

HANDBOOK
FOR
CLERKS OF SESSION
IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(U.S.A.)

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Table of Contents

I. Election and Duties	3
II. Minutes of Session Meetings	3
A. Essential Parts	
B. As Needed	
C. Annually	
D. Other	
III. Rolls	7
A. Membership	
B. Baptisms	
C. Deaths	
D. Weddings	
E. Ordinations/Installations	
IV. Correspondence	8
V. Secretary of Congregation	9
VI. Annual Statistical Report	10
A. Introduction	
B. Active Members	
C. Other Membership Data	
D. Finances	
VII. Assisting the Pastor	13
A. Docket Planning	
B. Parliamentarian	
C. Adviser	
References	15
Appendix.	16

I. Election and Duties

The clerk of session is elected by the session.¹ The length of the term is determined by the session; no limitation is set by the *Book of Order* with regard to the length of the term. The clerk must be an elder but does not need to be an active member of the session.

The primary duties of the clerk² are to

- ! record the minutes of the session
- ! keep rolls of membership and attendance of the session
- ! preserve the records of the session
- ! furnish extracts to other governing bodies when required

Other responsibilities are given to the clerk by the *Book of Order*.

- ! The clerk is responsible for the preservation of the minutes of both the session and the congregation.³ This means not only recording the minutes but also seeing that they are approved, signed, and placed into the official minutes book. Once each year, the minutes are to be submitted to presbytery for their review. The stated clerk of presbytery or the appropriate presbytery committee will notify the clerk of the arrangements.
- ! The session is responsible for maintaining rolls (see Section III) and in practical terms this usually means the clerk is responsible. When a new member is received by letter of transfer, the clerk should write to the transferring church requesting the letter (See Appendix A and Section IV). When a member transfers to another church, the clerk should verify the membership, obtain session approval, and issue the letter of transfer. Forms are available from Cokesbury for this as shown in Appendix B.
- ! The clerk of session serves as secretary of congregational meetings (see Section V).⁴

There are other responsibilities that show up in the *Book of Order* indirectly or by inference. Additional duties can be assigned or negotiated (see Section VII).

Each year the presbytery is required to file a statistical report with the General Assembly.⁵ The presbytery gathers this information by asking each congregation to fill out the relevant forms. The stated clerk of presbytery then compiles this information and sends it to General Assembly. Additional information is in Section VI.

II. Minutes of Session Meetings

The *Book of Order* requires that a session keep “full and accurate record of its proceedings”.³ No guidelines are given regarding the details for doing this. In the absence of parliamentary procedures in

the *Book of Order*, the instructions from *Robert's Rules of Order* are to be followed.⁶ The following is a summary of what has become the norm for session minutes. This is rooted both in the *Book of Order* and in *Robert's Rules of Order* and is to ensure that the important information is included and that the proper procedures have been followed.

A. Essential Parts

Every set of minutes should contain the following information.

- ! The name of the church
- ! The date, time, and place of the meeting
- ! Whether the meeting is called or stated
- ! The names of the moderator, elders, and others who are present
- ! The opening with prayer
- ! Attesting that a quorum is present
- ! Approval of minutes of previous meetings
- ! All main motions, except those withdrawn, and whether the motions pass or fail
- ! Significant portions of reports
- ! The time of the meeting's closing
- ! Closing with prayer
- ! Attesting by the moderator and the clerk by their signatures

The place of the meeting should be specific such as "The sanctuary" or "Room A of the church" . When motions are passed unanimously, it is not necessary to state the unanimity. When motions have dissenting votes, the vote could be recorded by terms such as "by majority" or "with 1 exception". Persons casting dissenting votes may request that their vote be recorded by name. It is neither necessary nor advisable to record the whole discussion prior to a vote; the record should be a very brief summary of any important aspects of the issues brought forward.

The reports presented can be recorded as "received" which indicates the report has been read or heard but does not necessarily indicate agreement with all aspects of the report. The minutes should contain, in addition to any actions taken, only those aspects that might be important to future readers of the minutes.

After the minutes have been approved by the session, they should be placed in the official *Minute Book* and signed by the moderator and the clerk. In this electronic age it is not necessary that minutes actually be typed into the *Minute Book*. Previously printed pages can be photocopied onto the *Minute Book* pages. Electronic storage, in place of paper storage, might not be acceptable because there is no way to attest by signature to the accuracy and correctness of the documents and due to long term storage problems (See Section VIII). The *Minute Book* needs to be kept in a secure fireproof environment.

Motions from a committee do not require a second. The minutes should record who makes a motion

(when made by an individual) but not who seconds the motion.

B. As Needed

There are some session actions and reports that should be included in the minutes that may or may not occur every month. Those actions or reports that normally occur every month that are to be recorded in the minutes include the following.

- ! The celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁷ The dates and occurrences should be recorded in the minutes subsequent to the celebration.
- ! Attendance at worship. The number of persons attending each worship service should be recorded. This will permit calculation of average attendance per week for the Session Annual Statistical Report. The attendance at Sunday School could also be included.
- ! Financial report. Session should receive the financial report. A summary of the report could be included, if desired.

Those actions or reports that normally occur less frequently than every month that are to be recorded in the minutes include the following.

- ! Authorization to celebrate the Lord's Supper at times other than normal.⁷ Session normally has a continuing approval for authorization at regular times such as the first Sunday of every month. The celebration of the Lord's Supper at other times, such as at a church retreat, needs special approval.
- ! Session action in receiving and dismissing members.⁸ The record should include the full name of the persons and family relationships where appropriate. For those transferring, the name, city, and state of the transferring church should be included. The method of reception (transfer, affirmation of faith, or reaffirmation of faith) should be recorded.
- ! Session action in transferring members from the active roll to the inactive roll or in removing inactive members from the roll.⁹ Active members should not be transferred to the inactive roll until the inactivity has been for a period of at least one year. Inactive members should not be removed from the roll until inactivity has been for a period of at least two years.
- ! Approval of guest ministers or others to conduct the worship service. At times when the pastor is not present for a worship service, such as during vacation time, the person to conduct the worship service and to preach the Word should be approved by session.
- ! Authorization and recording of baptisms.^{10,11} The authorization of session is needed for all baptisms. After the baptism, the occurrence should be recorded. The full name, birthdate, and place of birth of the person being baptized and the name(s) of parents(s) for infant baptisms should be recorded.
- ! Deaths.¹² The death of any member should be recorded.
- ! Weddings.¹¹ Any wedding taking place in the church and weddings performed by the pastor either at the church or elsewhere should be recorded.
- ! Commissioners to presbytery.¹³ The election of commissioners to presbytery and the receiving of the commissioners' report to the session after the presbytery meeting should be in the minutes.

C. Annually

Once each year the following items should be approved by session and included in the minutes.

- ! Annual Statistical Report.¹⁴ This report must be approved by session and included in the minutes. See Section VI.
- ! Annual budget.¹⁵ Session is responsible for the budget and expenditures of the church. The budget requires approval by session and should be included, at least in summary form, in the minutes.
- ! Election of the church treasurer.¹⁶
- ! Church Nominating Committee.¹⁷ Session needs to appoint its representatives to this committee, one of whom is moderator, and to set the date for the congregational meeting for the election. In many churches this election is held at the annual congregational meeting.
- ! Annual congregational meeting.¹⁸ Session needs to set the date and time for an annual congregational meeting. If the church is incorporated, this meeting is required by law. Annual reports should be presented at this meeting of the corporation.
- ! Newly elected elders.^{19,20} Session needs to arrange for the instruction, examination, ordination (where required), and installation of newly elected elders. This also applies to deacons for churches not under the unicameral system.
- ! Composition of session and congregation with respect to racial ethnic members, women, men, and age groups.³ These data are to be in the minutes. Since this information is in the Annual Statistical report, including that report in the minutes will fulfill this requirement.
- ! Pastor's Call. Session needs to call a congregational meeting or include in the agenda of another meeting a review by the congregation of the pastor's call. The pastor's call includes salary, other financial benefits, vacation (minimum of 4 weeks required), and study leave (minimum of 2 weeks required).²¹

D. Other

Each person 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 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 use of a template is limited. Using a template to take minutes may cause some difficulties since it may be difficult to predict how much space to leave. An alternative is to use a checklist. Some people 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. A template is shown in Appendix C.

Either the template or the checklist has 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 check list.

When typing the minutes using a computer word processor, it is suggested, again, that a template be

established and the information be typed into the appropriate places. This avoids retyping some information such as the list of elders present, and helps ensure that items are not missed.

E. Preparation for Session Annual Statistical Report/*Church Register*

When it comes time to prepare the Session Annual Statistical Report (see Section VI) or when inserting data into the *Church Register*, being complete in the minutes will help. A list of those items and the details that are needed (some of this is repeated in other contexts of this document) are given in Appendix D. It would help if all this is kept together in the minutes of each meeting such as under "Clerk's Report".

III. Rolls

The session is responsible for maintaining the church rolls. Even if a session committee, a membership secretary, or the church secretary takes on this responsibility, it falls on the clerk to see that the job is done and done correctly. This section deals not only with the maintenance of the rolls but makes some suggestions to make later work easier.

The rolls are to be recorded in the *Church Register*, which provides sections for each of the rolls to be kept. Even if your church maintains rolls using some sort of computer program, there needs to be a permanent written record. The *Church Register* should be kept in a secure fireproof environment.

Arrangements need to be made for providing certificates to all new members, to all persons baptized, and to all persons ordained and/or installed. Appropriate certificates are available for purchase from the Presbyterian Publishing House. Alternatively, a church may print its own certificates if a suitable word processor and printer are available. The circular seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be downloaded from the world-wide web at <http://www.pcusa.org> as *cirseal.pcx*. This is in color, if you have a color printer. Sample certificates designed this way are shown in Appendix J. WordPerfect 6.1 and higher and for MSWord copies of these files, and necessary Windows fonts, are available from the author. A copy of *cirseal.pcx* is also included on the disk.

A. Membership

There are three membership rolls to be kept:

- ! active members
- ! inactive members
- ! baptized members.

Active members, of course, are those who have been received into active membership by the session. Active members who have been inactive for at least one year may be transferred to the inactive roll. An effort must be made to contact these people and encourage them to return to active membership. After a

two-year period of inactivity, the session may delete those people from the roll. Other baptized persons who attend regularly (and who may even participate in church activities) but who have not been received into active membership by the session are called baptized members. The largest percentage of this group will probably be the children of the congregation prior to their participation in a confirmation class.

At the end of each calendar year, the Annual Statistical Report asks for the number of persons in each of these categories. The report also asks for the means by which new members were received into active membership (transfer or reaffirmation/affirmation of faith) and the means by which persons were removed from the active roll (transfer to inactive roll, removal, transfer to another church, death). It is suggested that lists be kept of each membership transaction as the year progresses so that at the end of the year the data will be readily available. Otherwise, it would be necessary to read through all the minutes at the end of the year to compile these lists. Updating the lists after each session meeting reduces the time required and results in fewer errors. If a computer program is used, the information could be entered each month using codes to enable the extraction of the required information at the end of the year.

B. Baptisms

It is important to maintain an accurate baptism roll because it can serve as a legal backup for birth certificates, especially for infant baptisms. The information to be entered includes the person's full name, date and place of birth, names of parents, date and place of baptism, and name of minister performing the baptism. When an adult is baptized upon reception into membership, this information is also part of the membership roll.

C. Deaths

The *Church Register* provides a section for listing deaths. This information also needs to be recorded in the membership roll.

D. Ordination and Installation

The *Church Register* provides sections for listing all ordinations and installations of elders and deacons. The dates of service are also to be recorded.

IV. Correspondence

The clerk is usually responsible for only a limited amount of correspondence. One type of letter frequently required is to another church asking that they send a letter of transfer. A sample letter is shown in Appendix A. Upon receipt of the transfer form (shown in Appendix B), the detachable part should be completed and returned. This two-way correspondence ensures that the transfer is complete and that both churches know about the dismissal from the transferring church and the acceptance by the receiving church. When the reverse occurs (when a church writes to request that a letter of transfer be issued), a letter as such is not required; the special form mentioned above is used.

Occasionally the session may ask that a letter of thanks or a letter of appreciation or a letter of congratulations be sent. The form of this letter should fit the personality of both the clerk and the recipient. Whatever the form, the letter should be clear and genuine. Two contrasting letters are shown in Appendix E.

V. Secretary of the Congregation

For congregational meetings, the *Book of Order* specifies that the clerk of session is to be the secretary of the congregation for the meeting.⁴ In the absence of the clerk, the congregation is to elect its own secretary for that particular meeting. The secretary is to take the minutes of the meeting. Since the secretary (clerk) is also parliamentarian, it is necessary to be familiar with the whole section of the *Book of Order* related to Meetings of the Congregation.²⁴ This includes what business can and cannot be transacted and what constitutes a quorum. Minutes of congregational meetings can be approved by the Session or by the congregation at the next congregational meeting.²²

Other information related to meetings of the congregation appears under the election and ordination of elders and deacons.²⁵ The election of a Nominating Committee²⁶ requires at least two members of the session, one of whom is to be moderator of the committee. It is good practice for the session to make these appointments in advance of the congregational meeting so that the congregation has this information when it votes on its representatives. The session representatives should be active on the session during the time they serve on the nominating committee. This is only a problem when the term of office on session does not correspond with the term of office on the committee such as when the session terms begin in June and the Nominating Committee election is in January.

After there has been a vote to close nominations, if the number of nominees equals the number of vacancies, the election may be by voice vote or show of hands to elect the slate by unanimous consent (or by acclamation).²⁷ While the *Book of Order* does not require that nominees give permission for their names to be entered into nomination, it is good practice for the church to have such a requirement written into its bylaws. *Robert's Rules of Order* specify that no person can make more than one nomination and that nominations do not need to be seconded.²⁸ The *Book of Order* does not require a secret ballot for this type of election when the number of nominees exceeds the number of vacancies but it is good public relations practice to do so. This means that the clerk should have ballots prepared in advance, even if they are nothing more than that shown in Appendix F; the example there assumes that five persons are to be elected.

Note that proxies are not permitted in this election. Only active members who are present may vote. (These requirements hold for all votes.)

The election of elders and deacons is more specifically given.²⁹ The moderator first asks the congregation "Are you now ready to proceed to the election?" The Nominating Committee makes its report and the moderator opens the floor to further nominations. After there has been a vote to close nominations, if the number of nominees exceeds the number of vacancies, a secret ballot is required. Thus it is

recommended that the clerk have a ballot prepared listing the nominees with several blank lines for names to be added as shown in Appendix F; the example there assumes that four persons are to be elected.

Again, proxies are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote.

An annual meeting of the congregation is required for the purposes of receiving reports from the session and to fulfill any legal requirements with respect to the church as a corporation. It is customary that the annual review of the pastor's call occurs at this meeting.³⁰

Matters related to capital expenditures that may or will result in a church mortgage require congregational approval and eventually presbytery approval.

Other less frequent actions of the congregation may require that the clerk to take a leading role. These include the dissolution of a pastoral relationship,³¹ the formation of a pastor nominating committee,³² and the subsequent election of a pastor.³³ All of these actions require consultation with and/or approval by presbytery. Early discussion with the presbytery committee on ministry (or its equivalent) is encouraged. Secret ballots should be used. Again, proxies are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote.

The Session may, in advance of the congregational meeting, specify that a vote should be by secret ballot. According to *Robert's Rules of Order* secret ballots are used when specified by the constitution or by-laws or when specifically voted on (by majority vote) by the congregation.²³

For a vote by ballot where the actual motion may not be known in advance can be handled by the use of a generic ballot as shown in Appendix F.

VI. Annual Statistical Report

A. Introduction

The presbytery must make an annual report to the General Assembly.⁵ The type of information in that report are specified by the General Assembly. Much of the information is gathered from local congregations by means of the "Session Annual Statistical Report". Completing this report can be the most tedious job assigned to the clerk.

The data entered 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.

Some of the information requested can be difficult to obtain accurately (such as ages of members) and some information related to the budget may be requested in different categories than your bookkeeper

has used. 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 the final form itself.

Suggestions are made here to try to make the process easier. As with most jobs, keeping up on a monthly basis rather than waiting until the end of the year makes it easier. In addition, keeping up makes the total time spent less.

The form is divided into two parts: A. Membership and B. Finances. For this discussion, part A will be considered in two parts: (1) active members and (2) other data. In order to collect the data, it is suggested that it be done regularly (each month) rather than waiting until the end of the year. The author keeps a notebook with pages labeled for various categories such as (1) New members, (2) Active members transferred to inactive roll, (3) Transfers to other churches, (4) Baptisms, (5) Deaths, and so forth. The appropriate information is transferred to the notebook after each session meeting. This includes details to match the parts of the Report such as whether members joined by (Profession of faith, Reaffirmation of faith, or Restoration) or by Certificate.

When serving as clerk, the author kept a notebook with pages labeled for various categories. The information was entered into the notebook after each Session meeting. Those pages were:

- New members received by profession of faith: 17 & under
- New members received by profession of faith: over 17
- New members received by reaffirmation of faith: 17 & under
- New members received by reaffirmation of faith: over 17
- New members received by restoration: 17 & under
- New members received by restoration: over 17
- New members received by certificate (letter of transfer)
- Active Members transferred to other churches (certificate)
- Active Members lost due to death
- Other: Active Members transferred to Inactive Roll
- Baptisms: children
- Baptisms: adult

B. Active Members

The report gives the number of active members at the beginning of the reporting period. Places are given for active members added in two major categories. A third category is given (All other gains) to allow for corrections. Places are given for losses in active membership in two major categories plus the All other losses category, which would include transfer to the inactive roll as well as corrections. The result of this portion gives the total number of active members at the end of the reporting period.

Two lines follow for number of persons on the inactive roll and the number of baptized members. Baptized members are baptized children and adults who are part of the congregation but who are not active or inactive members.

The sum of Active Members, Inactive Members, and Baptized Members is called Total Adherents.

C. Other Membership Data

These data will need to be collected from a variety of sources. These include:

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

If you are using some sort of computer membership system such as, PowerChurch Plus or Ease, 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 in order to determine age distribution.

Note that it requests Church School *enrollment* not *attendance*.

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 in age distribution, use of personal knowledge is expected to be applied rather than a formal survey.

D. 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, Mariners, Building Fund, and so forth), all of these must be included.

Appendix G lists the categories on the form. For each category there is a list of the typical items included in each category. Again, remember that the sum for each category should include the items from every church fund. For example, Presbyterian Women will probably have expenses under Local Mission, Local Program, and Validated Mission. Such groups will also have receipts and all income probably would fall under Contributions. A suggested form is given in Appendix H that could be distributed to each church group; do this at the beginning of the year so the group treasurer will know what to expect at the end of the year. You may need to modify this form for each group you distribute it to; one form may not fit all.

Some categories are more difficult to determine than others. For Receipts, other income may seem

nebulous or vague so if you find this difficult to determine, do it by difference as given in Appendix G. For Expenditures, Local Program may be difficult to determine because it encompasses so many items. This can be determined by difference as given in Appendix G. If your financial reporting seems in shambles, then see NOTE 2 at the end of Appendix G and then pressure the church treasurer to keep records in line with the reporting categories on the Statistical Report Form.

E. Other

Each year there are two pages of questions, which are different each year. You should consult with the pastor and with others knowledgeable about the information being requested before filling out these pages.

VII. Assisting the Pastor

The Clerk should keep the pastor informed and provide information to the pastor as requested. Other assistance will be determined by the relationship between the pastor and the clerk and by the needs of the pastor. In addition, the time commitment of the clerk will determine the extent and the nature of assistance that can be provided. Pastors are busy people so any assistance the clerk can provide with administrative matters will give the pastor more time for pastoral duties.

A. Docket Planning

Unless you have an excellent memory, you might consider making a calendar listing of actions that need to be taken by the session and by the congregation. Examples of these are given in Sections II and V. Prior to each session meeting, this calendar can be used to remind the pastor of actions that need to be on the agenda. Some of these items need to be considered in advance, not just the day of the session meeting, because they may require some homework. An example of this is the election of session representatives to the congregational nominating committee; the pastor may want to sound out some potential nominees.

Planning in advance will make the process smoother and important items will not be overlooked.

B. Parliamentarian

Most pastors are thoroughly familiar with the *Book 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 Session. Members of the congregation (as well as

nonmembers) should not have access to the minutes without the permission of the Session. The Clerk of Session should provide a summary of any desired information.

C. Adviser

Pastors frequently need someone to talk to as a sounding board and to check with as they develop policies and as they consider personnel matters. Sometimes this person is the clerk and sometimes it is someone else (and sometimes it is both). This is an area where the clerk can be of great assistance to the pastor but only when the relationship between the pastor and the clerk is such as to make it workable. The clerk should be ready to assist as needed but should not expect that this is a usual duty of the clerk.

VIII. Archiving Records

The Presbyterian Historical Society provides information about establishing a records management program. This is available on the internet at <http://www.history.pcusa.org/cong/records/index.html>, which serves as the entry page for the entire document.

They suggest first establishing a records inventory. That is, keep a record of the church records. This should include what they are and where they are. Seems logical but something that is easily put off until there is more time.

The length of time records should be kept varies with the type of record. The logical statement is that records should be kept for as long as they are needed. Financial records must be kept as long as tax laws require. Administrative records such as the Church Register and Session Minutes must be kept indefinitely. Routine correspondence, travel arrangements, etc. can be discarded as soon as their need has been met and any reports related to them have been made. Records deemed to have historical value should be referred to the Society for advice.

Inactive records should be stored in a dark, dry place with containers clearly marked as to contents. If possible, they should also be marked with the date on which they can be destroyed.

Important records should be kept on quality paper or on microfilm. Permanent records should never be kept on magnetic media such as computer hard drives, disks, CD-ROMs, etc. Not only are these media subject to gradual deterioration, but also the software or hardware to access the records may no longer be available.

References

BoO refers to *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order* and RRoO refers to *Robert's Rules of Order, 9th edition, Scotts Foresman, 1990.*

1. BoO G-9.0203 b
2. BoO G-9.0203 a
3. BoO G-10.0301
4. BoO G-7.0307
5. BoO G-11.0306
6. BoO G-9.0302
7. BoO W-2.4012
8. BoO G-5.0101 b-f
9. BoO G-10.0302 a,b
10. BoO W-2.3012
11. BoO G-10.0302 c
12. BoO G-10.0302 b(8)
13. BoO G-10.0102
14. BoO G-10.0103
15. BoO G-10.0102 l
16. BoO G-10.0401
17. BoO G-14.0201
18. BoO G-7.0301
19. BoO G-14.0205
20. BoO G-14.0209
21. BoO G-14.0501b
22. BoO G-7.0307
23. RRoO pp. 405-406
24. BoO G-7.0300
25. BoO G-14.0200
26. BoO G-14.0201 b
27. RRoO p. 435
28. RRoO p. 423
29. BoO G-14.0204
30. BoO G-7.0302 a
31. BoO G-14.0600
32. BoO G-14.0502
33. BoO G-14.0503

Appendix

CONTENTS

A. Request for Letter of Transfer	17
B. Form for Membership Transfer	18
C. Template for Session Minutes	19
D. Details for Clerk's Report.....	21
E. Letter of Appreciation.....	22
F. Sample Ballots	23
G. Financial Categories for Annual Session Statistical Report.....	24
H. Suggested Financial Form for Church Groups	27
I. About the Author	28
J. Certificates	29

A. Request for Letter of Transfer

For Presbyterian churches, address the letter to Clerk of Session. Addresses of Presbyterian churches should be available in your church office or from your pastor in a booklet published by the General Assembly. For churches other than Presbyterian, address the letter to Membership Secretary. Addresses of churches are available on the Internet at <http://www.switchboard.com> (choose the business listings) or at <http://s19.bigyellow.com>.

Include full names and family relationships where appropriate. Use Mary Smith Jones and Robert F. Jones rather than Mr. & Mrs. R. F. Jones. Use William Lopez and his daughter Alice rather than William and Alice Lopez. Small churches will have little problems but better details will substantially help large churches.



Dear Friend:



Mary Smith Jones and Robert F. Jones have met with our Session and expressed their desire to unite with First Presbyterian Church by transfer from your church. Will you please issue the necessary transfer paper at your earliest convenience? Thank you.

It is always appropriate to add a few words where appropriate such as:

Mary and Bob have been attending regularly and have already become active in the Sunday School and the Dinners for Eight group. We are fortunate to have them join our fellowship.

B. Form for Membership Transfer

	PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) <i>Certificate of Transfer</i>	
<p><i>This is to certify that</i> _____ is/are in full communion and in good and regular standing in the _____ _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ and upon _____ own request is/are hereby dismissed and affectionately recommended to the fellowship of the _____ Church of _____, and when so received,* and not before, _____ special relation to this Church will cease.</p>		
By order of the Session: _____		_____ Moderator
Given at _____		
Date _____		_____ Clerk of Session
<p>*FORM OF GOVERNMENT, G-10.0302 b(1): "When a certificate of transfer has been issued, the name of the member shall be retained on the appropriate roll by the church issuing the certificate until the person is received into membership in the other church."</p>		

	<i>Certificate of Reception</i>	
<p><i>This is to certify that</i> _____</p>		
Was/were received into the membership of _____ Church		
at _____ on _____ 19____		
This section of the certificate should be filled in and returned to dismissing church as soon as member(s) is/are received		Signed _____ Moderator or Clerk of Session

C. Template for Session Minutes

This template is for a stated meeting and no space is left to enter written material to save space recognizing that this template probably will not serve exactly for your use.

CHURCHNAME
CityState

MINUTES

STATED SESSION MEETING, *date*
place

MEMBERS OF THE SESSION PRESENT:

Rev. *pastorname*, Moderator; *clerkname*, Clerk; Ruling Elders *elder1*, *elder2*, *elder3*,

MEMBERS OF THE SESSION EXCUSED:

elder1, *elder2*, . . .

MEMBERS OF THE SESSION ABSENT:

elder1, *elder2*, . . .

ALSO PRESENT:

person1, *person2*, . . .

The meeting was opened with prayer by the Moderator at *time1*. It was determined that a quorum was present. Session voted to excuse the elders noted above.

Session approved the minutes of the stated meeting of *date1* and the called meeting of *date2* as presented.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Births:

Deaths:

Weddings:

Baptisms:

Lord's Supper:

Requests for baptism:

Requests for wedding:

Other information and action.

CLERK'S REPORT

Information and action.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership Committee

Information and action.

Christian Education Committee

Information and action.

Worship Committee

Information and action.

ETC.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

The meeting was closed with prayer by the Moderator at *time2*.

clerkname, Clerk

moderatorname, Moderator

D. Clerk's Report

New Members

How joining (letter of transfer affirmation of faith, reaffirmation of faith, restoration), where from (if letter of transfer), maiden name if married female, whether adult (18 or older) of child, if adult has minor children, names and birthdates and whether or not baptized

Transferring Members

Where transferring to (another church or Inactive Roll)

Removing Members

Baptisms

Date of baptism, person's full name, if child: parents' names, birthdate (including year), place of birth, minister's name

Death

Date of Death, whether or not an elder (either active or inactive), whether active member or inactive member

Weddings

full names of couple, minister officiating, date, place (all weddings in the church and those performed by the pastor elsewhere)

E. Letters of Appreciation

Dear Mary,

At our last Session meeting, we were informed of your recent honor as an outstanding volunteer at Warm Springs Hospital. The Session asked me to convey to you its congratulations and its appreciation of members like you who give of their time to others. Your service and diligence are an inspiration to us all.

Once again, we all congratulate you on your award and we thank you for being such an excellent representative of what Jesus would have us do.

Sincerely,

To the staff, parents, and children of the church Children's Enrichment Center

From the Session:

Whereas Session members are people

Whereas cookies are enjoyable

Whereas people like cookies

Whereas cookies make people feel happy

Therefore

Let it known that The Session thanks you for the cookies.

Signed by the hand of the Clerk.

F. Sample Ballots

CONGREGATION NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Write names of the persons you wish to vote for; vote for no more than five (5).

BALLOT FOR ELDERS

Vote for no more than four (4).

Nominee1 _____

Nominee2 _____

Nominee3 _____

Nominee4 _____

BALLOT

Vote either FOR or AGAINST.

For the motion _____

Against the motion _____

G. Financial Categories for Annual Session Statistical Report

RECEIPTS

- a. Contributions
 - pledges
 - loose offering (cash and checks)
 - special offerings
 - One Great Hour of Sharing
 - Joy Gift
 - Souper Bowl
 - Designated gifts that pass through the church such as someone specifying a gift to the Food Bank
 - etc.
- b. Capital and Building Funds
 - building fund
 - organ fund
 - gifts specified for other capital expenses such as new oven, etc.
- c. Investment and Endowment
 - interest/dividends from money-market accounts, stocks, bonds
(interest on checking/savings accounts could be included here or under Other)
 - receipts from sale of stocks/bonds
- d. Bequests
 - money received from a person's estate
 - value of one-time contributions of anything of value from a person's estate
- e. Other Income
 - other money received.
(this could be calculated by difference if you know total receipts; i.e., this is:
total receipts - a - b - c - d - f)
- f. Subsidy or Aid
 - money from other churches, presbytery, synod, GA for local programs

EXPENDITURES

- a. Local Program
 - salaries, wages, pension, benefits
 - utilities
 - office supplies

etc.

(this could be calculated by difference if you know total expenditures; i.e., this is:
total expenditures - b - c - d - e - f - g - h)

b. Local Mission

local mission projects within the church's general geographical area (city)
in San Antonio this includes House of Neighborly Service, Food Bank, etc.
this includes from the budget, from church groups, and from designated gifts

c. Capital Expenditures

money paid toward mortgages
purchase of new equipment such as stoves, air conditioners, etc.
extraordinary repairs or renovations

d. Investment Expenditures

money placed into stocks, bonds, etc.
brokers' fees

e. Per Capita Apportionment

as billed by Presbytery

f. Validated Mission

Unified Giving (paid to Presbytery)
One Great Hour of Sharing
Joy Gift
Hunger Offerings
Disaster Relief
Women's Birthday Offering
Peacemaking Offering
Witness Offering
etc.

(these are usually paid to Presbytery; local Presbyterian mission such as House of Neighborly Service for churches in San Antonio may be included here, other Presbyterian mission such as Presbyterian Children's Home, Pan American School, Menaul School, Stillman College, Austin Theological Seminary should be included here)

g. General Assembly Theological Education Fund

h. Other Mission

non-local, non-Presbyterian mission gifts

NOTE: If you are not certain what category to place an item, use your best judgment.

H. Church Group Financial Reporting Form

For purposes of financial reporting to the General Assembly via the Session Annual Statistical Report, please submit this form to the Clerk of Session at the end of the year. The categories on this form match those on the Statistical Report. See the Clerk if you have questions about the categories.

STARTING BALANCE (all funds) _____

RECEIPTS

a. Contributions (all income except interest) _____

c. Interest _____

TOTAL _____

EXPENDITURES

a. For Local Program (includes items such as office supplies) _____

b. Local Mission _____

f. Presbyterian Mission other than Local (includes money sent to
Presbytery for disbursement) _____

h. Other Mission (mission not included in b and f) _____

TOTAL _____

ENDING BALANCE _____

I. About the Author

I am an inorganic chemist and a university professor. I was on the faculty of The University of Toledo, a comprehensive doctoral institution with over 20,000 students that is a part of the Ohio state university system, for 25 years. During that time I spent one year as Visiting Professor at Michigan State University. After taking early retirement, I have taught part-time at The University of Texas at San Antonio and at Trinity University. I have published chemistry textbooks and articles for scientific journals based on both my scholarly research and on my teaching.

I have served on Session at two different churches for a total of 11 years being Clerk of Session for 8 of those years (4 years at each church). My Session committee assignments have included Adult Christian Education, Membership, Worship, Fellowship, Stewardship, ad hoc Committee to Reorganize Session Meetings, and ad hoc search committees for secretary (twice) and Christian Education Director (twice). There have also been two short periods as editor of the church newsletter. At the Presbytery level, I have served on one Administrative Commission (session replacement) for Maumee Valley Presbytery and as chair of the Trustees of the Henrietta M. King Memorial Fund for Mission Presbytery. I also serve on the Steering Committee of the Lay Leadership Institute of Mission Presbytery.

It has been a combination of my scholarly training and activity and my church activities that has led me to write handbooks for clerks of session, for elders, and for session committee moderators. In addition, I have written a series of Sunday School lessons for adults originating with some sermons I have preached and incorporating my perspective as a scientist.

J. Certificates

Examples of these certificates are included.

Membership
Infant Baptism
Adult Baptism
Confirmation/Membership
Ordination of Elder
Ordination of Deacon
Installation of Elder
Installation of Deacon



Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that

NAME

has been received as a member of

**Oak Hills Presbyterian Church
San Antonio, Texas**

This DAY day of MONTH YEAR

PASTORNAME, Pastor

CLERKNAME, Clerk of Session

Certificate of Baptism



This certifies

Child's Name

*Child of PARENT1 and PARENT2 LASTNAME
Born on the DAY day of MONTH YEAR
in CITYSTATE*

Received Christian Baptism

on the DAY day of MONTH YEAR

at Oak Hills Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas

PASTORNAME, Pastor

ELDERNAME, Elder



Certificate of Baptism

This certifies that

NAME

*Upon Confession of Faith
has been baptized
on the DAY day of MONTH YEAR*

at

Oak Hills Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas

PASTORNAME, Pastor

ELDERNAME, Elder



Certificate of Confirmation/ Membership

This is to certify that

NAME

was confirmed in the faith and has been received as a member of

**Oak Hills Presbyterian Church
San Antonio, Texas**

This DAY day of MONTH YEAR

PASTORNAME, Pastor

CLERKNAME, Clerk of Session

Certificate of Ordination



NAME

having been examined and ordained

Elder

*in the Oak Hills Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, Texas
according to the Constitution of the*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

this DAY day of MONTH YEAR

PASTORNAME, *Pastor*

CLERKNAME, *Clerk of Session*

Certificate of Ordination



NAME

having been examined and ordained

Deacon

*in the Oak Hills Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, Texas
according to the Constitution of the*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

this DAY day of MONTH YEAR

PASTORNAME, Pastor

CLERKNAME, Clerk of Session

Certificate of Installation



Name

*having been previously ordained
has been regularly elected and installed*

Elder

*in the Oak Hills Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, Texas
agreeably to the Word of God and according to the Constitution of the*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

*has been acknowledged and received by the congregation of this church
this DAY day of MONTH YEAR*

PASTORNAME, *Pastor*

CLERKNAME, *Clerk of Session*

Certificate of Installation



Name

*having been previously ordained
has been regularly elected and installed*

Deacon

*in the Oak Hills Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, Texas
agreeably to the Word of God and according to the Constitution of the*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

*has been acknowledged and received by the congregation of this church
this DAY day of MONTH YEAR*

PASTORNAME, Pastor

CLERKNAME, Clerk of Session