

Clerk of Session Training

Presbytery of Tampa Bay

General Role and Book of Order Requirements

- The **main** thing that a Clerk of Session is responsible for is to maintain and preserve the minutes, rolls and registrars of a congregation, including:
 - Session Minutes
 - Congregational Meeting Minutes
 - Minutes of Joint Meetings of Session with Trustees or Deacons
 - Baptized Members Roll
 - Active Members Roll
 - Affiliate Members Roll
 - Inactive Members Roll (optional)

General Role and Book of Order Requirements

- Installed Pastor Register
- Elder Register
- Deacon Register
- Baptism Register
- Marriage Register (optional)

General Role and Book of Order Requirements

- Broadly, the Clerk of Session is also responsible:
 - to know the Book of Order
 - to know Robert's Rules
 - to send and receive communications on behalf of session
 - to assist the pastor regarding matters related to session

General Role and Book of Order Requirements

- The Clerk of Session is also responsible for the following reports to Presbytery and GA:
 - Annual Session Minutes Review of Previous Year's Minutes
 - Necrology
 - Annual Statistical Report
 - Clerk's Annual Questionnaire

General Role and Book of Order Requirements

- Other common items that vary by church:
 - Newsletter articles
 - Assisting the moderator in keeping track of reports and motions for the agenda
 - Keeper of the church's Bylaws and manuals

Writing Good Minutes

- Robert's Rules guidelines for what to include in minutes:
 - General Principles
 - Record **actions** not discussion and not transcription
 - Don't editorialize
 - Recording of Motions
 - Record the *final* wording of main motions, and what happened to them (passed, failed, tabled, etc.)
 - Record even failed points of order or appeals
 - Mover, but not seconder, of motion

Writing Good Minutes

- Robert's Rules (con't):
 - Location of meeting (church name)
 - Date and time
 - Type of meeting (stated or called)
 - Name of Moderator
 - Name of Clerk
 - Time you begin and time you adjourn
 - Number of votes for and against if voting by ballot

Writing Good Minutes

- Robert's Rules (con't)
 - Declaration of quorum
 - It's your job to declare a quorum. It's also your job to know what quorum is for your session (varies by each church, and should be in your bylaws).
 - When appropriate, election of Clerk and/or Treasurer
 - Attendance, including guests
 - Approval of agenda
 - Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
 - If corrected, don't include the changes, just note that they were corrected

Writing Good Minutes

- Robert's Rules (con't)
 - Summaries of Oral Reports of: (written reports may be attached to the minutes instead)
 - Clerk
 - May contain correspondence, announcements, and report of the serving of the Lord's Supper, in addition to listing of baptisms, marriages, changes in membership rolls.
 - Treasurer
 - Pastor or other staff
 - Committees and Commissions
 - **Don't** summarize the remarks of a guest speaker

Writing Good Minutes

- Robert's Rules (con't)
 - When selling, encumbering or receiving real property:
 - Name, address and legal description of the property;
 - Name of buyer/lessee;
 - Sale price/terms;
 - Loan amount, purpose and terms, including the name of the lender;
 - Lease terms and liability insurance;
 - Concurrence of presbytery where necessary

Writing Good Minutes

- Book of Order Guidelines
 - The Book of Order directs that each meeting of a council (eg, your session) begin and end with prayer. The minutes should reflect this.
 - Election of Elder Commissioners for Presbytery and Regional Commission meetings
 - Reports of Elder Commissioners from Presbytery and Regional Commission meetings
 - Approval of Communion dates
 - Approval of Baptisms and dates
 - Examination of new members

Writing Good Minutes

- Book of Order Guidelines (con't)
 - Reception of new members by:
 - Profession of Faith and Baptism
 - Reaffirmation of Faith
 - Letter of Transfer
 - Removal of members by:
 - Transfer
 - Inactive
 - Request
 - Death

Writing Good Minutes

- Book of Order Guidelines (con't)
 - Examination and installation/ordination date for incoming Ruling Elders
 - Meeting time and agenda of Congregational meetings
 - Housing Allowance for Pastoral staff
 - Approval of Budget

Writing Good Minutes

- Tips and Tricks
 - Recording minutes is *much* easier if you write them out ahead of time and just leave the outcomes blank. Eg, you already know what motions are coming from which committees, just not if they'll be passed or not.
 - You'll want to have a copy of the Minutes Review Sheet as you're completing the minutes; this will help you make sure you've got everything you need come review time.
 - Keep a calendar of events you may want to remind the pastor of for the agenda.
 - Use example minutes from someone else as a base

Sample Session Minutes

Below you'll find some "bare bones" example minutes of a session meeting. If the agenda you're working with puts things in a different order, go with the agenda.

**Sample Presbyterian Church
Tampa, Florida
Stated Session Meeting Minutes
January 31, 2017**

Present: Pastor James Waters, Moderator, John Smith, Clerk, Jane Doe, John Doe, Elder 3, Elder 4

Excused: Elder 5

Absent: Elder 6

Guests: Charlie Smith, Commission on Ministry, Jennifer Smith, Treasurer

Pastor Waters opened the meeting with prayer at 7:01pm. Clerk John Smith declared a quorum present.

Session approved minutes from the congregational meeting on Sunday January 15th as presented and from the stated session meeting on January 10th as corrected. The agenda was also approved as presented.

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Pastor's Report:

Pastor Waters reported on visitations during the previous month and that the new copier was working out well.

Treasurer's Report:

Jennifer reviewed her written report on monthly income and expenses with the session.

Clerk's Report:

The clerk of session reported no correspondence to the session. There was one baptism as well as communion on Sunday January 22nd.

Presbytery Report:

Jane Doe reported on the January 14th meeting of Presbytery. Various amendments to the Book of Order were approved.

Committee Reports:

Mission Committee:

Elder 3 reports that the Mission Committee allocated \$3,000 to Beth-El this year, and \$3,000 to

Cedarkirk. Further mission giving and projects for the year are still being discussed. [you can summarize a written report or, better, attach it to the minutes]

Personnel Committee:

No report.

Commission Reports:

Commission to Receive New Members:

Pastor Waters reported that 2 people were examined for membership following the new member's class on January 22nd. They will be received via Reaffirmation of Faith at the February 5th worship service.

Old Business:

John Doe moved that the carpet in the sanctuary be replaced, and that the Building Committee be tasked with hiring a company to do so. The motion was seconded and discussed. Jane raised a point of order to Pastor Waters regarding the Treasurer's ability to participate in the discussion, as Jennifer is not an Elder. Pastor Waters, after consultation with the session, allowed Jennifer the floor. The motion passed, and the Building committee will bring a report to the next stated session meeting.

New Business:

Charlie Smith spoke to the session regarding best practices related to ministerial transitions on behalf of the Commission on Ministry.

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Jane Doe moved that the meeting be adjourned, which was seconded and passed. Elder 4 closed the meeting with prayer at 8:22pm.

Signature

John Smith, Clerk of Session
Sample Presbyterian Church

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

- Rolls can only be changed by the Session, but the clerk maintains them.
- There are only 3 rolls required by the Book of Order (notice “Inactive” is not one of them):
 - Baptized Members
 - People who have been baptized, but not confirmed (made a public profession of faith).
 - Record their Name, Date, and Church where their baptism occurred.
 - Remove people from this roll once they are confirmed, or once they leave the church

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

– Active Members

- Baptized person having made a profession of faith and commitment to their local church.
- Record their Name, Date received, Method of Reception (Baptism/Profession, Reaffirmation, Transfer), Date of removal and method of removal (transfer, death, request of member, lack of activity).
 - Unless a member moves, the period of inactivity prior to removal must be at least 2 years, and the session “shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity”. You don’t *have* to remove inactive members.

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

– Affiliate Members

- Active member of another church.
 - Eg, college student, snowbird, etc
- Must be renewed every 2 years
- Record their Name, Date of Affiliation, Home Church, Date of Renewal and Date of Return to Home Church

– Inactive Members (optional)

- This is no longer a requirement, but if a session would like to keep this roll, there can be advantages: at times when a member would object to having a relative removed from the rolls entirely, for instance.

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

- Registers Required by the Book of Order:
 - Baptisms
 - Register of Infant and Adult Baptisms shall include name, parents' names (if applicable), and date of birth and date of baptism of those being baptized.
 - Elders
 - Register of Elders shall include each elder's name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

– Deacons

- Register of Deacons shall include each deacon's name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

– Pastors

- Register of Pastors shall include the names of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.

Registers and Rolls

Tips and Best Practices

– Marriages (Optional)

- Prior to 2011, sessions were also required to maintain a register of marriages. If you wish to continue maintaining this register, here is the list of those marriages that are to be recorded:
- 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

Preservation of Records (Minutes, Rolls and Registers)

- Digital is not good enough – programs change, and they're sometimes harder to authenticate.
 - Creating and accessing records digitally is fine. Storing them digitally is not.
- Vinyl binders are bad for long term storage. They give off a gas that degrades records.
- Inkjet printers are superior to laser printers for long term record keeping. Most paper is already acid-free.
- Make sure the final minutes are signed (by you) and sealed (by the Presbytery)
 - I'll send you a copy of your Minutes Review form with a seal to insert into your minutes.

Preservation of Records (Minutes, Rolls and Registers)

- Records should be:
 - Kept in a binder
 - Have numbered pages
 - This is to prevent insertion of counterfeit pages.
 - Blank pages should be marked with a large X, or labeled as intentionally blank.
 - This is to prevent insertion of counterfeit pages.
- Presbyterian Historical Society Guidelines:
 - <http://www.history.pcusa.org/services/records-management/records-congregations>
 - Most everything except detailed financial records is of value.

Preservation of Records (Minutes, Rolls and Registers)

- Minutes permanent
- Registers permanent
- Annual reports permanent
- Bylaws/charters permanent
- Incorporation records permanent
- Annual budgets permanent
- Annual audits permanent
- Annual financial statements permanent
- Subject files: permanent
correspondence, minutes, or other records surrounding subject matter of continuing administrative or legal value, or comprising information on the mission, vision, and actions of the congregation
- Manuals/handbooks permanent
- Newspapers/newsletters permanent

Preservation of Records (Minutes, Rolls and Registers)

- Brochures/promotional materials (1 copy) permanent
- Photographs permanent
- Architectural drawings, plats, plans, blueprints permanent
- Wills, bequests permanent
- Legal/judicial cases permanent
- Loan agreements satisfaction + 20 years
- Property appraisals, records of sale 20 years after sale
- Personnel records/employee records employment + 7 years
- Contracts active + 6 years
- Accounts payable 7 years
- Accounts payable invoices 3 years
- Accounts receivable records 3 years
- Bank deposit slips 3 years
- Bank statements 7 years

Preservation of Records (Minutes, Rolls and Registers)

- Canceled checks 7 years
- Cash receipt records 3 years
- Donations (regular, weekly) 7 years
- Expense reports 7 years
- FICA / W-2 records 7 years
- Payroll records 7 years
- Petty cash records 7 years
- Receipts of purchases 7 years
- General/routine correspondence 3 years
- Travel plans/arrangements 3 years
- Periodic financial statements 2 years
- Data for updating Mailing lists 1 year
- Invitations 1 year
- Meeting notices 1 year
- Reference/Resource materials active

Rules of Discipline

- The session is the judicial body of complaint against a member of the church, including Ruling Elders (but not Teaching Elders).
- If you ever need this, ask the Stated Clerk for resources.
 - A great place to start is the [Stated Clerk's Handbook](#), chapter IV.

Congregational Meetings

- Minutes of all congregational meetings shall be included in the session record book along with session minutes in one chronological order.
- The installed pastor shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the congregation.
- The clerk of session shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If the clerk of session is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting.

Congregational Meetings

- The business of a congregational meeting may **only** include the following:
 - electing ruling elders, deacons, nominating committees and trustees;(always allow for nominations from the floor: G2-0401)
 - calling a pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor;
 - changing existing pastoral relationships, eg, approving changes to the terms of call of the pastor or pastors, or requesting, consenting to, or declining to consent to dissolution;
 - buying, mortgaging, or selling real property;
 - requesting the presbytery to grant an exemption to officer term limits as permitted in the Constitution (G-2.0404).
 - approving a plan for the creation of a joint congregational witness, or amending or dissolving the joint congregational witness (G-5.05).

Annual Responsibilities

- You have 2 major annual responsibilities to the GA:
 - The Annual Statistical Report
 - This manual from the denomination is a fairly comprehensive guidebook for this task:
 - <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/2016-english-session-annual-statistical-report-ins/>
 - If you need your password, let me know. It will also be coming to you in the mail.
 - Deadline is usually Feb. 1.

Annual Responsibilities

- Clerk's Annual Questionnaire
 - This is sent out as a link in an email, similar to surveymonkey if you've ever used that. This usually comes out towards the end of the year.
 - This is a completely different report than the Annual Statistical Report, although they cover some of the same ground. There is much more detailed information in the advanced training.

Annual Responsibilities

- You have 2 major annual Presbytery responsibilities:
 - the Necrology
 - This is a list of the Ruling Elders who have passed away in your church. It will be read at the February meeting of Presbytery during worship.
 - Session Minutes Review
 - This is also a great guideline for creation of minutes during the year

**PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY
2017 REVIEW OF 2016 SESSION MINUTES AND DOCUMENTS**

CLERK OF SESSION'S CHECKLIST (Large Print Form is Available)

Name of Church _____ Location of Church _____

Name of Clerk _____ Clerk Email _____

Please use this checklist as you prepare your minutes and documents for examination. This should help you with your own records and when you undertake to review another church's documents. You should provide the completed checklist to the reviewer, along with your Minutes and Documents.

	A. General Form and Structure of Minutes	Y/N	Page #s
1	Are all pages for the year numbered consecutively?		-----
2	Date, time, place, quorum, and type of meeting plus names of those present, excused, and absent. G-3.0203		
3	Prayer at beginning and ending of meeting. G-3.0105		
4	Meeting minutes signed by clerk of session		
5	Moderator present at all meetings. G-3.0104, G-1.0504		
	B. Required Minute Entries		
6	Elders & Deacons properly elected, instructed, examined, and installed. G-2.040 and G-2.0403		
7	Commissioners to Presbytery elected and their reports made to Session. G-3.0202a		
8	Commissioner to Regional Commissions elected and their reports made to Session.		

	examined, and installed. G-2.040 and G-2.0403		
7	Commissioners to Presbytery elected and their reports made to Session. G-3.0202a		
8	Commissioner to Regional Commissions elected and their reports made to Session.		
9	Approval of minutes of previous meetings. G-3.0204		
10	Approval of minutes of congregational meetings and joint meetings with deacons or trustees. G-3.0204		
11	Election of clerk and term specified. G-3.0104		
12	Election of treasurer and term specified. G-3.0205		
13	Annual review of property and liability insurance coverage to protect the facilities, programs, and officers. G-3.0113		
14	Annual financial review or audit made. G-3.0113		
15	Prior authorization for at least quarterly celebration of Holy Communion. G.3-0201b and W-2.4012a		
16	Reports of weddings, baptisms, and other uses of church property. W-2.03012 and W-1.4004		
17	Annual review of membership rolls. G-3.0201c		
	Annual review of pastor(s) salary. G-2.0804		
	C. Other Documents		Comments
18	Manual of administrative operations. G-3.0106		
19	Session's sexual misconduct policy. G-3.0106		
20	Session's child protection policy. G-3.0106		

Record appropriate comments below, linking the comment to the line number of the relevant item.

PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY
2017 REVIEW OF 2016 SESSION MINUTES AND DOCUMENTS

REVIEWER'S FORM (Large Print Form is Available)

Church being reviewed (name and location)

Name of Reviewer _____ Date of Review _____

Home Church of Reviewer: _____

REVIEWER: Please review the Clerk of Session's Checklist with G-3.0108 in mind.

In reviewing the procedures of lower council, the higher body shall determine whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded, have been in accordance with this Constitution, have been prudent and equitable, and have been faithful to the mission of the whole church. It shall also determine whether lawful injunctions of a higher body have been obeyed.

As you review these minutes and documents, please reflect on and respond, with examples insofar as possible, to the following questions:

1. Does the clerk's self-review give an adequate and accurate assessment of the minutes and documents of the church?
2. Do you find that these records reflect the ministry of the congregation as "prudent, equitable, and faithful to the mission of the whole church"? Do you see evidence of this congregation being engaged in ministry in healthy ways?

3. Do you have recommendations for ways these minutes could be improved?

4. Do you have comments to offer regarding good work and fruitful ministry of this church?

Reviewer's Assessment:

- These minutes and records are recommended for approval without exception.
- These minutes and records are recommended for approval with exceptions as noted.
- Assistance from the Presbytery could be helpful in order to improve record-keeping.

This form, along with the Clerk of Session's Checklist, should be emailed to statedclerk@pbtty.com, mailed to Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Tampa Bay (455 Scotland St, Suite 1, Dunedin FL, 34698) or faxed to 813 200 1054.

Date Received by Stated
Clerk from Examiners:

APPROVED Without Exception
 APPROVED With Exceptions Noted

Stated Clerk

Date

Other Presbytery Responsibilities

- You're also partly responsible for helping the financial person fill out the F-1 form, and for making sure the Session addresses commissioners for Presbytery and Regional meetings.
- If the Session *can't* send a commissioner, then you'll be the person who requests an excused absence from the Stated Clerk (usually at the direction of your session).

Common Questions

- Who can serve as Clerk of Session?
 - GA (1988, 137, 12.187, Com. 4-88): An elder, not currently active on session, may serve as clerk of session.
- Is the Pastor a member of Session?
 - Yes, all installed Teaching Elders are full members of Session, including voice and vote. (G-3.0201)

Common Questions

- Trust Clause Opt Out:
 - The trust clause opt out refers to a period of time just after the formation of the PC(USA) where churches of the old PC(US) could opt to remain under their prior rules for who makes decisions about the building.
 - The confusion lies in what the old rules say:
 - They do *not* say that a church owns its own property and can leave the denomination whenever it likes.
 - They *do* say that a church, not the Presbytery, is the one that gets to make decisions about the church property.

Common Questions

- Additionally, I believe it's also widely unknown that Presbytery permission is required if you lease any portion of your church building, or any property owned by the church at all for more than 5 years (eg, an old manse):
 - *G-4.0206 Selling, Encumbering, or Leasing Church Property*
 - a. Selling or Encumbering Congregational Property*
A congregation shall not sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber any of its real property and it shall not acquire real property subject to an encumbrance or condition without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation.
 - b. Leasing Congregational Property*
A congregation shall not lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation.

Q&A