money come from?
  - Is the action compatible with the *Book of Order*? (If it is not, the action is null and void!)

Do **not** include discussion in your minutes - only motions as they were adopted are included; not the discussion. A motion that has been defeated should also be included in the minutes.

## After the Meeting

1. Okay... most clerks don't want to hear this: Write up the minutes immediately. Transcribe them or have them transcribed. If you must have attachments, be sure they are handled just like the minutes (special paper, numbered properly). Some items can be photocopied and included with the minutes (e.g., the Annual Report that you download from the PCUSA website). Or these can be scanned.
2. Sign the minutes as clerk.
3. Make all necessary entries into the rolls and registers. No entry should be made unless a Session action, which appears in the minutes, directs the entry.
4. Complete or dictate all necessary correspondence related to the actions of Session. Within the denomination, all communication is from clerk to clerk or from clerk to stated clerk. The clerk's signature (not the Moderator's or the secretary's signature) authenticates any document coming from Session.
5. Some clerks have church secretaries who have the primary responsibility for the minutes and the rolls and registers. When that is the case, the Clerk of Session supervises the church secretary in all matters related to the minutes and rolls and register. The accuracy of these records is the clerk's responsibility, not the secretary's, and it is the Clerk who signs the minutes, not the church secretary (or recording secretary).

## **A Notebook for Session Members**

Some churches have developed notebooks, or manuals, for each Session member that include the necessary documents and information for intelligent decision-making. Such a tool is particularly helpful in orienting new Session members to their task.

The following are suggested index tabs for such a notebook:

- Introduction
- Church Life: includes/a list of programs and activities with contact people, telephone numbers, meeting times and places.
- Church Officers and Staff...includes names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers
- By-laws of the Congregation
- Manual of Operations
- Functions, Duties, and Responsibilities...including ordination vows
- Session Committees - Objectives and Duties...including list of committee membership
- Other groups: Deacons, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, etc.
- Annual Budget
- Special Purpose Funds
- Special Rules and Regulations
- Session Minutes
- Church Members
- Notes

## **Session and Its Relationships to Other Organizations**

Session supervises all organizations of the congregation. All organizations of the congregation are accountable to Session. All organizations shall make a financial report to Session and the Congregation annually. [G-3.0205]

### **1. Board of Trustees [G-4.01; G-4.02]**

- a. The board of trustees is accountable to the Session. Their powers as trustees are listed in G-4.0101 and shall not infringe on the powers of Session.
- b. Many churches choose to have the Session serve as the trustees for their congregation. Having such a unicameral board (where elders are trustees) can eliminate potential conflicts between the two bodies.
  - 1) If the church has a separate Board of Trustees, the Session can delegate powers to the trustees, although Session is still responsible for the delegated powers.
  - 2) The budget should be prepared by the Session (in some churches the Board of Trustees is also involved).

### **2. The Board of Deacons [G- 2.02]**

The Board of Deacons

- a. is accountable to Session;
- b. may be given other tasks and duties by the Session;
- c. chooses its own officers;
- d. must submit its plans to Session for approval;
- e. and includes the pastor(s) as advisory members of the Board of Deacons.

Deacons may also be individually commissioned where a board does not exist; the ministry of individual deacons is still under the supervision and authority of Session.

### **3. Nominating Committee [G- 2.0401]**

The New Form of Government has removed some of the requirements for a congregational Nominating Committee, providing additional leeway for the particular church to use practices which best fit that church. Particular provisions for the congregation's Nominating Committee should be spelled out in the by-laws or manual of operations. Some churches have chosen simply to lift the language from the old Book of Order and use it for their process. This language can be found in the 2009-2011 Book of Order under G-14.0223 through G-14.0226c. Under the new Form of Government [G- 2.0401], the provisions for a congregation are:

Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided:

- a. The committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session.
- b. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote.
- c. When elections are held, full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation.
- d. A majority of all the active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

#### 4. **Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)** [G-2.08]

The pastor nominating committee is a committee of the Congregation, not of the Session. The committee has several points of contact with the Session:

The session calls a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee [G-2.0802] which shall be representative of the whole congregation.

According to the process of the presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability and availability of those considered for the call. When the way is clear for the committee to report to the congregation, the session shall call a congregational meeting. [G-2.0803]

The committee negotiates the salary of the new pastor in consultation with the Session and within the limits that the Session has set (in some churches the Board of Trustees may also be involved).

**A call for a pastor involves three parties: the congregation, the pastor and the Commission on Ministry which will appoint a liaison to work with the PNC in going through the process.**

#### 5. **Personnel**

- a. The Session supervises all staff, ordained and un-ordained, according to its bylaws/manual of operations unless other provisions have been made.
- b. The Session reviews annually and recommends to the congregation the salaries of all teaching elders. [G-2.0804]
- c. The Session must have COM approval of all terms of call for teaching elders.
- d. Terms of Call must always meet, or exceed, the minimum terms of call guidelines adopted by presbytery.

Guidelines for Personnel practices and minimum terms of call are available from COM.

#### 6. **Outside Organizations**

Session controls the use of all church property, even to granting permission for the sanctuary to be used for weddings. If outside organizations use your building, be sure the purpose of the organization using the church is not contrary to the mission of the congregation or the Presbyterian Church. It is wise to have a written contract with all organizations using the church building, stipulating any rental fee, maintenance standards, and rooms of the church to be used. It is also recommended that you have "use of the building" guidelines in print as part of your Manual of Operations.

**NOTE:** No church shall lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation. [G-4.0206b]



## Minutes of the Session Meeting

A major responsibility of the Clerk is the accurate recording of the minutes of the Session meeting. The following guidelines may help:

1. Begin with the date and time when the meeting was convened, and by whom it was convened with prayer. (Unless Session meets somewhere other than your church building, you do not need to indicate location of the meeting).
2. State the nature of the meeting: either stated or special (called). If this is the regular scheduled meeting, it is the stated meeting; anything else is a special meeting. If this is a special meeting, indicate in the minutes by whom it was called, and the specific limited purpose(s) for which it was called. Remember that the "Call" or "Notice" of a special meeting IS the agenda for the meeting!! No other business can be conducted!
3. Certify that a quorum was present throughout the meeting. (Unless the quorum is lost during the meeting, the Clerk's certification of a quorum at the beginning meets this requirement; if the quorum is lost, the minutes should report that the Clerk advised Session and the Moderator of that fact).
4. Record the attendance, including in the record of every meeting the presence of the Pastor/Moderator. Record those present, those excused, and those absent/unexcused. Record the presence of any non-Session members by name and role (*for example: Sally Jones, Moderator of the Board of Deacons; Luke Brown, Custodian; Teaching Elder Herman Schlaggelhammer from Santa Fe Presbytery*). If the Pastor is not moderating, record the presence of another Moderator and the reason. Vote privilege of the floor for any guests so that they can take part in the discussion.
5. Record the review of the previous meeting's minutes, noting carefully any corrections or additions, and the approval. If the minutes were provided to Session members ahead of time do not read them; if not, the minutes must be read.
6. Record all the actions taken, in one of the following formats:  
*"msp that...";*  
*"Session voted to....";*  
*"On the recommendation of Personnel Committee, Session approved ...";*  
*"Motion made, seconded and passed to ...".*  
You are to record the disposition of ALL motions; even those that failed.
7. Be especially careful and thorough in recording all actions taken to hire, compensate, evaluate, discipline, or terminate non-ordained staff.
  - a. When the Session hires a non-ordained member of the staff, enter into the minutes of the meeting the full and complete employment agreement or contract.
  - b. Upon the annual review of the person's compensation, record any changes as follows:  
*"On the recommendation of Personnel Committee, the hourly rate of pay for the Custodian, John Doe, was increased from \$10 to \$12.50, effective January 1, 20xx."*
  - c. Record every evaluation of non-ordained staff which the Personnel Committee reports to Session. In every instance where the evaluation indicates less than satisfactory performance, record any remedial course of action which Personnel Committee proposes.
  - d. In the event that termination of an employee is recommended, record the Personnel Committee's report that the relevant provisions of the personnel policies have been followed. Be clear in the record that the Session, acting in a legal meeting with a quorum present, voted to terminate the employee. The record must not indicate that any individual, or any entity other than the full Session, took this action. Record any severance agreement or terms in full.

8. Record actions taken which affect the membership status of any member following one of these examples:
  - *Session acted to delete the names of the following members from the church's rolls (G-3.0204a):*  
*H B*  
*P B*
  - *Upon their request, Session deleted these names in accordance with G-3.0204a:*  
*W H*  
*R K*
  - *Session granted a letter of transfer to Christopher and J B and M B who are joining Meadow Presbyterian Church of Schnectady, NY; the request for the letter came from the church's clerk of session. (G-3.0204a).*
9. Record Session's prior authorization of all baptisms and the examination of the parents; afterward, record the pastor's report that the baptism took place. An example of how to record the Session's authorization:
  - *After meeting with the parents, the Session voted to approve the pastor's recommendation that J P , daughter of W and P who was born on March 1, 2010, be baptized during worship on Sunday May 15, 2010."*
  - *Session voted to authorize the baptism of R W, an adult, on Sunday April 10, 2010, prior to his being received as a member on that same day.*
10. Record Session's authorization for services of Holy Communion; record the pastor's report regarding communion for shut-ins.
11. Record the adopted budget in full detail.
12. Record Session's annual review of the compensation of all pastoral staff, to be voted on at the congregational meeting; record the review of the compensation of all non-ordained staff, and all Session actions taken related to compensation.
13. Record Session's authorization of all special offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Souper Bowl Sunday, Pentecost Offering, etc.).

### **Some general points**

1. Do NOT record the names of those seconding motions.
2. Unless asked to do so, do not record the numerical outcome of votes taken, or the names of those who voted in opposition.
3. Only the clerk signs session minutes.
4. The minutes of all Session and congregational meetings, and all other official records, including the records provided to Session by the Deacons and/or the Trustees, if any, are the property of the Session. The Clerk is responsible for their safekeeping. A request from a member of the congregation (or any other person) for a copy of the minutes, or an excerpt of part of a meeting, is reported to the Session at its next meeting, and the Clerk is to follow the Session's decision.
5. If it is the Session's standing policy that the minutes in full are provided to the congregation through the posting or distribution of a copy, care needs to be taken that confidential personnel matters and any other confidential proceedings are not included in the copy which the congregation sees.
6. Session may direct the Clerk to prepare a summary of the meetings to be posted in the church.
7. The Session minutes are reviewed by the Presbytery each year.
8. It is important to understand that properly maintained records will help a Session and congregation accurately assess that congregation's program by enabling it to review its history. The statistics listed in Session records not only help a congregation better evaluate its own program, but also provide important data to the larger Church which will help it evaluate regional

or national trends in membership and other areas.

**NOTE:** This section contains a suggested template for a Session meeting. You will, of course, have to adapt it to your own Session's operations, or create one that works for you. Working from a prepared template can help a clerk be certain that all of the necessary information is in the minutes correctly.

### **Suggested Form for Recording Minutes – number 1**

The Session of the.....Presbyterian Church of....., held a regular [special] meeting on.....,.....20....., at.....o'clock in.....[designated place] of the church.

The meeting was opened with prayer by.....

The following persons were present: the Moderator, Teaching Elder....., and Ruling elders..... .

Ruling Elders.....were excused.

Ruling Elders.....were absent

The following guests were present.

The clerk reported that a quorum was present.

The minutes of the meeting(s) of.....20.....[and....., 20.....], were read and approved (with the following corrections: [specify page, paragraph and exact wording of correction])

The clerk presented the following communications received since the previous meeting:

a.                      b.                      c.                      d.

Session voted to refer communications (a, b, c etc) to the.....committee for consideration and report, with recommendations, to the next regular meeting of the Session. The clerk was directed to acknowledge Communication d, and to advise the writer that the Session cannot grant the request contained therein.

The pastor, Teaching Elder .....presented the following report which was ordered entered into the minutes:

A. Baptisms:

Infants, their dates of birth, and names of parents.

Adults with full names, and in the case of married women, their maiden names.

B. Lord's Supper:      Date and time

Administration to sick and shut-ins (names optional) Name of elder accompanying

C. Weddings:              Place, date, and names of contracting parties.

D. Funerals:              Place, date, and name of deceased

The report of the trustees [finance committee, whatever], containing the financial statement for the month of.....20....., and the accumulated statement from January 1, to....., 20....., was presented in writing by.....[or through the clerk]. The report, in condensed form, was ordered entered in the minutes, as follows:

Receipts for the month.....[amount]

Disbursements for the month.....[amount]

Receipts January 1 to.....[amount]

The report of the.....Committee was presented by.....The committee reported that.....[brief summary of any important information].

The report of the.....Committee was presented by.....The committee reported that.....[brief summary of any important information].

Session voted to approve [disapprove] the following recommendation:

The moderator presented the following persons for examination by the Session for membership

on profession of faith (and baptism), and after due examination, the Session voted to receive them:

John Smith (spouse of Mary Williams Smith)

Mary Williams Smith (spouse of John) [include maiden name]

Robert Smith (son of John and Mary Smith)

The moderator presented the following persons for examination by the Session for membership on reaffirmation of faith, and after due examination, Session voted to receive them into membership:

Gordon Young

The moderator presented the following persons who seek to join by letter of transfer and after due examination, Session voted to receive these persons by letter of transfer:

Henry Brown (spouse of Edna Barrett Brown), from.....church of .....[city and state]

Edna Barrett Brown (spouse of Henry) [include maiden name] from .....church of.....[city and state]

The moderator reported that.....[names of parents] had requested the Sacrament of Infant Baptism for their child.....on Sunday, .....20....., at the.....o'clock service. Session, after examination of the parents, voted its approval.

The clerk reported that he/ she (or committee of Session) had been unable after due and diligent search to ascertain the place of residence of....., who has been absent for one year. Session voted to delete this name from the roll of active members in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Order* G-3.0204a.

The clerk reported that....., who has moved out of state and has been inactive for some time, had neglected to transfer church membership, even though recently advised to do so. Session voted that this person's name be deleted from the roll of the church, in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Order* G-3.0204a.

The clerk reported that members.....had intentionally not been participating in the church's work and worship for a period of one year and that Session has made diligent effort to restore the member to activity in the church's work and worship. Session voted to delete these names from the roll of the church, in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Order* G-3.0204a.

The clerk reported that letters of transfer have been requested for:

John Doe (spouse of Mary Doe) to.....Church. ....(city),.....(state).

Mary Doe (spouse of John) to.....church (city), (State).

Session voted that letters of transfer be sent for these members.

Commissioner(s)..... of Santa Fe presented an oral report.

Session considered the following items of old business:

a.

b.

c.

Session voted to (list action on the old business considered.....)

Session considered the following items of new business:

a.

b.

c.

There being no further business, the Session adjourned at.....with prayer by .....

## **Suggested wording for other items:**

### **Special meetings of congregation:**

Session directed the clerk to insert the following notice in the church calendar for Sundays.....[specify two consecutive Sundays], and requested the moderator to

emphasize the importance of this meeting from the pulpit:

"A special meeting of the congregation of.....Presbyterian Church of  
..... is called for.....at.....o'clock in the sanctuary for  
the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_. (Be very specific for this is the  
only item that can be considered at that meeting.)

Examination of candidates for ordination and/or installation as elders or deacons [G-2.0402]:

Having been elected by the congregation and having completed a period of study and preparation, Session conducted an examination of the newly elected members to Session and the Board of Deacons on their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and the discipline contained in the Constitution of the Church. Session voted to sustain the examinations of \_\_\_\_\_ and set the date of ordination and/or installation for [date], instructing the clerk to see that an announcement of the names and date for ordination and/or installation be announced in the church bulletin and/or the church newsletter.

[and/or] Session voted not to sustain the examination of \_\_\_\_\_ and directed the clerk to report its action to the congregation's nominating committee, which shall bring nomination(s) to a special meeting of the congregation to fill the office(s).

**Business usually occurring only once each year:**

Session voted to name.....as commissioners to presbytery from February 1, 20.... to January 31, 20.....[this should not be done until it is determined by the Stated Clerk of Presbytery how many commissioners should be elected. This is announced and voted upon at the October meeting each year]

Session voted to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on \_\_\_\_\_  
(dates or "*the first Sunday of each month and Maundy Thursday*").

The trustees reported that after reviewing the insurance policy for the church, it found it to be adequate [or needs updating and that a new proposal will be brought back to Session] [what about coverage for sexual misconduct; is pastor or staff members covered?]

The Personnel Committee reported that the church's personnel policy and procedures is current and no changes are necessary.

Session voted to approve the budget for 20.....as submitted by the.....and directed that it be included in the minutes of Session and presented to the congregation at the annual meeting.

The Personnel Committee reported that it had reviewed the adequacy of compensation with the pastor [and other staff, by name].

*Upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee, Session voted to recommend the following terms of call for the pastor to the annual meeting of the congregation (minimum salary as of January 1, 2018, is \$42,000 cash and housing and \$1,250 for Continuing Education).*

The Finance Committee (trustees, whatever) presented the annual financial review report as prepared by.....Session voted to include the report (or the summary statement) with these minutes and to adopt the recommendations, instructing the (treasurer, finance committee, whatever) to report back on its follow-through on the recommendations within two months.

Session voted to elect.....Clerk of Session for the year.

Session voted to elect..... Treasurer for the year.

**NOTE:** The following form is the Session Records Review form that is used during the Presbytery review. It can help you know what must be in the minutes. It is important that before the annual review you fill out the form listing pages where items are, or are not, so that the review team can more easily do their work. ***If the form is not turned in with your minutes and roll book they may be returned to you without being read.***

## Clerk of Session Form Requesting Review of Session Records

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Review: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Reviewed: From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**"Each council shall review annually...the proceedings and actions of all entities related to the body, all officers able to act on behalf of the body, and lower councils within its jurisdiction. In reviewing the procedures of the lower council, the higher body shall determine whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded, have been in accordance with this Constitution, have been prudent and equitable, and have been faithful to the mission of the whole church." (G-3.0108)**

### **Notes:**

# items so marked are considered essential. Minutes must reflect these actions to be approved.

### **Keep in Mind:**

- >All pages in the Session Record Book are to be numbered and in sequence
- >Pages or parts of pages not used are to be "X-ed" out
- >Previous actions of Session noted in current minutes should be referred to by page number.
- >**Minutes without this review sheet will NOT be reviewed!**

### **Items that are ordinarily included in minutes**

***Please list the pages, if any, where these items are missing from the Minutes being reviewed.***

**Page #**

### **Session Meetings Minutes:**

#### **General Format**

Date, time, place, type of meeting is noted except on page(s)	_____
Quorum determined and/or stated <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
Moderator named (G-3.0104) <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
Opened and closed with prayer (G-3.0105) <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
Elders present/excused/absent noted <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
Others present noted and granted Privilege of Floor <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
Previous minutes approved except for these meetings (dates)	_____
Minutes attested to by signature of clerk <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
(Note: Moderator signature on Session minutes is not required)	

#### **Motions**

Motions are clearly written <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____
The final disposition of the motion is noted <i>except on page(s)</i>	_____

***Please list the pages where these items are found in the Minutes book being reviewed.***

**Page(s) where  
items are found**

### **Members**

Received, and how received – affirmation, transfer, etc (G-3.0204a)	_____
Deleted with reason recorded (G-3.0204a) in minutes and on Roll	_____

### **Sacraments**

#### **Communion**

Authorized dates – (Note: can be "first Sunday of each month") (W-3.0409, W-3.410)	_____
Special occasion(s) authorized, e.g. marriage, special services, funerals (W-3.0410, W-5.0206)	_____

**Baptism**

Authorized by Session (W-3.0403) \_\_\_\_\_

Name and birth date of persons baptized are recorded (W-3.0403) \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Session Items**

Elders elected and named (G-2.0401) in the minutes with term \_\_\_\_\_

#Elders were instructed and examined (G-2.0402) \_\_\_\_\_

#Date of ordination/installation noted (G-2.0403) \_\_\_\_\_

#Election of Clerk and length of term included (G-3.0104) \_\_\_\_\_

Review of Membership Roll **annually** (G-3.0201c) \_\_\_\_\_**Were these other items included in minutes:****Yes      No      Page # Where found****Staff Compensation**

Compensation reviewed with pastor(s) (G-2.0804) \_\_\_\_\_

Compensation reviewed with other staff \_\_\_\_\_

**Deacons**

#Deacons were instructed and examined (G-3.0201c) \_\_\_\_\_

#Date of ordination/installation noted (G-3.0204b) \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregation**

Annual meeting of the congregation held (G-1.0501) \_\_\_\_\_

Minutes of meetings of congregation approved \_\_\_\_\_

Minutes of meetings of congregation attested to by Sec'y \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregational Nominating Committee (G-2.0401)**

At least 1 serving ruling elder named \_\_\_\_\_

At least 3 additional members of congregation named \_\_\_\_\_

Elected by congregation? \_\_\_\_\_

**Church Finances**

Election of treasurer for specified term (G-3.0205) \_\_\_\_\_

#Annual budget approved/recorded (G-3.0205) \_\_\_\_\_

#Report of annual financial review or audit (G-3.0113) \_\_\_\_\_

**Other**

#Annual statistical report to General Assembly included \_\_\_\_\_

#Evidence of adequate insurance (G-3.0112) \_\_\_\_\_

Mention of new mission efforts, new developments,  
new programs, mission statement, etc \_\_\_\_\_**Rolls and Registers (G-3.0204a) – Up to date?**

Baptized members (G-1.0401) \_\_\_\_\_

Active members (G-1.0402) \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliate members (G-1.0403) \_\_\_\_\_

Baptisms (G-3.0204b) \_\_\_\_\_

Elders/deacons/pastors (G-3.0204b) \_\_\_\_\_

Marriages (G-3.0204b, optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Inactive members (G-3.0204b, optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**Deed/title** to property is located where? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there an indication that the church leases worship space to another group for a period of more than five years? (G-4.0206b) \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Items for Inclusion in Session and Congregational Minutes**

One more guide that some might find useful, recognizing that each of our minds works in a different way.

### **Items that generally appear for most meetings**

- Date, time, and location of meeting (name of locality, if different from church)
- Type of meeting (Stated Meeting, Called Meeting)
- Meeting opened with prayer
- Names of Teaching and Ruling Elders present at meeting
- Names of Teaching and Ruling Elders requesting to be excused from meeting
- Names of Teaching and Ruling Elders absent without requesting excused absence
- Statement of whether or not quorum is present
- Moderator's name
- Approval of previous Session minutes by date (with corrections noted in the minutes)
- Any actions approved by vote or by consensus
- Meeting closed with prayer

### **Items that must appear at least once (annually) in each year's Session Minutes:**

- Election of Clerk of Session
- Election of Church Treasurer
- Training of new Elders and/or Deacons, after election and before installation
- Examination of new Elders and/or Deacons
- Ordination/Installation of Elders and/or Deacons
- Copy of Annual Statistical Report for Presbytery
- Review of financial reports by Session (at least once per year) Financial Review ("Audit") of books (following end of fiscal year)
- Review of compensation for all staff
- Review of insurance coverage
- Approval of budget for next year
- Annual review of membership rolls
- Observance of Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (must be observed at least quarterly)
- If have Deacons, review of their records
- Report of Presbytery's review of previous year's Session Minutes

### **Register items that must appear in each year's Session Minutes:**

- Baptisms (infant or adult), including date of birth (as they occur)
- Deaths, including date of death (as they occur)
- Marriages, including date of marriage (as they occur)
- Reception of members, by type of reception and date (as they occur)
- Removal from roll of members, by type of removal and date (as they occur)



## Congregational and Corporation Meetings and Minutes

An **annual meeting** of the congregation is required.

**Special meetings** must/shall be called by the Session:

- When deemed necessary by the Moderator;
- When requested in writing by one-fourth of the members on the active roll;
- And when Session is directed by presbytery to call a meeting.

There is no specific minimum notice requirement provided in the current Book of Order (see G-1.0502). The new Form of Government allows congregations to provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting. Ordinarily, two Sundays of notice, which may be written in the bulletin or made verbally or both, suffice—and the meeting can be held on the second Sunday it is announced. Provisions of the congregation's by-laws/manual of operations must be followed.

Ordinarily a meeting of the congregation's Corporation is held on the same day. Your bylaws must make provision for the establishment of a corporation, election of trustees, and business appropriate to the corporation. See Book of Order G-4.0101 and G-4.0102 for more information.

Meetings of the congregation related to the pastor nominating committee are special meetings, and there can be no other items on the agenda.

A congregational petition for the Session to call a congregational meeting, must be signed by one-fourth of the members on the active roll, and can only be called to consider one of the matters outlined in G-1.0503. If it is called to consider any matter outside the scope of this provision of the Form of Government, the Clerk must remind the Moderator and the Session is to decline the petition, while explaining why the petition is declined.

Matters which a congregation can consider are limited by the *Book of Order* to the following general areas:

1. Matters related to electing elders, deacons and trustees;
2. Matters related to calling a pastor or pastors;
3. Matters related to changing a pastor's terms of call, or acting on a request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship;
4. Matters related to buying, mortgaging, or selling real property;
5. Matters related to requesting the presbytery to grant an exemption as permitted in the constitution (G-2.0404).

Business which must be conducted annually at a congregational meeting includes the Session's report of its review of the adequacy of the compensation of the installed pastor(s) and any Associate Pastor(s), and the congregation's action on Session's recommendations in this regard.

The Clerk of Session is the secretary of all congregational meetings and is responsible for the minutes of the meeting.

Here are guidelines for the minutes of a congregational meeting:

1. Begin with the date and time, and the kind of meeting- annual or special; if special, record that the call to the meeting was read by the Clerk or Moderator, and was approved. Record the opening of the meeting with prayer.
2. Identify by name and title the Moderator of the meeting.
3. Quorum requirements are established by the By-Laws. A minimum of 10 percent (10%) of the active members is recommended. Indicate the number of active members needed to satisfy the quorum requirement (specified in the by-laws), and record the actual number of active members present. If a quorum is not present as the meeting begins, notify the Moderator; the members present may recess and seek a quorum (that is, go out and beat the bushes, or check the coffee area), or the Moderator may adjourn the meeting. **If the meeting proceeds in the absence of a quorum, absolutely no votes are to be taken.**
  - a. It is always a good idea for the Clerk to bring the list of active members of the congregation to all congregational meetings in case there are any questions about someone's voting rights.
  - b. And, of course, be sure it is up-to-date and accurate.
  - c. Only active members of the congregation are entitled to vote.
4. Record the approval of the agenda.
5. Ordinarily at the annual meeting, a single motion to receive all organizational reports would be in order.
6. The congregation does not vote to approve a budget. The Session approves the budget and shares it with the congregation.
7. Record the report of the Nominating Committee and the election of elders (and/or deacons if any).
  - a. Opportunity shall be offered for nominations from the floor. [G-2.0401]
  - b. Lacking any additional nominations, the motion to elect can be a motion directing the Clerk to cast a single unanimous ballot. If nominations from the floor result in more nominees than there are positions to be filled, the election must be by secret paper ballot.
8. At a congregational meeting called to vote on the call to a pastor or associate pastor, it is wise to vote by secret paper ballot. (It **must** be taken by paper ballot if even one person requests one, so it is always good to have paper ballots ready.) The Clerk is to report the numerical results of the voting in the minutes. If the Call is approved, the initial terms of call are included in full detail in the minutes of the congregational meeting.
9. Record in full detail congregational actions to buy, sell, mortgage, or encumber church property; or to lease the worship space; or to lease any of its property for more than five years. Remember that presbytery is a party to most of these agreements.
10. Record all congregational decisions to establish or eliminate installed positions; record the congregation's decision to discontinue using the office of Deacon.
11. Record the method of dealing with meeting minutes - either they are read verbatim at the conclusion of the meeting or they are referred to Session for approval at its next meeting.

12. Record the time of adjourning with prayer.
13. Sign the minutes. It is no longer necessary for the Moderator to sign congregational meeting minutes. Insert the minutes into the Session minute book in the correct chronological sequence after they have been approved by the congregation or by the Session at its next meeting.

**NOTE:** From time to time, Session may want to gather the members of the congregation in order to hear their opinion about a matter: should we buy new hymnals; should we rent out two floors of the education building to the local daycare center, etc. Such gatherings are completely legitimate and often a very good idea - but such a gathering is **not** a meeting of the congregation; no motions should be allowed, and no minutes are kept. Congregational meetings must address one of the matters outlined in G-1.0503; but this should not preclude gathering the congregation in order to listen to its voice.

### **Other information related to meetings of the congregation**

#### **Annual Meeting**

1. An annual meeting of the congregation is required for the purposes of receiving reports from the Session and to fulfill any legal requirements with respect to the church as a corporation. It is customary, but not required, that the annual review of the pastor's call occurs at this meeting.
2. Also, matters related to capital expenditures that may will, or may, result in a church mortgage require congregational approval and presbytery approval, and must come to the congregation.

#### **Calling a Pastor**

1. Other less frequent actions of the congregation may require that the clerk to take a leading role. These include the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the formation of a pastor nominating committee, and the subsequent election of a pastor. All of these actions require consultation with and approval by presbytery. **Calling a pastor is a three-way process involving the congregation, the pastor and COM.**
2. **It is strongly urged** (actually required) that as soon as it is known that a pastor is leaving, the Commission on Ministry will be immediately contacted so that a liaison can be appointed to work with the Session and then the PNC right from the beginning to go through the pastor search and call process. We have learned that when COM is not involved immediately upon the announcement of a pastor setting a time for the end of the pastoral relationship there can be many problems that could be prevented with the assistance of a liaison from COM. The process of calling a pastor is long and complicated but manageable with the proper COM guidance.
3. **Early** discussion with the presbytery Commission on Ministry (COM) is encouraged.
4. Secret ballots should routinely be used when voting on calling a pastor.
5. Votes by proxy are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote.
6. No step in this process can be completed without full involvement of the COM.

# The Clerk and Records: How to Keep the Church Rolls and Registers

## Church Rolls and Registers are Legal Documents

Presbytery reviews your rolls and registers annually. The rolls and registers are checked against the Session minutes. You will find your responsibilities related to the rolls and registers in the *Book of Order* [G-3.0204].

There are only three ways a person can join the Presbyterian Church: [G-1.0303]

- **Profession of faith** – someone who has been baptized (probably as an infant or child) but has not become a member of a church appears before the congregation and affirms their belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior and accepts the responsibilities of church membership. Most churches have a training period followed by a meeting with the Session for new members. If the person has not been baptized they can be baptized following instruction and meeting with the Session at the same service when they are received as a member.
- **Transfer** – when someone has formally joined another church, their membership can be transferred from their home church to their new church through a letter of transfer from the home church. Not all denominations offer letters of transfer.
- **Reaffirmation of faith** – when someone has been a member of another church by profession of faith but for some reason cannot obtain a letter of transfer they can join by reaffirming their faith and accept the responsibilities of church membership.

All three ways require formal Session action.

**NOTE:** The Session shall review the roll of members at least annually, and shall counsel with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership. [G-3.0201c]

## Rolls

The Session is responsible for maintaining the church rolls. Even if a Session committee, a membership secretary, or the church secretary takes on this responsibility, it falls on the clerk to see that the job is done and done correctly.

The church rolls record every member who has ever belonged to your church. These rolls must be kept current. The official church rolls may not be kept in a card file or on a computer.

There are five church rolls: [G-3.0204a]

### 1. **Chronological Roll of Members**

The chronological roll has numbers down the left side of a double page. Each member of the church is assigned a number at the time that person joins the church. Columns to the right offer space for necessary comments from time to time. The only ways a name can be removed are by transfer to another church, removal from the active roll due to a move or member otherwise ceasing to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation of the congregation for a period of two years, at the request of the member, renunciation of jurisdiction, or the death of a member.

A name is removed by drawing a line with pencil through the name and listing the reasons in the appropriate column next to the name.

### 2. **Alphabetical Roll of Members**

The alphabetical roll groups church members according to the first letter of their last names. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll by membership (line) number.

3. **Baptized Roll**

The baptized roll lists all infants, children and adults baptized in your church or transferred into your church with the name of the teaching elder who baptized them. In the case of infant baptisms, the parents' names must be listed. The only way a name can be removed from the baptized roll is by profession of faith, transfer, or death. This is accomplished by drawing a line through the name and indicating in the appropriate column the reason for the deletion. The baptized are counted and entered in the Annual Report.

4. **Inactive Roll**

*NOTE: The New Form of Government, 2011/2013, has eliminated the requirement for an Inactive Roll. Some churches may wish to continue this practice, but it is no longer necessary. Below is a description the congregation may choose to add to its bylaws/manual of operations if it wishes to continue this practice.*

The inactive roll lists the names of members of the church, who, in the judgment of Session, have willfully let their active membership in the church lapse. The person must have been inactive for at least one year and Session must have diligently tried to discover the cause of the member's nonparticipation.

5. **Affiliate Roll**

The affiliate roll enables a member who is away from his/her home church to join temporarily another church while remaining on the active roll of the home church. It must be renewed every two years. It is a very helpful roll for college students and "snowbirds". Affiliate members cannot hold office or vote. (See G-1.0403)

**Registers [G-3.0204b]**

Each Session shall keep up-to-date registers on "acid-free" paper of infant baptisms, adult baptisms, marriages, pastors, elders, deacons, trustees, and deaths (optional but strongly encouraged), which shall be submitted at least once each year to the presbytery for its general review and control.

1. **Register of Marriages**

This includes marriages of all members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property.

2. **Register of Baptisms**

For infant baptisms, this includes the infant's name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized and the names of persons presenting the children for baptism. Adult baptisms include name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized.

3. **Register of Ruling Elders**

The name of each elder, the name of the church in which each elder was ordained, the date of ordination and installation, terms of active service, and the record of removals are recorded.

4. **Register of Deacons**

This register contains the name of each deacon, the name of the church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and the record of removals.

5. **Register of Teaching Elders**

This includes the names of all pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.

6. **Register of Deaths**

Although this is not required, it complements the other registers of the congregation. This register includes the names of the deceased, date of death, and date of memorial service and/or interment. Be certain to also list the death in the chronological and alphabetical listing of members.

## Relations with the Presbytery

It is helpful for a clerk to look at the most up-to-date by-laws, standing rules and/or manual of operations of the presbytery for an understanding of the presbytery's structure. This can be found on the presbytery website, [www.santafepresbytery.org](http://www.santafepresbytery.org).

### **The Session and Presbytery**

The relationship of the Session to presbytery is contained in the *Book of Order* and in the standing rules, manual of operations and by-laws of the Presbytery of Santa Fe. Here is a list of some of the responsibilities of Session to the presbytery:

#### **Commissioners to Presbytery**

1. Presbyterian polity (government) is a representative polity. It works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect elder commissioners who attend the meeting and stay through the end of the meeting, and report back to the Session.
2. There are three regular (stated) presbytery meetings each year: February, June/July, and October.
3. Each Session is responsible for electing commissioners to presbytery. The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the congregation. [G-3.0301]
  - a. The number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled also varies according to a process of equalization (balancing the number of ruling elders and teaching elders). The Clerks of Session of some churches will be notified of the number of extra commissioners they will be entitled to so that equalization can happen.
  - b. Churches are encouraged to elect their commissioners for the entire year, at least. Some churches elect different commissioners for each meeting (although this might not be the best choice). It is even possible to elect a commissioner for the first half of a presbytery meeting and another commissioner for the second half. But the continuity of a longer term allows the commissioner a higher level of confidence and knowledge.
4. Notices of presbytery meetings and registration cards are sent to Clerks of Sessions to be distributed to the duly elected commissioners before the presbytery meeting. The call and registration forms are sent via email (or USPS when no email address is available). Business papers for the presbytery meeting are available on-line at the presbytery web site: [www.santafepresbytery.org](http://www.santafepresbytery.org) Presbytery Meetings section under the date of the meeting.
5. Papers are generally available at least a week before the presbytery meeting. Be certain that commissioners are reminded to read the reports and print or download the papers for often they will not be available in hard copy unless a commissioner requests this from the office ahead of the meeting.
6. Informational and promotional papers are distributed at the presbytery meeting and should be distributed by the commissioners when the commissioners return to their churches. Each commissioner should report to Session about the meeting:
  - a. significant actions taken by the presbytery
  - b. a summary of issues deliberated upon
  - c. policy decisions made
  - d. *per capita* decisions

- e. implications of presbytery actions for the congregation
- f. concerns and opportunities open to the congregation through presbytery
- g. raising of consciousness of the congregation's participation in the total ministry of Jesus Christ

### **Nominations to Presbytery Standing Committees and Commissions**

Presbytery is always looking for particular skills and interest among the members of our congregations. The Presbytery of Santa Fe is also committed to finding racial/ethnic minority members of our churches with skills and interest in serving on a presbytery committee or commission. Nominations can be forwarded to the chair of the Committee on Representation and Participation (contact the presbytery office for contact information).

### ***Per Capita Apportionment Payments***

The *per capita* apportionment is adopted by Presbytery in the early fall. An invoice is sent to each church treasurer in October/November. The per capita payment is due early the following January. Please remember that the *per capita* assessment is based on the membership figures you turned in to Louisville for December the previous year. (e.g., the assessment for 2014 is based on what you reported as your active membership on December 31, 2012.) Your assessment is based on the figure you turned in.

The portion we are assessed by General Assembly (GA) and Synod must be paid by presbytery whether your church submits its assessment to presbytery or not.

### **Annual Review of the Pastor's Terms of Call**

Each year the Session is required by the *Book of Order* to review the adequacy of the salaries of all pastoral staff. If Session wishes to make any change in the terms of call as they were last approved by presbytery, the change in terms of call must be brought to the congregation for approval, then taken to presbytery which, finally, approves all terms of call and all changes in terms of call.

Annually, presbytery sends to each Session a form upon which to report terms of call for the following year. As soon as the congregation has approved terms of call for its pastor(s), the call forms must be returned to the Commission on Ministry, for recommendation to Presbytery. Please be sure that this form is returned each year!

### **Minimum Compensation for Pastors**

Each October, the COM announces minimum terms of call for all installed pastors.

All terms of call must meet this minimum standard in order for presbytery to approve the call.

Annually, Session will receive notification of minimum terms of call as soon as they are adopted by Presbytery. These are also posted on the presbytery website.

It is the Clerk's responsibility to see that this relationship with Presbytery is used, nurtured and encouraged.

## General Assembly Annual Statistical Report

The Annual General Assembly Statistical Report is your report to the General Assembly and is the specific responsibility of the Session and the Clerk of Session. Packet information is sent and submitted electronically. If you have not received information on completing the report by the first week of the New Year, please call the presbytery office (505-345-5657). With your packet you will receive a password unique to your church. If you change this be sure anyone replacing you knows what the password is.

The packet will include the GA Annual Report instruction booklet, the Clerks Questionnaire, the Terms of Call form, and a Church Information form. The Annual Report and the Clerk Questionnaires are to be submitted electronically.

**(NOTE: If you are a Union church your materials will differ slightly, so read carefully the instructions that come with your packet.)**

The GA reports are usually due in February or March. The date will be on the instruction sheet and in the cover letter.

If you have missed the deadline stated in the cover letter sent with the report, call the presbytery office immediately. If you are too late or do not submit at all, membership and financial figures from a previous year will be used. This does a great disservice to the congregation, particularly if it is searching for a pastor. And your *per capita* assessment is based on these membership reports.

### Tips on Completing the Report

Complete the membership part of the form immediately after your last Session meeting of the year.

Send a copy of the financial report from the instruction book to the treasurer with the request that the figures be returned no later than the first week in January.

During December begin work on the program questions of the report, referring each question to the proper person for an answer. For example, the head of Christian Education can give you the number of participants in Christian Education by age. You may want to work with the pastor on the section about member ages and disabilities. The Roll book will contain the statistical information you need.

If it is not possible to meet the deadline, please call the Presbytery of Santa Fe with an estimated completion date. GA gives the presbytery a few extra days leeway, but once that period is passed we cannot enter any data for you. So do not put it off. Louisville always warns us that the last week or so before the deadline finds the computer working very slowly as many churches are entering data. (Remember there are about 11,000 churches that are to enter data on the computer.) It is wise to enter your data as early as possible.

The Clerk of Session relates directly to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. All correspondence between presbytery and the Session is sent to the Clerk of Session with a copy to the moderator. The by-laws, standing rules, manual of operations of the Presbytery of Santa Fe, with the *Book of Order*, define the relationship of Session to the presbytery stating specific responsibilities which the clerk has toward presbytery with recommendations about how best to fulfill them.



## Resource Material

A successful clerk is not made overnight. Knowledge of your resources and diligence in finding them will help you to become proficient in your task of clerking. The following is suggested list of materials for you to pursue from the day of your election.

1. Locate the **Presbytery of Santa Fe Manual for Clerks of Session**
2. Locate the minute book and church register. Locate all previous record books. Are they properly stored? These records should never be taken from the church and should be kept in a fire proof safe when not in use. You are the only person who can authorize entries into these books.
3. Locate a current **Book of Order**. Chapter G-3 of the *Book of Order* discusses the duties of Session. You will find most of the information you need immediately in that chapter. That chapter also describes the rolls and registers of the church and gives instructions on how to maintain them. General Assembly meets every other year so the Book of Order is changed every summer between meetings of the GA. It is always good to have a paper copy handy, but you may wish to have an electronic copy as well. A free copy of the Book of Order may be downloaded: <http://store.pcusa.org/OGA11010>
4. Locate a copy of your church by-laws, standing rules, manual of operations and congregational charter. Where the *Book of Order* is silent, the congregation's rules and by-laws will often tell you what needs to be done.
5. Find out where you can find copies of church architectural drawings, mortgage papers, deeds, insurance papers, church histories.
6. Keep the presbytery address and telephone number close at hand. You will find help on almost every problem at presbytery. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Santa Fe is the person to whom you directly relate. For help on your questions and knowledge of whom to call, contact:  
Office of the Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of Santa Fe  
217 Locust St. NE, Albuquerque NM 87102  
Phone: (505) 345-5657 Fax:(505)345-6563  
e-mail: [statedclerk@santafepresbytery.org](mailto:statedclerk@santafepresbytery.org)
7. Plan to attend the annual clerk's training each year. Here you can receive answers to your questions, additional help. The fellowship with other clerks of Session is invaluable.
8. *Robert's Rules of Order* (Newly Revised, 11th edition) which is available through any local book store. A helpful summary, *Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the PCUSA*, is available on line: [www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary\\_procedure.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf)
9. The Standing Rules of Presbytery and the Presbytery Directory are available through the Presbytery office.
10. **Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers**, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker, Geneva Press, Louisville, KY, can be helpful.
11. **Presbyterian Planning Calendars** begin each year in June. They may be purchased at a good discount through the presbytery office; notice will be given when it's time to order them. They are complete with the church liturgical calendar, personnel directories and ideas for local mission.
12. **And don't forget The Holy Scriptures.**

## **Questions/Comments/Notes**