CLERK OF SESSION HANDBOOK

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

Fall 2018

CLERK OF SESSION HANDBOOK

Prepared with Thanks
to the Presbytery of New Covenant and the Presbytery of South Dakota.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the office of Clerk of Session! You have joined a unique and important group of people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The *Book of Order* mandates that each mid council body of the PC(U.S.A.) have a moderator and a Clerk.[1] Clerks of Presbyteries, Synods and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving Sessions are called Clerks of Session or Clerks to Session, depending on whether the Clerk is currently serving on Session or not.

As Clerk, you will record a good deal of the history of your church as you write the minutes of session and congregational meetings. 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 to keep accurate records of all the proceedings in session meetings and in congregational meetings.

This handbook has been prepared to provide you with information and examples to assist you in your work and to ensure that you have easily accessible information about what must be included in the session record books.

[1] G-3.0104 (Book of Order, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II 2017/2019)

THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF SESSION

The Clerk of Session must be a ruling elder and is elected by the session for such term as it may determine.[2] The Clerk may be a member of the session or the Clerk may be a ruling elder not currently serving on session. If the Clerk is not a member of session, general privilege of voice **may** be given by session, but the Clerk may not make motions or vote. Session may ask the Clerk to be its parliamentarian and, in all cases **shall** give the Clerk voice in matters pertaining to the minutes and the Clerk's report.

The person chosen to be Clerk of Session needs to be knowledgeable about session responsibilities, needs to understand Presbyterian polity, and needs to be willing to learn basic parliamentary procedure. The Clerk must be able to write a clear record of the proceedings at session and congregational meetings and make those minutes available promptly following the meeting.

When the pastor or ruling elders need a strong lay leader, 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 officer who receives the correspondence, keeps the records, and routinely discusses the work of the session with the pastor and all committee moderators to form the agenda and refer business, is the officer to whom they would take a problem. Presbyterian polity does not provide for any other lay officer to carry out these responsibilities.

Although 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" functions of being the primary administrative officer of the congregation.

[2] G-3.0104

RESPONSIBILITIES AT A GLANCE

ANNUALLY:

1. Accurately complete the annual statistical report requested by the General Assembly by the deadline. The statistical report is completed and submitted online. You will receive a letter with information and directions from the stated clerk in late fall.

2. Submit all records and reports requested by the presbytery's stated clerk by the deadline noted. In general, these include a copy of your Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, your congregation's Sexual Misconduct Policy, Child and Youth Protection Policy and Manual of Administrative Operations[3] as well as your congregation's rolls and registers.

3. Have your session records reviewed with your fellow Clerks. The stated clerk of the presbytery will notify you of the dates for the records review meetings, as well as the information that must be included in the minutes as mandated by *The Book of Order*. Bring your minutes since your last review and the church register.

4. Communicate dates and other information about Presbytery meetings to the Session so that ruling elder commissioners to presbytery can be elected and attend.

MONTHLY:

1. Send meeting notices by mail or email.
2. Contact committee moderators about unfinished and referred business.
3. Ask for recommendations to be in writing.
4. Develop the docket or agenda for the meeting with the moderator.
5. Record the minutes of each meeting. It is helpful to use a template with room to take notes and minutes. This should be a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the session. (G-3.0204)
6. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance (G.3.0104). The session shall "provide by rule" the number present for a quorum. (G-3.0203)
7. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of session and respond as directed by the session.
8. 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.
9. 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.

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[3] G-3.0106

ONGOING:

1. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records (G-3.0104), making recommendations to the session for the permanent safe-keeping of its records at the Presbyterian Department of History (G-3.0107) https://www.history.pcusa.org/ .
2. Furnish extracts from the minutes when required by another governing body of the church (G-3.0104).
3. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of session (G-3.0204a&b).
4. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees (G-3.0107).
5. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in *The Book of Order* (G-3.0201).
6. 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 (G-3.0105). A copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* and the latest edition of *The Book of Order* should be available at meetings.

AS NEEDED:

1. Notify the session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted. Congregations shall provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting as well as email. (Snail mail if necessary). (G-1.0501 and G-1.0502)
2. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation (G-1.0505), seeing that the minutes are received by session and are filed in the permanent session minute book. It is helpful to have the congregation delegate to session the authority to approve minutes of the congregational meetings, but these minutes should be posted for the congregation to see.
3. Receive and submit communications from/to other governing bodies.
4. Notify the stated clerk of the presbytery of any changes in the membership of session.
5. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested.
6. Assist in church officer training when requested.
7. May moderate the congregational meeting, if requested by the moderator, during the pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary Clerk should be appointed.
8. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the session or moderator.

HELPFUL HINTS:

* Written reports facilitate the meeting flow.
* Meetings may be informal, but all actions must be approved.
* Each member of session should receive a copy of the minutes soon after the meeting.

SAMPLE SESSION DOCKET/AGENDA

Your Presbyterian Church
Stated Session Meeting
Month Date, Year

Call to Order, Declaration of a Quorum and Opening Prayer

Approval of the Docket and the Minutes of the previous session meeting

Communications

Clerk's Report
    Session class of (year) was ordained and installed at the 11:00 a.m. worship service on (Date): List their names.
    Lord's Supper was celebrated at the 11:00 a.m. worship service on (Date)
    Membership report - transfers, deaths, marriages, baptisms

Session Committee Reports
    Action Items

Old and New Business

Report from Presbytery Commissioners

Spiritual and Pastoral Concerns

Motion to Adjourn and Closing Prayer

Who Prepares the Docket?
The docket or agenda for a session meeting can be the responsibility of either the Clerk or the moderator or both working together. In some instances, it is compiled by the church secretary. Input from the moderator and other members of session is invaluable. In the case of a pastoral vacancy, the moderator named by the presbytery often will rely on the Clerk of Session to formulate the docket.

Who Should Receive a Copy of the Docket?
Session dockets should be made available to session members prior to meetings so that the elders may be prepared to do the business of the church. Included in this information are the date, time, location, agenda or order of business, financial data, and other pertinent information as needed and available.

Why is a Docket Necessary?

The value of a printed docket or agenda is three-fold:

It provides for an orderly process in the handling of session business.
It informs the members of issues to be discussed.
It serves as a reminder of the necessary preparation for a meeting.

Creating and following a well-planned Docket will assist the Clerk of Session and moderator in handling administrative details and sharing in the ministry of the church.

GUIDELINES FOR SESSION MINUTES

Minutes of each session meeting must include:

1. Whether the meeting is a regular or a 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 <u>FIRST AND LAST</u> names.)**
6. The affirmation of a quorum (G-3.0203) **NEW: Sessions shall provide, by rule, for a quorum for meetings; such a quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.**
7. The approval of the agenda/docket. (In case of a special meeting, the call to the meeting states the purpose for the meeting, and this becomes the agenda/docket.)
8. The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. Any corrections or previous meeting minutes shall be listed, and then corrected in the prior meeting's minutes.
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, funerals or changes in membership rolls.
10. Reports of pastor, other staff, the treasurer and committee moderators 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 mentioned, the page on which it is recorded, or the date of the meeting at which it occurred, should be designated.

MINUTES SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING, WHEN APPLICABLE:

1. Requests for marriage, baptism or funerals to occur in the church.
2. The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should 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, the pastor's report or that of the worship committee.
3. The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism should be reported, giving the full name of those baptized, date of birth and the names of the parents or the one rightly exercising parental responsibility. This may be part of the Clerk's report, the pastor's report or that of the appropriate committee.
4. The full name of applicants for church membership 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
5. The name of the church to which a certificate of transfer is granted and the full name of the person transferred with the date of transfer, together with names of baptized children, if applicable.
6. Record (attach to minutes) the job descriptions for employed personnel, both clergy and non-clergy, as they are approved.
7. Name of elders elected to be commissioners to meetings of the presbytery, and the period for which they are elected (G-3.0202a).
8. Record that the commissioners to the presbytery reported to session. The report may be summarized.
9. When the session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the "Form of Government" and the "Rules of Discipline" (*Book of Order),* should be carefully studied by a committee of the session and if discipline be administered, the minutes of the session meeting must contain such a record of the proceedings sufficient to enable the Presbytery to know who was disciplined, why and how. It is most often advisable for session to ask the presbytery to take jurisdiction of any matter of church discipline.
10. 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**

BE SURE THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED EACH YEAR:

1. Approval of the annual budget.
2. Approval of the distribution of the church's benevolences.
3. Record the annual review with each pastor for the adequacy of compensation.
4. Record any recommendation made to the congregation for changes in the terms of call or contract for each pastor.
5. 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.
6. Note whether new officers have received training and been examined (G-2.0402).
7. Report the ordination and/or installation of elders and deacons.
8. Report the recognition of trustees (if any) at the next succeeding meeting.
9. Report that property and disability insurance has been obtained (G-3.0112) and insert a copy of the church's certificate of insurance.
10. Record the report of the annual financial review or audit.
11. Record marriages, births, deaths.
12. Record election of Clerk and treasurer.
13. Record annual review of church rolls and report any removals from the rolls.
14. Report reception of new members; dismissal/transfer of members to other churches.
15. Record approval of curricula and teachers for the educational programs of the church.
16. Attach a copy of the Annual Statistical Report (to OGA) to minutes.

CLERK'S ANNUAL REPORT

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

1. Record that job descriptions have been approved for all employed personnel, both clergy and non-clergy, and indicate by page number where the latest job description for each staff person is in the minutes book.

2. Record changes during the year in the session, the Board of Deacons and the Trustees through death, resignation, or removal.

3. State the composition of the session regarding racial or ethnic members, women, men and age groups, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. This requirement may be fulfilled by copying the annual statistical report required by the General Assembly into the session records.

4. If your congregation has a Board of Deacons and/or Board of Trustees, report in the minutes where their records are kept, and that they have been reviewed by session.

5. Include the Moderator's annual report, or periodic reports to the session of ongoing church life.

SAMPLE CLERK OF SESSION REPORT

This is a sample of a Clerk of Session report, which can be modified per the needs of the particular clerk and/or congregation. If you have any questions, please contact Presbytery Stated Clerk Barbara Lutter at statedclerk@ptcaweb.org.

Baptisms to be Approved: (Name and proposed date of baptism to be celebrated)

Baptisms Celebrated: (Name and date of baptism already celebrated)

Lord's Supper to be Approved: (Note – this can be one per year)

Lord's Supper Celebrated:

Communion was served on (date) at the (time) a.m. worship service.

And later that same day to (name – homebound person) by ruling elders/deacons (names of deacons or ruling elders)

Pastor (name) took Communion to (name); ruling elder/deacon (names) was present.

Weddings to be Approved: (Name of couple, date, place)

New Members Received (or to be received): (Name(s) of new member(s) received)

Transfer Request – to be Approved: (Name, and church requesting transfer)

Restore to Active Roll: (Name)

Restore and Transfer Request

Restore from Inactive and Transfer Request: (Name and church requesting transfer)

To Inactive Roll

Remove from Roll

Birth

Death

Ordinations/Installations

Total Active Membership: (Last meeting date) – (number) (This meeting date) – (number)

SESSION MINUTES ~ BASIC PROCESS

The method of recording session minutes is somewhat dependent on the circumstances of each congregation. The following is the suggested procedure used by the majority of the churches in our presbytery:

1. Clerk takes notes for the minutes at meeting.
2. Clerk writes the minutes and types or arranges for them to be typed.
3. Clerk makes copies and distributes before the next meeting.
4. At the next meeting, the minutes are either approved as distributed or corrections are made, and the corrections are noted in that meetings minutes (as well as the originals).
5. Clerk types or arranges for someone to type approved minutes on archival quality paper (acid-free paper) and store in a safe place until sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society.
6. Do not use erasures, whiteout, strike-throughs or footnotes; do not insert in the records separate sheets of paper with written or printed matter on them.
7. 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 **AND** the moderator.
8. The minutes of congregational meetings, the annual report of the church treasurer(s), and the annual statistical report required by General Assembly are to be included with session minutes. These are to be typed or copied into the permanent record book.
9. Minutes should be interesting, with enough information so that future generations will know what happened in the church years before. The minutes play a role in recounting the history of the congregation, often retrievable in no other way.
10. The minutes of a meeting should never reflect the Clerk's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.
11. Session minutes should be available to any member who asks.
12. It is recommended that a "church office copy" of session and congregational meeting minutes be kept in a notebook for handy reference. Typically, this is not the set of minutes to be reviewed by presbytery.
13. All original minutes should be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society.

SAMPLE SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Your Presbyterian Church
Month Day, Year

The Session of **(your)** Presbyterian Church held its Stated Meeting in the church library on (**month, day, year)** at (t**ime**). The meeting was called to order by Moderator **(name)** who declared a quorum was present and opened the meeting with prayer.

Attendance:

Ruling elders **(names)**, Visitors **(names),** Moderator **(name),** Excused **(names)**

Docket:

It was moved and seconded that the docket be approved. The motion was carried.

Minutes:

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Stated Meeting of **(date)** be approved as written (corrected); motion approved.

Clerk's Report:

Membership updates
Births
Deaths
Weddings
Baptisms
The Lord's Supper
Ordinations/Installations
Other Information

Communication:

A letter was received from the stated clerk of the presbytery requesting the names of any elders or deacons who died in the past year for the presbytery's necrology report.

Old and New Business:

(Indicate any actions taken)

Committee Reports:

(Indicate any actions taken)

Christian Education:

Requested approval for the elementary students to use the "Growing in Grace and Gratitude" curriculum in Church School. The motion was approved.

Finance:

Reported that pledges received exceed last year at this time.

Worship:

Requested approval for communion to be served at the church retreat at Clearwater Forest. The motion was approved.

Property:

Reported that bids for a new air conditioner are being received and be brought to the next meeting for approval.

Report from commissioners to the presbytery meeting:

A & B attended the presbytery meeting held at ***(location)*** *on* ***(date).*** *They reported that C, D & E, members of the congregation, were elected to serve on presbytery committees and that a presbytery mission trip to Africa is being planned.*

Financial Review Committee Report:

The moderator of the Financial Review Committee reported that the 2017 financial records of the church have been reviewed by the committee. No discrepancies were found, and the following recommendations were made:___________.

Spiritual and Pastoral Concerns:

The Moderator reported on the pastoral care extended to______.

Presbytery Commissioner Reports:

(Indicate names of commissioners reporting, and the substance of the items reported.)

Motion for Adjournment and Closing Prayer:

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was approved. The meeting was closed at ***(time)*** *with prayer led by* ***(name).***

Respectfully submitted,

(Name)
Clerk of Session

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS BASICS

Congregational meetings may be called by the session, the presbytery, or by session by written request of one-fourth of the members of the congregation on the active roll (G-1.0502). Your congregation's by-laws should include what constitutes a quorum (G-1.501). Proxy voting is not permitted in church meetings. We believe that the Holy Spirit guides us in our decision making, and one must be present in the room to be open to such guidance by the Spirit for all votes. Be prepared for a ballot vote if needed. Minutes of all congregational 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 taken.
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 and corporation at which the annual financial reports are made should indicate:
    a. Report of a full financial review of the financial records (G-3.0113).
    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.
12. Must be attested to (signed in ink) by the Moderator and the Clerk of Session.

SAMPLE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

Your Presbyterian Church
Month Day, Year

The congregation of **(your)** Presbyterian Church was called to meet on Sunday, **(date),** immediately following the 11:00 a.m. worship service. The meeting was called to order by the Pastor/Moderator **(name)** who opened the meeting with prayer.

Clerk/Secretary: **(name)** was present and served as secretary. The Clerk advised the moderator that a quorum was present. The moderator agreed. The Clerk reminded everyone of the voting eligibility for this meeting.

Reading of the Call **(for Special or Called meeting)**…the call was found to be in order.

Approval of the Docket:

The docket was found to be in order and approved by consent.

Members who joined the Church Triumphant in the last year:

The Clerk read the names of the members who died. They are …**(names).** The pastor offered a prayer of commemoration.

Minutes of the Congregational Meeting(s) (for last year):

The minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting of **(date)** and the Called Congregational Meeting of **(date)** were distributed. They have been reviewed and accepted by the Session as an accurate reflection of the actions taken at those meetings.

Review of the "Summary for (year)" and "(year) Annual Report Supplement:"

The summary for the **(year)** and the **(year)** Annual Report Supplement (with Minutes, Statistical and Financial reports) were distributed and discussed by the congregation. Copies of the full Annual Reports were made available in printed and/or electronic means, and upon request. Members asked questions about these reports.

Review of the Session Approved Church Budget for (year):

The treasurer, **(name)**, reviewed the **(year)** church Budget which was approved by the Session on **(date)**. Questions were asked, opportunity was offered for any member to make any budget recommendations to the Session for their consideration.

Approval of the Change in the Pastor's Terms of Call:

The Session reviewed the Pastor's Terms of Call and made the following recommendation for changes:

	Past Year:	Proposed Amount
Salary	$__________________	$__________________
Housing	$__________________	$__________________
Expenses	$__________________	$__________________
Board of Pensions	$__________________	$__________________
Vacation	___________________	___________________
Continuing Education	$__________________	$__________________
Pension	$__________________	$__________________
Automobile Allowance	$__________________	$__________________
Social Security Offset	$__________________	$__________________
Medical/Dental Supplement	$__________________	$__________________
Optional Retirement	$__________________	$__________________

This change in the pastor's call represents a **(number)** % increase. The pastor spoke to these terms and left the room. The Clerk assumed the chair. Discussion followed. The motion was approved. The pastor was welcomed back to the meeting with applause.

Congregational Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee is comprised of two members from the Session, (one from the Deacons), and **(number)** from the congregation. The following persons were nominated to serve on the committee: **(names).** A motion was made to elect **(names)** to the Nominating Committee. The motion was approved.

Old/New Business:

The Commissioners to Presbytery, **(names)** reported ____________.
(Add other business as appropriate.)

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was moved a motion and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried. The meeting closed at **(time)** with prayer by **(name),** and the singing of "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds."

Attest:

____________________________________ ________________________________
Moderator Clerk/Secretary

THE SESSION'S RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

All organizations of the congregation are accountable to the session. All organizations should make a financial and programmatic report to session and the congregation annually.

G-3.0201 The Session: Composition and Responsibilities
…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.*
b. *Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
c. *Nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ … including directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation…..*

<u>Board of Trustees: G-4.0101</u>
…The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.

<u>Board of Deacons or Individual Deacons: G-2.0202</u>
…Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need…

<u>Nominating Committee: G-2.0401</u>
The church nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session. It does not report to the session, although the committee may wish to consult with session, and provide updates on their progress to the session.

…Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided that 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. The pastor shall serve as ex officio and without vote…

<u>Pastor Nominating Committee (When there is a Pastoral Vacancy)</u>
It is vital that the Session and any transitional pastor work closely with the Committee on Ministry of the presbytery. Supporting and resourcing the local congregation as it calls a new pastor is one of the most significant ways the presbytery serves the local congregation. When a congregation is searching for a new pastor, the "Called Positions Sub-committee" of the PTCA's Committee on Ministry will assist the congregation every step of the way.

G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy
When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.

G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee
The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation…

The Pastor Nominating Committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session.

Session and Personnel Committees: G-3.0102 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction
[Councils, like the session] *have the power to establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ. They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church that is under their jurisdiction.*

The session supervises all ordained and non-ordained personnel, often through a Personnel Committee. The session recommends to the congregation the "Terms of Call" (salary, including housing, benefits, etc.) of all ordained personnel; the congregation approves these terms of call or any subsequent future changes in the terms of call annually. The terms of call must meet the minimum guidelines set by presbytery unless a waiver is granted.

It is recommended that the Personnel Committee for each church consist of a majority of session members, and several congregational "at large" members.

Outside Organizations
Session controls the use of all church property, including granting permission for the sanctuary to be used for weddings. The purpose of an outside organization using the church should not be contrary to the mission of the congregation or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is wise to have a written contract for all organizations using the church building, stipulating any rental fee, maintenance standards, and rooms of the church to be used. The PTCA's Board of Trustees can assist the Session with respect to lease terms and building use; and a congregation must obtain permission from the presbytery/Board of Trustees to lease church property for purposes of worship or for a period of more than five years. (G-4.0206)

ACTIONS THAT MUST BE APPROVED BY MORE THAN ONE COUNCIL

One of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is our connectional system. There are a number of actions that require approval beyond the session. Among them are:

1. **Application to presbytery to take an inquirer under care of the presbytery**:
   Session, Committee on Preparation for Ministry and presbytery must all approve this action.
2. **Loans that use the church or its property as collateral for a mortgage, and all sales of property:**
   The congregation, Session and trustees, the Board of Trustees of presbytery, and the presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate) must all approve the loan.
3. **All leases of church property for a period of more than five years**: Session, Board of Trustees of presbytery and the presbytery must approve leases.
4. **All changes of church location or church name:**
   Session, congregation (ecclesiastical and corporate), and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate) must all approve.
5. **All changes in the annual terms of call for the pastor:**
   Session recommends the changes to the congregation; the congregation approves the changes and the Committee on Ministry and the presbytery must concur/approve the changes.
6. **Dissolutions of pastoral calls:**
   The congregation, the Committee on Ministry and presbytery must all approve or concur with the dissolution of a pastoral relationship.
7. **Issuing calls for new pastors:**
   The congregation, the Committee on Ministry and the presbytery must all approve the issuance of a new call to a pastor.
8. **Appointment of moderator of session or temporary pastoral relationship**:
   The session, the Committee on Ministry and presbytery approve this action.
9. **Call for a special congregational meeting:**
   Session, or presbytery, or session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the active members of the congregation. (G-1.0502)
10. **Session meeting when a pastor is ill or out-of-town:**
    Pastor and/or Committee on Ministry grants permission and appoints a member of presbytery as moderator pro-tem. (G-3.0201)
11. **All waivers from the *Book of Order* terms of election (G-2.0404):**
    Congregation, Committee on Ministry and the presbytery must all concur.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNCILS
G-3.0202

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

1. Elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports.

2. Nominate ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered as the presbytery's commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on presbytery, synod and General Assembly committees or commissions.

3. See that the guidance of and communications from presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and implemented.

4. Welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits.

5. Propose to the presbytery, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church.

6. Send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

ROLLS AND REGISTERS

The counterparts of the session minute book are the church membership rolls and registers. The rolls and registers contain vital information on the life of the congregation. The rolls and registers are reviewed and approved as part of the annual review of the congregation's records.

ROLLS:

The rolls of the church should contain information about those who are members of the local church: baptized members, active members and affiliate members. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain, or to oversee the maintenance of the Rolls as required in G-3.0204a.

1. Names of members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the Session. (G-3.0204a) The session deletes names from the rolls upon a member's death, or when a member is admitted to membership in another congregation, or when a member renounces jurisdiction of the PC(USA), or when a members requests, or moves or otherwise ceases to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. (G-3.0204a)
2. Session shall maintain the following three membership rolls (G-1.04):
   - **a.** **Baptized Members** (G-1.0401)

     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 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.

     The Baptized Roll lists all infants, children, and adults baptized in your church **or transferred into your church.** In the case of infant baptism, the parents' names must also be listed.

     Record the name, date of baptism (if known) and church where Sacrament of Baptism occurred. Names should be removed from this roll when profession of faith is made, or when the person moves from the community, or dies.

   - **b.** **Active Members** (G-1.0402)

     An **Active Member** is one who had 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 the church, and participates in the church's work and worship.

Record name, date received into membership and method of reception. Record date of removal from the particular roll and whether by death, transfer to another church, placed on inactive roll or removed.

The Active Roll is divided into two sections: Chronological (by date the member joins the congregation) and Alphabetical (by last name). The roll is cross-indexed.

c. Affiliate Members (G-1.0403)

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 active membership is situated. A certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation should be presented. The person will be received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member is not eligible to be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation and does not have a vote in congregational meetings. An example of an affiliate member would be a college student living in your community while attending school.

Record name, date of affiliation, name of home church, date of renewal, date of return to home church.

d. Inactive Members: This category is no longer in the *Book of Order.*

You are <u>not</u> required to keep a roll of Inactive Members, but you may if you want. An Inactive Member is one who no longer participates in the church's work and worship.

If you choose to keep a roll of Inactive Members, record each by name and date transferred to the inactive roll. Indicate if an inactive member is subsequently removed or reinstated with date of action. (<u>See</u> Appendix for additional information on roll review.)

REGISTERS

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 as required in G-3.0204b. All information in the Register should be able to be cross-referenced to the minutes.

According to the 2017-2019 *Book of Order,* there shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with date of service, and such registers as the session may deem necessary. These are suggestions for information for the register:

BAPTISM

Register of infant and adult Baptisms shall include names, parents' names (for infant baptisms) and dates of birth of those being baptized.

RULING ELDERS

Register of Ruling 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.

DEACONS

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.

PASTORS

Register of Pastors shall include the name of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, transitional pastors, designated pastors and stated supply pastors, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.

MARRIAGES

Although no longer required by the *Book of Order,* you may choose to keep a register of marriages. If so, here is suggested information:

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.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The presbytery must make an annual report to the General Assembly[4] which specifies the type of information it needs. Much of the information is gathered from local congregations by means of the "Session Annual Statistical Report." The report form is divided into two main parts: Membership (Active Members and Other Data) and Finances.

The data need not be perfect. The information is used to keep track of trends and much is expected to be subjective. Both the total active membership and the financial data for recent years are available on the General Assembly's web site (www.pcusa.org) for all churches that complete the report, so accuracy in reporting these items is advisable.

Some of the information requested can be difficult to obtain accurately (such as ages of members) and some financial information may be requested in different categories from those used by your congregation/bookkeeper. The report form comes with a workbook, which provides explanations of each item and provides a place to do a draft before transferring the figures to an online form.

Suggestions are made here to try to make the reporting process easier. As with most jobs, keeping up monthly rather than waiting until the end of the year makes it easier. In addition, this minimizes the total time devoted to the reporting process.

One way to gather the data is to keep a notebook, table or Excel spreadsheet with columns/pages labeled for various categories. Enter the pertinent membership and financial information after each Session meeting. This makes it easy to complete the year-end report forms and submit the data to GA.

The following data should be recorded:

- New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 17 & Under
- New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 18 & Over
- New members received by certificate (letter of transfer)
- Other additions: Restoration from inactive roll; correction to make total correct; etc.
- Active members transferred to other churches (certificate)
- Active members lost due to death
- Other losses: Active members transferred to inactive roll; correction to make total correct; etc.
  - Baptisms: children (17 & Under)
  - Baptisms: adult

[4] G-3.0302f

REPORTING ACTIVE MEMBERS
The report identifies the number of your congregation's active members at the beginning of the reporting period. Places are given for active members added during the year, and for losses in active membership. The result of this portion gives the total number of active members at the end of the reporting period.

REPORTING OTHER MEMBERSHIP DATA
Other data may be requested, including:

- Number of female members
- Age distribution of members
- Average attendance at Sunday worship
- Church school enrollment
- Baptisms
- Gender distribution of ruling elders and deacons
- Number of persons with disabilities
- Racial/ethnic composition of congregation, session, and deacons

This data will need to be collected form a variety of sources. If you are using some sort of computer membership system, it is possible to keep track of some of these items through the proper use of the system. Years of birth of all members may not be known so you will need to make educated guesses to determine age distribution.

Note that the report may request Church School ***enrollment,*** not Church School ***attendance****.* Church School is an inclusive term, including groups that meet at times other than on Sunday morning, such as “The Tuesday Bible Study" or "The Men's Breakfast Group."

Look at the workbook for the definition of a person with a disability. This is not the usual definition. The definition is that the disability “substantially limits participation” but the application of the definition is left to you. Just as with the age distribution category, use of personal knowledge is expected to be applied here.

REPORTING FINANCES
The financial reporting is broken down into broad categories. Note that the values to be reported are for the whole congregation. If there are several accounts in the main finances, all must be included. If groups within the church maintain their own accounts (such as Presbyterian Women, Building Fund, and so forth), all of these should be included if their finances are substantial. If these group’s monies are small, they can be omitted if you do this consistently over the years. The financial reporting is really looking for trends.

PRESBYTERY ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION
The presbytery annual statistics should be submitted electronically by going to https://form.jotform.com/61395915311152 . The reporting covers the time from January to the end of December of the newly completed year. It is important that you complete all sections of the report. The deadline for this report is January 15 of each year.

REPORTING THE CLERK OF SESSION AND TREASURER
This information is used to update any changes in Clerk of Session or treasurers. There are several communications that are sent only to those two officers, so it is important for the presbytery to know who the Clerk and treasurer are for your congregation. Any new Clerks or treasurers elected during the year should be reported to the presbytery office. Clerks and treasurers are "signed up" to receive eMerge, so that you can be current on the presbytery, synod and General Assembly affairs and pass pertinent information on to the session.

NECROLOGY
During one presbytery meeting (typically the March meeting), the Committee on Ministry will honor all ruling elders and deacons who died during the previous year. If you did not have any ruling elders or deacons that passed away, **please indicate none in the first box.**

SESSION MEMBERS
The presbytery also needs to know who your session members are. Please complete this section as fully as possible. They will also be enrolled to receive eMerge news.

CERTIFICATION OF COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY
The session elects your congregation's commissioners to presbytery (G-3.0202a). Each church is assigned a certain number of commissioners. All church members are welcome to attend stated meetings of the presbytery, but only commissioners may vote at the meetings. It is important for the presbytery to know who your congregation's commissioners are from year to year.

APPROVAL OF TERMS OF CALL
Each year the session is required by the *Book of Order* G-2.0804) to review the adequacy of the salaries of all pastoral staff. If session wishes to make any changes in the terms of call, the changes must be brought to the congregation for approval, contingent upon the approval of presbytery. Changes in terms of call must be approved by the congregation, the presbytery and the pastor.

The presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors. These terms are reviewed and updated annually. All terms of call must meet the minimum standard for presbytery to approve the call. This information is available on the presbytery's website.

RULING ELDER COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY

Presbyterian polity is representative**. It works when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect ruling elder commissioners who attend the stated meetings of the presbytery, stay through the end of the meetings, and report back to their congregation/session**. The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area holds five regular presbytery stated meetings each year. The dates and time are published on the website under Presbytery Meetings.

Each session is responsible for electing ruling elder commissioners to presbytery. The commissioners do not need to be currently serving on session. The number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled is announced in January of each year according to the presbytery's "Redress of Imbalance Policy." The *Book of Order* (G-3.0301) states that "the presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation…" The goal is to attain parity between ruling elders and teaching elders.

The stated meeting docket and meeting materials are posted on the presbytery website 10 days prior to the meeting, with any additional meeting information available the day of the meeting. This information should be given to the commissioners so that they can access the meeting materials, which can also be distributed to members of the congregation, as appropriate.

Commissioners are asked to report to their congregation about the meeting, including significant actions taken by the presbytery; a summary of issues deliberated upon; policy decisions made; implications of presbytery actions for the congregation; concerns and opportunities open to the congregation through presbytery; and any other matter which will help with the congregation's participation in the total ministry of Jesus Christ. The presbytery will work hard to offer a summary after each meeting and can be helpful in this report. A sample "Commissioner Reporting Form" is included in the Appendix.

Session members, including presbytery commissioners, should bear in mind the opportunities and need for nominations to presbytery committees. We are committed to finding Presbyterians with skills and interests in serving on a presbytery committee and welcome your suggestions. We strive for inclusion so that all voices are represented at the table. Please share the gifts of your congregation with the presbytery.

WRITING A MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

The Book of Order requires each council, including sessions, to develop a Manual of Administrative Operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council (G-3.0106).

A Manual of Operations is different from the church By-laws. The purpose for the Manual of Operations is to provide guidelines for how the structures of the congregation operate, especially considering their Mission and Vision statements. Since it is the session's responsibility to develop the Manual of Operations, congregational approval is not required, however, input from congregation members in its writing might be helpful.

Introductory paragraphs might include a general description of the work of the congregation through the various committees/ministry teams (which would include the session). It could include a line saying, “The contents remain flexible allowing amendments and additions to be made as recommended by the committees and approved by the session.” How the details of the committee work and are defined are up to the session.

A Manual that uses more “guidelines” than hard and fast “rules” often makes is easier for the work of the church to be accomplished, and to become more “permission giving.” Using the word “ordinarily” instead of the word “shall” assists in that effort.

Committee structure could include membership composition (how many members, terms of service), and skills and abilities that are helpful in its work. It could address how meetings are convened - how often, face to face or electronically. It could outline how committee members are assigned tasks and how reporting is done. The tasks or functions of the committee could be included, whether written generally or specifically. A committee could be able to set up task groups as needed without having to revise the manual of operations.

Use of the church property might be addressed in the Manual. This could include the use by outside groups, identify who is responsible for maintenance and clean up, or list any costs for using the facility. Wedding and/or funeral policies could be included.

The Manual of Administrative Operations should be the reference that answers questions about “how we do things” in this congregation. Each Manual will be as unique as each congregation. Writing a Manual of Operations will help define the policies, procedures and practices of a congregation and to discern what is working and what might need to change.

ITEMS THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

1. Table of contents.

2. Bylaws, (latest edition) updated regularly, **at least every five years**. If the Bylaws are up to date and kept in the Manual, it will provide guidelines for a lot of deliberations by the various boards and committees. If you need assistance updating your Bylaws, the stated clerk of the presbytery is a resource.

3. Calendar, or list showing regular meeting dates and locations for session, deacons, trustees, and congregation annual meeting(s).

4. Directory of session; deacon board; trustees if appropriate; installed staff; support staff, and updated each time there is a change.

5. List of standing committees and task forces. Each committee should have a separate page which names the chair; lists the meeting time, date and location; describes, in detail, its responsibilities. It is a good thing to refer to *Book of Order* or Bylaws whenever appropriate.

6. Personnel policies; position and job descriptions for all paid positions.

7. Copies, in full, of any policies that the session has in place; i.e. Sexual Misconduct policy; Use of building; Parking; etc.

Note:
All of these items should have separate pages, so the Manual can be easily amended and updated as necessary.

SAMPLE OF MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ANYTOWN, USA

NOTE: The session should review this model manual, making any desired choices or changes that do not conflict with the Book of Order (BOO), before adopting it and sharing it with the congregation; some parts are for congregational approval, some parts are for congregational information. All references to the Book of Order begin with a letter followed by a number, i.e., G-3.0102.

I. PURPOSE

(Note: You may state your purpose as you like; generally, this statement would not be lengthy.)

The _____________ Presbyterian Church is a member church in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It has been called by God and organized by the Presbytery to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in worship, to serve the needy, and to promote peace and justice in the world.

II. GOVERNANCE

This church's congregation and session shall be governed in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), both its *Book of Confessions* and its *Book of Order.* Subordinate to that Constitution, these bylaws and then the latest edition of Roberts Rules of Order (Newly Revised) shall provide specific guidance.

III. MEETINGS

The session shall hold stated meetings _________________**.** Special meetings may be called in accord with G-3.0203.

The congregation shall hold its annual meeting in the church building on the ___________ Sunday in ___________. The business at that meeting shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Financial report for the preceding year

- Budget for the current year adopted by the session (for information only)
- Any proposed changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s) in accord with G-2.0804
- Nominating committee report for church officers and their election
- Election of members to serve on the current year's nominating committee
- Review of reports from the pastor(s), the session, and all church organizations (for information only)

(See G-1.0503 for the business that is appropriate for a congregational meeting.)

Special meetings of the Congregation may be called in accord with G-1.0501.

IV. NOTICE OF MEETING

Note: The Book of Order Says: Adequate public notice as determined by the congregation's own rule shall be given of all congregational meetings.

Notice of congregational meetings shall be given at regular services of worship on _____ successive Sundays prior to the meeting, in accord with G-1.0502.

V. QUORUM FOR MEETINGS

The quorum for session meetings shall be the moderator and ____________***("a majority" is recommended)*** of ruling elders in active service on the session.

The quorum for congregational meetings shall be the moderator and at least _______________***("ten" is recommended)*** percent of its active members.

Neither absentee ballots nor voting by proxy shall be permitted in any meetings.

VI. INCORPORATION

In accord with the laws of the State of Minnesota (or Wisconsin), the congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed (G-4.0101), if such has not already been done. Consistent with the laws of this state, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of the congregation.

(NOTE: This might be a good opportunity for the session to see if it can find the incorporation papers, and especially the bylaws, to see if there is a need to update them, and determine the process is for changing/updating the bylaws.)

VII. MEMBERSHIP

In accord with G-1.03, the session shall receive and nurture members of the church. The session shall create and annually review rolls for all baptized members, active members, and affiliate members in accord with G-1.04 and G-3.0204, also maintaining the required registers. ***(Note: We are no longer required to keep an "inactive roll.")***

All members shall carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the sacraments, and living in *covenant life with God and each other (G-1.0101).* ***(Note: What is the session's policy regarding instruction for new members?)***

VIII. Worship

The session shall ensure that services of worship of God are regularly and reverently held in accord with the Book of Order Directory for Worship and G-3.0201.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated ***(how often or on what occasions)*** as well as at other special times, as the session may decide in accord with W-3.04.

The Sacrament of Baptism shall be celebrated in accord with the principles of the Book of Order Directory for Worship and in accord with W-3.04. ***(Note: Does the session have a policy/procedure for visiting with the parents before the baptism?)***

IX. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accord with G-2.0401, the congregation shall form a nominating committee in the following manner:

- There shall be ______ members, at least three shall be active members of the congregation.
- At least one of the members shall be a ruling elder currently serving on the session.

- The pastor (or moderator of the session) shall be a member ex-officio, but without vote.

- At the meeting of the congregation, the Nominating Committee shall nominate those to serve as ruling elders and deacons from among the members of the congregation. (Deacons and ruling elders must be members of the congregation.)

- Elections in the congregation shall be fair, just and inclusive in accord with F-1.0403, and G-3.0103, G-3.0104 and G-2.0401. The rich diversity of the congregation's membership shall be reflected in the nomination and election process.

X. SESSION

The congregation shall elect __________***(Note: No specific number is required, but ideally the total number would be divisible by 3)*** ruling elders distributed into three equal classes (as near as may be), one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term.

If necessary, the Nominating Committee shall nominate a successor for a vacancy, to be elected by the congregation for the unexpired portion of the vacated position's term.

Ordinarily, no ruling elder shall serve for more than six consecutive years. ***(Note: Congregations can request that the presbytery grant a waiver of this requirement due to extenuating circumstances/good cause.)***

Those elected as ruling elders shall be prepared and examined by the session in accord with G-2.0402. ***(Note: Does the session have procedures for these examinations?)***

XI. DEACONS

If, in accord with G-2.02, the congregation determines to have deacons, either individually commissioned or organized as a board, it shall also determine how they are elected and their terms of service, and other matters, similar to provisions for ruling elders (as near as may be).

XII. RECORDS

The session shall ensure that there are proper and adequate minutes, duly approved, and other records in accord with G-3.0107 and G-3.0204 and shall submit any requested records to Presbytery in accord with G-3.0108.

XIII. FINANCES

It is the responsibility of the session to prepare and adopt a budget to support the congregation's mission and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences. This includes authorizing offerings and accounting for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursements, providing full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters. (G-3.0205) The session shall elect the treasurer for a period of _______________***(suggested annually).***

XIV. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

(To be included in the manual as attachments).

- ☐ Wedding/Reception Policies
- ☐ Funeral Policies
- ☐ Policies Regarding the Use of the Church Building and Grounds by Non-Church Related Groups and Organizations
- ☐ Van Policy
- ☐ Cemetery Policies (if applicable)
- ☐ Background Checks
- ☐ Personnel Policies
- ☐ Sexual Misconduct Policy (required)
- ☐ Child and Youth Protection Policy (required)

XV. COMMITTEES AND MINISTRY TEAMS

(***To be included with a description of their ministry responsibilities).***

The session, in accord with G-3.0201, shall establish, discharge, and review the actions of any committee or other ministry within the congregation.

Adopted by the session on: ________________(date)

Appropriate parts adopted by the congregation on:________________(date)

Updated/Revised:________________(date)

Approval of Revision by session:________________(date)

Approval of Revision by congregation (if needed):_______________(date)

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

The *Book of Order* mandates that all councils of the church "adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy" (G-3.0106). Many have wondered how this differs from a "Child Protection Policy." A sexual misconduct policy is broader, in order to protect the whole congregation and those outside the congregation, as we engage our communities to make disciples.

Having a sexual misconduct policy gives people language and framework for discussing these issues as an abuse of power. Recognizing that power is given by individuals and communities gives us a greater responsibility to ensure that no one is being abused or mistreated. A sexual misconduct policy helps us to set up appropriate boundaries in our ministry - defining appropriate friendships, counseling limitations, and the complexities of communication technology. No one on the church staff or in a position of leadership is exempt, nor should be the members of the congregation.

The sexual misconduct policy should include the basic principles of conduct and definitions of inappropriate behavior. Sexual misconduct can include sexual abuse including that with children, as well as sexual harassment.

The policy should articulate how the church will receive and respond to allegations of sexual misconduct. Prevention and risk management should be addressed in the policy, including issues of liability and insurance, as well as employment practices.

Education and training is another area to include in the policy, to raise awareness of this problem. This could include the requirement for ministers, volunteers, elders, deacons, and staff to be trained, as well as how often.

Another area to consider is how to meet the needs of all involved - the victim, the accused, their families, as well as the congregation. The needs of each will be different but should be fair and compassionate.

SAMPLE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY:

XXXXX Presbyterian Church
Procedures for Handling Allegations of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment against Teaching elders, Ruling elders, Employees, and Volunteer Leaders

All allegations of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct will be taken seriously. Every allegation will be received, investigated, and acted upon in accordance with the terms of this policy.

The protection of children and youth is a priority. Persons having reasonable cause to suspect sexual abuse of a child or young person will report it to the appropriate secular agency for immediate investigation.

The accused person is always presumed innocent until proven guilty. In the context of this policy, no adverse finding will be made public or revealed against an accused person, except on a need to know basis, until a full investigation is completed and it has been determined that the allegation has been properly substantiated.

1. **Anyone suspecting or having knowledge of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment** may report such violation to any teaching elder, to the Clerk of Session, or to one of the ruling elders. Any child or youth who suspects or has knowledge of any sexual exploitation or harassment is invited to share the knowledge with any teaching elder, ruling elder, adult, or volunteer. Anyone who has knowledge or suspicion of child abuse should be aware that state law requires the immediate reporting of such abuse to the civil authorities. Any person suspecting or having knowledge of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment with a minor must report such violation to civil authorities and any teaching elder, Clerk of Session, or one of the ruling elders.

2. **If anyone is uncomfortable reporting Sexual Exploitation or Harassment locally**, he or she may report it to the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area's Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk (651-357-1150). The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area shall respond.

3. **A response team with no fewer than two members, one male and one female, will be established by the session** of XXXXX Presbyterian Church each year at its first meeting, in preparation for the possibility of receiving an allegation or complaint under this policy. The response team will familiarize itself with the terms of this policy as well as the established procedures of XXXXX Presbyterian Church for dealing with allegations of misconduct against any teaching elder, ruling elder, employee, or volunteer in leadership position(s) at XXXXX Presbyterian Church.

4. To address incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

A. The complainant (if adult) may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual exploitation or harassment; or

B. The complainant may report the incident(s) to a teaching elder, Clerk of Session, or ruling elder of the church to resolve the matter.

5. The Clerk of Session, ruling elder, or teaching elder receiving the information is required to share the information within 24 hours with the response team.

A. The response team shall do the following:

1. If the report is against a teaching elder, the response team will, without further investigation, send a written statement of allegation to the stated Clerk of the Presbytery that holds the teaching elder's membership.

2. If the report alleges sexual abuse or harassment of a minor, the response team will:

   a. immediately insure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law;

   b. immediately takes steps to remove the alleged offender (without implication of guilt or innocence) from contact with minors until an investigation is completed or until a resolution of the allegations has occurred;

   c. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the minor;

   d. notify the session of the allegation so that the session may take steps to ensure that the accused does not have contact with minors until an investigation is completed or until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.

3. If the report is against a ruling elder, the response team will notify the session that an allegation of offense has been received against a ruling elder that triggers the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

   a. The session will appoint an investigating committee according to the Rules of Discipline.

b. The resulting investigating committee will initiate an investigation using the procedures described in the Rules of Discipline.

4. If the report is against an employee of XXXXX Presbyterian Church, the response team will notify the person(s) or committee responsible for supervision of the employee. The response team will request a follow-up report from the supervisory body of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.

5. If the report is against a member, volunteer, or non-member of the congregation, the response team will request that the session appoint an investigating committee of three persons to initiate an investigation of the allegations as follows:

    a. gather any statements of sexual exploitation or harassment from those making the report and any party to the exploitation or harassment.

    b. gather any information from the person who was accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.

    c. make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:

        1. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action accordingly. Such action may include one or more of the following:

            a. Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification;

            b. Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling;

            c. Temporary removal from ministry, with the terms of the temporary removal clearly defined;

            d. Dismissal from volunteer leadership position or limitation on participation in church ministry (that will provide protection for the person(s) exploited and/or harassed) and, in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.

2. Finding that no sexual exploitation or harassment occurred.

   a. Provide pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s), accused, family members).

   b. Determine, with the pastoral staff, how ministry will be maintained in the church while this issue is being addressed, balancing the need of the community to discuss the issue of sexual exploitation and harassment with the rights of the individual accused not to be assumed guilty.

6. A written summary of any proceedings in such cases will be maintained.

9. Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation report or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged

SAMPLE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ANYWHERE, STATE

General Purpose Statement
First Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of First Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions
For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years including participants in our youth programs.

Selection of Staff and Volunteers
All employees and volunteers, or anyone who desires to work with the children participating in our programs and activities, will be screened. This screening includes the following:

A. Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with children until s/he has been involved with First Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

If a prospective volunteer has transferred membership from another Presbyterian church or is living in the area for a temporary stay, the six month requirement may be waived if it is established that the volunteer was a member of the transferring church or home church for at least two years and if the teaching elder in charge at the transferring or home church recommends that the person is suitable for the volunteer position.

B. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete First Presbyterian's written application form. (See Appendix A). The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, and disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

C. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the volunteer position.

D. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of a ministry or personal nature as opposed to employer or family references, preferably from churches or organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

E. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in all children and youth programs. This includes, but is not limited to; Sunday school, any clubs, Nursery, Youth Group meetings, retreats, church-sponsored athletic team coaches, vehicle drivers and summer programs;

- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;

- Those counseling minors; and

- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form (See Appendix B) allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying factor that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the teaching elder in charge on a case-by-case basis considering all the surrounding circumstances. Disqualifying factors include, but are not limited to:

- Being currently under investigation for, has pleaded no contest or guilty to, or been convicted of criminal sexual conduct, neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, or physical abuse or domestic abuse.

- Conviction for or pleas of no contest or guilty to an offense involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, or indecency.

- Failure to disclose a criminal conviction.

Evidence of substantial rehabilitation may allow waiver of a disqualifying factor.

The background check authorization form and results will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some children's classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, the Open-Door Policy (see below) will apply. We do not allow a child to be alone with an unrelated adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. (*Married couples must be accompanied by an unrelated adult or teenage helper. In the instance that a third volunteer is unavailable, married couples will function as a single adult teacher and follow the Open-Door Policy.)*

Open Door Policy

On rare occasions when only one adult is present with a group of children, classroom doors must remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window besides it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. In all other places, where a single adult is present with a child or group of children, there must be other people present, such as at a coffee shop, or it must be in a public place, with members of the public present.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lace of action) by an adult or another child which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical Abuse**
  Any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, bullying and biting.

- **Emotional Abuse**
  Emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

- **Sexual Abuse**
  Any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a child is being used for sexual stimulation or of the perpetrator. It may be violent or non-violent and includes behaviors that involve touching aspects (fondling, oral, genital and anal penetration, intercourse, forcible rape) and non-touching aspects (verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism and allowing children to witness sexual activity.)

- **Neglect**
  Depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Presbyterian Church becomes aware of suspected child abuse of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to a member of the church staff for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by Minnesota or Wisconsin law.

In the event that an incident of child abuse is alleged to have occurred at First Presbyterian Church, or during our sponsored programs or activities, the church staff will utilize the following procedure:

- Appendix F of the Presbytery Prohibited Conduct/Misconduct Policy and procedures should be consulted to determine if there is a legal duty to report. If so, the incident will be reported **immediately** to the state authorities (including the police and the Department of Human Services (Minnesota) or Department of Children and Families (Wisconsin), to the insurance company and to the church session. (See Appendix C for current contact information).

- The child's parents will be notified, and the child will be removed from the situation. We will not confront the accused until the safety of the child has been secured.

- When the child is safe, the worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the child abuse will be removed from working with children pending an investigation. This individual will be handled with dignity and respect. If the accused is a paid employee of the church, he or she may be suspended until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

- An incident report (Appendix D) will be filled out. All efforts will be documented on a daily basis.

- We will cooperate with any investigation by the state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, the session will form a team to investigate the circumstances of the incident and to make recommendations, if any, to the session. The team should act only in consultation with those assigned to us by our insurance company and the session.

- The role of the church is to provide spiritual care, comfort, and pastoral care for all parties, including the victim, the alleged perpetrator and their families. The church staff will not act as a detective or investigator. Staff members should not prejudge the situation and should show care and support to all parties.

- Public statements and media interviews will be handled under guidance of the attorney and through a session-designated spokesperson. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.

- If criminal charges are brought against the accused, an attorney appointed by the session to represent the church, will be engaged. Our insurance company and the denominational offices will also be informed of these charges.

Teenage Workers
We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters or classroom helpers (paid or volunteer) who are, themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 13.

- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above.

- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children except in an emergency.

- First Presbyterian Chu8rch recognizes the importance of children below age 13 being allowed to participate in service to the church. When a child below age 13 wishes to serve as a volunteer in any given classroom, they will be allowed, pending approval of the Director of Christian Education. This child will be under direct supervision of an adult and their presence will not fulfill the two-adult requirement.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedure: Parents or guardians are responsible for their children and youth if they are not in a scheduled activity.

Before leaving a child under the age of 16 years at a scheduled activity, a parent or guardian must ensure their children are in the charge of a designated adult. Parents are responsible for their children and must notify a leader of the activity where they can be reached in case of an emergency or if there is a designated person assigned to pick up the child or youth at the end of the activity.

- **General Policy:** Paid staff or volunteers may not release a child until a parent or designated person (who can be an older sibling, if the sibling is 6th grade or older) has picked up the child.

- **Nursery and Toddler Room Policy:** Only parents, guardians, or a designated adult are permitted to pick up children from the Nursery or Toddler Room.

- **Parents to Remain in Building.** Parents are expected to remain in the building while their child attends a scheduled activity. If parents leave the building, they must inform the leader that they are leaving and designate an adult who will be responsible for the child or provide contact information for the parent for the period of time allocated for the activity.

Sick Child Policy
It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children at First Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should **NOT** be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy
It is the policy of First Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions) or children with a medication regimen that intersects with church activities. Parents of such children should address their situation with the Director of Christian Education or Minister of youth to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy
It is the policy of First Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, hitting, or other physical discipline on children. Workers should consult with the Director of Christian Education or Youth Minister if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines
Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, children five years and younger should utilize the following procedure:

> Workers should escort children to the bathroom monitor who will check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The bathroom monitor will remain outside the bathroom door and then escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the bathroom monitor will open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the

bathroom monitor should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide the first aid (band-aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the medical professional on-call and the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

First Presbyterian Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION FOR THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS

This form is to be completed for any position (paid or volunteer) involving the supervision or care of minors. This s being used to provide a safe and secure environment for the activities and programs of the church.

Name:____
Last First Middle Maiden

DL#:_______________________________________Date of Birth:__________________
(Identity **MUST** be confirmed with a driver's license)

Present Address:____

City:________________________________State:________________Zipe Code:____________

Phone:______________________________Email:___________________________________

Occupation:___________________________Work Phone:______________________________

If less than one year:

Previous Address:____

City:________________________________State:________________Zipe Code:____________

Phone:______________________________Email:___________________________________

Occupation:___________________________Work Phone:______________________________

Have you ever been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of either sexual or physical abuse? Yes______ No_____ If yes, please explain:

____

____

Personal References (3)

Name: Address: Telephone:

____

____

____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I, the undersigned, authorize any references of churches listed in this application to release any and all records of information related to working with minors. The Church Staff or their designee may contact my references and appropriate government agencies as deemed necessary in order to verify my suitability as a worker. I understand that the personal information provided in this application will be held in strict confidence.

Signature:______________________________________ Date:__________________________

APPENDIX B

AUTHORIZATION FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, AUTHORIZE First Presbyterian Church to acquire a criminal background check on me.

____

Print Name

____ ________________________

Signature Date

Address:____

City:____State:__________ Zip:________________

Social Security Number:____

Date of Birth:____

APPENDIX C

CONTACTS

Church Staff to report an incident of abuse:

____

Name: Phone:

Police Department Phone #:____

State Department of Child Protection Phone #:____

Session Moderator Phone #:____

Clerk of Session Phone #:____

Insurance Company:

____

Name of Rep: Company: Phone:

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area: 651-357-1150

APPENDIX D

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report:____

____

Date of Incident:_________________________________ Time:___________________

Event/Activity:____

Name of Reporter:________________________________ Class/Group:_____________

Title:____

Name(s) of Child(ren) Age(s)

____ ________________________

____ ________________________

____ ________________________

Quote the child's/youth's first words verbatim: (There is no need to question the child further)

____

____

Briefly describe child's/youth's demeanor/appearance:_________________________________

____

____

Briefly describe what happened:____

____

____

What action did you take?____

____

Has the incident been resolved?____________Yes _______________No

Explain:____

____

____

Were there any witnesses: _______________Yes _______________No

Names:____

____

____

Signatures of witnesses (if possible):____

____

____

Report submitted to:____

Date:______________________________________

APPENDIX

FULL FINANCIAL REVIEW DEFINED

The “Form of Government” also known as the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church requires the following G-3.0113):

> *A full financial review of all financial books and records shall be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures. Reviewers should not be related to the treasurer(s). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community.*

Therefore, an annual financial **review** is required for every church organization or group which has a treasurer, and which receives and disburses funds. In addition to review of the church’s General Operating Fund, Benevolence Fund, Memorial Fund, Endowments, Capital Fund, etc., other groups within the local church whose financial transactions must be reviewed might include the Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Building/Maintenance Fund, Choir, Youth, Church School, Presbyterian Women, etc. This review gives assurance to members that donations are used as the donor intended, for the benefit of the specific group, and as a witness to the Lordship of Christ. This review also gives members and those in leadership rolls the confidence that the church's financial resources are appropriately managed.

The persons making the full financial review do not need to be CPAs, but they should have an understanding of accounting procedures. Look for persons who have been Trustees or who have some experience in business accounting. Remember that those doing the financial review should not be related to the treasurer(s).

The church's financial ledgers, records of all forms of income, deposit slips and bank account records, withdrawal slips and canceled checks, authorization of payments, copies of invoices, expense vouchers, and a balance sheet should be made available to the persons conducting the review. Financial records for relatively small groups would require less validation; but it is important that each report have a beginning balance, income, expenses and a closing balance.

Unless a congregation and its income/expenses are very large, it is not necessary to have a professional audit made. A full financial review implies that the financial review committee has checked through the records, has spot-checked those records and (hopefully) has approved them, and (if helpful) has made suggestions for improvement to the Treasurer or Finance Committee. The report of the financial review committee must be approved by the Session, Trustees or whichever body has created the committee, and this approval must be recorded in the official minutes of that body.

This report may be a simple statement such as:

> “We have reviewed the financial statements of the various Funds of _______ Presbyterian Church and affiliated organizations for the year ending December 31,

_____, as set forth in the ______Annual Report of _________Church. During our review, nothing came to our attention that would require modification of these financial statements."

REVIEW THE ACTIVE ROLL OF THE CHURCH

Reviewing the church rolls is an annual responsibility of session. Under the current *Book of Order*, a person may be deleted from the active roll when s/he has ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.

A session may ask the Clerk to bring recommendations to them of those who may be considered inactive; or may ask a committee to conduct the review and bring recommendations to the session for action.

Before any member is removed from the active roll, it is incumbent upon session to exhaust all possible avenues of inquiry and pastoral care.

SOME HELPFUL HINTS:

1. In a large church, the rolls might be divided so that a portion is reviewed each quarter, or month.
2. Active Members who do not meet the session's definition of participating in the work and worship of the congregation should be contacted and encouraged to resume active participation. A visit or phone call by an elder (not the pastor) may be the best way of doing this. Alternately, the Clerk may write a letter to such persons. This contact should:
    a. Offer to discuss any difficulties;
    b. Invite resumed participation in the work and worship of the congregation;
    c. Offer to assist them in finding a new church home;
    d. Be sure they realize that failing to respond to this contact within a specific period (set by session) will result in removal from the active roll; and
    e. Assure them that at any future date, they can be restored to the active roll by making that request to session.
3. It is recommended that names never be physically deleted, rather applicable notations be made next to names.
4. All persons, regardless of membership status, should be welcome at worship and communion.
5. A member does not have to be returned to the active roll to transfer the membership to another church.

SAMPLE LETTERS TO POTENTIALLY INACTIVE MEMBERS

THOSE WHO HAVE RELOCATED: (Use church letterhead)

Date

Name
Address

The session of _____Presbyterian church is in the process of fulfilling its responsibilities as defined in the *Book of Order,* paragraph G-3.0201c which states: *"The session shall review the roll of members at least annually."* Since your move to ________________, we hope that you have found a new community of faith near home. If, in fact, you have become a member of another church, please advise us of the name of that church so that we might note it on our church register.

If you have not yet found a local church home, the Session would like to encourage you to seek the fellowship, support, and spiritual nurture of a faith community. We would be glad to help you find another church if that is your desire.

Please let me hear from you. You may e-mail me at ________________ or return the bottom portion of this letter to me in care of the church, marked appropriately. If I have not heard from you by December 31 (concerning your wishes), your name(s) will be removed from our Active Membership Roll. Later, should you desire to be restored to the active roll or transfer your membership to another church, we will be delighted to facilitate your active membership.

Please know that you will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers and we particularly wish you a blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year.

Sincerely yours,

(your name)
Clerk of Session

Please complete as appropriate and return to _______________church at the above address.

____has/have jointed another church.
(name of members)

Church name:______________________________

Church address:_____________________________

I wish to speak to **the Pastor or an Elder** concerning this matter. (Circle one, if applicable).

THOSE STILL LIVING LOCALLY: (Use church letterhead)

Date

Name
Address

Dear _____________,

The session of _________Presbyterian Church is in the process of fulfilling its responsibilities as defined in the *Book of Order,* paragraph G-3.0201c which states: *"The session shall review the roll of members at least annually."* We have missed you during the past year and wonder if you have become involved in another community of faith. If so, we can transfer your membership to that church.

It may be possible, however, that you have not become active in another church. The session would like to encourage you to return to active participation in the ministry of our church, or to seek the fellowship, support and spiritual nurture of another community of faith. If there is something a member of Session, or our Pastor, or I can do to facilitate your active participation in a Christian ministry, whether at _________Presbyterian Church or another church, please do not hesitate to let us know. You can reach me by e-mail at ______________or at home (phone number). The Pastor may be reached at the church office.

Please let me hear from you, either by email, phone call or returning the bottom portion of this letter marked appropriately. If, however, we have not heard from you by December 31, your name will be removed from our active membership roll. Later, should you desire to be restored to the active roll, or to transfer your membership to another church, we will be delighted to see that your request is honored.

Please know that you and your family will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers, and we pray that you and yours have a blessed Christmas holiday season and joy-filled New Year.

Sincerely yours,

(your name)
Clerk of Session

Please complete as appropriate and return to _______Church at the address above.

____has/have jointed another church.
(name of members) Church name:______________________________
Church address:____________________________

I wish to speak to **the Pastor or an Elder** concerning this matter. (Circle one, if applicable).

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

Companion to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); by Frank A. Beattie, © 1999 updated by the Office of the General Assembly 2007. Download at: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/publications/constitution-companion.pdf

Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); by Gregory A. Goodwiller © 2014. Download at: http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf

Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised 11th Edition © 2011.

Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised In Brief, Second Edition; © 2011.

ONLINE PC(U.S.A.) RESOURCES FOR ELDERS:
The PC(U.S.A.) website: www.pcusa.org has many helpful resources and articles. Here are some to enrich the service of elders:

> **A Listing of All Articles about What Presbyterians Believe:**
> **What Presbyterians Believe**: Elders as Spiritual Leaders
> **How Presbyterians Make Decisions** along with some Church History
> **What Presbyterians Believe:** A Balancing Act
> **How to Speak Presbyterian:** What is all this Presbyterian Lingo?
> **PC(U.S.A.) Structure and Governing Bodies**
> All can be found at the website below:
> https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today/

Training is available online at: http://www.theocademy.com/

CONGREGATIONAL RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

Type:	Retention Period:
Minutes (all)	Permanent
Registers	Permanent
Annual Reports	Permanent
Bylaws/Charters	Permanent
Incorporation Records	Permanent
Annual Budgets	Permanent
Annual Audits	Permanent
Annual Financial Statements	Permanent
Subject Files: correspondence, minutes, or other records surrounding subject matter of continuing administrative or legal value, or comprising information on the mission, vision, and actions of the congregation.	Permanent
Manuals/Handbooks	Permanent
Newspapers/Newsletters	Permanent
Brochures/Promotional Material (1 copy)	Permanent
Photographs	Permanent
Architectural Drawings, plats, Plans, Blueprints	Permanent
Wills, Bequests	Permanent
Legal/Judicial Case Records	Permanent
Loan Agreements	Satisfaction + 20 Yrs.
Property Appraisals, Records of Sale	20 Years after Sale
Personnel Records/Employee Records	Employment + 7 Yrs.
Contracts	Active + 6 years
Accounts Payable	7 Years
Accounts Payable Invoices	7 Years
Accounts Receivable Records	7 Years
Bank Statements	7 Years
Canceled Checks	7 Years
Cash Receipt Records	7 Years
Donations (regular, weekly)	7 Years
Expense Reports	7 Years
FICA/W2 Records	7 Years
Payroll Records	7 Years
Petty Cash Records	7 Years
Receipts of Purchases	7 Years
Bank Deposit Slips	3 Years

General/Routine Correspondence (acknowledgements, requests, travel arrangements, etc.)	3 Years
Travel Plans/Arrangements	3 Years
Periodic Financial Statements	2 Years
Data for Updating Mailing Lists	1 Year
Invitations	1 Year
Meeting Notices	1 Year
Mailing Lists	Active
Reference/Resource Materials	Active

*Taken from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Summer of 2018.
https://www.history.pcusa.org/services/records-management/records-congregations

SESSION GUIDE TO MEETINGS

MEETING SUGGESTED	ACTION AT MEETING	NOTES/INFORMATION	PREPARE AND/OR FOLLOW UP RESPONSIBILITY	NOTES
EVERY MEETING	Open with prayer, declare quorum, adopt agenda	Moderator must be present (or special arrangements made per *Book of Order)* for Session to be in session	Moderator and Clerk	See Clerk's Handbook for guide for agenda
	Review Minutes of last meeting(s) not yet reviewed/approved	Of Session (and Congregational meeting as needed)		
	Receive/review/ treasurer reports	These reports are reviewed and filed for audit	Treasurer	
	Receive pastor/moderator's report	Include whether there were baptisms, weddings, funerals, when communion was served, etc.	Pastor prepares; Clerk records in minutes	See Clerk's Handbook for Information needed in minutes and register
	Receive Committee Reports		Clerk records information/actions	
	As appropriate, authorize baptisms and weddings, act on reception of members	All baptisms and events in the church require Session authorization.	Pastor/Clerk	See Clerk's Handbook for Information needed in minutes and register
	Act on old and new business, set next meeting, close with prayer		Clerk prepares minutes - includes time of opening and closing	Minutes should be written and given to Session members for review as soon as possible.
SESSIONS THAT MEET QUARTERLY	If the session meets quarterly, it must authorize persons or groups to act between meetings for some matters. For other matters special meetings may be called.			
JANUARY	Elect Commissioners to Presbytery for the year	Per *Book of Order*	Clerk	Include in PTCA annual reports
JANUARY	Elect Clerk of Session	Per *Book of Order*	Clerk	Include in PTCA annual reports
JANUARY	Elect Church Treasurer	Per *Book of Order*	Clerk	Include in PTCA annual reports
JANUARY	Designate two people to count church offerings	Per *Book of Order*	Treasurer	
JANUARY	Review authorization for access to safety deposit box	Provide for at least two people	Treasurer follow up	Update signature cards at the bank
JANUARY	Review authorizations for signing checks	Provide for at least two people	Treasurer follow up	Update signature cards at the bank

JANUARY	Authorize times for Celebration of Lord's Supper	To be held at least quarterly	Pastor	Pastor's report to Session to include information when communion has been served
JANUARY	Authorize which special offerings will be received during the year	One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peacemaking, Christmas Joy, Others??	Pastor/Treasurer	Materials come from GA - listed on planning calendars
JANUARY	Planning for January meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
JANUARY	Check corporation status	Renew, name officers	Clerk; Treasurer	Update at Secretary of State's Office
JANUARY	If offering envelopes are used, authorize ordering in February for next year		Treasurer	Much less expensive at this time
JANUARY	Renew/approve Annual Statistical Report to PTCA and General Assembly	Include in minutes a statement of approval and portion of report	Clerk prepares reports; submits	Be aware of due dates. See Clerk's Handbook
JANUARY	Review representation of session	Include in minutes the composition of session	Clerk	See Clerk's Handbook/checklist
JANUARY	Arrange for review of church by-laws	(May be part of Manual of Operations	Persons Designated	Will require session then congregation action if revisions are needed.
JANUARY	Review, update church's Manual of Operations	Manual required in *Book of Order G-3.01*		
JANUARY	Arrange for audit of financial records of church an all organizations		Treasurer	Auditors should report completion - should be reported in minutes.
JANUARY	Designate session member to be moderator of Congregation Nominating Committee	Per *Book of Order*		Clerk may provide Nominating Committee with information
JANUARY	Designate moderators/leaders of program areas or committees			
JANUARY	Designate month to meet with Deacons	Confer about Deacons' responsibilities/programs	Pastor, Clerk make contact w/deacons	
JANUARY	Designate Elders of the Month - review responsibilities		All Session Members	
JANUARY	Prepare reports for congregation's annual meeting		Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer	
JANUARY	Note dates for Ash Wednesday and Easter	Plan ahead for special events during Lent/Easter - including One Great Hour of Sharing	Pastor, Clerk entire session	See Planning Calendar and GA packet
JANUARY	Set dates for newly elected officer training and ordination/installation		Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer	Report training - to be noted in session minutes
JANUARY OR	Recognize officers who have completed		Pastor and Clerk	

FEBRUARY	terms of service.			
FEBRUARY	Planning for March Meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
FEBRUARY	Receive report about January meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
FEBRUARY	Begin planning and publicity about summer camps, programs		Pastor and Christian Ed leaders	
MARCH	Authorize ordering Planning Calendars		Person Designated	Order through PTCA
MARCH	Begin planning for Pentecost	Including Pentecost offering publicity	Persons Designated	Use packet from GA
APRIL	Planning for May Meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
APRIL	Receive report about March meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
MAY	Planning for time when pastor is on vacation	Sunday worship leadership, funerals, communion dates	Session	
MAY	Completing plans for special summer events		Session	
JUNE	Receive report about May meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
JULY	Contract for fuel for the heating season		Session/person Designated	
JULY	Plan for fall events			
JULY	Plan for World Communion Sunday and Peacemaking offering		Persons Designated	Information from GA
AUGUST	Designate times/persons to review minutes of the church organizations	Deacons, PW, Youth Group, etc.	Persons Designated	This does not include session minutes - which are reviewed annually by Presbytery
AUGUST	Planning for September Meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
SEPTEMBER	Fall programs begin	Review leadership availability; special events		
SEPTEMBER	Nominating committee to report progress on officer nominations for next year		Clerk to provide information on member eligibility	
SEPTEMBER	Submit Session minutes and Church Register for review by Presbytery	Per *Book of Order* requirements	Clerk	Arrangements will be made by a PTCA representative
OCTOBER	Receive report on September meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
OCTOBER	Planning for November meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	

OCTOBER	Receive report about review of church records	Note completion of review in minutes	Clerk	
OCTOBER	Annual review of effectiveness of pastor and congregation	Per *Book of Order* requirements. Good time to look at vision for future of congregation		Requires review of compensation of pastor
OCTOBER	Begin budget planning for next year		Designate session members	Budget is session responsibility
OCTOBER	Determine Mission Pledge for next year	PTCA will provide form	Treasurer to provide information	Congregation votes only on pastor compensation
OCTOBER	Plan for Advent/Christmas			
OCTOBER	Begin review of rolls; take action to bring up to date	Remember: notification of members needed if dropped		Not required to keep a roll of inactive members
NOVEMBER	Complete bringing roll up to date			
NOVEMBER	Complete plans for Christmas Joy Offering			
NOVEMBER	Budget committee bring proposal for next year for review/adoption by Session.	If there are yoked churches, set joint meeting for conference on budget; reviewq2 of yoked agreement.	Persons Designated	
DECEMBER	Review special needs in the congregation and community			
DECEMBER	Receive report on November meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
DECEMBER	Planning for January meeting of Presbytery		Pastor/Commissioners	
DECEMBER	Receive report from Nominating Committee	Need not include names, but assurance that nominees have been obtained for all vacancies.	Committee moderator	
DECEMBER	Affirm date of annual meeting of congregation and any special arrangements for meeting day.		Announce from pulpit; provide notices for entire membership	Notice of meeting should include officer vacancies to fill
DECEMBER	Draft reports for congregation’s annual meeting			
DECEMBER	Act on any end of the year business matters pending			

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT TO SESSION

PRESBYTERY MEETING DATE:________________________________

LOCATION OF PRESBYTERY MEETING:____________________________________

BUSINESS ITEMS/PRESBYTERY INFORMATION/MOTIONS PASSED:

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I LEARNED AND/OR WAS INSPIRED BY:

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I ENJOYED FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FROM THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES DURING THE MEAL:

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NOTES:____

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DULY REPORTED:____ ______________________

(Name) (Date)