



The Presbytery of Denver

Manual for:

Clerks of Session

October 2017

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Introduction

Welcome to the office of Clerk of Session! You have joined a unique ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The *Book of Order* mandates that each council of the PCUSA have a moderator and a clerk. The clerks of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving Sessions are called Clerks of Session.

Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, maintain any required registers, 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. The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk of a presbytery, a synod, and the General Assembly shall be called stated clerk, shall be elected by the council for a definite term as it may determine, and must be a ruling elder or teaching elder. A stated clerk may be removed from office prior to completion of his or her term of service through the use of the process outlined in G-3.0110. (G-3.0104)

As clerk, you will record a good deal of the history of your church as you write the session minutes. Future generations will learn what your church did to further Christ's mission in the world by reading the minutes you write. It follows then, that it is important that you keep accurate records of all the proceedings in session meetings and in congregational meetings.

This document has been prepared to provide Clerks of Session with information and examples to assist them in their work and to insure that they have easily accessible information about what must be included in the session record books.

If you have any questions, or need assistance, please contact the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Denver.

March 2014
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The Office of Clerk of Session

The Clerk of Session (clerk) shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk may be a member of the session, or may be an inactive elder. If the clerk is not a member of session, she or he may not make motions nor vote. Session may ask the clerk to be its parliamentarian and shall give the clerk voice in matters pertaining to the minutes and the clerk's report.

The elder chosen to be clerk must be knowledgeable about session responsibilities, have an understanding of Presbyterian polity, and be willing to learn basic parliamentary procedure. He/she must be able to write a clear record of the proceedings at session and congregational meetings promptly following the meeting.

When the pastor or elders need reliable leadership, the clerk of session is the "first among equals." This responsibility flows to the clerk not because of any explicit statement in the *Book of Order*, but because the clerk receives the correspondence, keeps the records, and routinely discusses the work of the session with the pastor and all of the committee chairpersons to form the agenda and refer business, is the officer to whom they would take concerns and look to for guidance. Presbyterian polity does not provide for any other ordained ministry to carry out these responsibilities.

The session, in electing a clerk should seriously consider the qualifications needed to carry out the very significant functions of being reliable leadership of the congregation.

Responsibilities at a Glance

1. Keep full and accurate records of all proceedings of the session, including actions on motions, and information necessary to explain the action.
2. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance.
3. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records, making recommendation to the session for the permanent safe-keeping of its records, to safeguard against fire and water damage. Record shall be kept on acid free paper.
4. Furnish extracts from the minutes when required by another governing body of the church.
5. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of session.

6. Maintain the manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council (session), including the sexual misconduct policy and a child protection policy.
7. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees (if separate from the session).
8. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in the *Book of Order*.
9. Notify the session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted, pursuant to the *Book of Order*.
10. Be sure that the annual statistical data requested by the General Assembly is completed accurately and timely and presented to the session for approval prior to submission deadlines.
11. Submit the session minute book and roll register to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery for annual review when requested.
12. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation, insuring that the minutes are received by session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book.
13. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of session, and respond as directed by the session.
14. 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 person(s) if not reported expeditiously.
15. 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 *Book of Order* provides otherwise. Copies of *Robert's Rules of Order* and the latest *Book of Order* should be available at meetings.)
16. Receive and submit communications from and to other governing bodies (councils).
17. Notify the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of changes in the membership of session.

18. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested.
19. Assist the pastor in church officer training when requested.
20. In consultation with the session 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 or other congregational communication) NOTE: confidential matters should NOT be included.
21. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the session or moderator.

Guidelines for Session Minutes (See generally G-3.02, et seq.)

Minutes of each session meeting shall include:

1. Whether the meeting is a regular or special meeting.
2. The name of the church, the place, date and time of the meeting.
3. The name of the moderator of the meeting.
4. The opening and closing of each meeting with prayer.
5. The roll, listing elders present, elders absent and any who are excused; the clerk, moderator and other staff present or excused; others present and their identity. (Please use **first and last** names.)
6. The affirmation of a quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer moderating the session and the number of participants stated in the bylaws. (See G-3.0203)
7. The approval of the agenda. (In case of a special meeting, the call to the meeting stating the purpose becomes the agenda.)
8. The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. (Any corrections of previous meeting minutes shall be listed.)
9. Clerk's report: may include correspondence, announcements, and report of the serving of the Lord's Supper, in addition to listing of baptisms, marriages, changes in membership rolls.
10. Reports of pastor, other staff, and the treasurer and committee chairpersons should be summarized in the minutes.

11. All motions and amendments, if any, and whether they passed or failed. (Details of discussion should not be recorded, except when needed to give a sense of the action.)
12. When a previous action of the session is referred to, the page on which it is recorded, or the date of the meeting at which it occurred, should be designated.

When appropriate, include the following:

13. The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must be reported at the next succeeding regular meeting. When the sacrament has been administered to those unable to attend public worship, the name of the minister officiating and the name of the elder or elders assisting should be noted (This may be part of the clerk's report or the report of the worship committee.)
14. The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism at the next succeeding regular meeting, giving the full name of adults baptized including the maiden name of married women; the record of infants baptized, noting the name of the child, date of birth, and the names of the parents or the one rightly exercising parental responsibility, and including the mother's maiden name. (This may be part of the clerk's report, the pastor's report or that of the appropriate committee.)
15. The full name of applicants for church membership (in the case of married person, include former name) and the manner of their reception:
 - a. by profession of faith, previously baptized
 - b. by profession of faith and baptism
 - c. by re-affirmation of faith
 - d. by letter of transfer, giving the name of the church from which received
16. The full title of the church to which a certificate of transfer is granted and the full name of the person transferred with the date of transfer.
17. Record the job descriptions for employed personnel, both pastors and other staff, as they are approved.
18. Name of elders elected to be commissioners to meetings of the Presbytery, and the exact period for which elected.
19. Record that commissioner(s) to presbytery reported highlights of the presbytery assembly to session. The report may be summarized.

20. When the session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline should be carefully studied by a committee of the session and if discipline is administered, the minutes of the session shall contain a record of the proceedings, which will enable the Presbytery to know who was disciplined, why and how.
21. In case of a sale, mortgage, gift or lease of property, the session records must show:
- a. Name, address and legal description of the property
 - b. Name of buyer/lessee
 - c. Sale price
 - d. Loan amount purpose and terms, including the name of the lender
 - e. Lease terms and liability insurance
 - f. Concurrence of Presbytery

The following shall be included annually:

22. Approval of the annual budget
23. Approval of the distribution of the church's benevolences
24. Record the annual review with each pastor of the adequacy of compensation.
25. Record the recommendation to be made to the congregation for changes in the terms of call for each pastor.
26. Note the annual review by the personnel committee (or other responsible body) appointed by the session of the adequacy of compensation of all paid staff.
27. Note whether new officers have received training and been examined.
28. Report the ordination and/or installation of elders and deacons at the next succeeding meeting.
29. Report the recognition of trustees (if any) at the next succeeding meeting.
30. Report that property and liability insurance has been obtained and is adequate to cover potential claims.

CLERK'S ANNUAL REPORT

At the last meeting of each calendar year, please include the following in the Clerk's Report:

31. Record that job descriptions have been approved for all employed personnel, both ministers and other staff, and indicate by page number where the latest job description for each staff person is located in the minute book.
32. Record changes during the year in the session, deacons and the trustees through death, resignation, or removal.
33. State the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic membership, women, men and age groups, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. (This requirement may be fulfilled by photocopying the annual statistical report required by the General Assembly into the session records.)
34. Record the date of the latest renewal of the articles of incorporation with the state. This must be renewed annually.
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/business/FAQs/reports.html>
35. Record the date that the annual exempt property report – religious purposes is filed and when it is accepted. www.colorado.gov/dola/property-exemptions
36. Report in the minutes where records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees are kept.
37. Include an Annual Narrative Report. (Moderator's annual report or periodic reports to the session of ongoing church life will satisfy this request.)

Nuts & Bolts of Session Minutes

The method of recording session minutes is somewhat dependent on local circumstances. The following is the suggested procedure used by the majority of churches:

- a) Clerk takes notes for the minutes at meeting;
- b) Clerk writes the minutes and types or arranges for them to be typed.
- c) Makes copies and distributes before the next meeting;
- d) At the next meeting, the minutes are either approved as correct or corrections are made and the corrections are noted in that meeting's minutes;
- e) Clerk types or arranges for someone to type approved minutes in the session permanent minute book (these may be photocopied as long as archival quality paper is used);

- f) If using a computer for minutes in the permanent minute book, a laser printer and archival quality paper must be used;
- g) 200-250 pages may be professionally bound into volumes. The Presbyterian Historical Society may do this at a reasonable cost (215) 627-1852.

Do not use erasures, whiteout, interlineations or footnotes; or insert in the records separate sheets of paper with written or printed matter on them.

The records of each session meeting are to be duly attested (signed in ink) by the clerk. The records of congregational meetings are to be attested by the clerk.

The minutes of congregational meetings, the annual report of the church treasurer or treasurers, and the annual statistical report required by General Assembly are to be included. These are to be typed or photo copied into the permanent record book and not included as inserts.

Congregational and Corporation Meetings

Minutes of all congregational and corporation meetings shall be included in the session record book along with session minutes in chronological order.

Minutes of these meetings shall include:

1. indication of whether the meeting is "regular" or "special"
2. if it is a "special meeting," the minutes shall include the call to the meeting, which will serve as the agenda
3. name of the church
4. date, time, and place of the meeting
5. name of the moderator or presiding officer
6. presence of a quorum
7. opening and closing of the meeting with prayer
8. record of all actions, whether adopted or lost
9. when applicable, action by the congregation on any change in each pastor's compensation, with terms of call specified
10. Minutes of the meeting of the congregation or corporation at which the annual financial reports are made should indicate, at least:
 - a. report of a full financial review of the financial records (formerly referred to as "audit")
 - b. a complete, itemized report of income and expenditures for the year
 - c. provide the complete, itemized proposed budget adopted by the session for the coming year
 - d. details of the status of loans from General Assembly, Synod, or Presbytery, if any are outstanding
11. If the congregation does not approve the minutes before adjournment, session may approve the minutes at its next scheduled meeting.

Congregational meeting minutes shall be attested (signed in ink) by the clerk.

Corporation meeting minutes shall be signed by the one presiding over the meeting and the corporate secretary.

Rolls and Registers

The Rolls of the church should contain information about those who are members of the local church. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain, or to oversee the maintenance of the Rolls as required in the *Book of Order*.

1. Names of members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the Session.
2. Session shall maintain the following membership rolls:
 - Baptized Members
 - Active Members
 - Inactive Members (no longer in the *Book of Order*, if the bylaws include such a status)
 - Affiliate Members
3. Baptized Member
G-1.0401 Baptized Member
A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members receive the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
4. Active Member
G-1.0402 Active Member
An active member is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. In addition, active members participate in the governance of the church and may be elected to ordered ministry (see G-2.0102). Active members shall regularly, after prayerful consideration, recommit themselves to the disciplines and responsibilities of membership outlined in G-1.0304. The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become active members of the congregation.
5. Inactive Members (no longer required by the *Book of Order*, but may be kept by decision of the session if included in the bylaws)

- a. Inactive Member is one who no longer participates in the church's work and worship.
 - b. Record name, date; indicate if inactive member is subsequently removed or reinstated with date of action.
6. Affiliate Members
G-1.0403 Affiliate Member
An affiliate member is a member of another congregation of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the congregation of membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member may participate in the life of the congregation in the same manner as an active member except that an affiliate member may not vote in congregational meetings or be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation.
7. Roll books usually provide double pages for a chronological roll by date of reception into membership with columns for name, how received, name of church from which member transferred if that is the manner of reception, date of deletion from the active roll and reason –by death, inactivity, or transfer, in which case the name of the church to which the member is transferring is listed.
8. Pages may be provided in the same binder for an alphabetical listing of Active members along the membership number that is assigned in the chronological roll. Pages also may be provided for Baptized, Affiliate and Inactive member roll in the same binder.

Registers are historical records and need to be carefully maintained. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain or oversee the maintenance of Registers.

1. Session shall maintain the following registers:
 - Marriages
 - Baptisms
 - Elders
 - Deacons
 - Ministers
2. Register of Marriages shall include marriages of members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all

marriages performed on church property.

3. Register of Infant and Adult Baptisms shall include name, parents' names, and date of birth of those baptized.
4. Register of Elders shall include each elder's name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.
5. Register of Deacons shall include each deacon's name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.
6. Register of Pastors shall include the names of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.
7. All registers may be kept in the same binder, or in the binder with the rolls.

SAMPLE CLERK'S CALENDAR for SESSION

January

- Session approves minutes of Annual congregational meeting, pending on meeting date
- Session officially receives various reports submitted at annual congregational meeting
- Clerk prepares annual statistical report - Session approval, pending on meeting date
- Session elects treasurer for the year
- Annual joint meeting with Deacons – officers' retreat
- Minutes report that newly elected officers were trained, examined and installed
- Clerk enters names of newly installed officers in the Church Register
- Session affirms communion schedule for the year
- Session designates members (and moderator) of Congregational nominating committee for current year

February

- Session approves annual statistical report, if not in January, clerk submits on-line
- Session approves annual congregational meeting minutes (if not done in January)
- Session receives report of Presbytery commissioners from January Presbytery assembly
- Session arranges for financial review of previous' year's financials

March

- Any special communion services for Lent/Holy Week are authorized
- Session authorizes One Great Hour of Sharing special offering
- Clerk prepares to attend record and roll review event

April

- Session receives report of Presbytery commissioners from March Presbytery Assembly
- Session receives report of financial review –result entered into minutes

May

- Clerk reports results of annual record review which are entered into minutes

September

- Session engages in process of reviewing active and inactive member rolls – minutes record any actions taken. Clerk makes appropriate entries in Church Register
- Session provides for review of staff compensation
- Session approves Peacemaking Offering
- Session reviews insurance policy for adequacy of coverage
- Session receives report of Presbytery commissioners from August Presbytery Assembly

October

- Session receives report of staff compensation review with budget recommendations

November

- Session adopts budget for following year
- Session sets date for congregational meeting for election of officers and approval of pastor's terms of call
- Session approves plans for new officer training and examination
- Session approves The Christmas Offering
- Session receives report of Presbytery commissioners from October Presbytery Assembly

December

- Session approves minutes of Congregational Meeting
- Session elects clerk, if necessary, for next term
- Session elects/appoints commissioners to Presbytery for coming year
- Session sets date for annual congregation