



**HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS OF SESSION**

**Presbytery of the James**

**Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

**Spring 2020**

Updated March 2026

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the office of clerk of session! You have assumed the role of the chief ecclesiastical officer of your congregation. That is a big title, and it is an equally big responsibility. Together with the moderator of the session, you plan the meetings of the session, report all communications received (e.g., mail, e-mail, etc.) as they relate to the session and congregation, and record. Record...Record...Record!

This handbook builds on the framework of the *Manual for Clerks of Session* created by the Presbyteries of Western Reserve, of Shenandoah, of Plains and Peaks, and of Hudson River. It conforms to the current *Book of Order 2025-2027*. Hereinafter, the *Book of Order* will be referenced as *BoO*.

Let us first make clear that while the *BoO* currently refers to the councils of the church, it also retains the name session for the church council. “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by councils composed of presbyters elected by the people (F-3.0202). These councils are called the session, the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly” (G-3.0101).

The stated clerk of the Presbytery of the James is always available to respond to questions, to provide professional development opportunities, and to assist you in your work.

## THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF SESSION

“Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, maintain any required registers, preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church. The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine” (*BoO* G-3.0104).

As noted in the Introduction, the clerk of session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session.

The question is often asked, “Must the clerk of session be a current member of the session?” The answer to that question is “No.” Any ruling elder is eligible to be elected and to serve as clerk of session. The only codicil is that if the clerk is not a current member of the session, the clerk may not make motions or vote. The session may ask the clerk to be its parliamentarian and shall give the clerk voice in matters pertaining to the minutes and the clerk’s report.

The person chosen to be clerk of session needs to be knowledgeable about the responsibilities of the session, understand the fundamentals of Presbyterian polity, and be willing to learn basic parliamentary procedure. The clerk must be able to write a clear

record of the proceedings at the session and congregational meetings promptly following the meetings.

When the moderator or 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 *BoO*, but because the clerk may receive sensitive correspondence and be the officer to whom church members would take a problem. The clerk is the officer who keeps the records and routinely discusses the work of the session with the moderator and all of the committee chairpersons to form the agenda and refer business. Presbyterian polity does not provide for any other lay officer to carry out these responsibilities.

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

### **RESPONSIBILITIES AT A GLANCE**

1. Keep a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the session (G-3.0104)
2. Keep rolls of baptized (G-1.0401), active (G-1.0402), and affiliate members (G-1.0403) in accordance with G-3.0204a
3. Keep the registers of baptisms, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary (G-3.0204b)
4. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records, making recommendation to the session for the permanent safekeeping of its records (G-3.0107)
5. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in the *BoO* G-3.0201 and W-2.03
6. Notify the session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted (G-1.0501, G-1.0504, G-3.0203)
7. Be sure that the annual statistical report required by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of the General Assembly is approved by the session and completed online in an accurate and timely manner (G 3.0202f)
8. If requested, consider participating in the Annual Reading of Session Minutes coordinated by the Presbytery’s stated clerk. Submit records and completed checklists for review at that time (G-3.0108a)
9. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation, seeing that the minutes are received by the session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book (G-1.0506)
10. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of the session, and respond as directed by the session
11. Keep a list of unfinished business, including all matters referred to a committee or staff member for later reporting to the session, and, with the moderator, remind the appropriate persons if not reported in a timely manner

12. Be prepared to respond to questions of parliamentary procedure in meetings. It is encouraged that the church has the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* at hand for reference before and during meetings
13. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for Session meetings, as requested
14. Assist the pastor in church officer training when requested
15. Work collaboratively with the moderator and the person responsible for church communications (e.g., newsletters, website, Facebook, etc.) to bring highlights of meetings to the awareness of the congregation (NOTE: confidential matters should not be included)
16. Moderate the congregational meeting, if requested, during the installed pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary clerk should be appointed to keep the minutes of this portion of the meeting. (This is the only time that a portion of the congregational meeting can be moderated by the clerk of session. In other situations when the pastor cannot be present for a congregational meeting, a moderator shall be appointed ahead of time by the Commission on Ministry.)
17. Perform other such duties as appropriately requested by the moderator or the session

### **SESSION AGENDA**

The agenda for a session meeting can be the responsibility of either the clerk in consultation with the pastor/moderator or the pastor/moderator in consultation with the clerk. Your input and frequent contact with other session members 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 agenda. The clerk should get that agenda to and go over that agenda with the appointed moderator ahead of time.)

Session agendas 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 update, and other pertinent information as needed and available.

The value of the 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, and
- It serves as a reminder of the necessary preparation for a meeting.

The clerk of session can take this opportunity to assist the pastor/moderator in handling administrative details and sharing in the ministry of the church.

**Refer to the Sample Agenda in Appendix A**

## **GUIDELINES FOR SESSION MINUTES**

Minutes of each Session meeting must include:

1. Whether the meeting is a stated or special meeting
2. The name of the church, the place, date, and time of the meeting
3. The name of the moderator of the meeting
4. The opening and closing of each meeting with prayer
5. The roll, listing elders present, elders absent, and any who are excused; the clerk, moderator and other staff present or excused; others present and their identity (use first and last names)
6. The affirmation of a quorum: "Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such 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" (G-3.0203).
7. The approval of the agenda (in the case of a special meeting, the call to the meeting stating the purpose becomes the agenda)
8. The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (any corrections of or additions to previous meeting minutes shall be listed)
9. Clerk's report: may include correspondence, announcements, and report of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in addition to listing baptisms, marriages, and any changes in the membership rolls
10. Reports of pastor, other staff, treasurer, and committee chairpersons should be summarized in the minutes. Lengthy reports should be submitted in typed format to the clerk and may be attached to the minutes as Attachment 1, Attachment 2, etc.
11. All motions and amendments, if any, and whether they passed or failed. It is not necessary to name the person presenting the motion or the person offering a second. Details of discussion are not recorded unless the body believes it necessary to give a sense of the action. It is not necessary to name those voting in favor, those voting opposed, nor those abstaining.

When appropriate, include the following:

12. The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must be reported at the next succeeding regular meeting. When the Sacrament has been administered to those unable to attend public worship, the name of the person officiating and the name of those assisting should be noted.
13. The Sacrament of Baptism shall be reported at the next regular meeting and recorded in the minutes as well as on the register. Adults baptized are noted giving the full name, including the maiden name of married women (if relevant). Children baptized are noted giving the name of the child, date of birth, and the name(s) of the parent(s) or the one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility. This may be part of the clerk's report, the pastor's report, or that of the appropriate committee.

14. The full name of applicants for church membership (in the case of married women, include maiden name, if relevant), and the manner of their reception:
  - a. By profession of faith
  - b. By reaffirmation of faith
  - c. By certificate of transfer, giving the name and location of the church from whom the certificate/letter was received
15. The full title and location of the church to which a certificate of transfer is granted and the full name of the person transferred with the date of transfer
16. Position descriptions for employed personnel, both clergy and non-clergy, as they are approved
17. Name of the elder(s) elected to be commissioners to meetings of the Presbytery of the James
18. Reports that the commissioner who attended the meeting of the presbytery gave to the session
19. In case of a sale, mortgage, gift, or lease of property, the session records should show:
  - a. Name, address, and legal description of the property (tax map #)
  - 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 the presbytery (if applicable) and date it granted approval

Be sure the following are included each year:

20. Approval and copy of the annual budget
21. Approval of the distribution of the church's benevolences
22. Date of required annual review of the installed pastor's, and associate pastor's if applicable, terms of call or contract
23. Any changes in terms of call or contract presented to and approved by the congregation
24. Ordinations and/or installations (if any), which should be reported at the next succeeding meeting
25. A report that property and liability insurance has been obtained (G-3.0112); include a copy of the church's current certificate of insurance. Note: policy should be reviewed annually for adequacy of coverage.
26. Proof that the required annual full financial review has been conducted by either a public accountant or a committee of members versed in accounting procedures (G-3.0113)

Follow the directions of the presbytery's stated clerk to prepare for the required annual review of church records.

## THE HOW-TO'S OF SESSION MINUTES

The method of recording session minutes is somewhat dependent on local circumstances and the expectations of the session and its moderator. The following are suggestions:

1. Clerk takes notes for the minutes during the meeting either by hand or by computer
2. Clerk transfers notes to full minutes as soon as possible
3. Emails or copies and distributes the minutes to the session before the date of the next regular meeting
4. At the next meeting, the minutes are either approved as submitted or corrections or additions are added
5. Clerk (or someone designated by the clerk) copies the minutes onto acid-free paper and enters the same into the official minutes notebook
6. Do not use erasure, whiteout, footnotes, or notes in the margins
7. If there is blank space following page entries, draw a line through that space
8. Minutes must be signed (in ink) by the clerk
9. Minutes of the annual congregational meeting must be signed by both the clerk and the moderator

Each clerk needs to work out the best ways for handling the preparation of the minutes. One suggestion is to prepare a template for use in taking the minutes during the meeting. This template would include the list of ruling elders' names (to aid in taking the roll) and major category headings with blank spaces for writing in the information. If the meetings do not follow a regular format, the usefulness of a template is limited.

An alternative is to use a checklist. Some clerks use a template file and a laptop computer and take notes on the computer during the meeting. A good, rather complete agenda makes this approach more feasible. The template and/or the checklist have an additional benefit in that it will help you and the moderator to remember what needs to be done. This can be carried further by the clerk and the pastor meeting in advance of the session meeting with the purpose of including more details in the template or checklist. This helps ensure that items are not missed.

Session minutes are to be kept in a book designated solely for that purpose. This book should be a loose-leaf binder of good quality and acid free paper. Pages should be numbered consecutively, but do not purchase pre-numbered pages. Having a separate numbering device allows you to include other items that cannot be copied on pre-numbered sheets. Also, be sure to copy front to back.

After the minutes have been approved by the session, they should be placed in the official minute book and signed by the clerk. If you use a computer, it is not necessary that minutes actually be typed into the minute book. Remember that ink jet printer ink will run if it gets wet. Printed pages from ink jet printers can be photocopied onto the minute book pages or other acid-free, substantial paper. Laser print on good acid-free

paper can be used. A good quality three-ring binder is sufficient for a minute book. You do not have to use the expensive and difficult-to-use Westminster Binders.

Electronic storage, in place of paper storage, **is currently not acceptable** because there is no way to attest by signature to the accuracy and correctness of the documents.

It is recommended that minutes should be interesting, with enough information so that our grandchildren will know what happened in this church years before. One of the primary reasons for the emphasis on precise, accurate record keeping is the role that the minutes play in recounting the history of the congregation, often retrievable in no other way.

Additionally, the minutes of a meeting should never reflect the clerk's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.

The moderator, co-pastors, associate pastors, and all active ruling elders should receive and approve the minutes of all session meetings.

The *BoO* (as well as *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*) specifies that ownership of these records resides with the body that constituted them. In other words, the session has ownership and the clerk has responsibility for preserving these records on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (G-3.0107).

Keeping the book(s) in a fireproof file cabinet or safe is highly recommended.

## **CONGREGATIONAL AND CORPORATION MEETINGS**

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

Minutes of these meetings shall include:

1. Indication of whether the meeting is "regular" or "special called"
2. If it is a special called meeting, the minutes shall include the purpose of the meeting, which will serve as the agenda (NOTE: No other business may be conducted at special meetings other than what was identified in the call to the meeting)
3. Name of the church, date, time, and place of the meeting
4. Name of the moderator or presiding officer
5. Presence of a quorum (decided by the rule of the congregation found in its by-laws)
6. Opening and closing of the meeting with prayer
7. Record of all actions, whether adopted, not approved, or postponed to a later date
8. If the congregation does not approve the minutes before adjournment, the session may approve the minutes at its next scheduled meeting.

A congregational meeting may be called only by the session, by presbytery, or by the session on written request of one-fourth of the members of the congregation on the active roll (G-1.0503).

Check the congregation's by-laws for what constitutes "adequate public notice" for a congregational meeting (G-1.0503).

Check your congregation's by-laws for the quorum of the congregational meeting (G-1.0502).

What business may be done at a congregational meeting? As clerk, you should take particular care to alert the moderator of the congregational meeting when business is out of order. The business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the publicly announced call for the meeting. No other business may be transacted at this meeting. You will find a careful listing of such business in G-1.0504 of the *BoO*. ***The budget is adopted by the session, not the congregation.*** However, the session must inform the congregation of the budget.

**The salary of the pastor, co-pastors, and the associate pastor(s) must be approved annually by the congregation and reported to presbytery for its approval.** The Commission on Ministry will provide this form.

The congregation approves the salary of pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors for recommendation to presbytery (G-2.0804).

Members must be present to vote. Proxy voting is not permitted in church meetings (G-1.0502).

Corporation meeting minutes must be signed by the one presiding and the secretary (who may or may not be the clerk of session, depending upon church by laws).

## **ELECTRONIC MEETINGS**

Though physical gathering is the preferred manner in which to meet, virtual platforms (including oral and aural connectivity) are sometimes necessary. Matters that need immediate action may arise when calling a session meeting is impractical. For those cases, the session may adopt a policy for electronic meetings. The policy should include provisions to reach all members, for two or more members to object and thus cancel the electronic meeting, and for any decisions to be included in the minutes of the next regular session meeting. If the session adopts such a policy, then the policy should be recorded in the minutes of the session meeting and in the session's *Manual of Operations*.

## ROLLS AND REGISTERS

The rolls of the church should contain information about those who are members of the local church. It is the responsibility of the clerk of session to maintain or to oversee the maintenance of the rolls (G-3.0104, G-3.0204a).

Names of members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by action of the session.

Session shall maintain the following membership rolls: Baptized Members; Active Members; and Affiliate Members

### Baptized Member

1. A Baptized Member is one who has received the Sacrament of Baptism but has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and/or one who was baptized in any church and is currently worshiping regularly with your congregation. The 217th General Assembly issued a "clarification of meaning" that baptized members are children who have been baptized in a Christian church, but who have not been received as Active Members (G-1.0401).
2. Record the name, date of baptism (if known), church where the baptism occurred. Names should be removed from this roll when profession of faith is made, or when the person moves from the community. It is important to maintain an accurate baptism register because it can serve as a legal backup for birth certificates, especially when there has been an infant baptism.

### Active Member

1. An Active Member is one who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the Church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of the particular church, and participates in the church's work and worship (G-1.0402).
2. Record the 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, placement on inactive roll (if you have such), or removal.

### Affiliate Member

1. An Affiliate Member is one who is an active member of another church of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the church of active membership is located and so is attending your congregation for a relatively short period of time (G-1.0403).
2. Record the name, date of affiliation, name and location of home church, date of renewal (if applicable), and date of return to home church.

Other Participants are persons who are not members of, or who may have ceased active participation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but who are welcome and may participate in the life and worship of this church and receive its pastoral care and

instructions (G-1.0404). It is up to the session whether or not they want to keep a list/lists of people in this category or to put this list into several categories.

An “inactive roll” is no longer required but may exist if the session so chooses.

Roll books usually provide double pages for a chronological roll by date of reception into membership with columns for name, how received, name of church from which member transferred if that is the manner of reception, date of deletion from the active roll and the reason – by death or transfer, in which case the name and location of the church to which the member is transferring is listed.

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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 G3.0204b...which states: “There shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, or ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.” It is recommended that the session also require a register of marriages.

**Register of Infant and Adult Baptisms** shall include name, parents’ names, and date of birth of those being baptized.

**Register of Ruling Elders** shall include each ruling elder’s name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

**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. Note: the office of Deacon is not required.

**Register of Pastors** shall include the names of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors, covenant pastors (1 or 2), commissioned pastors (commissioned ruling elders), and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.

**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.

All registers may be kept in the same binder or in the binder with the rolls.

## PAPER VS ELECTRONIC ROLLS

For many of the reasons that appropriate paper records of the session minutes are required, a chronological paper record of rolls and registers shall also be kept. Electronic records are useful for counting the various categories of members and for keeping an alphabetical list. Paper rolls are chronological and should have the full name, date joined, and how joined (letter of transfer, profession, reaffirmation) at a minimum. If by letter, record the name of the church. It should record the date of removal from the roll and the reason.

These are the minimum items for an electronic roll, too. We suggest adding to an electronic roll the information that the Annual Statistical Report asks for, such as gender, racial/ethnic identity, disability (if applicable), and date of birth (for calculating ages).

Many old roll books contain a section for adding member names in an alphabetical order, at least by the first letter of the surname. That function may best be done via an electronic roll. Print an alphabetical list, with roll book number, at least annually, and keep this alphabetical list with the paper Roll Book.

## PARLIAMENTARY LAW

Parliamentary law is not really law as such, but a collection of customs and conventions used to make decisions. It encompasses common sense and courtesy, is a model for effective conflict resolution, and – when used correctly – will provide accuracy, efficiency, impartiality, objectivity, and uniformity. It helps us transact our business decently and in order. The heart of *Robert's Rules of Order* is protection of the minority as using parliamentary process ensures that all are heard and the rights of each member honored.

Many pastors are thoroughly familiar with the *Book of Order* and *Robert's Rules of Order* and can function as their own parliamentarian. Others need some assistance or an occasional reminder. In the latter case, the clerk should function as parliamentarian or as a resource to the pastor. The relationship between pastor and clerk can work well if both are sensitive, open, and honest.

Some items that are strictly Presbyterian are as follows:

- Motions that come from a committee do not require a second.
- Session minutes are the property of the church. Members of the congregation (as well as nonmembers) should not have access to the minutes without following the steps required by the congregation's *Manual of Operations*. Otherwise, the clerk of session may provide a summary of any desired information.
- Trustee minutes are also the property of the church. Members of the congregation may see trustee minutes – or the portions of the session minutes dealing with trustee business if the session is a unicameral body – if a proper request is presented.

## COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity. It works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to send their pastor and elect ruling elder commissioners who attend the meeting, stay until the end of the meeting, and report to the session. Times and dates of presbytery meetings are published annually on the presbytery website ([www.presbyteryofthejames.com](http://www.presbyteryofthejames.com)). The Presbytery of the James has three stated meetings annually: the third Saturday of February, the third Wednesday of June, and the third Saturday of October. Announcements about upcoming meetings are also sent ahead of time to those who have contacted the presbytery office requesting such.

Each session is responsible for electing ruling elders as commissioners to presbytery (G-3.0202a). The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the congregation. Most congregations are entitled to one commissioner per presbytery meeting though a few large congregations may be entitled to more than one commissioner. If you are not sure of the number of commissioners for your congregation, please check with the stated clerk of the presbytery

Session may elect a commissioner who may serve for the entire year or different commissioners for each meeting of presbytery.

If your congregation has a ruling elder serving as a presbytery officer or on another presbytery committee/commission/team that gives them a vote, this person may not serve as your ruling elder commissioner but will vote in their other capacity. Another ruling elder should be sent to represent your congregation. Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders are also given a vote at presbytery meetings and may not be counted as the commissioner from your congregation.

The agenda and the supporting reports for each presbytery meeting are posted on the presbytery's website and should be viewed prior to the meeting. If a print copy of the presbytery packet is desired, please contact the presbytery office (804-262-2074).

Commissioners are expected to report to the session about the meeting (G-3.0202a) 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 raising of consciousness of the congregation's participation in the total ministry through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **ACTIONS THAT MUST BE APPROVED BY MORE THAN ONE COUNCIL**

Because the connectional system is one of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), there are a number of actions that require approval beyond the Session.

Among them:

1. Application to presbytery to enroll an “inquirer” under care of presbytery and the enrolled inquirer accepted as a “candidate”: session and presbytery (G-2.06)
2. Loans that use the church or its property as collateral and all sales of property: congregation and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate) (G-1.0504 G-4.0206a)
3. Buying, mortgaging, or selling real property: session and presbytery (G-1.0504) (except for those who were granted exemption in the 1980s; presbytery does not have to approve)
4. Any lease of its real property used for purposes of worship, and all leases of church property for a period of more than five years: session and presbytery (G-4.0206b)
5. All changes of church location, worship place(s), or church name: session, congregation (name change), and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate) (G-3.0303b)
6. All changes in terms of call for the pastor: congregation and presbytery (G-2.0804)
7. Dissolutions of pastoral relationships (G-2.09) and calls for new pastors (G-2.08): congregation and presbytery
8. Hiring covenant pastor, interim pastor, or parish associate: session and presbytery (G-2.0504b)
9. Session meeting when pastor is ill or is out-of-town: pastor grants permission and appoints a member of presbytery as moderator *pro tem* (G-1.0505). This person must be a minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery.
10. All waivers from the *BoO* regarding terms of service for church officers (G-2.0404): congregation and presbytery
11. All changes of pastoral leadership (G-2.0504a & b, G-2.0801): session and/or congregation and presbytery

Thank you for doing this important job. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the stated clerk or presbytery office:

Stated Clerk  
statedclerk@presbyteryofthejames.org

Presbytery of the James  
3218 Chamberlayne Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23227  
804-262-2074  
office@presbyteryofthejames.org

## **Appendix A**

### **Sample Agenda for Session Meeting**

#### **Practice Presbyterian Church Stated Session Meeting April 26, 2020 Agenda**

1. Call to order, declaration of quorum, opening devotions and prayer
2. Approval of the agenda and minutes of stated meeting of March 22, 2020
3. Communications
4. Clerk of session's report
5. Narration:
  - a. Session Class of 2020 ordained and installed at the 11:00 a.m. worship service on March 22, 2020
  - b. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper observed during both the 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. worship services on April 5, 2020
  - c. Membership of Sam Jones transferred to Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS effective March 29, 2020
  - d. Ellen Smith died on March 28, 2020
  - e. Timothy Brown married Anastasia Jones on March 28, 2020 at Practice Presbyterian Church, Reverend Perfect officiating
  - f. Frederick Bradley and Rebecca (Purdy) Bradley accepted by transfer of membership from the First United Methodist Church, Bristol, TN on April 5, 2020 along with their baptized children, Edith born July 1, 2016, in Bristol, TN and Frederick born October 12, 2019 in Richmond, VA.
6. Session Committee Reports
7. Old and New Business:
  - a. Report from commissioners to the called meeting of the Presbytery of the James on April 18, 2020
  - b. Audit Committee Report
8. Statement of adjournment and closing prayer

**Appendix B**

Sample: CLERK OF SESSION INDEX SHEET FOR 2020 MINUTES

***This Index Sheet must be a part of session's records and placed at the beginning of the 2020 minutes.***

Name of Church \_\_\_\_\_ County / City \_\_\_\_\_

*If you send paper minutes, send **copies only**. Do not submit original minutes, because presbytery will not return the minutes to you. Also, keep a copy of the completed Clerk's Index Sheet and place it at the beginning of the 2020 minutes. After reviewing this Index Sheet and your minutes, presbytery will send you only an Examiner's Report.*

Submitting minutes in paper form? \_\_\_\_\_ or electronically? \_\_\_\_\_

Session's Composition (F-1.0403; G-3.0103)

Give the **number** of Ruling Elders who served on session in 2020. \_\_\_\_\_ Total  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Other  
 \_\_\_\_\_ African American \_\_\_\_\_ Korean \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Session's Rolls and Registers

*Does session maintain these required rolls and registers? Indicate Yes or No.*

Rolls (G-3.0204a)

Registers (G-3.0204b)

Y / N Active Members (defined in G-1.0402)                      Y / N Baptisms  
Y / N Baptized Members (defined in G-1.0401)                      Y / N Ruling Elders  
Y / N Affiliate Members (defined in G-1.0403)                      Y / N Installed Pastors (defined in G-2.0504a)

Deacons *The congregation is not required to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons (G-2.0202).*                      Y / N

Session Meetings (The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly, G-3.0203).

*List the date of each stated (regularly scheduled) meeting and called (special) meeting. Provide also the date when session approved the minutes of each meeting.*

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Stated or Called</u>	<u>Date Minutes Were Approved</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Stated or Called</u>	<u>Date Minutes Were Approved</u>
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____
____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____	____/____/____	<u>S / C</u>	____/____/____

Session Minutes

For details about what minutes should include, see the Book of Order as cited below, and Robert's Rules of Order: Newly Revised, 11th edition (RONR), pages 468-469.

Do the session minutes record the following items? Indicate Yes or No.

Y / N Date, time, place, and type (stated or called, in-person or virtual) of each meeting (RONR, 468).

Y / N Names of all persons present, identifying who was moderator and who was clerk.  
(G-3.0201, G-3.0203; RONR, 468).

Y / N That a quorum was present (G-3.0203).

Y / N That the meetings were opened and closed with prayer (G-3.0105).

Y / N That minutes of each meeting were approved (RONR, 469).  
*Approval of minutes of a meeting usually happens at the next stated meeting.*

Session Actions

Enter the **date** of the meeting whose minutes reported that the session had . . . :

/ / Elected the clerk of session for a term (G-3.0104; *the term may be longer than one year*).

/ / Elected the treasurer for a term (G-3.0205; *the term may be longer than one year*).

/ / Reviewed the roll of active members of the congregation (*required at least annually, G-3.0201c; see also G-3.0204a*).

/ / Reviewed the adequacy of the church's property and liability insurance coverage  
(G-3.0112; *should be done annually to determine that the coverage still offers enough protection*).

/ / Prepared and adopted a budget (G-3.0113; G-3.0205).

/ / Completed a full financial review of all financial books and records (*required annually, G-3.0113; the minutes report the results of the review, including the names of the financial review committee members or the name of the auditing firm*).

/ / Received a report from any who are in charge of various congregational funds (*such reports are due at last annually either to the session, or to the entity vested with financial oversight, G-3.0205c; G-3.0106*).

/ / Reviewed annually the minutes of deacons' meetings if there is a board of deacons (G-3.0201c).

/ / Approved the annual statistical report to the General Assembly (G-3.0202f).

/ / Reviewed the adequacy of the pastor's compensation (*required annually for called and installed ministers, G-2.0804; the covenants between sessions and ministers in temporary pastoral relationships are reviewed at least yearly, G-2.0504c*).

/ / Decided when the annual meeting of the congregation will be (G-1.0501; G-1.0502).  
*Enter the date of the session's decision, not the date of the congregation's meeting.*

/ / Trained, examined, and approved the ruling elders (and deacons) elected by the congregation  
(G-2.0401, G-2.0104a, b, G-3.0201c).

Y / N Elected ruling-elder commissioner(s) to presbytery meetings and received their reports (G-3.0202a).

<u>Presbytery Meeting</u>	<u>Date Session Elected Commissioner(s)</u>	<u>Date Commissioner(s) Reported to Session</u>
Feb 15, 2020, Westminster, Charlottesville	_____	_____
June 16, 2020, Virtual Meeting	_____	_____
Oct 17, 2020, Orange	_____	_____

Enter the **year** in which session took the following actions:

20 Approved a Manual of Administrative Operations (G-3.0106; required as of 2015).

20 Approved a Sexual Misconduct/Harassment Policy (G-3.0106, required as of 2017).

20 Approved a Child Protection Policy (G-3.0106, required as of 2017).

If these actions have not been completed, say what progress has been made toward the goal:

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**Congregation: Annual and Special Meetings**

The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold special meetings as necessary (G-1.0501).

For business that may be transacted at a meeting of the congregation, see G-1.0503.

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Annual or Special</u>	<u>Business Conducted</u>
<u> / /</u>	<u> A / S</u>	<hr/>
<u> / /</u>	<u> A / S</u>	<hr/>
<u> / /</u>	<u> A / S</u>	<hr/>
<u> / /</u>	<u> A / S</u>	<hr/>

**Congregation: Rules and Incorporation**

20 The congregation has approved Congregational Rules or By-Laws (G-1.0501, G-1.0502).  
*This has been required by presbytery since 2015. Enter the year the congregation approved its Rules. If these have not been approved, say what progress has been made toward the goal:*

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Y / N The congregation has formed a corporation.  
*Where permitted by civil law, each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained (G-4.0101).*

**Important Changes and Events**

Please note below important changes and events in the year that the presbytery should know about.

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Index Sheet was prepared by

PRINT NAME 

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SIGNATURE 

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DATE 

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## **Appendix C Annual Review of Membership**

The *Book of Order* takes seriously our responsibilities as members of local congregations. In Chapter One of the Form of Government, there is a listing of ways in which a member in a congregation is to be involved (G-1.0304). It is a calling from God, not just a name on a roll.

In similar fashion, the session is charged with the responsibility of caring for the members of a congregation and ensuring that they are actively involved in the mission and ministry of the church. One of the ways in which a session can assist members in their responsibilities in a congregation is through the annual review of membership.

The following suggestion is one way in which a session can take its role about membership involvement and oversight seriously. May it be a way in which the session can become the spiritual leaders of a congregation in a new and meaningful way.

### ***Book of Order* References**

G-3.0201c Review of Membership at least annually  
G-3.0204a,b Rolls and Registers

### **Suggested Timetable for Annual Review of Membership**

- August session meeting: Session acts to begin annual ROM. Responsibilities referred to existing committee or Task Force (Suggestion: establishment of a three-member Task Force to handle the annual review and report to session)
- September: ROM Committee established and tasks defined
- October: ROM Committee makes personal contacts
- November: ROM Committee finalizes report
- December session meeting: Report received from Annual Review of Membership (ROM)

### **Review of Membership Suggested Process**

1. The Task of the ROM Committee or Task Force is to “review the roll of members at least annually.” Of the four rolls required by the *BoO*, the ROM Committee or Task Force needs to be primarily concerned with the Active Members and the Affiliate Members rolls.
2. The primary focus of the review of membership is to see how someone can receive pastoral care and/or be involved in the life and mission of the congregation.
3. It is important to obtain an official list of the Active Member and Affiliate Member rolls from the clerk of session. (Note: in smaller membership congregations, it might be best if the clerk of session handled this matter in consultation with the treasurer and the pastor).

4. It is also important that the pastor be involved in this work with the Committee or Task Force. The pastor will be able to give insights and suggestions about persons without breaking confidences that will assist the work of this review.
5. Take time to review the rolls provided by the clerk of session and determine the following:
  - a. Has the person(s) been in worship or attendance during the past calendar year?
  - b. Has the person(s) given of time or financial resources in this calendar year to the church?
  - c. If neither question can be answered positively, the person becomes part of the list of people for the Committee or Task Force to consider.
6. Take your list and compare it to these criteria from the *BoO* G-1.03

#### *G-1.0301 The Meaning of Membership and Baptism*

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim on a human life and of entrance into the membership of the church. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The baptism of those who enter the covenant of membership upon their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls forth a response of faithfulness. Thus, the triune God, incarnate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, gives to the Church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership.

#### *G-1.0302 Welcome and Openness*

A congregation shall welcome all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of his Church (F-1.0403). No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith. The Gospel leads members to extend the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the Gospel.

## Appendix D Retention Schedule for Congregations

<b>Types</b>	<b>Retention Period</b>
Minutes	permanent
Registers	permanent
Reports/annual reports	permanent
Bylaws/charters	permanent
Incorporation records	permanent
Annual budgets	permanent
Annual audits	permanent
Annual financial statements	permanent
Subject correspondence	permanent
Manuals/handbooks	permanent
Newspapers/newsletters	permanent
Brochures/promotional material (one copy)	permanent
Photographs	permanent
Property appraisals, records of sales	20 years after sale
Architectural drawings, plats, plans, blueprints	permanent
Wills and bequests	permanent
Legal/judicial case records	permanent
Loan agreements	satisfaction + 20 years
Contracts	active + 3 years
Personnel records/employee records	employment + 7 years
FICA/W2 records	7 years
Accounts payable invoices	3 years
Accounts payable	7 years
Accounts receivable records	3 years
Bank deposit slips	3 years
Bank statements	7 years
Canceled checks	7 years
Cash receipt records	3 years
Data for updating mailing lists	1 year
Mailing lists	active
Periodic financial statements	2 years
Expense reports	7 years
General/routine correspondence (acknowledgments, requests, travel arrangements, etc.)	3 years
Invitations	1 year
Petty cash records	7 years
Receipts of purchases	7 years
Meeting notices	1 year
Travel plans/arrangements	1 year
Resource files	active

## Appendix E

### “Are you an employee?” Checklist

Title of Position \_\_\_\_\_

Person in Position \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No
1. Is the person expected to report to work at a certain time each day?	_____	_____
2. Does the person have to stay at work until a certain time each day?	_____	_____
3. Does the person use the equipment of the church?	_____	_____
4. Does the person use the supplies of the church?	_____	_____
5. Is the person paid on a set day each week, month, etc.?	_____	_____
6. Does the person receive raises without asking each year?	_____	_____
7. Does the person have a business license?	_____	_____
8. Does the person provide similar work to other churches/companies?	_____	_____
9. Does the person file a Schedule D on their tax return?	_____	_____
10. Does the person submit an invoice for payment?	_____	_____
11. Does the person have a business card?	_____	_____

**Scoring:** If you answered “YES” to the majority of questions 1-6 and “NO” to the majority of questions 7-10, then the person is probably your employee, subject to social security and Medicare withholding and matching by the employer.