

## I. INTRODUCTION

You have been given a great honor, the honor of serving your Lord and your church as a clerk of session in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). If you are a new clerk, welcome. We hope you will enjoy this new position of authority, responsibility and work. Don't let anyone tell you that being a clerk of session is an easy job. At times the work may seem overwhelming, but it can be an exciting job with many challenges and rewards. The intent of this handbook is to make your work easier, but do not hesitate to call the clerk in another church or the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery if you need help.

## II. THE CLERK OF SESSION

### A. Election by Session

The clerk shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine to be the continuing ecclesiastical officer of the congregation. The clerk may or may not be an elder elected by the congregation to serve a current term as an active member of the session. If not serving as an active member of the session, the clerk shall have voice but no vote in session meetings.

### B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. The clerk of session plays a vital role in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Historically, the clerk has been the person who maintains and preserves accurate records for the session and the congregation. Church records communicate the history of the faithfulness of the church, its formation, its life and growth, and its mission in the community, the Presbytery, and the denomination. Church records have many historical uses, but they also keep the church alert to its current status. Each year the General Assembly requires a summary in the form of an annual statistical report. Much of that report is dependent upon the clerk's good record keeping. Church records also may be used in civil affairs to trace vital statistics for families associated with the church. That is why names and dates are of vital importance. The clerk shall furnish extracts from official church records when required by another governing body of the church, and such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any governing body of the church.
2. Record keeping, however, is only a small part of the clerk's job, even though it takes much space in this handbook. The clerk also is expected to be interested in and knowledgeable about Presbyterian polity, or procedures, and where to find answers to questions. The clerk is the moderator's right hand, the parliamentarian, the secretary and the resource person for the session and the congregation. In general, the clerk helps to set the tone for all official meetings in the church family. In many churches the clerk may be responsible for a variety of other tasks, depending on the traditions of his or her particular church. It is always helpful for a clerk to write out these particular duties and pass them on to the succeeding clerk, along with other tools of the office, to facilitate a smooth transition.
3. Another role for the clerk is to provide a key lay person contact for the wider church community. If the pastor is unavailable, for example, the clerk is the one person most likely to be called upon by the Presbytery for information.
4. Finally, the clerk is a servant of the session and the congregation in the fullest New Testament sense, and he or she must be equipped to fulfill that servant role.

### III. SESSION MEETINGS

A. Session meetings shall conform to the *Book of Order*, G-10.0200.

B. Before the Meeting

1. Schedule of Meetings

Session should set regular meeting dates in advance so elders can arrange their calendars. The session shall hold meetings at least quarterly. The moderator of the session may call a special meeting of the session when he or she judges it necessary and shall do so when requested in writing by any two members of the session. The session also shall meet when directed to do so by the Presbytery. Reasonable notice of all special meetings must be given when other than routine business is to be transacted.

2. Docket for Meeting

The clerk of session with the moderator is responsible for preparing the docket so that all business is handled in the most efficient manner. The docket becomes the outline for the session minutes. All deferred and unfinished business should be included. Approximate time for discussions should be listed in order to move the meeting forward. The docket for a special session meeting shall be limited to those items specifically listed in the call for the meeting and no other business may be conducted.

3. Committee Reports

Written reports, with recommendations requiring session action, should be in the hands of session members prior to the meeting to enable the flow of business. Although committee chairs are responsible for this, the clerk may find it necessary to remind chairpersons of pending business and time requirements prior to the next meeting. Historical and informational material should come first in these reports and the recommendations last. Only the recommendations appear in the session minutes unless the session orders the entire report spread on the minutes.

4. Resources for Meeting

The clerk is responsible for all papers and documents necessary to help the session in reaching its decisions. It will be helpful to have the following at each meeting:

- a. *Book of Order*, a current edition.
- b. *Robert's Rules of Order*, newly revised edition.
- c. Church bylaws.
- d. Current-year session minutes.
- e. List of all referred and unfinished business.

- f. Church officers and staff list.
- g. Committee membership lists.
- h. Church membership rolls.

### C. During the Meeting

#### 1. Moderator

The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of the session and the session shall not meet without the pastor except as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-10.0103.

#### 2. Attendance

All persons attending a meeting of the session, including the names of the moderator, the clerk, elders present, and elders absent, shall be recorded in the minutes. The session may invite members of the congregation to attend and observe its meetings if it so desires, without restricting its right to meet in executive session whenever circumstances indicate the wisdom of doing so.

#### 3. Quorum

A quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders but no fewer than two, except for the reception and dismissal of members, when the quorum shall be the moderator and two members of session. The session may fix its own quorum at any higher number.

#### 4. Prayer

All meetings of the session shall be opened and closed with prayer as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-9.0301b.

#### 5. Minutes

The clerk is responsible for keeping a full and accurate record of the proceedings for all session meetings. The minutes never should reflect the clerk's opinion, favorable or unfavorable, on anything said or done. See Section VI.B, Minutes, and Appendix A, Rules for Session Minutes.

#### 6. Parliamentarian

The clerk may be asked to advise on matters of parliamentary procedure. Except where the *Book of Order* provides otherwise, session meetings shall be conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order*.

## 7. Decisions

Session meetings may be informal with many decisions reached through consensus. Nevertheless, all recorded motions must be worded exactly as the maker intended and as formally voted upon by the session. The clerk can require that all motions be in writing and may find it necessary to help members of the session word their motions. Questions to ask about session actions are:

- a. What exactly is going to be done?
- b. Who is going to do it?
- c. When will it be completed or reported?
- d. What is the dollar cost?
- e. Where will the money come from?
- f. Is the action compatible with the *Book of Order*, the *Book of Confessions*, and church bylaws? Incompatible actions are out of order and therefore are null and void.

## 8. Voting

The session consists of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, and elders in active service. All members present are entitled to vote.

## C. After the Meeting

### 1. Minutes

Immediately prepare minutes of the session meeting in final form to be read, corrected and approved by the session at its next meeting prior to being entered into the session minute book. The minutes of each session meeting shall be attested by the clerk or moderator when entered into the session minute book. See Section VI.B, Minutes, and Appendix A, Rules for Session Minutes. If session minutes are duplicated and distributed to elders, they must be fully aware that the minutes are not official until approved by the session.

### 2. Rolls and Registers

Make all necessary entries in the rolls and registers. No entry should be made unless a session action which appears in the minutes directs the entry. See Section VI.C, Rolls and Registers, and Appendix B, Rules for Session Registers.

### 3. Correspondence

Complete or dictate all necessary correspondence related to the actions of the session. Within the church, all communication is from clerk to clerk or from clerk to stated clerk. The clerk's signature (not the moderator's or a secretary's signature) authenticates any document coming from the session.

#### IV. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Meetings of the congregation shall conform to the *Book of Order*, G-7.0300.

B. Before the Meeting

1. Annual Meeting

The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold other meetings as necessary.

2. Calling a Meeting

Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the session whenever it deems such a meeting is necessary and as otherwise provided in the *Book of Order*, G-7.0303.

3. Notice of Meeting

Public notice of the call to a meeting of the congregation shall be given on two successive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday.

C. During the Meeting

1. Moderator

The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of all meetings of the congregation except as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-7.0306.

2. Secretary

The clerk of session shall be the secretary for meetings of the congregation. If he or she is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary.

3. Quorum

The congregation is made up of all members on the active roll of a particular church. Before the meeting opens, a quorum as required by the church bylaws must be present. The quorum for a meeting of the congregation shall be not less than one tenth of the members except as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-7.0305. A quorum must be continuous in order for business to be conducted.

4. Prayer

All meetings of the congregation should be opened and closed with prayer.

## 5. Minutes

The clerk is responsible for keeping a full and accurate record of the proceedings for all meetings of the congregation. Minutes of special congregational meetings shall include the purpose of the call, and the business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting. If the congregation does not approve the minutes of a congregational meeting before adjournment, the session shall read, correct, and approve the minutes of that congregational meeting at its next scheduled meeting. The minutes of each meeting of the congregation, whether regular or special, shall be attested by the moderator and by the secretary and shall be entered into the minute book of the session.

## 6. Business

The annual meeting may consider such business as electing officers, hearing reports of the session along with plans for the coming year, hearing reports from the board of deacons and other organizations of the church, and transacting other business as is appropriate. It shall review the adequacy of the compensation of the pastor or pastors upon report of the prior review by the session. Business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall include and shall be limited to those matters provided in the *Book of Order*, G-7.0304. The budget is adopted by the session, not the congregation; however, the session must inform the congregation of the budget and should present the budget, invite comment, and solicit suggestions prior to adopting a budget. Both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting.

## 7. Voting

All members on the active roll who are present at a congregational meeting are entitled to vote. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are members of the Presbytery, not individual congregations; therefore, they are not entitled to vote at congregational meetings. Proxy voting is not permitted in meetings of the congregation.

## V. INCORPORATION AND TRUSTEES

### A. Incorporation and Trustees

Incorporation and trustees of a church shall conform to the *Book of Order*, G-7.0400. If the board of trustees is separate from the session, it is accountable to the session and their power as trustees shall not infringe upon the powers of the session.

### B. Corporate Business

1. Both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting as provided in Section IV and the *Book of Order*, G-7.0300.
2. Where the church charter and/or bylaws require that corporate business be conducted in a separate corporate meeting of the congregation, the provisions of Section IV and the *Book of Order*, G-7.0300, shall apply, except as follows:
  - a. Such a meeting of the church as a corporation shall be called by the trustees at their

discretion, or when directed by the session or by the Presbytery.

- b. The trustees shall designate from among members on the active roll of the church a presiding officer and a secretary for such a meeting. The secretary may or may not be the clerk of session.
- c. Minutes of each such meeting shall be attested to by the presiding officer and the secretary and entered into the minute book of the trustees.

### 3. Voting

Voting by proxy shall be permitted with respect to a corporate matter only where civil law specifically requires that voting by proxy shall be permitted as to that particular corporate matter.

## VI. SESSION RECORDS

### A. Preparation

1. The clerk of session is responsible for the official records of the session and the congregation. The ownership and control of these official records resides with the session.
2. Some clerks have a secretary who assists in the preparation of the session minutes and the rolls and registers. The clerk must supervise the secretary in the preparation of these official records. The accuracy of these records is the clerk's responsibility, not the secretary's responsibility.

### B. Minutes

1. Each session shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings which shall conform to the *Book of Order*, G-10.0301, and Appendix A, Rules for Session Minutes.
2. The clerk shall maintain the minutes for the session and shall submit them annually for review as designated by the Presbytery. See Section VI.D, Examination of Session Records.

### C. Rolls and Registers

1. Each session shall maintain rolls of members as defined by the *Book of Order*, G-5.0200, and registers as provided below.
2. The names of members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the session whenever the session is fully satisfied that such action is justified. When making changes in the status of members, as ordered by the session, do not obliterate any name from any roll or register; these are historical documents.
3. Rolls and registers shall conform to the *Book of Order*, G-10.0302, and Appendix B, Rules for Session Registers.
4. The clerk shall maintain the membership rolls and registers for the session and shall submit

them annually for review as designated by the Presbytery. See Section VI.D, Examination of Session Records

## 5. Membership Rolls

The church rolls record every member who has ever belonged to a particular church. These rolls must be kept current. Many churches keep their current membership in a card file or on a computer for convenience, but these records do not replace the official church rolls which shall be kept in the session rolls in the registers book and the minute book.

### a. Baptized Members' Roll

The baptized members' roll shall list the names of those persons baptized in a particular church who have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and children of active members transferred into the church or children of ministers of the Word and Sacrament related to the particular church, when such children have been baptized elsewhere. For most churches, the baptized members' roll is the same as the register of baptisms, after taking into consideration the changes in the register related to changes in membership.

### b. Active Members' Roll

The active members roll shall list the names of those who have been received into the membership of the church and who are active in the church's work and worship. A name is removed from this roll only by action of the session or by death.

- (1) The chronological roll has numbers down the left side of a double page and 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 when a member marries, transfers, dies, or otherwise is removed from the roll.
- (2) The alphabetical roll groups church members according to the first letter of their last names. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll using the membership number assigned at the time the member joined the church.

### c. Inactive Members' Roll

The inactive members' roll shall list the names of those who have been removed from the active members' roll because of their failure, in the judgment of the session, to participate in the church's work and worship. No member shall be transferred from the active to the inactive roll until that member shall have failed intentionally to participate in the work and worship of the church for a period of one year and until the session shall have made diligent effort to restore the member to activity in the church's work and worship.

### d. Affiliate Members' Roll

The affiliate members' roll shall list the names of those who have been received into affiliate membership by the session and who are active in the church's work and worship. The affiliate roll enables a member who is away from his or her home church to join

temporarily another church while remaining on the active roll of the home church. Affiliate membership must be renewed every two years.

## 6. Deletion from Rolls

### a. Certificate of Transfer

When a transfer is requested, the session shall issue a certificate of transfer to a particular church setting forth the membership status of the person. When parents transfer to membership in another church the names of their baptized children should be included. The member's name is retained on the appropriate roll until that person is received into membership in the other church.

### b. Deletion from Inactive Roll

When a member has been transferred to the inactive roll, it shall be the duty of the session to provide that member pastoral care and make a diligent effort to accomplish that person's restoration as an active member. After two years on the inactive roll, names of resident members may be deleted from the roll. After one year on the inactive roll, names of non-resident members may be deleted.

### c. Other Deletions from Rolls

When a member, whether active or inactive, requests that membership be terminated, the session, after making diligent effort to persuade the member to retain membership, may delete that person's name from the active or inactive roll. When a member joins another church without a regular transfer or renounces the jurisdiction of the church, the session shall delete that person's name from any rolls on which it has been listed. When a member moves and the session is unable, after due and diligent search, to ascertain the member's place of residence, the session, after one year of absence, may delete that person's name from the roll.

### d. Deaths of Members

When a member dies, the session shall record the date of death and delete the name from the roll.

## 7. Registers

### a. Marriages

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

### b. Baptisms

Include all infants and all adults baptized by the ministerial staff of the church, and all infants and all adults baptized on the church property.

## c. Elders

Include all members of the church ordained and installed as elders in the church, and all members of the church ordained as elders in some other church.

## d. Deacons

Include all members of the church ordained and installed as deacons in the church, and all members of the church ordained as deacons in some other church.

## e. Pastors

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

## D. Examination

1. Session minutes and records shall be submitted at least once each year to the Presbytery for its general review and control as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-11.0103x and G-9.0407 through G-9.0411.
2. In the Spring of each year the Stated Clerk will publish a schedule for the examination of session records from each church for the period January 1 through December 31 of the preceding year. These examinations are usually held on three consecutive Saturday mornings at three different locations in the Presbytery beginning at 9:00 AM.
3. The clerk of session or some other individual thoroughly familiar with the session records should arrive promptly by 9:00 AM in order to begin the examination of all records together as a group effort. Plan to arrive no later than 9:00 AM and be prepared to remain and participate in the examination for about two hours until the examination of records has been completed.
4. Both the session minute book and the session registers must be presented for examination so that the rolls and registers can be checked against the minutes. The records will be approved, approved with exceptions, or not approved, and advisory comments will be provided based on Appendix A, Rules for Session Minutes, and Appendix B, Rules for Session Registers. Moderators are encouraged to take the time to review their session records and these rules with their clerks to facilitate their mutual understanding of and compliance with the rules.

## E. Safekeeping

1. Session records are the property of the session. The clerk is responsible for the safekeeping and preservation of all official records of the session, which include but are not limited to the minutes of all session meetings, both regular and special, the minutes of all congregational meetings, all church rolls and registers, the records of the board of deacons, and the records of the board of trustees. It is important that official records be protected from loss, theft, and fire or water damage. Records should be stored in a secure, temperature and humidity controlled environment at the church and not at some person's home.

2. All official records of the session that no longer are required for frequent reference are to be deposited for preserving and servicing with the Department of History of the General Assembly or in a temperature and humidity controlled environment of a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is the responsibility of the clerk to make recommendations to the session for the permanent safekeeping of its official records. All sessions are strongly encouraged to microfilm their official records.
3. See the *Book of Order*, G-9.0406, and Appendix C, Records Preservation and Retention.

## VII. REPORTS TO PRESBYTERY AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### A. Annual Review of Terms of Call

Each year the session is required by the *Book of Order*, G-10.0102n and G-7.0302, to review the compensation of all pastoral staff. All terms of call must meet the minimum standard terms of call adopted annually by the Presbytery. Any changes session proposes to make in the terms of call must be brought to the congregation for approval and are contingent upon the final approval of the Presbytery. Annually, the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery sends to each session the adopted minimum terms of call and a form upon which to report changes in terms of call. As soon as the congregation has approved new terms of call for its pastor(s), the call forms must be returned to the Committee on Ministry for recommendation to the Presbytery.

### B. Annual Reports to General Assembly

Each session reports through the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to the General Assembly. Data required in the Annual Reports to General Assembly must be approved by the session, not by the congregation, and the annual statistical report of the session must be included in the session minutes. In addition, directory information on the church's officers and staff also is required. Report forms distributed in November are due by a deadline established by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, usually no later than the January meeting of the Presbytery. If the report is not received by the deadline, the previous year's membership is reported to the General Assembly.

### C. General Mission Pledge

The Administration Committee of the Presbytery annually in the fall requests a pledge for general mission giving from each congregation. This pledge must be approved by the session, but it does not require the approval of the congregation. Pledges usually are requested by December 31 so that the Presbytery can report to the Synod of the Trinity and the General Assembly. Any changes made by the local church may be reported later as amendments.

### D. Per Capita Apportionment

The per capita apportionment for the coming year is established by the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly in the preceding year, based on the number of active members published in the most recent General Assembly statistical report. For example, the number of members on the active roll of the church as of December 31, 1998 would be reported in 1999 and would be multiplied by the per capita apportionment adopted in 1999 to determine the total amount of per capita apportionment to be paid by the church in the year 2000.

#### E. Other Annual Reports

Each church is required annually by March 15 to submit to the Presbytery reports on the value of church properties, the types and amounts of insurance coverage carried by the church, and the types and amounts of church debt.

#### F. Nominations to Presbytery

Presbytery is looking for particular skills and interest among the members of its local churches. Clerks, pastors, sessions and nominating committees are encouraged to forward information to the Nominating Committee of the Presbytery about individuals from the local church who should be considered for service at the Presbytery level. Recommendations should include the person's name, address, name of the church, a brief description of the person's work in the church, and the title of the Presbytery group or committee for which the person should be considered.

### VIII. COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY

#### A. Election by Session

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity which works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect elder commissioners who attend the meeting, stay until the end of the meeting and report to the session. The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the congregation. Prior to the first Presbytery meeting of each new year the clerk will be notified by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery regarding any change in the number of elder commissioners to which the congregation is entitled. Sessions are encouraged to elect their elder commissioners for the entire year, preferably for two or three years, in order to assure continuity and understanding of Presbytery business. An alternative would be to elect a commissioner and an alternate for each Presbytery meeting, with the alternate becoming the commissioner at the next meeting.

#### B. Preparation for Meeting

There are five stated meetings of the Presbytery each year in January, April, June, September and November. The docket and business papers are mailed to each church two weeks prior to a Presbytery meeting. These documents should be reproduced and distributed immediately to all commissioners. Informational and promotional papers are distributed at the Presbytery meeting. These documents should be distributed by commissioners to the appropriate people in the congregation when the commissioners return to their churches. See the Presbytery Leadership Handbook, Section III, Article V, The Meetings of Presbytery.

## IX. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### A. *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

1. The *Book of Order* may be considered our denomination's by-laws as well as its standing rules. It is essential for the clerk of session to study the *Book of Order* because it contains the fundamentals for working within the church. The *Book of Order* is divided into three parts.
  - a. The Form of Government explains thoroughly and clearly the polity for the orderly work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We turn to it to find answers to our frequent questions, and it is one of the standards under which the church makes decisions.
  - b. The Directory for Worship reflects the conviction that the life of the church is one, and that its worship, witness and service are inseparable. It describes the theology that underlies Reformed worship and outlines appropriate forms for that worship. It sets standards and presents norms for the conduct of worship in the life of congregations and the governing bodies of the church.
  - c. The Rules of Discipline contain information regarding the nature and discipline of the church. It includes judicial process, jurisdiction and process of permanent judicial commissions, procedural safeguards and much more.
2. The *Book of Confessions* contains the historic Christian confessions that are basic to the theology of the church. All ordained church officers are to affirm that they will be instructed by these confessions; therefore, it is essential that this book be available for individual and group study as well as to be used at times of ordination and installation of officers.

### B. *Robert's Rules of Order*

The most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* is mandated for use by the *Book of Order*, G-9.0302. Parliamentary law is a body of conventions or customs used in decision making. It encompasses common sense and courtesy. It helps to transact business decently and in order. It works for the protection of individual rights in the church. It always is out of order to use parliamentary procedure to subvert the will of the Holy Spirit as our guide as we seek the truth.

### C. Presbytery Leadership Handbook

The Presbytery Leadership Handbook may be considered our Presbytery's bylaws and standing rules. It is revised and published periodically. It includes information on the Presbytery's mission, meetings and officers as well as duties of its Council, committees, boards and commissions.

### D. Presbytery Directory

The Presbytery Directory is revised and published each year. It contains the names, addresses and telephone numbers for all ministers, the Presbytery staff, and members of the Presbytery Council, committees and boards. It also includes the location and directions to each church in the Presbytery, plus the names, addresses and telephone numbers of selected church staff members.

- E. Other references and resources are listed in Appendix D, References and Resources.

## **Appendix A**

### **RULES FOR SESSION MINUTES**

1. Each session shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings on “acid-free” paper, which shall be submitted at least once each year to the presbytery for its general review and control. (G-10.0301) (G-11.0103x)
2. Record the date, time, and place of each meeting and the time of adjournment. (Robert’s Rules)
3. Record the names of the moderator, the clerk, elders present, and elders absent. (Robert’s Rules)
4. Record the opening and closing of each meeting with prayer. (G-9.0301b)
5. Minutes of each session meeting shall be attested by the clerk. (Robert’s Rules)
6. Record the reading and approval of minutes, as read or as corrected, by date. Record the approval of the minutes of each regular meeting and each special meeting at the next regular meeting. Minutes should be kept up-to-date with no more than the minutes of the preceding regular meeting and any subsequent special meetings missing from the session minute book. (Robert’s Rules)
7. Record in the minutes of each special meeting the purpose of the call to such a meeting and who called the meeting. The business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the special meeting. (G-7.0302b) (G-10.0201)
8. Record only that which is vital to the transaction of the meeting with a separate paragraph for each subject matter. It is not necessary to record the name of the maker or the seconder of a motion in the minutes unless the session requests it. When previous action of the session is referred to, the date and page or pages on which it is recorded should be designated. (Robert’s Rules)
9. Avoid erasures, white-outs, interlineations, footnotes, and typographical errors. Blank pages should be ruled out. Minutes should not be entered in the permanent record until approved by the session. (Robert’s Rules)
10. Number all pages in the minute book and do not insert written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper. Minutes may be produced or photo copied on the pages of the minute book by automatic means provided the copy is legible. (Robert’s Rules)
11. Record a brief financial report (income/expenses/balance) in the minutes of each regular meeting. Record the results of a full financial review of all books and records relating to finances once each year. (G-10.0102h) (G-10.0401)
12. Record in full the annual statistical report of the session to the presbytery. (G-9.0407a) (G-10.0301)
13. Record as part of the annual report a statement on the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men, age groups, and persons with disabilities, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. (G-10.0301)
14. Record the completion of a period of study and preparation for new elders and deacons (those organized as a board or individually commissioned) and the session examination of them as to their personal faith;

knowledge of the doctrine, government and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and duties of the office; before the new elders and deacons are ordained and installed. Also record the dates of the election, ordination and/or installation, task(s) to which individually commissioned deacons are commissioned and terms of active service for all elders and deacons at the next regular session meeting. (G-6.0404) (G-10.0102k) (G-10.0302c) (G-14.0205)

15. Record the names of all elders elected as commissioners to presbytery, the exact period for which each elder is appointed, the receiving of their reports and a report of their attendance and fidelity upon the expiration of their terms of service as a delegate. (G-10.0102p(1))
16. Record the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for the pastor or pastors by both the session and the congregation in the minutes of their respective meetings. (G-7.0302) (G-14.0506)
17. Record the call, quorum and business transacted at all congregational meetings, which shall be held at least annually. (G-7.0302) (G-7.0303) (G-7.0304) (G-7.0305) (G-7.0306) (G-7.0307)
18. Minutes of each congregational meeting shall be attested by both the clerk and the moderator and entered in the session minute book after approval by the congregation or by the session at its next regular meeting. (G-7.0307)
19. Record at least annually, session authorization for all observances of the Lord's Supper and record the date for each observation of the Lord's Supper at the next regular session meeting. In the case of a privately administered sacrament, record the date, location, names or number of communicants and the names of the officiating minister and congregation member(s) authorized to represent the church. (W-2.4009) (W-2.4010) (W-2.4012a)
20. Record session authorization for and session instruction prior to the Baptism of infants and adults and record the administration of Baptism at the next regular session meeting. Record for each Baptism the date and location; the full name, date and place of birth of the person being baptized; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; the parents' full names including mother's maiden name; the names of persons presenting children for Baptism; and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302c(2)) (W-2.3012)
21. Record the examination and reception of new members by the session and record the public reception of new members at the next regular session meeting. Record the full name of each applicant for membership; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; in the case of minors, the parents' names; how the applicant is received, upon profession of faith, upon reaffirmation of faith, or upon satisfactory certification of transfer of church membership; in the case of transfer, the full title and location of the church from which the person is transferred; and the date of reception. (G-10.0102b) (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302a(2)) (W-4.2003) (W-4.2004)
22. Record the transfer of baptized, active, affiliate, inactive and nonresident members to and from the respective session rolls; include the full title and location of the church to which a person is transferred when appropriate; delete names from the roll when appropriate; and record the reason and/or authority for each action. (G-5.0200) (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302)
23. Record all marriages, including marriages of all members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property at the next regular session meeting. Record for each marriage the full name of the husband; the full name of the wife including the wife's maiden name; the place of residence prior to marriage for each; the date and place of marriage; and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302c(1))

24. Record the deaths of all members of the church at the next regular session meeting. Record the date of death and delete the name from the appropriate membership roll. If a register of deaths is maintained, also record the full name of the deceased; the residence of the deceased; the date and place of burial; the name(s) of the officiating minister(s); and the date of ordination in the case of an elder or deacon. (G-10.0302b(8))
25. When the session of a church finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the *Book of Order* must be studied carefully by a committee of the session and, if discipline must be administered, the session minutes must contain such a record of the proceedings as will enable the presbytery to know who was disciplined, why and how. (D-11.0601c)

Approved by Coordinating Council 12/4/2001

## **Appendix B**

### **RULES FOR SESSION REGISTERS**

1. Each session shall keep an up-to-date register on “acid-free” paper with the full and accurate rolls of baptized, active, affiliate and inactive members and registers 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. The names of members shall be placed upon, removed or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the session whenever the session is fully satisfied that such action is justified. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302) (G-11.0103x)
2. Maintain a roll of baptized members which shall list the names of those persons baptized in the particular church who have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and children of active members or children of ministers of the Word and Sacrament related to the particular church, when such children have been baptized elsewhere. Record the full name of each baptized member; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; in the case of minors, the parents’ full names including the mother’s maiden name; the date and place of birth of the baptized member; the date of Baptism and the full title and location of the church at which the person was baptized; the date of transfer or deletion; and the reason and/or authority for each action. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302a(1))
3. Maintain a roll of active members which shall list the names of those who have been received into the membership of the church and who are active in the church’s work and worship. Record the full name of each active member; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; in the case of minors, the parents’ names; how the applicant is received, upon profession of faith, upon reaffirmation of faith, or upon satisfactory certification of transfer of church membership; in the case of transfer, the full title and location of the church from which or to which the person is transferred; the date of reception, transfer or deletion; and the reason and/or authority for each action. Assign a membership number to each new member on the chronological roll at the time that person joins the church and cross-index this number on the alphabetical roll. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302a(2))
4. Maintain a roll of affiliate members which shall list the names of those who have been received into affiliate membership by the session and who are active in the church’s work and worship. Record the full name of each affiliate member; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; in the case of minors, the parents’ names; satisfactory certification of church membership; the full title and location of the church of membership; the date of reception; and the reason and/or authority for each action. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302a(4))
5. Maintain a roll of inactive members which shall list the names of those who have been removed from the active member’s roll because of their failure, in the judgment of the session, to participate in the church’s work and worship. Record the full name of each inactive member; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; in the case of minors, the parents’ names; in the case of transfer, the full title and location of the church to which the person is transferred; the date of the transfer or deletion; and the reason and/or authority for each action. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll using the membership number assigned at the time the member joined the church. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302a(3))
6. Maintain a register of infant Baptisms. Record for each infant Baptism the date and location; the full name, date and place of birth of the infant being baptized; the parents’ full names including the mother’s maiden name; the names of persons presenting the child for Baptism; and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302c(2)) (W-2.3012)
7. Maintain a register of adult Baptisms. Record for each adult Baptism the date and location; the full name, date and place of birth of the adult being baptized; in the case of married women, their legal name including maiden name; the parents’ full names including the mother’s maiden name; and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302c(2)) (W-2.3012)

8. Maintain a register of marriages, including marriages of all members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property. Record for each marriage the full name of the husband; the full name of the wife including the wife's maiden name; the place of residence prior to marriage for each; the date and place of marriage; and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302c(1))
9. The session is strongly encouraged to maintain a register of deaths of all members of the church. Record for each death the full name of the deceased; the residence of the deceased; the date of death; the date and place of burial; and the date of ordination in the case of an elder or deacon.
10. Maintain a register of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies and parish associates serving the church. Record the full name and dates of service for each. (G-10.0302c(5))
11. Maintain a register of all elders who are members of the church. Record the full name of each elder; the name of the church in which each was ordained; the date of ordination; the terms of active service; and the record of removals. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302c(3))
12. Maintain a register of all deacons who are members of the church. Record the full name of each deacon; the name of the church in which each was ordained; the date of ordination; the terms of active service; and the record of removals. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302c(4))
13. Maintain a register of trustees serving the church. Record the full name of each trustee; the date of recognition; the terms of active service; and the record of removals. (G-7.0401) (G-10.0102m)

Approved by Coordinating Council 12/4/2001

## Appendix C

### RECORDS PRESERVATION AND RETENTION

#### I. RECORDS PRESERVATION

##### A. Responsibility of the Clerk of Session

As clerk of session you are responsible for the preservation of your church's ecclesiastical records. You must protect your minutes, rolls and registers, and other official records from loss, theft, and fire or water damage. Official records which have not been microfilmed should be stored in a secure, temperature and humidity controlled environment at the church and not at some person's home. As you keep your records you are creating the history of the church for posterity; your records are the book of "Acts" for our Presbyterian Church in your area.

##### B. The Presbyterian Historical Society

The Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147, telephone 215/627-1852, is the Department of History and Record Management Services of the General Assembly and is a nationally recognized archives for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The records of many of our churches are held in the archives, either in original form or on microfilm. The Presbyterian Historical Society may do some ecclesiastical research for you on any original books stored there, but it will not do genealogical research under any circumstances; however, you may send people there to do their own research.

##### C. Microfilming Records

All sessions are encouraged to microfilm their official records. The cost of microfilming varies based on who does it and what is chosen for microfilming. Not all microfilming firms are equipped to deal with old books or bound books which require special care and special equipment. The Presbyterian Historical Society microfilms records at a competitive cost and it is recommended that you contact them directly for more detailed information and estimates of cost.

##### D. Records Deposit and Access

1. The session may deposit original permanent records with the Presbyterian Historical Society at no cost. The records continue to be the property of the session and may be retrieved by the session on request.
2. When the records are microfilmed the session may choose to take the microfilm and leave the original records on deposit; or it may retain the original records and leave the microfilm on deposit. The important objective is the preservation of a copy of the official records at an approved location other than the church, as provided in the *Book of Order*, G-9.0406.
3. Access to church records on deposit with the Presbyterian Historical Society is unrestricted for records over 50 years old; however, access to church records under 50 years old is available only with written permission from the pastor or clerk of session of the church.

##### E. Records and Computers

Many churches keep their current membership on computers for mailing convenience. This is entirely appropriate, but computer membership records do not replace the minute book, rolls and registers. Computer printouts are not acceptable at the annual examination of session records by the Presbytery. Financial records may be kept on the computer, but always have a hard copy of each new record.

## II. RECORDS RETENTION

- A. Session records may be classified as records of permanent value and records of temporary value. Any records not possessing permanent value would, of course, automatically fall into the temporary category. Realistically evaluated, there should be many more records judged temporary than permanent. Church records, especially those which are voluminous and bulky, should be disposed of as soon as they outlive their usefulness. It is estimated that the majority could be destroyed after just three or four years.
- B. Since appropriate storage space often is limited, a suggested schedule for the retention of records has been developed. Listed below are examples of records possessing administrative, financial, legal or historical value, many of which would be essential for the continuation or resumption of operations following a disaster. The proposed number of years for retention of temporary records is in parenthesis. There is a "P" in parenthesis for permanent records which should be retained indefinitely.

Accident & Fire Reports (6)	Insurance Claims (after settlement) (10)
Accounts Payable Ledgers (6)	Insurance Policies (expired) (4)
Accounts Receivable Ledgers (6)	Leases, Mortgages & Notes (expired) (8)
Annual Budget & Audit Reports (P)	Legal/Judicial Cases & Correspondence (P)
Annual Congregational Reports (P)	Minutes (Session, Congregation & Other) (P)
Bank Statements & Deposit Slips (3)	Payment Vouchers (8)
Capital Stock & Bond Records (P)	Payroll FICA/W-2 & Earning Records (8)
Cash Receipt Records (3)	Payroll Time Cards (3)
Cemetery Records (P)	Periodic/Monthly Financial Statements (2)
Charter & Incorporation Papers (P)	Personnel Contracts & Files (terminated) (6)
Checks (Dividend, General & Payroll) (8)	Petty Cash Records (8)
Checks (Taxes, Property & Contracts) (P)	Purchase Orders/Requisitions & Receipts (8)
Congregational Bylaws (P)	Retirement & Pension Records (P)
Contracts & Agreements (P)	Rolls & Registers (P)
Deeds, Easements & Property Records (P)	Safety Inspection Records & Reports (8)
Disability & Sick Benefits Records (6)	Sales Contracts & Invoices (3)
Expense Records (6)	Shipping & Receiving Records (4)
General Ledgers & Journals (P)	Tax Records, Returns & Working Papers (P)
General/Routine Correspondence (3)	Wills & Bequests (P)
Group Disability Records (8)	Workmen's Compensation Reports (10)

- C. Many people feel that they must keep all original records for at least a certain time (six years is most quoted), after which no action can be brought against them. In fact, there is no single statute of limitations (there are dozens of them) and the time period for each statute varies depending on the applicable law. Record-keeping policies must be guided by the rule of reason and the probability and dollar amount of the risk involved, not by statutes of limitations alone. When in doubt, check with your auditor regarding retention periods for financial records. The retention periods shown above were developed from the requirements specified in over 900 federal and state regulations, as reported in the Guide to Record Retention Requirements, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.
- D. Listed below are examples of other items which you, or a person you appoint, may wish to collect and preserve for historical purposes:

Bulletins from major worship services  
Church artifacts (communion services, bibles, etc.)  
Photograph albums, videos of important events  
Photographs of the church and church property  
Photographs of former pastors and members  
Tapes of anniversary or other celebration sermons  
Tapes of interviews with your oldest members

## Appendix D

### REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

#### I. ESSENTIAL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

*Bible*

*Book of Order*

*Book of Confessions*

*Robert's Rules of Order*

Presbytery of Carlisle Manual

Presbytery of Carlisle Directory

Presbytery of Carlisle Handbook for Clerks of Session

Church Charter and Bylaws

Session Minutes

Session Rolls and Registers

#### II. HELPFUL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Certificates of Baptism

Certificates for New Members

Certificates of Transfer

Certificates for Ordained Elders

Certificates for Ordained Deacons

General Assembly Statistics - Minutes, Part II (names/addresses of all pastors/churches in PC(USA))

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Planning Calendar

The Clerk of Session: A Manual, by Dr. Gene Randolph

Managing and Preserving Official Records for Congregations, Department of History, PC(USA)

Presbytery of Carlisle Manual for Churches Without a Pastor ( provided by Committee on Ministry)

Minutes of Presbytery of Carlisle Meetings (must be requested from Stated Clerk)

Presbytery of Carlisle Newsletter (published after each Presbytery meeting and mailed to churches)

NOTE: For further information about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

Call PresbyTel at (800) UP-2 DATE (872-3283)

Visit the PC(USA) web site [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

NOTE: Binders and pages for minute books and church registers, financial record materials, certificates, and many other items may be ordered from the Cokesbury Book Stores.

### III. QUICK REFERENCE TO THE *BOOK OF ORDER*

The following selected references are provided to facilitate your use of the *Book of Order* while fulfilling your roles and responsibilities as the clerk of session. For more complete information consult the detailed index in the back of the *Book of Order*.

Administrative Commissions	G-9.0502; G-9.0503a(5); G-9.0504a
Administrative Review	G-9.0407; G-10.0301; G-11.0103x
Budget	G-10.0102i
Business of Meetings	G-7.0302; G-7.0304
Calling Meetings	G-7.0303; G-7.0403a
Candidates for Ministry	G-14.0300
Church Nominating Committee	G-14.0201b; G-14.0201c
Clerk of Session	G-7.0307; G-9.0201; G-9.0203; G-10.0301
Congregational Meetings	G-7.0300
Corporation Meetings	G-7.0304b; G-7.0403
Disciplinary Cases	G-10.0102r; D-10.0100; D-11.0600
Elders and Deacons	G-10.0102l; G-10.0102m; G-14.0200
Executive Session	G-10.0201
Finances	G-10.0102i; G-10.0400
Incorporation	G-7.0400
Insurance Coverage	G-10.0102o
Membership Categories	G-5.0200
Membership Review	G-5.0502
Membership of Session	G-10.0101; G-14.0200
Minutes	G-7.0307; G-7.0403c; G-10.0301
Moderator	G-7.0306; G-10.0103
Non-ordained Staff	G-10.0102n
Ownership of Records	G-9.0406
Parliamentary Procedure	G-9.0302
Pastors & Associate Pastors	G-14.0500; G-10.0101
Presbytery Relationships	G-7.0202; G-10.0102p
Principles of Administration	G-9.0401
Property Management	G-7.0403; G-8.0500; G-10.0102o
Pulpit Nominating Committee	G-14.0502
Quorums	G-7.0305; G-10.0202
Renunciation of Jurisdiction	G-6.0500
Responsibilities of Session	G-10.0102
Rolls and Registers	G-9.0203; G-10.0102s; G-10.0302
Secretary	G-7.0307; G-7.0403b
Session Meetings	G-9.0300; G-10.0200
Session Records	G-9.0203; G-9.0407c; G-10.0300
Special Meetings	G-7.0302b; G-10.0201
Transfers and Deletions	G-10.0302b
Treasurer	G-10.0401
Trustees	G-7.0401; G-7.0402; G-10.0102m
Voting	G-7.0301; G-7.0404

**Appendix E**  
**SESSION RECORDS CHECK LIST**

SESSION RECORDS BEING  
XXAMINED \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON EXAMINING RECORDS \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark the blank if the statement is reported correctly for all meetings. Leave the blank unmarked for missing items and record the page and line after the statement.**

**I. RULES FOR SESSION MINUTES:**

- \_\_\_ 1. Minutes present. (G-10.0301) (G-11.0103.x)
- \_\_\_ 2. Record date, time and place, of each meeting and time of adjournment.
- \_\_\_ 3. Record the names of the moderator, the clerk, elders present, and elders absent.
- \_\_\_ 4. Meetings Opened and Closed with prayer. (G-9.0301.b)
- \_\_\_ 5. Minutes attested by the clerk. (Congregational meeting by clerk and moderator)
- \_\_\_ 6. Minutes reviewed and approved.
- \_\_\_ 7. Purpose noted for special meetings.
- \_\_\_ 8. Date of previous action should be referred to when necessary.
- \_\_\_ 9. All pages correctly numbered.
- \_\_\_ 10. Page numbers are consecutive for the calendar year.
- \_\_\_ 11. Financial report at each Stated Meeting. (G-10.0102.h; 10.0401)
- \_\_\_ 12. Record annual statistical report. (G-9.0407.a) (G-10.0301)
- \_\_\_ 13. Composition of session: age groups, gender, disabilities, racial ethnic background. (G-10.0301)
- \_\_\_ 14. Record preparation and examination of elders and deacons. Also, dates of ordination and installation. (G-6.0404) (G-10.0102.k) (G-10.0302.c) (G-14.0205)
- \_\_\_ 15. Record name(s) of all elder(s) elected as commissioners to presbytery and term. (G-10.0102.p.(1))
- \_\_\_ 16. Record the annual review of compensation for the pastor or pastors. (G-7.0302) (G-14.0506)
- \_\_\_ 17. Record the call, quorum and business transacted at all congregational meetings, which shall be held at least annually. (G-7.0302) (G-7.0303) (G-7.0304) (G-7.0305) (G-7.0306) (G-7.0307)
- \_\_\_ 18. Minutes of each congregational meeting shall be attested by both the clerk and the moderator and entered in the session minute book after approval by the congregation or the session. (G-7.0307)
- \_\_\_ 19. Record at least annually, session authorization for observances of the Lord's Supper: record the date, location, names or number of communicants and the names of the officiating minister and congregation member(s) authorized to represent the church. (W-2.4009) (W-2.4010) (W-2.4012a)

- \_\_\_ 20. Record Baptism of infants and adults. (G-10.0302.c(2)) (W-2.3012)
- \_\_\_ 21. Record the examination and reception of new members by the session and the public reception including how the applicant is received. (G-10.0102.b) (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.a(2)) (W-4.2003) (W-4.2004)
- \_\_\_ 22. Record the transfers to and from the respective session rolls. (G-5.0200) (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302)
- \_\_\_ 23. Record all marriages: of members and/or conducted by the ministerial staff. (G-10.0302.c(1))
- \_\_\_ 24. Record the deaths of all members and ministers. (G-10.0302.b(8))
- \_\_\_ 25. When the session of a church finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the session minutes must contain such a record of the proceedings as will enable the presbytery to know the particulars. (D-11.0601.c)

## **II. RULES FOR SESSION REGISTERS:**

- \_\_\_ 1. Each session shall present an up-to-date Register to Presbytery. (G-10.0102s) (G-10.0302) (G-11.0103x)
- \_\_\_ 2. Maintain a roll of baptized members. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.a(1))
- \_\_\_ 3. Maintain a roll of active members. Assign a membership number to each new member on the chronological roll at the time that person joins the church and cross-index this number on the alphabetical roll. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.a(2))
- \_\_\_ 4. Maintain a roll of affiliate members. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.a(4))
- \_\_\_ 5. Maintain a roll of inactive members cross-index with the chronological roll using the membership number assigned at the time the member joined the church. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.a(3))
- \_\_\_ 6. Maintain a register of infant Baptisms. (G-10.0302.c(2)) (W-2.3012)
- \_\_\_ 7. Maintain a register of adult Baptisms. (G-10.0302.c(2)) (W-2.3012)
- \_\_\_ 8. Maintain a register of marriages and the name(s) of the officiating minister(s). (G-10.0302.c(1))
- \_\_\_ 9. Maintain a register of deaths.
- \_\_\_ 10. Maintain a register of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies and parish associates serving the church: full name and dates of service for each. (G-10.0302.c(5))
- \_\_\_ 11. Maintain a register of all elders who are members of the church. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.c(3))
- \_\_\_ 12. Maintain a register of all deacons who are members of the church. (G-10.0102.s) (G-10.0302.c(4))
- \_\_\_ 13. Maintain a register of trustees serving the church. (G-7.0401) (G-10.0102.m)

HANDBOOK  
FOR  
CLERKS OF SESSION

Presbytery of Carlisle  
Synod of the Trinity  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Revised September, 2006

PREAMBLE

The Presbytery of Carlisle is ecclesiastically related to the Synod of the Trinity and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and to its member churches within its geographical bounds. It exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the provisions of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* and discharges these responsibilities in accordance with this manual. Its actions are always subject to review by the more inclusive governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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