

PLEASE PASS THIS BOOK TO YOUR SUCCESSOR

HANDBOOK
FOR
CLERKS OF SESSION

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you to the Presbyteries of Grand Canyon and Pittsburgh, which at one of the first training sessions I attended as a new stated clerk, provided us with a format for a handbook manual for clerks of session. Some portions of this handbook use that format and some of its contents directly. It was necessary to update some of its content as references to the Book of Order and some procedures have changed over the years.

Thank you also to the members of the Stated Clerk's Association who contributed in an anonymous fashion to the various resources made available on the Association's web page which were helpful as well. The balance of this handbook is based upon forms, questions and thoughts of my own, such as they are.

This manual explores only some of your responsibilities as the Clerk of Session. It is to be used as a guide. Above all, it has been designed and devised to ease your work in this challenging and rewarding position. It is a map which charts some of the known territory. As we celebrate our Presbyterian journey in praise of the Lord, let us do it with excitement and thanksgiving for all those who have journeyed before us and express enthusiasm to those who will come after. . .

Michael R. Lochow, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Northern Plains

HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARE YOU A NEW CLERK?	Page 4
THE CLERK AND THE SESSION	Page 5 - 11
THE CLERK AND THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING	Page 12 - 14
THE CLERK AND RECORDS	Page 15 - 31
THE CLERK AS HISTORIAN	Page 32 - 36
THE CLERK AND PRESBYTERY	Page 37 - 39
INSURANCE	Page 40
BASIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE	Page 41 - 42
WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM	Page 42
RESOURCE BOOKS	Page 43
DIRECTORY	Page 44 - 45

ARE YOU A NEW CLERK?

A successful clerk is not made over night. Knowledge of your resources and diligence in using them will help you to become proficient in your task of clerking. Here follows a list of priorities for you to pursue from the day of your election.

1. Locate the minutes book and church register. Locate all previous record books. Are they properly stored? *These records should never be taken from the church (except when being read by Presbytery's Committee on Session Records) and should be kept in a fire proof safe when not in use. You are the only person who can authorize entries into these books.*
2. Locate a current Book of Order. Chapter Ten tells about the duties of session. You will find most of the information you need immediately in this chapter. In this chapter the rolls and registers of the church are described, and you will find instructions on how to maintain them.
3. Locate copy of your church bylaws and congregational charter. Where the Book of Order is silent, the congregation's bylaws will often tell you what needs to be done.
4. Locate copies of architectural drawings, mortgage papers, church histories.
5. Locate a copy of the "Clerk's Handbook" published by the Presbytery of Northern Plains. You will find a great deal of helpful information in this document. Copies of the Handbook are available from the Office of the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Northern Plains.
6. Keep the presbytery address and telephone number close at hand. You will find help on almost every problem at presbytery. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Northern Plains is the person to whom you directly relate. For help on your questions and knowledge of whom to call, contact:

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THE CLERK AND THE SESSION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Before Meeting

Take to the Meeting

During the Session Meeting

After the Meeting

Session's Continuing Education

Sample Documents

 Session Docket

 A Notebook for Session Members

 Session and its Relationship to Other Organizations

BEFORE THE MEETING

1. Plan the docket : It is the responsibility of the clerk of session and the moderator of session to prepare the docket so that all business is handled in the most efficient manner. The docket becomes the outline for the session minutes. (A sample docket appears at the end of this section).
2. Meeting notices: send or arrange to have sent, notices of the meeting. It is helpful to accompany these notices with reminders to committee chairs of reports due and docketed, business referred, previous assignments. *(The call of a special meeting must include the exact purpose for which the meeting is called and no business other than that named can be transacted. The phrase, "...and such other business as may come before session,,," is not adequate in the call of a special meeting.)*
3. Most sessions have found that written reports enable the flow of business. In such reports historical and informational material always comes first in the report and the recommendations come last. Only the recommendations appear in session minutes unless session orders the entire report spread on the minutes. Many sessions find it very helpful for committees to have their reports ready in time to be sent with the call of the meeting.

TAKE TO THE MEETING

You are responsible for all papers and documents that aid session in reaching its decision. It will be helpful to have at each meeting...

- ***current** Book of Order
- *congregational bylaws (contents of a notebook for all session members appear at the end of this section)
- *session committee membership lists;
- *current - year session minutes;
- *a list of all referred and unfinished business.

DURING THE SESSION MEETING

*Session **cannot** meet without its moderator, who normally is the pastor of the church. If the moderator is absent or ill, the moderator may appoint another minister of Presbytery to moderate over the session, or with the approval of the pastor, may elect one of its own members to preside. If your pulpit is vacant, presbytery will appoint a moderator for session. In this event, please call the presbytery.

*A quorum of session must be present to have a legal meeting at which actions may be taken. The quorum of session is the moderator and one - third of the total membership except for reception and dismissal of members, in which case the moderator and two elders is sufficient.

* Record only that which is vital to the transaction of the business: minutes should be as brief as possible, but long enough to tell the story.

*Session meetings in most churches are informal. However, as clerk, **require** that **all** actions by session be voted upon. As clerk, you can **require** that all motions be in writing.

- * All motions passed should be recorded, using the exact wording of the motion as it was proposed.
- * Include the name of the maker of each motion made. The seconder of the motion is not necessary unless required by the session.
- * It is not necessary to record the number of votes for or against a motion, except in rare occasions.
- * You may find it necessary to help members of session word their motions. Helpful questions to ask about every session action are:

What exactly is going to be done?

Who is going to do it?

When will it be completed or reported?

How much will it cost?

Where will the money come from?

Is the action compatible with the Book of Order? (*If it is not, the action is null and void.*)

- * Motions that are lost, or die for lack of a second, are not recorded except in rare occasions.
- * Avoid descriptive terms, whether complementary or otherwise, as minutes should not reflect any opinion or promote any particular view of events.
- * **Do Not** include discussion in your minutes -- only main motions made and subsidiary motions adopted.
- * **Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised**, (latest edition) governs all the procedures of session in all cases not specifically provided for by the Book of Order. (**G-9.0302**)

AFTER THE MEETING

1. As soon as possible after the meeting, send copies of the minutes to the pastor or moderator, as there may be items of unfinished business that require thought and preparation before presentation at the next meeting or he/she may have corrections to your initial draft. Next, transcribe or have them transcribed into the minute book. Never include attachments or place inserts in the minutes book. If necessary photocopy whatever must be included onto number minuted paper
(Recommended for reports to be spread on the minutes.)
2. Make all necessary entries into the rolls and registers. No entry should be made unless a session action which appears in the minutes directs the entry.
3. Complete or dictate all necessary correspondence related to the actions of session. Within the church, all communication is from clerk to clerk or from clerk to stated clerk. The clerk's signature (not the moderator's or the secretary's signature) authenticates any document coming from the session.

Some clerks have secretaries who have the primary responsibility for the minutes and the rolls and registers. **The clerk of session supervises the church secretary in all matters related to the minutes and rolls and register.** The accuracy of these records is the clerk's responsibility, not the secretary's.

**SESSION'S CONTINUING EDUCATION
(G-10.0102)**

National studies show that very few elders understand their office, or the history, theology and polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Book of Order requires the session plan for the continuing education of its elders.

Here is a sample docket of the business which should take place at a session meeting. Use it to guide your preparation of the session docket.

SESSION DOCKET

1. Heading: The session (church name), of (city, state), held a regular meeting on (day, month, date, year), at (time), in the (room) of the church. The moderator was (name).
2. The meeting was opened with prayer by (name).
3. Elders present: (names)
Excused: (names)
Absent: (names)
Visitors Present: (names)

A quorum was present and the meeting was called to order.

4. The following minutes were read and approved: (Insert Regular or Special) Meeting on (date). Corrections made as follows: (Note here any reference to this correction made in the margin of corrected minutes).
5. Communications/Correspondence: (List)
6. Changes in Rolls and Registers of the Church:
Weddings: (name(s), date, witnesses); (In the church, conducted by an Installed Pastor); (In the church, not conducted by an Installed Pastor); (Not on church property, conducted by an Installed Pastor)
Marriages: (Other than above that affect member status on the roll.)
Deaths: (name, date of death, date of funeral)
New Members: (received by transfer, reaffirmation, etc.)
Requests for Letters of Transfer
Requests for Baptism: (name, parent's names, date of birth, baptismal date)
Other Changes
7. Reports heard, actions taken.
8. New Business
9. The meeting was adjourned at (time) and closed with prayer by (name).
10. Date of next regular session meeting is (insert date).

Respectfully submitted,

Minutes Approved: (initials)

Clerk of Session

Date of Approval: (insert date)

A NOTEBOOK FOR SESSION MEMBERS

Some churches have developed notebooks, or manuals, for each session member that include the necessary documents and information for intelligent decision making. Such a tool is particularly helpful in orienting new session members to their task.

Introduction

Church History

Includes a list of programs and activities with contact people, telephone numbers, meetings times and places.

Church Officers and Staff

includes names, addresses and telephone numbers

Bylaws of the Congregation

Functions, Duties and Responsibilities

includes ordination vows

Session Committees - Objectives and Duties

includes list of committee membership

Other Committees

Deacons

Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Men

Annual Budget

Special Purpose Funds

Special Rules and Regulations

Session Minutes

Church Members

Notes

SESSION AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

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

Board of Trustees (G-7.0400; G-8.0000)

The board of trustees is accountable to the session. Their powers as trustees are listed in G-7.0402 and shall not infringe on the powers of session.

G-7.0401 provides that active elders shall be the trustees of the corporation unless the by laws provide otherwise. Having such a unicameral board eliminates conflicts between the session and the board of trustees.

(**Recommendation:** It is possible for session to delegate powers to the trustees, although session is still responsible for the delegated powers.)

(**Recommendation :** the budget should be prepared by the board of trustees and the session together.)

The Board of Deacons (G-6.0400)

The board of deacons is accountable to session; chooses its own officers; meets annually with the session; and must submit its plans to session for approval. The pastors are advisory members of the board of deacons.

Nominating Committee (G-14.0223)

The church nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not of the session. It does not report to session; although the committee may wish to consult with session. The pastor is an ex-officio member of this committee.

Pastor Nominating Committee (G-14.0531)

The pastor nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not of session.

The committee has several points of contact with the session:

- *the pastor nominating committee develops the church information form and the long-range plan.
- *the session approves both documents
- *the committee negotiates the salary of the new pastor in consultation with the session/board of trustees.
- *the committee requests session to call a congregational meeting when it is ready to bring a candidate.

Session and Personnel (G-10.0102n)

Session supervises all ordained and unordained personnel. Session recommends to the congregation the salaries of all ordained personnel. This recommendation must meet the minimum guidelines set by presbytery.

Outside Organizations

Session controls the use of all church property, even to granting permission for the sanctuary to be used for weddings. If outside organizations use your building, please see the cautions under "Legal Questions." The purpose of an organization using the church should not be contrary to the mission of the congregation or the Presbyterian Church. It is wise to have a written contract with all organizations using the church building,

stipulating any rental fee, maintenance standards, and rooms of the church to be used.

THE CLERK AND THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Minutes

Due Notice

Call

Business

Proxy Voting

Ballot Vote (Who May Vote)

Quorum

Docket Form for Annual Congregational Meeting

TIPS ABOUT CLERKING THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

*The clerk of session is secretary to the congregational meeting, both ecclesiastical and corporate. G-7.0307

*The congregation minutes, both ecclesiastical and corporate, are signed by the moderator and the clerk. If your congregation does not have a unicameral board the congregation elects the secretary of the corporate meeting. The person elected may be the clerk. G-7.0307; G-7.0403

*Check both the Book of Order and your bylaws for constitutes "due notice" for the congregational meeting. At the very least, public notice must be given to the congregation the Sunday before and the Sunday of the meeting. To elect a pastor nominating committee or to elect a pastor, public notice must be given two Sundays before the congregational meeting and the second notice cannot be given the day of the meeting. G-7.0303; G-14.0611

*A congregational meeting may be called only by session, presbytery or one-fourth of the members of the congregation on the active roll. G-7.0303

*What business may be done at a congregational meeting? (Very little) G-7.0304

As clerk you should take particular care to alert the moderator of the congregational meeting when business is out of order. You will find a careful listing of such business in the Book of Order ("permissive powers" relates to adopting congregational bylaws, establishment of a unicameral board, waivers from election of officers, raising of the quorum, and buying, selling, and mortgaging of real property. **The budget is adopted by session, not the congregation.** However, session must inform the congregation of the budget. If the congregation does not approve of the use of its gifts, the members will not give. (**Recommendation:** at an informal meeting of the congregation after worship or a church supper, session should present the budget, invite comment, and solicit suggestions. **No actions should be taken at this meeting.**)

*The pastor(s) salary must be approved by the congregation and reported to presbytery for its approval. The Committee on Ministry will provide this form. The congregation :approves the pastor's salary for recommendation to Presbytery." G-7.0302;G-7.0304a.(3)

*Proxy voting is not permitted in church meetings, ecclesiastical or corporate.

*Always be prepared for a ballot vote to elect officers. If there is more than one nominee for an office, the election must be by ballot. (**Recommendation to avoid trouble:** Since only members on the active roll can vote, have your roll book current. Bring it with you to the meeting. If there is considerable tension about a particular vote, have active members of the congregation come to your desk to pick up a ballot.) G-14.0230

*Minutes of the congregational meeting are ordinarily approved before adjournment. However, the session may approve the minutes and report its action at the next congregational meeting. G-7.0307 Minutes of the congregational meeting must be signed by both the moderator and the clerk.

*Check the Book of Order and your bylaws for the quorum of the congregational meeting. G-7.0305

*If your congregation does not have bylaws, please contact the stated clerk for information about how to establish them.

Docket Form for Annual Congregational Meeting

Minutes of Annual Congregational Meeting
Month, Date, Year

1. The congregation of (church name), of (city, state), held its annual meeting on (day, month, date, year), at (time), in the (room) of the church. The moderator was (name).
2. The purpose of the meeting was to (state the express purpose of the meeting-the same purpose given in the invitation to the congregation to attend).
3. Notice of the meeting was given by (oral announcement, and/or bulletin, and/or letter).
4. The meeting was called to order and opened with prayer by (name).
5. A quorum was declared with (number) members present. (Quorum is 10% of active members.)
6. The following minutes of congregation meeting(s) were noted as having been approved by the session: Minutes of Meeting(s) on (Date(s)) were approved by session on (Date(s)).
7. Reports heard, actions taken: Include election of officers, nominating committee, etc.
8. Review of pastor's compensation.
9. Motion to grant authority to session to approve minutes of this meeting.
10. Adjournment, closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Clerk of Session

Minutes Approved: (Initials)

Date of Approval: (Insert Date)

Moderator (Name)

THE CLERK AND RECORDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Keep the Church Rolls and Register

Tips on Maintaining the Rolls

Tips on Keeping the Registers

Guidelines for Keeping Minutes

Sample documents

 Session Minutes

HOW TO KEEP THE CHURCH ROLLS AND REGISTER

Church Rolls and Registers are Legal Documents

Presbytery checks your rolls and registers annually. The roll and registers are checked against session minutes. You will find your responsibilities related to the rolls and registers in the Book of Order (G-10.0300.) Read these pages carefully.

There are only three ways a person can join the Presbyterian Church: profession of faith, transfer, and reaffirmation of faith. All three ways require formal session action.

ROLLS

The church rolls record every member who has ever belonged to your church. These rolls must be kept current. The official church rolls may not be kept in a card file or on a computer. There are five church rolls.

- a. Chronological roll: The chronological roll has numbers down the left side of a double page. Each member of the church is assigned a number at the time that person joins the church. Columns to the right offer space for necessary comments from time to time. A name is removed from the roll by action of session or because of death. The only ways a name can be removed are by a transfer to another church, transfer to the inactive roll, removal from the inactive roll, death, ordination to Ministry of Word and Sacrament, deletion or removal from membership.
- B. Alphabetical roll: The alphabetical roll groups church members according to the first letter of their last names. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll by membership number.
- C. Baptized roll: For most churches in the Presbytery of Northern Plains, the baptized roll is the same as the register of baptisms. * The baptized roll lists all infants, children and adults baptized in your church or transferred into your church with the name of the minister who baptized them. In the case of infant baptisms, the parents names must be listed. In the case of adult baptism, the name of the person baptized is always entered on the chronological and alphabetical rolls. Adult baptism is always accompanied by joining the church and joining the church is always accompanied by baptism if the person is unbaptized. The only ways a name can be removed from the baptized roll are by profession of faith, transfer, or death.
- D. Inactive roll: The inactive roll lists the names of members of the church, who in the judgement of session, have willfully let their active membership in the church lapse. The person must have been inactive for at least one year and session must have diligently tried to discover the cause of the member's non-participation.
- E. Affiliate roll: The affiliate roll enable a member who is away from his/her home church to join temporarily another church while remaining on the active roll of the home church. It must be renewed every two years. It is a very helpful roll for college students and "snowbirds."

*Note: to fill out the question on the General Assembly statistical report on "number of person on the baptized roll," count the names listed on your baptized roll, or register of baptisms. This includes minor children of active members and/or ministers, and any other persons baptized in your church for whom the church feels a current pastoral responsibility. If your roll book does not have a baptized roll, it will be necessary for you to use the register of baptisms. In this event you will need to make note of the changes on the register related to the changes in membership. Do not obliterate any name from the baptized register. This is an historical document.

TIPS ON MAINTAINING THE ROLLS

Mr and Mrs. John Adams are received by session on letters of transfer.

1. Session receives Mr. and Mrs Adams into membership. Do not make any entry into the roll book unless there is a record of this session action in the session minute book.
2. Record "John Edward Adams" on the chronological roll opposite the first free membership number. Indicate the way Mr. Adams joined the church (by certificate) and the date of the session action.
3. Record "Mary (maiden name) Adams (Mrs. John E)" on the chronological roll opposite the next free membership number exactly the same way you listed Mr. Adams.
4. List both new members on the alphabetical roll (the "A" page) with their membership number.

Mr. and Mrs. Adams have a son, Bryan, three years old, who was baptized in the former church.

1. List Bryan Lee Adams on the baptized member roll (register if you do not have a roll) with the date and place of his baptism, and his parents' names. His mother's name is recorded as "Mary (maiden name) Adams."

Mr. and Mrs. Adam's infant daughter, Sarah, is baptized after they join the church.

1. List Sarah Jane Adams on the baptized members' roll and the register in exactly the same way in which Bryan's name was listed.

*If Sarah is the daughter of a single mother who did not wish to state the father's name, list only the mother's name.

*If Sarah is adopted or a legal ward of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, their names are listed as the parents of Sarah.

*If Sarah is a ward of the court she cannot be baptized without permission of the parents or the court. Her legal parents' names are listed.

Mr. and Mrs. Adams have a son, Richard, sixteen, who has never been baptized. Session authorizes the baptism and receives him as a new member.

1. List Richard Adams on the chronological roll, indicating that he was baptized when he joined the church. List him also on the alphabetical roll and the baptized register, noting the date he made a profession of faith and joined the church. Richard cannot be baptized as an adult without a profession of faith, which makes him a member of the church.

Mary Jones has been in a nursing home for one year. She cannot attend worship services and does not contribute to the offering.

1. As clerk you must inform session that since her absence is involuntary she cannot be removed from the roll and session continues to be responsible for her nurture.

Billy Willmer hasn't been to church for over five years. Session discovers he went straight to graduate school after college graduation.

1. Write both Billy Willmer and a church located near his school suggesting that he affiliate with the church temporarily. Do not place him on the inactive roll unless you receive no response from him.

Mable Frisch, who lives in town, has not been to church for over a year. Members of session have called upon her several times to no avail. Session votes to place her name on the inactive roll.

1. Write Mabel Frisch's name on the inactive roll with her membership number, the date of the session action, and the date of notifying her of the action.
2. Note on the chronological roll, under "remarks" -"inactive roll" and the date of the session action.
3. Write Mable Frisch that she has been placed on the inactive roll, the date, and the reason. Urge her to become active in the church again. Keep a copy of the letter.

Session continues to contact Mabel Frisch for two years. She still does not reply or come to church.

1. Session votes to remove Mabel Frisch from the rolls.
2. You draw a thin ink line through her name on the inactive roll and on the chronological roll, noting the date of removal.

James Parr requests that session transfer his membership to First Church, St. Louis.

1. Session votes to transfer Mr. Parr.
2. You fill out the transfer certificate, noting on the back of the form the ordination Mr. Parr holds and the date of ordination and the dates of service.
3. You draw a thin ink line through his name on the chronological roll, noting the date of transfer after you receive his certificate of reception.

Mr. Parr's son, Jeffrey, ten years old, is on the baptized roll.

1. You note Jeffrey's name and date and place of baptism on the back of Mrs. Parr's transfer form.
2. You note on the baptized member's roll that Jeffrey's baptism was transferred to first Church, St. Louis.

Mary Jones dies in the nursing home.

1. You draw a thin line through her name on the chronological roll, noting the date of death.
2. If you have a death register, list Mary Jones' name in the register along with date of death, place of death and place of burial.

TIPS ON KEEPING THE REGISTERS

Detailed instructions for keeping the registers may be found in the Book of Order (G-10.0302c.) The registers are:

- a. Register of Baptized Persons
- b. Register of Marriages
- c. Register of Pastors
- d. Register of Elders
- e. Register of Deacons
- f. Register of Trustees

GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING MINUTES

SESSION RECORDS BOOK APPEARANCE

1. Clerks may use the standard loose-leaf minute book or a three-ring binder. Archival paper used in a three-ring binder should be what is called “acid-free” paper. The requirements for this paper can be found at www.history.pcusa.org/cong/acidpaper. The paper is sold loose in reams, therefore, you will need to maintain a personal chronological numbering of each page as you continue in your record keeping procedure. Some archival supply stores are:

Gaylord Bros.	800-634-6307	www.gaylord.com
Metal Edge, Inc.	800-862-2228	www.mtledge@ix.netcom.com
Light Impressions	800-828-6216	www.lightimpressionsdirect.com
University Products, Inc.	800-628-1912	www.universityproducts.com

Some local office supply stores may have it as well. Be sure to check that the paper meets the proper requirements.

2. The leaves should be:
 - a. Of uniform size and style
 - b. Numbered consecutively and uniformly
 - c. Held in place in an automatically locking binder or in the three-ring binder.
 - d. Ultimately bound in permanent book form of not more than 400 pages or stored in an appropriate box to preserve “acid-free” paper.
3. All minutes and records should be typewritten, not handwritten.
4. Do not leave blank pages or blank space of more than two inches on any page. If space is left, cross it out with pen and ink or type in “The Remainder of this Page is Blank”.
5. Do not insert into records any written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper.
6. Do not use glue, tape, Post-it Notes® (some adhesive remains on the page even after the paper tag is removed) on permanent records. The glue will accelerate deterioration of the paper.
7. Do not curl or fold the paper or use staples, paper clips or other paper fasteners. These accelerate the deterioration of the paper.
8. Minutes should be typed into the official record book only after review, correction and approval. If, however, a later revision becomes necessary, an entry in ink can be made in the margin, indicating the entry changed, the type of change, and reference forward to the new page where the change is authorized. The Clerk should initial the marginal note.

A. ENTRIES TO BE RECORDED AT EVERY MEETING

1. **RECORD DATE, TIME, AND THE TYPE OF MEETING.** The type of meeting should be identified: session, congregation, regular, special, annual.

2. **INDICATE THAN THAT MEETING OPENED WITH PRAYER**
3. **IDENTIFY MODERATOR OF MEETING** Ordinarily the Pastor, Interim or Stated Supply, is the moderator. In cases where another moderator is present the reason and name of person should be given.
4. **RECORD ELDERS PRESENT, ABSENT AND EXCUSED.**
5. **INDICATE THAN THAT A QUORUM IS PRESENT.** The Book of Order defines a quorum for the session (G-10.0202), but gives the session authority to establish a higher quorum for its own meetings. The moderator should be familiar with what constitutes a quorum in the church for both bodies, and minutes confirm that a quorum was present.
6. **RECORD APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES.** Ordinarily, minutes shall be approved at the next regular meeting of the session. They should be identified by date and type of meeting, and any corrections noted. While not required, it is expedient for the congregation to authorize approval of its minutes by the session. To avoid the need for confusing corrections, it is suggested that minutes not be entered in the Record Book until after their approval.
7. **ENTER MINUTES OF CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS IN THE RECORD BOOK.** Minutes from the annual congregational meeting and any specially called congregational meeting shall be entered in the session's minute book, and signed by both the Moderator and the Clerk (G-7.0307)
8. **RECORD ALL ADOPTED MOTIONS.**
Defeated motions need not appear in the minutes except by actions of the session. Record motions with all pertinent information included. Reference to other documents, which do not appear in the minutes, should be avoided whenever possible. Record presentation of committee reports **without** including the content of the report unless directed to do so by the session. Record only that which is vital to the transactions of the meeting or of historical value.
9. **INDICATE THAN THAT THE MEETING CLOSED WITH PRAYER.**
10. **SIGN THE MINUTES.**
When the minutes have been entered in the Record Book, Session minutes must be signed by the clerk or the moderator. Congregational meeting minutes must be signed by the clerk and the moderator (G-7.0307). Minutes entered in the Record Book should appear without erasures and interlineation. If corrections must be made, the corrected section appears in the minutes following discovery of the error, with a handwritten signed or initialed note in the margin by the error indicating the page where the correction has been made. Under no circumstances may a page be permanently removed from the Record Book. Permission to open new records book is done through conversation with the Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

B. ENTRIES TO BE RECORDED AS NEEDED OR INDICATED.

1. **RECORD THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**
Observance of the Lord's Supper should be authorized by session. All regular and special celebrations of the Lord's Supper should be recorded in the minutes of the next regular session meeting. While it is required to report only that the Supper was served, it may be advantageous for the church's historical record or worship attendance, to record how many people partook.
2. **RECORD THE PRIVATE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**
When the Lord's Supper is administered privately with the sick the minutes should record it, and who was present.
3. **RECORD THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM.**
All celebrations of Baptism should be recorded in the minutes of the next regular meeting of the session, indicating who was baptized and when. Note that ordinarily, the session shall authorize baptisms.
4. **RECORD PERSONS WHO ARE BAPTIZED.**
When an infant is baptized, the minutes shall record the infant's full name, the name of parents, and date of birth. The information is then recorded on the Roll of Baptized Members. The Baptized member Roll includes the children baptized in your church and names of children of members who were baptized in other congregations. When an adult is baptized, the minutes include the full name of person and is recorded on roll of adult baptisms.
5. **RECORD NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED.**
When new members are received by the session, the minutes shall record the individual's full name; the name of their baptized children, if any; the date and place of previous ordination as elder or deacon, if any, how they were received (profession or reaffirmation of faith or letter of transfer), and name of dismissing church. This information shall then be entered in the Roll and Records.
6. **RECORD MEMBERS DISMISSED**
When church members are dismissed, the minutes shall record the individual's full name; names of their baptized children, if any; the record of their ordination as elder or deacon if any; how they were dismissed (transfer, removal of inactive roll, dropped from rolls); and in the case of person dismissed by letter of transfer, the name and location of the church receiving them (the number assigned to each member in the Chronological roll should be recorded with the name.) This information shall then be entered in the Rolls and Records. The Book of Order G-10.0302b outlines the grounds and process for dismissal of church members. Effective date of dismissal is date of reception in receiving church.
7. **RECORD THE DEATH OF CHURCH MEMBERS**
When a member dies, that death should be reported to the session, and the minutes should note the individual's full name, date of death, and if he or she was an elder. This information shall then be entered in the chronological Roll. A special roll of those who died is no longer required. [Note: each year the presbytery prepares a necrology report to be part of the worship service at the first presbytery meeting of the

year and will ask for the names of any elders from your church who died in the previous year.]

8. **RECORD ANY TRANSFER OF MEMBERS ON THE CHURCH ROLLS.**
When church members are transferred from one membership to another (e.g. Active to Inactive, Baptized Members to Active Members, etc.), the minutes should record the individual's full name (the number assigned to each members in the Chronological roll should be recorded with the name) and the session's actions.
9. **RECORD MARRIAGE**
All marriage of church members, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property shall be reported to the session and included in its minutes. This information (if one of the partners is a member of the church, the number assigned to each member in the Chronological roll should be recorded with the name) shall then be entered in the Register of Marriages (G-10.0302c).
- 10 **RECORD ELDERS AND DEACONS ELECTED TO SERVICE**
When new elders and deacons are elected to be ordained and installed, the minutes shall record the individual's full name, completion of period of study, and session examination (G-14.0240), the date of ordination and installation. This information shall then be entered in the appropriate Register of Elders or Deacons. The installation of pastors should also be noted, with the dates of their service in the present church.
11. **RECORD COMMISSIONERS TO OTHER GOVERNING BODIES OF THE CHURCH**
When elders are elected by session as commissioners to Presbytery, or nominated as commissioners to Synod or General Assembly, the minutes shall record the individual's name and how long they have been elected to serve. It may also be advantageous, upon completion of the term of service, to record the individual's attendance and fidelity to the task.
12. **RECORD DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS.**
When the session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Book of Order, "Rules of Discipline" should be carefully studied. If discipline be administered, the minutes must contain such a record of the proceedings so the Presbytery will know who was disciplined, why and how. Check with Stated Clerk for any questions on procedure.
13. **REPORT TO SESSION ON PRESBYTERY'S REVIEW OF SESSION RECORDS**
When the session's records have been reviewed by the Presbytery, that report should be received by the session and appropriate actions taken to adjust or correct the records as indicated.
14. **FURTHER SUGGESTIONS:** It would be helpful, when referring to church members in the minutes, to identify them by the number where they may be found on

the Membership Roll. In addition, it is advantageous when actions are taken in specific compliance with the Book of Order (e.g. disciplinary action, removal of members, etc.) For the appropriate paragraph number to be identified.

C. **ENTRIES TO BE RECORDED ANNUALLY**

1. **RECORD ANNUAL REVIEW OF PASTOR'S COMPENSATION**
It is the responsibility of the session to review annually the adequacy of compensation which the church provides its pastor(s). (G-10.0102n & G-7.0302). It should be reported to the session when this review has taken place, and the session minutes should note it.
2. **RECORD ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT OR FULL FINANCIAL REVIEW**
The church's financial records shall be subject to a full financial review each year by a public accountant or firm or a committee of members versed in accounting procedures (G-10.0401d). It should be reported to the session when this has been done, and the minutes should note it. The review itself does not need to be in the minutes.
3. **RECORD ANNUAL JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF DEACONS**
The Book of Order requires "that a joint meeting of the session and board of deacons be held at least annually to confer on matters of common interest" (G-6.0405). Since no binding decision may be reached at such a meeting, minutes do not need to be recorded. But it should be reported at the next regular session meeting, when the joint meeting was held, and the minutes should note it.
4. **RECORD ANNUAL REPORTS RECEIVED FROM OTHER BOARDS AND ORGANIZATIONS**
It is the session's responsibility to supervise the work of all other boards and organizations within the church - deacons, trustees, men's and women's groups, etc. (G-10.0102m & G-10.0401c). The minutes should show at least annually, when these other groups have reported to the session on their work and their finances. The reports themselves need not appear in the minutes.
5. **RECORD THE COMPOSITION OF THE SESSION**
The Book of Order now requires that the minutes state annually "the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men and age groups, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation" (G-10.0301). This may be done in a variety of forms, and should ordinarily appear in the minutes for the first meeting after the beginning of a new year. The church's failure, over several years time, to elect a session representative of the congregation may be called into question according to G-4.0403 & G-9.0104.
6. **INCLUDE THE ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT**
It is a requirement of the Presbytery that a summary of the statistical and financial information reported to the General Assembly each year be entered in the minutes. This summary should include at least the following: # baptisms (adult and infant), # members received (by profession or reaffirmation of faith or letter of transfer),

#members removed (by letter of transfer, death or other cause), The total number of active church members as of December 31; the beginning and ending balance of church finances, total receipts and total expenditures (broken down as appropriate), total mission giving, and the value of all investments.

7. **FURTHER SUGGESTION:** For entries recorded annually in the session minutes, it is suggested that the Clerk keep an index or table of contents, so that these items may be easily located when needed, either by the church or the Presbytery.

The following sample minutes contain examples of things that might occur at a session meeting. Many can be used as a standard form such as the opening paragraph. Others may occur occasionally or never. The order is suggestive only and needs to be adapted to the particular actions taken by session. All reports should be in writing, including that of the clerk and pastor.

Sample Minutes

Minutes of the Regular (Special) Meeting of Session
October 15, 20__

A regular meeting of the Session of _____ Presbyterian Church was held in the church parlor at 7:00 p.m., October 15, 20 __. The meeting was constituted with prayer offered by the Moderator, the Rev. _____. A quorum was present.

Present were: The Moderator and Elders: _____
Excused were Elders: _____
Absent were Elders: _____
Staff and guests present: _____

Approval of Minutes The minutes of the August 15, 20__ meeting were **approved** (or **approved with the following amendments:**)

Correspondence The Clerk presented the following correspondence and referrals made in consultation with the Moderator:

1. Notice of the Presbytery Meeting referred to _____ Committee for nomination of commissioners
2. Notice of Christian Education event referred to Christian Education Committee
3. Bill for per capita due referred to Treasurer
4. Request for Session to participate in annual parade to Session
5. _____ etc. _____

Session **ratified** the referrals and directed the Clerk of Session to respond to Item #4 with regret.

Pastor's Report The Pastor presented the following report of his/her activities since the last regular Session meeting.

Baptisms Requested Session **approved** the requests for baptism of the following people and **referred** to the Christian Education Committee a request that a date be set for the committee and pastor to meet with the parents prior to baptism (or to meet with _____ concerning the meaning of baptism and church membership):

_____ (child's name) _____ (parent's name)

_____ (adult's name) _____

Baptisms performed: _____ approved by Session, July 15, 20__
_____ on behalf of Christ Church approved by Session on July 15, 20__

_____ extraordinary baptism

Session **ratified** the baptism of Baby Doe by the pastor and instructed the clerk to note the baptism on the Baptized Roll. Session instructed the clerk to notify Christ Church of the baptism of _____ (include date, birthday, parents' names using mother's maiden name.)

Weddings (all weddings performed on church property, performed by the pastor(s) anywhere, of members of the church married elsewhere)

Session instructed the clerk of record the weddings on the register.

Funerals Session instructed the clerk to record the deaths on the rolls.

Report of the Clerk The Clerk of Session presented the following report and recommendations.

Waiver That the presbytery approval of the request for waiver from election for Elder-Elect _____ be spread on the Minutes and that arrangements for the ordination date for _____ be referred to the Worship Committee.

The recommendation was **adopted**.

Annual Review That the Minutes and Register had been reviewed by Presbytery with one exception that the annual joint meeting of the deacons and session was not held and that his be spread on the Minutes. The recommendation was **adopted**.

Report of the Treasurer The Treasurer presented the financial report for the period from January 1 to October 1, 20____.

Receipts _____
Disbursements _____

Receipts, year to date _____
Disbursements, year to date _____
Balance, year to date _____

The report was **received and filed for audit**.

Report of the Commissioner Elder _____ presented a report on the September Presbytery meeting and made the following recommendations:

Special Offering That session authorize a special offering for the Lazarus Fund in Accordance with Presbytery's request. The recommendation was **referred** to the Worship Committee.

Next Presbytery That the next Presbytery meeting would be held on November 20 at

Meeting

Second Presbyterian Church at 1:00 p.m. and that session appoint a commissioner. Session **appointed** Elder _____ to be commissioner to the November 20 meeting.

REPORT OF SESSION COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Elder _____, Chair of the Special Committee recommended that

Name Change the name of the church be changed from _____ United Presbyterian Church to _____ Presbyterian Church, contingent upon the approval of the congregation and the presbytery. Session **approved** the recommendation.

Elder _____ moved that Session call a special meeting of the congregation on December 1, 20___, in the sanctuary, following worship, for the purpose of taking action on session's recommendation that the name of the church be changed from _____ United Presbyterian Church to _____ Presbyterian Church, contingent upon the approval of presbytery. Session **approved** the recommendation and instructed the clerk to issue a call of the meeting.

Report of the Membership Elder _____, Chair, presented the report of the **Committee** Membership Committee, making the following recommendations:

Receptions That the following people have completed membership classes and are recommended to Session for examination for membership in the congregation.

- John Smith for baptism and profession of faith on October ___, 20___
- Mary William Smith (Mrs. John) reaffirmation of faith
- Elder Henry Brown by letter of transfer from Faith Presbyterian Church, Ordained elder 1964 in Faith Church. Actively serving as elder 1964-70.
- Deacon Mary Cooper Brown by letter of transfer from Faith Presbyterian Church, ordained
- (Mrs. Henry) deacon 1968 in Faith Church. Actively serving as deacon 1968-1974

The moderator introduced the proposed members, who were examined by the session. Session **approved** the examinations. John and Mary Smith and Henry and Mary Brown were received as active members of the congregation, to be introduced to the congregation the following Sunday. Session instructed the clerk to record the names of the new members in the roll book and to forward the letters of reception for Henry and Mary Brown to their former session.

Affiliate Members Elder _____ moved that Elder William Jones be received by session, at the request of First Church, Los Angeles, as an affiliate member of the congregation, effect February 17, 20___ to February 17, 20___.

The Moderator introduced Elder Jones, who was examined by the session. Session approved the examination and enrolled Mr. Jones as an affiliate member of the congregation. Session instructed the clerk to forward a letter of reception to First Church.

McConnell Elder _____ recommended that the affiliate membership of Ms Mary McConnell be renewed for an additional two years and that her session be notified by the clerk. The recommendation was **adopted.**

Transfers Elder _____ recommended that the following members of the congregation be transferred from the congregation and the clerk send the necessary letters of transfer, noting the baptisms of the Haine's children:

Emily Atkins (#1001) to First Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, Iowa
Edwin Haines (#967) to First Methodist Church, Fargo, North Dakota
Janet Haines (#968) to First Methodist Church, Fargo, North Dakota

The recommendation was **adopted.**

Visitations That since the Higgins family has not been present for worship for over one year,
the pastor and a member of the committee visit the family in an attempt to restore
Higgins them to the Church fellowship.

The recommendation was **adopted.**

Transfers to the Inactive Roll That the following people be transferred to the inactive roll and the clerk instructed to notify them:

Norma Greenleaf (#89)
James W. Speak (#450)

The recommendation was **adopted.**

Deletions from the Church Roll That Jonathan Edmund (#612) be deleted from the roll at his own request.
The recommendation was **adopted.**

Report of the Worship Committee Elder _____, Chair, presented the report of the Worship Committee,
making the following recommendations:

Lord's Supper That the Lord's Supper be celebrated the last Sunday of each month. The recommendation was **adopted.**

Elder _____ recommended that Elder _____ accompany the pastor in serving communion to shut-ins. The recommendation was **adopted.**

Report of the Christian Education Committee Elder _____, Chair, presented the report of the Christian Education Committee, making the following recommendations:
Sunday School Teachers That the following teachers be approved for the Spring Term:

----- , -----

The recommendation was adopted.

Curriculum That the following curriculum and teaching materials be approved for the Spring Term for grades K-adult. The recommendation was adopted.

Sunday School Sunday That Sunday, June 6, be approved as a special Sunday School Sunday with worship to be planned by the Sunday School. The recommendation was referred to the Worship Committee in consultation with the pastor for study and recommendation.

Report of the Mission Committee Elder _____, Chair, presented the report of the Committee, with the following recommendation:

Mission Fair That a mission fair be held in October in conjunction with the stewardship campaign. The recommendation was adopted.

Report of the Stewardship Committee Elder _____, Chair, presented an informal report concerning the plans for the stewardship campaign and the intention of the committee to bring a final plan for session's approval at the next meeting.

Report of the Finance and Property Committee Elder _____, Chair, recommended that Session approve the sale of the manse and refer the terms of the sale to the Board of Trustees for implementation. The recommendation was approved for recommendation to the congregation and to the presbytery.

RECESS

The moderator recessed the session meeting at 8:30 p.m. for the purpose of meeting as a Board of Trustees. (*if session is unicameral*)

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES October 15, 20__

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of _____ Presbyterian Church was held in the church parlor at 8:30 p.m., October 15, 20___. The meeting was called to order by the President, _____. A quorum was present.

Present were the President and Trustees _____ ;
Excused were: _____
Absent were: _____

Approval of the Minutes The minutes of the September 15, 20__ meeting were **approved** (or **approved with the following amendments**):

Manse The Secretary of the Board of Trustees moved that the manse be sold for no less than \$120,000.00 to the highest bidder; that a corporation meeting be called following the special meeting for the purpose of seeking the approval of the sale by the corporation, contingent upon like approval by Presbytery. The recommendation was **adopted** and the secretary directed to give notice of the meeting.

Adjournment The meeting of the Board of Trustees was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

/s/ President of the Board

/s/ Secretary

SESSION RECONVENES: The Moderator reconvened session with prayer at 8:45 p.m.

Report of the Ecumenical Elder _____, Chair, reported that final arrangements were being made for a Good Friday Worship Service, making the following recommendations:

That Session investigate the feasibility of purchasing a bus in cooperation with the Lutheran, Episcopal, and Methodist Churches in town for the purpose of transporting elderly people to church on Sunday mornings. The recommendation was **adopted** and the Ecumenical Committee was instructed to consult with the other churches, and, if possible, develop a cooperative plan report to the next meeting concerning the cost of owning and operating a bus as well as the liabilities related to such a purchase.

New Business There was no new business.

Adjournment There being no further business to come before session, the meeting was adjourned with prayer offered by Elder _____ at 9:30 p.m.

CLERK AS HISTORIAN

Creating a History

Department of History of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Microfilm Project

Records of Permanent Value

Vital Records

Records of Temporary Value

WHEN AND HOW TO PRESERVE YOUR RECORDS

The Clerk, as he or she is keeping records, is creating the history of the church for posterity. Please see suggestions below for preserving your records. There are other documents which you, or a person you appoint, may wish to collect and preserve:

tapes of anniversary sermons	bulletins from major worship services
photographs of the church and church property events	photograph albums video of important events
interview with your oldest members	old church artifacts (communion services, bibles...)
formal and informal photographs of former pastors	

Most churches publish a church history at each important anniversary date. Add these to your collection and each time you publish such a history, **please send two copies of the history to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Northern Plains**. If you find gaps in your history, please check with the Stated Clerk's office. We may have information to help fill in that gap.

A frequent question clerks ask is how to manage records; which records to keep and for how long. A management chart may be found at the end of the section.

The Department of History of the General Assembly
425 Lombard Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147
www.history.pcusa.org
215/627-1852

The Department of History is a nationally recognized archives for the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is an exciting place to visit and is *the* place to visit to do research. The records of many of our churches are held in the archives, either in original form or on microfilm. The Department will do ecclesiastical research for you on any original books stored with the Department. The Department will not do genealogical research under any circumstances; however, you may send people directly to the Department to do their own research.

FACTS ABOUT MICROFILMING YOUR RECORDS

The cost of microfilming varies as to who does it and what is chosen for microfilming. Microfiche is not appropriate for old records. It is appropriate for ledgers and financial records.

The Presbyterian Historical Society (The Department of History of the General Assembly) microfilms records at a competitive cost.

Not all microfilming firms are equipped to deal with old books or bound books which take special care and special equipment. **(The Department of History is recommended.)**

RECORDS AND COMPUTERS

Many churches keep their current membership on computers for mailing convenience. This is entirely appropriate but computer membership records **do not** replace the rolls, registers and the minute book and computer print-outs are not acceptable at the annual administrative review of church records.

Financial records can be kept on the computer but always have a hard copy of each new record.

SESSION'S VITAL RECORDS

Records of Permanent Value

Below is a list of records possessing administrative, legal or historical value. It is recommended that these records be stored in a fireproof, waterproof safe **at the church**. They should **never** be removed from the church or stored in members' homes.

Session Minutes	Annual Financial Review
Congregational Minutes	Financial ledgers of final entry
Rolls and Register Books	Deacons' Minutes and Reports
Charter and/or incorporations papers	Church School Minutes and Reports
Congregational By Laws	Presbyterian Women's Minutes

Miscellaneous

Property deeds	Blueprints, architectural drawings and sketches
Photographs - identified	Scrapbooks
Manuals and Directories	Worship bulletins
Newsletters	Histories
Anniversary publications	Ministers' biographies and photographs

Vital Records

Example of records that document the legal and financial position of the local congregation and that are essential for the continuation or resumption of operations following a disaster. Such records seldom constitute more than approximately two percent of an office's total list of records. Vital protection records may be found in both the temporary and permanent categories of records.

Accounts payable	Accounts receivable
Annual reports	Audits
Bank Balances	By Laws
Canceled checks	Certificate of incorporation
Charter and amendments	Contractual agreements
Cash books	Deeds
Employees' Directory	Financial statements
Insurance policies and schedules	Invoices
Leases Mailing lists	
Minutes	Purchase orders
Suppliers' directories	Trial balance (monthly)
Wills, bequests	

Records of Temporary Value

Any records not possessing permanent value would, of course, automatically fall into the "Temporary" category. The following list presents only a few examples of the many such records. Realistically evaluated, there should be many more records judged "temporary" than "permanent" in most offices.

Few temporary records should be retained beyond seven years: an example of an exception would be Worker's Compensation Reports which should be held ten years before destruction. When in doubt, check with your auditor regarding retention periods for financial records.

Account payable invoices
Bank deposits slips
Canceled checks
Correspondence re: speaking engagements
Employee withholding records
Expense reports
Letters of acknowledgment
Periodic financial statements
Receipts of purchases
Routine notices of meetings

Accounts receivable ledger
Budgets
Cash Receipt records
Data for updating mailing lists
Excerpts from documents retained elsewhere
Invitation
Payroll checks
Petty cash records
Requests for information and responses thereto
Travel plans and arrangements.

PRESBYTERY
TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Session and Presbytery

Commissioners to Presbytery

Nominations to Permanent and Program Committees of Presbytery

Reports to Presbytery

Actions Which must Be Approved by Session, Congregation, and Presbytery

Communication with Presbytery

Presbytery Review of Minutes, Rolls, and Registers

THE PRESBYTERY

The organization of Presbytery is found in the Directory & Manual of Administrative Operations (Revised April 2009). Each Minister has a copy of the Directory and each clerk should also have a copy.

THE SESSION AND PRESBYTERY

The relationship of the session to Presbytery is contained in the Book of Order. A list of specific responsibilities of session to the Presbytery follow:

COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity. It works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect elder commissioners to attend the meeting, stay through the end of the meeting, and report to the Session.

There are two regular presbytery meetings each year: the annual meeting on the first Friday and/or Saturday of February and the fourth Friday and/or Saturday of September.

The number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled depends upon the size of the congregation (G-11.0101).

Each commissioner is required by the Book of Order to report to the session about the meeting:

- *significant actions taken by the presbytery
- *a summary of issues deliberated upon
- *policy decisions made
- *implications of presbytery action for the congregation
- *concerns and opportunities open to the congregation through presbytery
- *raising of consciousness of the congregation's participation in the total ministry of Jesus Christ

Nominations to Presbytery Units and Standing Committees

Presbytery is always looking for particular skills and interest among the members of our congregations. The Presbytery of Northern Plains is also committed to find racial/ethnic minority members of our churches with skills and interest in serving on a presbytery committee. Nomination forms are included at the end of this section. Please share the gifts of your congregation with your presbytery. Return the forms to the Office of the Stated Clerk.

Reports to Presbytery

Annual General Assembly Statistical Report

The annual General Assembly Statistical Report is session's report to the General Assembly and is the specific responsibility of the session and the clerk of session. It is sent by the stated clerk of the presbytery to the church, addressed, "Moderator/Clerk? With a copy of the cover letter to the clerk. The report is sent early in December. **It is important for the clerk to locate this report.**

If it has not arrived by Christmas, please call the stated clerk's office immediately. The report is always due between January 15th and January 31st. Reports which are not returned to the presbytery on time will be returned unopened and the membership and financial figures from the previous year will be used. This does a great disservice to the congregation, particularly if it is searching for a pastor. Also a particular church's per capita assessment is based on these membership reports.

PRESBYTERY REVIEW OF SESSION MINUTES, ROLLS AND REGISTERS

"Every governing body above a session shall review the records of the proceedings of the next lower governing body. Presbyteries shall review the records of sessions annually. If a session shall fail to submit its records for this purpose, the presbytery shall order them to be produced at a specific time.

"In reviewing the proceedings of a lower governing body, the higher governing body shall determine, either from the records of those proceedings or from any other information as may come to its attention, whether:

- (1) The proceedings have been correctly recorded;
- (2) The proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;
- (3) The proceedings have been prudent and equitable;
- (4) The proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church;
- (5) The lawful injunctions of a higher governing body have been obeyed.

(G-9.0407d.(1), G-9.0409)

The Presbytery's committee on Session Records will conduct several meetings throughout the year (to be announced) when the Clerks of Session or Moderators can gather to accomplish the task of review. Please review P-6.0108 - Session Records Committee Procedures (Revised 2008) in the Manual of Operations on P-76.

In preparation for the review session each Clerk is asked to fill out the review form noting the pages in their records where the required actions were recorded. This greatly assists the reviewer in completing the review. You, as a Clerk, will appreciate this as you will be in the role of an examiner as well, examining the records of another session.

INSURANCE

Helpful ideas to keep your information up-to-date:

1. Perform at least an annual review of the insurance program with the session's committee that is responsible for the insurance coverage of the church.
2. A summary of the insurance coverage and premium(s) should be entered in the minutes of a meeting at which time the session approved the program/plan.
3. Perform annual safety inspections of your building with fire officials to identify hazards. Check with your local fire department, as they are often very pleased to assist with inspections and provide fire prevention ideas. Part of this safety inspection includes the placement and current operative performance of all fire extinguishers.
4. Create a detailed inventory of all furniture and equipment. The inventory list should include additions and deletions of items as they occur. A photographic inventory of all furniture, equipment and rooms of the church is an excellent inventory tool. A video recording is also an effective tool in providing documentation in the event of loss. All inventory records should be stored off-site preferably in a safe deposit box or similar secure location.
5. Conduct periodic appraisals to update the values of all property; appraisals should be conducted at least every three years.
6. Obtain at least two quotations for your insurance program. Seriously consider the program that is offered through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) You should begin your quotation process at least 90 days prior to policy expiration.
7. Be confident that all realistic insurance premiums are included in the annual budget.
8. Always retain all insurance policies, no matter how old.

BASIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

On Making a Motion At A Meeting of Presbytery

Elder or clergy commissioners to the Presbytery of the Northern Plains, have the right to make motions. To make a motion, rise from your seat, wait until the moderator recognizes you, state your name and affiliation, then simply and clearly state: "Mr/Mrs Moderator, move the following motion and if seconded will speak to it." State your motion. It is not discussion time until the motion has been seconded and the moderator invites you to speak to the motion. All motions of any length must be given in writing to the stated clerk. This is imperative if debate is lengthy. Only one motion will be considered at a time.

A motion, whether at a presbytery or a session meeting should clearly state: what is the motion, who is affected, when it is to be done, how it will be done and why it will be done.

Motions

Main Motion: Any motion which proposes an action to be taken by the governing body. Main motions are debatable.

To Amend: A motion to amend is to perfect the main motion; therefore an amendment contrary to the intent of the main motion is out of order. A motion to amend a motion takes precedence over the main motion. It must be adopted or rejected before the main motion is considered. If adopted, it becomes a part of the main motion. It is debatable.

To Substitute: A motion to substitute is a form of amendment. It takes precedence over a main motion. If approved, it replaces the main motion.

To Postpone Indefinitely: This is a motion to kill consideration. It is debatable.

To Postpone Definitely: This motion includes a specific time and/or date on which this motion will be presented to the deliberative body. It is debatable and may be amended.

To Commit or Refer: A motion to refer must include the body to whom this action is referred. The desirability or the details of the referral are debatable, but the matter being referred is not under debate.

To Reconsider: Once a question has been decided, it must not be reconsidered again at the same assembly, unless a motion to reconsider it made by a person who voted with the majority. It is debatable.

To Move The Previous Question: This is a motion to close debate and to bring the issue to vote. The motion must say, "I move the previous question." A voice calling out, "Question" is not appropriate and should be ignored. This motion requires a 2/3 vote and should not be used to close off debate or opposition prematurely. The moderator can rule,

prior to the vote, that in their judgment there has not been sufficient debate and that the motion is out of order. This motion requires a second and is not debatable.

WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS

Contrary to popular belief and probably what you have been told, Clerks of Session do have problems and questions. These questions may come out of meetings or from individual members about our system of government. Finding suitable answers is not always easy, but is always vital.

- Step 1: Try to find the answer in the *Book of Order*. This book has evolved over many years and is always your first guideline. In it you will find guidance and potential answers. The experience of familiarizing yourself with the *Book of Order* will also aid in finding other answers ahead of time.
- Step 2: If appropriate, discuss these problems or questions with the pastor or moderator.
- Step 3: If you still have a question, do not hesitate to call the stated clerk or the presbytery executive. They are well acquainted with polity and policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.

An important point is that Clerks of Session should seek help when a problem first arises, rather than wait for it to become a detriment to the life and work of the church. Seek guidance and use the tools as noted in this document. It is much easier to invite help when situations first materialize, than to invite presbytery to step in when the problem becomes too great for the session and congregation to manage along. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are all part of the connectional family.

RESOURCE BOOKS

Book of Confessions

This book contains our historic Christian Confessions basic to the theology of the Church. All ordained officers are to affirm that they will be instructed by these Confessions; therefore it is essential that this book is available for individual and group study as well as to be used at times of ordination and installation of officers.

Book of Order

This book contains three sections: (a) Form of Government, (b) Directory for Worship, and (c) Rules of Discipline. The *Book of Order* explains the polity and orderly workings of the Church. We turn to the *Book of Order* to find answers to our frequent questions, and it is one of the standards under which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Makes decisions.

The *Book of Order* might be considered our denomination's bylaws as well as its standing rules. It is essential for the Clerk of Session to have a good working knowledge of the *Book of Order* and be familiar with its use because it contains the fundamental working within the Church.

The *Book of Order* is revised following each General Assembly meeting (held bi-annually in June or July) and every Clerk of Session should have the most current copy.

Robert's Rules of Order

This book is mandated for use by the *Book of Order*, except where the *Book of Order* provides otherwise. (G-9.0302) The current book is the 10th Edition. There are shortened versions available, including of course, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules* and *Robert's Rules for Dummies*. Keep a version with your *Book of Order* for easy reference.

Companion to the Constitution - Polity for the Local Church

This book is a guide to Presbyterian law and procedures that addresses the needs of the members of a church session. It concentrates on the material useful and essential to officers and members carrying out their duties and ministries in their particular church.

Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers

This detailed, comprehensive interpretation of the *Book of Order* and Presbyterian polity is the most complete resource of its kind since the church's reunion. It explains principles and procedures of church government and includes changes since reunion.

These publications are available from Cokesbury (www.cokesbury.com) or Amazon (www.amazon.com). The Presbytery office has a limited supply of the *Book of Order*. If you have any questions regarding these resources please contact the Stated Clerk or the Presbytery office.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

For complete directory information of the staff and committees as well as the leadership of local congregations of Northern Plains Presbytery, make sure that you have in your possession a current copy of the **DIRECTORY & MANUAL OF OPERATIONS** of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains. You may obtain one from the office of the presbytery. A complete directory of the staff, commissions and committees of the General Assembly are found in the current **PRESBYTERIAN PLANNING CALENDAR**. For quick reference a few of the most frequently used offices/individuals are as follows:

Northern Plains Presbytery

Office of Northern Plains Presbytery

5555 South Washington Suite A

Grand Forks, ND 58201

701-772-0783

800-243-3532

Fax: 701-775-7599

Email: pnppoffice@gmail.com

Web: www.northernplainspresbytery.com

The Rev. Steve Minnema - Interim Executive

Laurie Elhard - Communications Coordinator

Office of the Stated Clerk

4339 9th Avenue Circle S #11

Fargo, ND 58103

701-271-4775

Fax: 701-271-4775

Email: sc.pbynp@gmail.com

Michael R. Lochow

Office of the Treasurer

3280 35th Avenue NE

Inkster, ND 58244

701-352-2020

bcawley@cawleycpa.com

Bill Cawley

Other email addresses and location information of presbytery leadership may be found in the presbytery's *Directory*.

Synod of Lakes and Prairies

2115 Cliff Drive

Eagan, MN 55122-3327

800-328-1880

651-357-1140

Fax: 651-357-1141

Web: www.lakesandprairies.org

The Rev. Phil Brown - Synod Executive

J. Jay Wilkinson - Treasurer/Stated Clerk

Other email addresses and location information of the synod leadership may be found in the presbytery's *Directory* or the *Directories* which is located in the "**Presbyterian Planning Calendar**."

Office of the General Assembly

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

100 Witherspoon Street

Louisville, KY 40202-1396

888-728-7228

Web: www.pcusa.org

Gradye Parsons - Office of the Stated Clerk
(Ext. 5375)

Mark Tammen - Constitutional Services (Ext.
5433)

Other email and location information of the General Assembly leadership may be found in the *Directories* which is located in the “**Presbyterian Planning Calendar.**”

Board of Pensions

200 Market Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103-3298

800-773-7752

Web: www.pensions.org

Our Regional Representative

Douglas Kelly

800-773-7752 x7045

dkelly@pensions.org

More detailed information regarding names/telephone extension numbers, etc. is located in the “**Presbyterian Planning Calendar.**”

Department of History

425 Lombard Street

Philadelphia, PA 19147

215-928-3886

Email: refdesk@history.pcusa.org

Web: www.history.pcusa.org

More detailed information regarding names/telephone extension numbers, etc. is located in the “**Presbyterian Planning Calendar.**”

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation

200 E. Twelfth St.

Jeffersonville, IN 47130

812-288-8841

800-858-6127

Our Regional Development Officer

Karen A. Krum

410 So. Stanton St.

Shannon, IL 61078

kak@fdn.pcusa.org

