



HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS OF SESSION

PLEASE PASS THIS BOOK TO YOUR SUCCESSOR

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the office Clerk of Session! You have joined a unique and important group of people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The *Book of Order* mandates that each governing body of the PCUSA have a moderator and a clerk. (G-9.0201). The clerks of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving Sessions are called Clerks of Session.

As clerk, you will record a good deal of the history of your church as you write the session minutes. Future generations will learn what your church did to further Christ's mission in the world by reading the minutes you write. It follows then, that it is important that you keep accurate records, of all the proceedings in session meetings and in congregational meetings.

This manual has been prepared to provide Clerks of Session with information, and examples to assist them in their work and to insure that they have easily accessible information about what must be included in the session record books. This manual has been prepared by the Office of the Stated Clerk with considerable material prepared by the Committee on Session Records, Presbytery of the Western Reserve, Presbytery of Grand Canyon and the Pittsburgh Presbytery drawing on information in the Book of Order and from various manuals for Clerks of Session and Stated Clerks.

If you have any questions, or need assistance, please contact:

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FORWARD

The **Handbook for Clerks of Session** is written for clerks as a guide to the responsibilities of the clerk of session. It is written with the following assumptions:

- a. The clerk of session plays a vital role within the Presbyterian Church (USA);
- b. The clerk of session maintains the history of the faithfulness of the church through careful minutes and records;
- c. The clerk of session is interested in and knowledgeable about Presbyterian polity;
- d. The clerk of session, along with the moderator, is the liaison between session and presbytery;
- e. The clerk of session is always striving to be a servant to session, in the fullest New Testament sense, and is equipped spiritually to fulfill the servant role; and
- f. The clerk of session is elected to be the continuing ecclesiastical officer of the congregation. In this capacity, the clerk and the session have the responsibility to see that worship takes place and that the pulpit is filled.

A clerk of a governing body understands that our order is to be derived from Scripture, as it is expressed in the Confession of our church. Our order expresses the principle that we must live our lives together in accord with our faith and as witness to the demands of Scripture. A clerk of a governing body respects the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as our covenant with one another about how we can, in our diversity, be such a witness. And a clerk knows that our rules are never an end in themselves, but rather an attempt to be faithful to our covenant. Our polity commits to a shared ministry among elders, deacons, members, and ministers of Word and Sacrament; it commits to a representative form of government in which elders and ministers have care of the congregation; and it commits to corporate governance in which decisions are always corporate, never singular. The moderator and the clerk of session, together, are the guardians of this polity. . . all to the goal of furthering the "Great Ends of the Church."

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (G-1.0200)

ARE YOU A NEW CLERK?

THE OFFICE OF CLERK OF SESSION

The Clerk of Session shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine (G-9.0203 b). The Clerk may be a member of the session, or may be an inactive elder. If the clerk is not a member of session, he/she may not make motions nor vote. Session may ask the clerk to be its parliamentarian and shall give the clerk voice in matters pertaining to the minutes and the clerk's report.

The person chosen to be clerk of session needs to be knowledgeable about session responsibilities, to have an understanding of Presbyterian polity, and be willing to learn basic parliamentary procedure. He/she must be able to write a clear record of the proceedings at session and congregational meetings promptly following the meeting. When the pastor or elders need a strong lay leader, the clerk of session is the person they turn to. This responsibility flows to the clerk not because of any explicit statement in the Book of Order, but because the officer who receives the correspondence, keeps the records, and routinely discusses the work of the session with the pastor and all of the committee chairpersons to form the agenda and refer business is the officer to whom they would take a problem. Presbyterian polity does not provide for any other lay officer to carry out these responsibilities.

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

RESPONSIBILITIES AT A GLANCE

1. Keep a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the session (G-10.0301).
2. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance (G-9.0203).
3. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records (G-9.0203), making recommendation to the session for the permanent safe-keeping of its records (G-9.0406).
4. Furnish extracts from the minutes when required by another governing body of the church (G-9.0203).
5. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of session (G-10.0302). (See Rolls and Registers.)
6. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees (G-10.0301).

7. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in the Book of Order (G-10.0102).
8. Notify the session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted. [Notification of annual and special meetings of the congregation shall be given on two successive Sundays (G-7.0302 and G-7.0303)].
9. Be sure that the annual statistical form requested by the General Assembly is completed accurately and returned to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery by the deadline noted.
10. Submit the session minute book to the Session Minute Review Committee of the Presbytery for annual review when requested (G-11.0103x).
11. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation (G-7.0307), seeing that the minutes are received by session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book. (See Congregational and Corporation Meetings.)
12. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of session, and respond as directed by the session.
13. Keep a list of unfinished business, including all matters referred to a committee or a staff member for later report to session, and remind the appropriate persons(s) if not reported expeditiously.
14. Be prepared to respond to questions of parliamentary procedure in meetings if requested to be parliamentarian. (Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order, except in those cases where the Book of Order provides otherwise (G-9.0302). Copies of Robert's Rules of Order and the latest Book of Order should be available at meetings.)
15. Receive and submit communications from/to other governing bodies.
16. Notify the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of changes in the membership of session.
17. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested.
18. Assist the pastor in church officer training, when requested.
19. In consultation with the moderator, prepare a statement of highlights of session actions and reports following the meeting for information for the congregation (may be included in the next issue of the congregation's newsletter). **Note:** Confidential matters should not be included.
20. May moderate the congregational meeting, if requested, during the pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary clerk should be appointed.
21. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the session or moderator.

A successful clerk is not made overnight. Knowledge of your resources and diligence in using them will help you to become proficient in your task of clerking. Here follows a list a 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 a 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. Consider the purchase from Cokesbury Books of the Companion to the Constitution – Polity for the Local Church published by the PCUSA. It is a book that addresses the needs of a church session.

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 Elizabeth is the person to whom you directly relate. For help on your questions and knowledge of whom to call, contact:

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7. Supplies you will need: Cokesbury Books and Church Supplies, www.cokesbury.com has many of the supplies you will need. They usually will mail them to the church and invoice the church.

- The correct minute paper (*if you buy unnumbered paper a numbering stamp and pad is available in the Presbytery office for your use*)
- Register fillers
- Minute and register binders (*because these are very expensive, we recommend that when your minute book is filled that you have the pages bound and reuse your present binder.*)
- Member transfer forms and stubs
- Baptismal forms and stubs

8. Plan to attend the annual clerk's training. You will receive notice of the training. Here you will receive answers to your questions, additional help. You will find the fellowship with other clerks of session invaluable.

TIME LINE FOR CLERKS: PRESBYTERY

January: Complete your annual statistical report and submit on-line or send copies of the completed worksheet to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery by the announced due date (usually around February 15). Do not wait for your congregational meeting.

February: Prepare your Minute Book and Register for the annual administrative review by Presbytery. Fill in the requirements form with the requested page numbers for each book. Be alert to look for the announcement of dates when the review will take place.

Announce Presbytery meeting dates for the year. (See "Commissioners to Presbytery," for process)

The seven (7) stated meetings of Presbytery are scheduled as follows:

January 4th Saturday at 9:00 a.m.

March 4th Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

May 4th Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

June 4th Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

September 4th Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

October 4th Saturday at 9:00 a.m.

November 4th Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

Early December: The annual report of Session to the General Assembly is mailed to the church c/o Clerk in a large envelope and appropriately marked. If you do not have your report by the end of the second week in December, search for it around the church. Someone has usually put it in a drawer or on the bottom of a pile. If you cannot find it, call the Presbytery Office **immediately.**

SUGGESTED TIME LINE FOR CLERKS: SESSION

Many clerks are aided by the church administrative assistant. However, the clerk is accountable for the following responsibilities and directs the church secretary in the following tasks.

Two Weeks Before Session: *Send meeting notices.

*Contact committee chairs about unfinished and referred business for which they are responsible. Remind chairs that all recommendations need to be in writing with enough copies for the members of session.

One Week Before Session: *Develop the docket of the session meeting with the moderator.

Session Meeting: *Seek approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

*Record the minutes of the meeting (see minute format).

After the Session Meeting: *Write the minutes. They may be mailed to all session members. If the minutes are not mailed, send excerpts from the minutes to each chair of all motions related to the particular committee.

*Complete all correspondence directed by the minutes, including letters of transfer. Remember that all correspondence between the governing bodies of the church is "clerk to clerk."

* Record in the rolls and registers all membership changes ordered by session.

NOTE: This is a manageable task if done regularly. If a clerk falls behind, the task becomes very difficult and memory fades. Set a regular schedule for yourself.

THE CLERK AND THE SESSION 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 mailed with the call of the meeting.

TAKE TO THE MEETING

You are responsible for all papers and documents that aid the 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 appears at the end of this section, beginning on page 10).

*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 or the session; with the **approval of the pastor**, the Session 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 Chair of the Committee on Ministry.

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

*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. Stop the meeting if you must until you are given the exact wording of the motion in writing.

*Include the name of the maker of each motion made.

*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.)

***Do Not** include discussion in your minutes -- only main motions made and subsidiary motions adopted.

*Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, (10th edition) governs all the procedures of session in all cases not specifically provided for by the *Book of Order*. (G-7.0302)

AFTER THE MEETING

1. Write up the minutes **immediately**, 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 minutes paper (**Recommended for page 1 of the annual General Assembly Statistical Report or 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 the church administrative assistant have the primary responsibility for the minutes and the rolls and registers. **The clerk of session supervises the church administrative assistant in all matters related to the minutes and rolls and register.** The accuracy of these records is the clerk's responsibility, **not** the administrative assistant'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 follows a sample docket of the business which should take place at a session meeting. Use it to guide your preparation of the session docket.

SAMPLE SESSION DOCKET

1. Constitute meeting with prayer
2. Roll (present, excused, absent)
3. Approve minutes of previous meeting
4. Report of Clerk
 - Correspondence received and referrals
 - Unfinished business to be completed
5. Report of Pastor
 - Baptisms requested
 - Baptisms performed
 - Weddings
 - Funerals
 - Other information such as people in hospital, people needing visits
 - Communion to shut-ins off church property with elder or deacon
6. Report of the Treasurer
7. Report of Commissioner to Presbytery and appointment of commissioner to next Presbytery meeting.
8. Reports of session committees
9. Reports of commissions or special committees
10. Recess: meeting of the Corporation if necessary
11. Reconvene with prayer
12. New Business
13. Adjournment with Prayer

A NOTEBOOK FOR SESSION MEMBERS

Some churches have developed notebooks, or manuals, for each session member that includes the necessary documents and information for intelligent decision making. Such a tool is particularly helpful in orienting new session members to their task. There should be the following suggestions for index tabs for such a notebook.

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's Group

Budget

Special Purpose Funds

Special Rules and Regulations

Session Minutes

Church Members/Church Directory

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 the 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-14.0200) 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-14.0502) 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 non-ordained 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

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

Minutes

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

Due Notice

Check both the *Book of Order* and your bylaws for what 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-14.0502

Call to meeting

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

Business

What business may be done at a congregational meeting? 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:** Session should present the budget, invite comment, and solicit suggestions, **but no action should be taken on the budget.**)

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-7.0304(3) The Presbytery then approves the pastor's salary when the Committee on Ministry presents the annual

compensation chart for ordained personnel is presented to the Presbytery at the June Presbytery meeting.

Proxy voting

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

Ballot Vote (Who may vote)

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. The election of a pastor is always by ballot. Only active members may vote at a congregational meeting. Only active members over the age of 18 may vote at a meeting of the corporation

Quorum

(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-14.0204b

*Minutes of the congregational meeting ordinarily are 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 by laws, please contact the stated clerk for information about how to establish them.

THE CLERK AND RECORDS

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.

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.

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.

Baptized roll

For most churches in the Elizabeth Presbytery, 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, death.**

Inactive roll:

The inactive roll lists the names of members of the church, who, in the judgment 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 members' non-participation.

Affiliate roll

The affiliate roll enables 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 persons 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 a 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 minute 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.

List Bryan Lee Adams on the baptized members' 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.

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 is 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.

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.

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.

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. **Do no obliterate her name.**

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 ordinations 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.

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. Use the standard loose-leaf minute book. (see page 6 for ordering)
2. The leaves should be:
 - a. of uniform size and style
 - b. numbered consecutively and uniformly (a mechanical numbering stamp is preferable such as a Bates Stamp.)
 - c. held in place in an automatically locking binder.
 - d. ultimately bound in permanent book form of not more than 400 pages
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.
5. Do not insert into the records any written or printed matter on separate sheets of paper.
6. 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 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 THAT A QUORUM IS PRESENT

The *Book of Order* defines a quorum for the session (G-10.0202) and a congregation (G-7.0305), 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 action 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 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 inter-lineations. If corrections must be made, corrected section should appear 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 the 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 included 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 persons 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.

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 action.

9. RECORD MARRIAGE

All marriages 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 10.0303c)

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 14.0205), 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 the 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 SUGGESTION:

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-10.0102m & 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 audited annually (G-10.0401d). An audit is defined to be "an examination of review of financial statements and records to determine that they present fairly the financial position and results of operation for the period then ended." A financial review may be performed by a session-appointed committee (and the appointment recorded in the minutes) or an official audit performed externally. It should be reported to the

session when this has been done, and the minutes should note it. The audit itself does not need to be in the minutes.

3. RECORD ANNUAL JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF DEACONS

The *Book of Order* now 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-10.02011 & 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 G4.0403 & 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. INCLUDE THE CHURCH'S MISSION STATEMENT, EVERY 3 YEARS

At least every three years, the session shall review the congregation's mission goals. This is a requirement of the presbytery, in order to encourage churches to reflect on a regular basis on their overall program, goals and mission. Whenever a new or revised Mission Statement is adopted, it should be entered in full in the minutes.

* **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 format 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

February 17, 20__

A regular meeting of the Session of _____ Presbyterian Church was held in the church parlor at 7:00 p.m. February 17, 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 January 17, 20__ 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 _____ parents' name _____
 _____ adult's name _____

Baptisms performed: _____ approved by Session, January 17, 20__
 _____ on behalf of Christ Church Session approved January 17, 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 to 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 this be spread on the Minutes.

The recommendation was **adopted**.

Treasurer Report The Treasurer presented the financial report for the period from January 1 to February 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 January Presbytery meeting and made the following recommendation:

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 Meeting That the next Presbytery meeting would be held on March 20 at Second Presbytery Church at 1:00 p.m. and that session appoint a commissioner. Session **appointed** Elder _____ to be commissioner to the March 20 meeting.

REPORT OF SESSION COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Name Change Elder _____, Chair of the Special Committee recommended that 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 March 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 the presbytery.

Session **approved** the recommendation and instructed the clerk to issue a call of the meeting.

Report of the Membership Committee Elder _____, Chair, presented the report of the 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 March __, 20__

Mary William Smith (Mrs. John) reaffirmation of faith

Elder Henry Brown by letter of transfer from Hispire Presbyterian Church, Ordained elder 1964 in Hispire Church. Actively served as elder 1964-1970.

Deacon Mary Cooper Brown by letter of transfer from Hispire Presbyterian Church, ordained (Mrs. Henry)_deacon 1968 in Hispire Church. Actively served 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

Jones 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, effective 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, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Edwin Haines (#967) to First Methodist Church, Cleveland, Ohio

Janet Darnes Haines (#968) to First Methodist Church, Cleveland, Ohio

The recommendation was **adopted**.

Visitations

Higgins 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 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. Speaks (#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 recommendation:

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: (1)_____, (2)_____, (3)_____ 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 the Corporation. *(if session is unicameral)*

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION

February 17, 20__

The regular meeting of the Corporation of _____ Presbyterian Church was held in the church parlor at 8:30 p.m., February 17, 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 January 17, 20__ meeting were **approved** (or **approved with the following amendments:**

Manse

The Secretary to the Board of Corporation 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 congregation, 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 Corporation 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 Committee

Elder_____, Chair, reported that final arrangements were being made for a Good Friday Worship Service, making the following recommendation: 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 for the purchase and operation of such a bus. The Finance and Property Committee was requested to 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.

PRESBYTERY REVIEW OF SESSION MINUTES, ROLLS AND REGISTERS

“At least once a year every governing body above a session shall review the records of the proceedings of the next lower governing body. If any lower governing body shall fail to send up its records for this purpose, the higher governing body shall order them to be produced as a specified 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-9.0408, G-9-0409)”

The Presbytery's committee on the Review of Session Minutes, Rolls and Records will conduct several meetings throughout the year (to be announced) when Minutes, Rolls and Records will be reviewed

RECORD OF EXAMINATION OF SESSION MINUTES – G-10.0301

Church: _____ Year _____

Is your church governed by a unicameral Session? Yes No

Clerk of Session: Please fill in blanks to the left of the numbers indicating where in the Session Minutes, i.e. what Page Number, the item is located. Please provide two examples. Mark "NA" if the requirement is not applicable to your church. This completed form is to be in your books when they are presented for examination. Spaces to the right of the page will be completed by the Minute Reviewers.

| Page | Ques. No. | Question | No | Yes | Comments |
|------|-----------|---|----|-----|----------|
| | 1 | Date, time & Place of each meeting. | | | |
| | 2 | Elders, Moderator named as present, excused or absent and a quorum present. | | | |
| | 3 | Reason for a special meeting recorded. (G-10.0201; G-10.0202; G-10.0301) | | | |
| | 4 | Meeting opened and closed with prayer. (G-9.0301b) | | | |
| | 5 | Reading, approval of minutes of previous meeting with page references for corrections. | | | |
| | 6 | Annual summary of congregational meeting or full meeting minutes. (G-10.0102; G-10.0401) including the call and minutes of corporation meeting (if held) in the congregational minutes and number of members attending—10% of total membership. (G-70305; G-7.0307) | | | |
| | 7 | Annual summary of corporation meetings or full meeting minutes. (G-7.0403) including, the statement that all corporation members were 18 years or older as provided for under the laws of the State of New Jersey. | | | |
| | 8 | Summary of GA statistical Report including average annual weekly attendance at worship. (G-10.0301; G-10.0102) | | | |
| | 9 | Annual election of Treasurer by Session. (G-10.0401) | | | |
| | 10 | Election of Clerk of Session with specific term indicated (When Clerk is not present election of Clerk Pro-Tem. (G-9-0203b) | | | |
| | 11 | Appointment of Auditors or financial review committee; report of Auditors or financial review committee. (G-10.0401) | | | |
| | 12 | Appointment of commissioners to Presbytery and Commissioners report to Session. (G-10.0102) | | | |
| | 13 | Authorization for and celebration of communion including date of celebration, place, Minister presiding and number in attendance. (W-3.3201) | | | |
| | 14 | Session authorization for Baptism including date for baptism and person being baptized. (G-10.0102) | | | |
| | 15 | When the sacrament is administered on special occasions, e.g. home communion, record name of elder assisting and attendance. | | | |
| | 16 | Baptism recorded in Minutes including actual date, instruction given, names of the parents, the date and place of birth of the person why was baptized (applies to adults and children.) | | | |
| | 17 | Full names of applicants (including maiden name) for church membership, date and manner of reception, name and address of transferring church if received by letter of transfer. (G-10.0102; G-10.0302a) | | | |
| | 18 | Full name of parent(s) of youth received named. | | | |
| | 19 | Reference to a person's baptism made when reception is by profession of faith. | | | |
| | 20 | Full name of person (including maiden name) recorded with name and address of church to which members are dismissed. (G-10.0302b) | | | |
| | 21 | Record transfer to inactive or deleted rolls with Book of order citation. (G-10.0302b) | | | |

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|
| 22 | Record changes affected by marital status in he church register, membership roll and alphabetical index. (G-10.0302a; G-10.0302c) | | | |
| 23 | Deaths record names of those deceased with date of death. (G-10.0302b(8)) | | | |
| 24 | Annual session review and approval of work/minutes of Deacons. (G-6.0404; G-10.0102l) | | | |
| 25 | Annual session review of work/minutes of Trustees. (write NA if Unicameral)(G-10.0102l) | | | |
| 26 | Annual session review and approval of the work/minutes of all other organizations, e.g. committees. (G-10.0102l) | | | |
| 27 | Annual meeting of Session with Deacons. (G-6.0405) | | | |
| 28 | Annual meeting of Session with Trustees. | | | |
| 29 | Annual approval of pastor's compensation first by Session, then by congregation including a breakdown of benefits. (G-10.0102m; G-7-0304) (if pulpit is vacant, served by interim, temporary supply or stated supply or if pastor has served less than one year write NA in left margin) | | | |
| 30 | Examination of officers-elect. (G-14.0205) | | | |
| 31 | Ordination/Installation of officers-elect. (G-14.0205) | | | |
| 32 | Minutes reflect that Session hold continuing education for Officers. (G-10.0102k) | | | |
| 33 | Calls of regular and special congregational meetings recorded in minutes of the same meeting. (G-7.0302; G-7.0303) | | | |
| 34 | Local and General Mission budgets adopted by Session. (G-10.0102) | | | |
| 35 | Composition and identity of Church Nomination Committee including a full roster of members and Moderator as ex-officio. (G-14.0201b) | | | |
| 36 | Approval of church school staff and curriculum.(G-10.0102 e & f) | | | |
| 37 | Manner of gathering, recording and account of offerings stated. (G-10.0401) | | | |
| 38 | Report of last minute and register review with exception noted in Session minutes. | | | |
| 39 | Minutes of Session signed by the Clerk of Session. | | | |
| 40 | Minutes of Congregational meeting signed by both the Clerk of Session and Moderator of the meeting (G.3.0307) | | | |
| 41 | Annual review of Certificate of Insurance reflected in Minutes | | | |
| 41 | Adopted of a Sexual Harassment Prevention policy or a review of same | | | |
| 42 | Approval of a Change in job/position descriptions when changes are made or adoption of job/positions descriptions when positions are created (Presbytery action, 1/27/91) | | | |

Signature of Clerk of Session _____ Date ____ / ____ /20__

Name of Examiner: _____ Affiliation/Church _____

_____ Approved with commendation _____ Approved with () exceptions _____ Not approved

Additional comments:

For the
Committee: _____

REVIEW OF RECORDS

The Presbytery of Elizabeth

The session minutes book and rolls/register of the _____ church were reviewed on _____ 20 __, Pages # _____ to _____, dated from _____ to _____.

THE FOLLOWING EXCEPTIONS WERE TAKEN:

I-MINUTES BOOK

A. Entries to be recorded at every meeting

(Page Number)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Date, time, place and type of meeting not recorded | _____ |
| 2. Meeting not opened with prayer | _____ |
| 3. No proper moderator present | _____ |
| 4. Presence/absence/excuse of elders not properly recorded | _____ |
| 5. Quorum not identified as present | _____ |
| 6. Minutes of previous meetings(s) not approved | _____ |
| 7. Motion not properly recorded | _____ |
| 8. Meeting not closed with prayer | _____ |
| 9. Minutes not properly signed | _____ |

B. Entries to be recorded as needed

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Celebration of the Lord's Supper not recorded | _____ |
| 2. Private administration of the Lord's Supper not properly recorded | _____ |
| 3. Celebration of Baptism not recorded | _____ |
| 4. Record of persons baptized incomplete | _____ |
| 5. Record of members received incomplete | _____ |
| 6. Record of members dismissed incomplete | _____ |
| 7. Death of member/elder not recorded | _____ |
| 8. Proper transfer on church rolls not shown | _____ |
| 9. Record of marriages performed incomplete | _____ |
| 10 Record of Elders/Deacons elected incomplete | _____ |
| 11 Commissioner to other Governing Body not identified | _____ |
| 12 Disciplinary action not properly recorded | _____ |
| 13. Action regarding previous review of records not taken | _____ |

C. Entries to be recorded annually

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. No record of annual review of pastor's compensation | _____ |
| 2. No record of annual financial audit | _____ |
| 3. No record of joint annual meeting with Board of Deacons | _____ |
| 4. No record of annual reports of other organizations | _____ |
| 5. Composition of Session not recorded | _____ |
| 6. Annual statistical report not included | _____ |
| 7. Mission Statement not included within a 3-year period | _____ |
| 8. Certificate of Insurance not reflected in Minutes | _____ |

D. Other

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

II REGISTER (ROLLS) Based on Session Minutes

A. Roll of Members

- 1. Baptized Members (Persons) Roll incomplete _____
- 2. Active Members Roll incomplete _____
- 3. Inactive Members Roll incomplete _____
- 4. Affiliate Members Roll incomplete _____
- 5. Proper transfer on rolls not shown _____
- 6. Death of member/elder not recorded _____

B. Register of Marriages incomplete _____

C. Register of Elders incomplete _____

D. Register of Deacons incomplete _____

E. Register of Pastors incomplete _____

III COMMENDATION AND/OR SUGGESTIONS TO THE CLERK IN THE KEEPING OF MINUTES AND ROLLS ARE NOTED BELOW

IV THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS OF THE SESSION OR CONGREGATION WERE IMPROPER OR UNCONSTITUTIONAL. BOOKS WILL BE RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE WHEN CORRECTIONS ARE MADE.

Signed _____, Reader

Date _____, Review of Records Committee

REVIEW OF RECORDS RESPONSE FORM

Review of Records Committee
The Presbytery of Elizabeth

The session received the Review of Records Report at its meeting of _____20____
and wishes to make the following comments:

The following actions have been taken to correct exceptions noted:

(continue on back if needed)

The session believes that the following exceptions, taken by the Reader to our Records, are in error and requests that the record be corrected:

(continue on back if needed)

The session desires answers to the following questions and/or assistance for the Clerk in the following aspects of record-keeping:

SIGNED: _____ Clerk of Session
_____ Moderator
_____ Church

THIS FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED TO: The Review of Records Committee, Presbytery of Elizabeth, 525 East Front Street, Plainfield, NJ

CLERK AS HISTORIAN

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 that 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 | photograph albums video of important events |
| interviews with you 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 Elizabeth.** If you find gaps in your history, please check with the Stated Clerk's office. We have in our files and on our computers the old church histories for many churches.

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

215/627-1852

The Department of History is a nationally recognized archive 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.

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 Audit |
| Congregational Minutes | Financial ledgers of final entry |
| Rolls and Register Books | Deacons' Minutes and Reports |
| Charter and/or incorporation 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

Examples 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 |
| 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 Workmen'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 | Accounts receivable ledger |
| Bank deposits slips | Budgets |
| Cancelled checks | Cash receipt records |
| Correspondence re: speaking engagements | Data for updating mailing lists |
| Employee withholding records | Excerpts from documents retained elsewhere |
| Expense reports | Invitation Letters of acknowledgment |
| Payroll checks | Periodic financial statements |
| Petty cash records | Receipts of purchases |
| Requests for information and responses thereto | Routine notices of meetings |
| Travel plans and arrangements. | |

PRESBYTERY

The organization of Presbytery is found in the By-Laws and Administrative Manual of Presbytery.

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 seven regular presbytery meetings each year: January, March, May, June, September, October, and November.

*The number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled depends upon the size of the congregation (**G-11.0101**) and also varies according to equalization. ". . . When the number of ministers is larger, the stated clerk shall bring the imbalance to the attention of the presbytery at its first meeting of the year. The presbytery shall redress the imbalance by inviting sessions of particular churches to elect additional elder commissioners or on some other basis acceptable to the presbytery. . ." (G-11.0101b). In the Presbytery of Elizabeth, the imbalance is addressed by asking sessions to request additional elder commissioners and are encouraged to name these additional commissioners early in the year and send their names to the Stated Clerk.

*Churches are encouraged to elect their commissioners for the entire year, preferably for two or three years. Some churches elect different commissioners for each meeting. It is even possible to elect a commissioner for the first half of a presbytery meeting and another commissioner for the second half.

(Recommendation: in order to assure continuity and understanding of presbytery business, it is best to elect commissioners for extended periods. An alternative would be to elect a commissioner and an alternate for each meeting, with the alternate becoming the commissioner at the next meeting.)

*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

*Calls for each Presbytery meeting are sent directly to those commissioners named on a yearly basis. Those commissioners who are named only for single meetings of Presbytery will receive the Call to Presbytery through the Church Office.

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 Elizabeth 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, "Clerk of Session" along with instructions as to how to complete and file the report. A copy of the cover letter is sent to the Pastor/Moderator. 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 filed on-line by computer through the PCUSA web site and is due by January 31st. Reports that cannot be filed on-line are to be completed on the worksheet provided and returned to the presbytery so that the information can be entered. If the information is not received by the due date, 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.

Tips on Completing the Report

- * Complete the membership part of the form immediately after your last session meeting of the year.
- * Early in December, send a copy of the organizational financial report to the chair of each of the congregations' organizations with the request that they be returned no later than the first week in January.
- * Early in December, work with your treasurer on the definition of expenditures which you will find in the workbook.

* During December begin work on the programmatic questions of the report, referring each question to the proper person for an answer.

* If it is not possible to meet the deadline, please call the Office of the Stated Clerk of The Presbytery of Elizabeth with an estimated delivery date. **Presbytery cannot enter reports after the GA deadline given to our office.**

* The clerk of session relates directly to the stated clerk of Presbytery. All correspondence between presbytery and the session is sent to the clerk of session with a copy to the moderator.

Per Capita Apportionment Payments

The per capita apportionment is adopted by Presbytery in the early fall. An invoice is sent to each church treasurer in December. The per capita payment is due in **March**, however payment may be made quarterly. **The per capita apportionment for the coming year is figured upon the latest published reported membership x the total per capita adopted by General Assembly, synod and presbytery. For example: 2006 membership (latest published figures) x per capita amount = total payment for 2008. The Per Capita apportionment is used for ecclesiastical expenses, those mandated by the *Book of Order*.**

Annual Review of the Call

Each year the session is required by the *Book of Order* to review the adequacy of the salaries of all pastoral staff. If session wishes to make any change in the terms of call as they were last approved by presbytery, **the change in terms of call must be brought to the congregation for approval, contingent upon the approval of presbytery which, finally, approves all terms of call and all changes in terms of call.** Annually, the Committee on Ministry sends to each session a form upon which to report changes in terms of call. As soon as the congregation has approved new terms of call for its pastor (s), the call forms must be returned to the Committee on Ministry for recommendation to Presbytery. Please be sure that this form is returned each year.*

Minimum Compensation for Pastors

Each September, Presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors. All terms of call must meet this minimum standard for Presbytery to approve the call. The minimum terms of

call are published to the churches each fall through a letter to the session from the Committee on Ministry. Annually, session will receive notification of minimum terms of call as soon as they are adopted by Presbytery.

***NOTE:** This applies only to churches having installed pastors.

ACTIONS WHICH MUST BE APPROVED BY MORE THAN ONE GOVERNING BODY ACTION REQUIRED ACTIONS

| ACTION | REQUIRED ACTIONS |
|---|---|
| application to presbytery to take an "inquirer" under care of Presbytery | Session Committee on Preparation for Ministry Presbytery |
| all loans which use the church or its property as collateral and all sales of property | Session and Trustees Trustees of Presbytery Presbytery |
| all leases of church property for a period of more than 5 years | Session Trustees of Presbytery Presbytery |
| all changes of church location or church name | Session Congregation, ecclesiastical and corporate Trustees and Council of Presbytery Presbytery, ecclesiastical and corporate |
| all changes in terms of call for the pastor(s) <i>procedure for changing terms of call and minimum terms of call may be found at the end of this section</i> | Session Congregation Committee on Ministry Presbytery |
| all proposals for merger, dissolution, yoking congregations | Session Congregation Evangelism & Church Vitality Unit Trustees of Presbytery Presbytery |
| all dissolutions of a pastorate and calls for new pastors | Congregation Committee on Ministry Presbytery |
| appointment of moderator of session: stated supply or interim pastor in the case of a vacant pulpit | Session Committee on Ministry Presbytery |
| All waivers from the <i>Book of Order</i> terms of election (G-14.0202) <i>waiver forms may be found at the end of this section</i> | Congregation Stated Clerk Council Presbytery |
| OTHER ACTIONS | |
| call a special session meeting | two members of session, in writing |
| call a special congregational meeting | Session, or Presbytery, or session when requested in writing by 1/4 active members of the congregation |
| session meeting when the pastor is ill or is out-of town | pastor grants permission and appoints a member of Presbytery as moderator <i>pro-tem</i> |

COMMUNICATION WITH PRESBYTERY

Official communication between session and presbytery is from clerk of session to the stated clerk of presbytery.

When to Involve the Presbytery Trustees

All property held by or for a particular church, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a particular church or of a more inclusive governing body or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-8.0201). Such there are certain times when the congregation will need to consult with the Presbytery Board of Trustees concerning certain property and financial transactions. These include:

- Purchase or sale of a church manse
- Purchase or sale of property to which a church holds title
- Lease or rental of a manse or church property
- Borrowing money in an amount greater than or equal to 15% of the current year's budget
- Encumbering via a mortgage or similar means church property
- Loan to a Pastor

If in doubt concerning a transaction contact the Presbytery Board of Trustees.

Petitions to Presbytery or General Assembly

* A member of the congregation may ask session to petition the presbytery.

* A session may petition or overture presbytery or synod or General Assembly through the presbytery. Session cannot overture synod or General Assembly directly.

* Suggestions for writing petitions or overtures may be found at the end of this section.

Proposed Changes Sent Down to the Presbyteries from the General Assembly

* Every two years, the General Assembly sends to the presbyteries the proposed changes to amend the *Book of Order* adopted by the previous General Assembly

* If a majority of presbyteries approve, the *Book of Order* is amended.

* Although elder commissioners cannot be pledged by session to vote in a particular way, it is useful for session to spend time studying and discussing the overtures so that the elder commissioners will have guidance when they vote on the overtures.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING OVERTURES

I. Definition: An overture is a request by a presbytery or synod to the General Assembly to take action or express an opinion. A session may not overture the General Assembly except through a petition to presbytery to do so. An individual may not overture the General Assembly except through a governing body.

- A. An individual may propose an overture to session or from the floor of presbytery if that person is a commissioner to presbytery.
- B. A session may propose an overture to presbytery
- C. A presbytery or a synod may propose an overture to the General Assembly

II. All Overtures must Contain:

- A. The name of the presbytery or synod
- B. The meeting place
- C. The date of the meeting and type of session (i.e. regular or special)
- D. The specific action requested (the action should include a specific date for the proposed change, report or action. If at all possible, the best date for a change affecting the statistical records is January 1 or July 1.)
- E. The signature of the (stated) clerk

III. What Kind of Overture Are You Writing?

- A. Does the overture amend the Constitution? (See the deadline dates for submission attached.)
- B. Does the overture propose change of synod or presbytery boundaries? If so
 - 1. The names of all ministers, licentiates, and candidates being transferred are to be included in the overture with the effective dates of change.

2. In the case of change of presbytery boundaries, the overture needs to be accompanied by synod approval of the overture in a similar overture from the synod.
3. Detailed survey information concerning the boundary change must be attached to the overture

C. Does the overture propose a particular action or stand of the General Assembly? If so what kind of position?

IV What Preparation is Necessary Before Writing an Overture?

- A. Time: -for the stated clerk to work with the drafters -for a preliminary draft to be checked with the appropriate unit of the General Assembly or with the Office of the Stated Clerk -for the appropriate committee of the presbytery to review it, make recommendations for amendment or for adoption.
- B. History: Why is "it" the way "it" is? Has anyone else ever tried to change "it" (Check the Journal of the General Assembly and check your annotated copy of the *Book of Order*. Important information will be found in the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution).
- C. Theology: What is your theological rationale behind the overture?
- D. Polity: What in the Constitution affects the overture and how does the overture affect the Constitution?
- E. Rationale: What are the reasons for the overture?
- F. Strategy: What is the best way in which to obtain a favorable response from the General Assembly? (Sometimes means other than an overture can accomplish the end you wish more quickly and more efficiently)
1. In the case of a programmatic overture:
 - in what unit should the requested action be lodged?
 - cost of requested action and source of funds?
 - is the overture practical?
 - is the overture timely?
 2. In case of an overture to amend the *Book of Order*:
 - is the overture specific to one situation only? If so the requested amendment can usually be taken care of by governing body by-laws.
 - note deadline dates for overtures to amend *Book of Order*
 - is the overture practical?
 - is the overture timely?
 - is the overture in conflict with other parts of the *Book of Order*?

V. Can an overture be changed by the Governing Body Considering it?

Yes, each governing body must adopt the overture as its own, with amendments as necessary. Please note that it is no longer necessary to circulate overtures adopted by the presbytery in order to seek enough support for the General Assembly to send it down unchanged (**G-18.0000**) The only benefit to be gained from circulating an overture is to request other presbyteries to adopt a similar overture.

VI. How Is an Overture Processed?

A. An overture is **always** sent clerk to clerk. The overture, if it involves constitutional change will be referred to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution for opinion and then be referred directly to the committee of the General Assembly to which the overture is referred, along with the opinion. The Committee will bring its recommendation to the floor of the General Assembly. All cases which do not involve constitutional change or interpretation of the constitution will be referred directly to the appropriate General Assembly Committee.

B. An overture must be accompanied by the name and address of the "overture advocate" -- the person the governing body has chosen to represent its point of view before the General Assembly Committee. This person must have a hearing before the committee.

Sample Document
NOMINATING COMMITTEE
PRESBYTERY OF ELIZABETH

The Nominating Committee needs your help! Our committee structure calls for many new people each year, and you are the best way for us to find Presbyterians who are new to service at the Presbytery level (or want to return after an absence.) Please prayerfully consider how you or someone you know could be a part of this work.

NAME OF PERSON: _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 CITY & ZIP _____
 TELEPHONE: _____ Minister _____ Elder _____ Deacon _____ Lay member _____
 Name of home church _____

Committee for which this person is recommended:

1. Committee on Ministry (1st Thursday @ 7:00 pm) _____
2. Committee on Representation (Set by Chair) _____
3. Educational and Discipleship Unit (bimonthly) _____
4. Evangelism Church Vitality Unit (Set by Chair) _____
5. Nominating Committee (Set by Chair) _____
6. Preparation for Ministry (1st Tuesday @ 1:00 pm) _____
7. Presbytery Council (2nd Tuesday @ 4:00 pm) _____
8. Outreach and Social Concerns (1st Thursday @ 7:00 pm) _____
9. Financial Development (Set by Chair) _____
11. Worship and Theology Team (Set by Chair) _____
12. Committee on Representation (Set by Chair) _____
13. Personnel (Set by Chair) _____
14. Trustees (1st Wednesday) _____
15. Bills and Overtures (Set by Clerk) _____

Do you have any special reasons for making this recommendation or other comments?

Please print your name _____ Telephone _____

Please return this form to the Presbytery Office or to Chair of Nominating Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF PERMANENT AND PROGRAM COMMITTEES OF PRESBYTERY

PERMANENT COMMITTEES OF PRESBYTERY

1. **Committee on Ministry.** There shall be a Committee on Ministry consisting of twenty-four (24) members equally divided between elders and ministers who shall be elected by Presbytery in accordance with Form of Government G-11.0501. A quorum of the committee shall be half the members. This Committee shall facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers and Presbytery; handle matters related to times of transition and pastoral vacancies in the life of the congregation, including the training and resourcing of search committees, and the processing of calls; include in its membership a specially trained conflict management team to assist pastors and congregations in times of stress; and act as a Commission of Ministry to approve calls and receive minister members on behalf of the presbytery between regularly scheduled meetings, and report such actions at the next regular meeting of presbytery. (Article V (D) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Ministry, acting within the scope of its responsibilities defined in G-11.0500-11.0504 is given authorization by the Presbytery (G-14.0507c) to find calls in order; approve and present calls; dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur; and dismiss ministers to other presbyteries. All such actions shall be reported to the next Stated Meeting of the Presbytery (G-9.04003, G-11.0103v, and G-11.0502h). (Part II, N2 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

2. **The Nominating Committee** There shall be a Nominating Committee. Membership of this committee according to G-9.0801. The moderator and immediate past moderator of Presbytery shall be ex-officio members of the committee This Committee shall:

1. Nominate persons to fill all vacancies on continuing committees (except the nominating committee), councils, boards, and other bodies that require election by the presbytery or synod.
2. Consult, at least annually, with the Committee on Representation.
3. Report to presbytery after consultation with Council (Article VIII Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth.)

3. **The Committee on Representation.** There shall be a Committee on Representation. The responsibilities and composition of the committee shall comply with the Form of Government for the Committee on Representation (G-9.0105, G-11.0302), the Bylaws and Standing Rules. This Committee shall consult with the Nominating Committee and advise it of any need for nominations, in particular categories needing increased representation; serve as an advocate for representation and as a resource; review the performance of its own governing body in these matters and report annually to it and to the Synod with recommendations for any needed

corrective action; inform the presbytery in November of each year of its progress toward the representation of the categories listed in G-4.0403. The report shall include the racial ethnic composition, different ages, male and female membership and the number of persons with disabilities in our churches and in the unties and committees of presbytery; advise presbytery on the employment of personnel in accordance with the principles of participation and representation and in conformity with a church side plan for equal employment; and report to presbytery after consultation with council. (Article VII Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Representation shall be formed according to the requirements of Book of Order G-9.0902a in fulfilling the responsibilities of Presbytery outlined in the Book of Order G-11.0302, G-9.0104 and G-4.0403. (Part II, O1 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Representation shall advise presbytery's Nominating Committee of any need for nominations in particular categories needing increased representation of the categories of persons listed in Book of Order Article G-4.043 and G-11.0302. (Part II, O2 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Representation shall be composed of six persons (according to G-9.0105) with membership of equal numbers of man and women, in three equal classes, one class to be elected each year for a three year term with no one serving for more than two successive terms of six consecutive years. A majority of the members shall be selected from the racial ethnic groups within the Presbytery and the total membership shall include persons from each of the following categories: (a) majority male membership, (b) majority female membership, (c) racial ethnic male membership, (d) racial ethnic female membership, (e) youth male and female membership, and (f) persons with disabilities. (Part II, O3 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Representation "shall serve both as an advocate for representation of racial ethnic members, women, different age groups, and persons with disabilities, and as a continuing resource to the particular governing body in these areas. The Committee on Representation shall review the performance of its own governing body with recommendations for any needed corrective action. The Committee on Representation shall consult with the Nominating Committee of its own governing body." (G-9.0105c). (Part II, O4 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Committee on Representation, in consultation with the Presbytery Council, shall develop and establish guidelines for use by the Committee on Representation in providing advice to the Presbytery in the area of employment. (Part II, O5 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

4. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry. There shall be a committee on Preparation for Ministry. Responsibilities of the committee shall include, but not be limited to giving guidance to and have oversight of applicants and candidates for church vocations as provided in Form of Government, G-14.03 & 14.04. This unit shall be responsible for all constitutional requirements related to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (G-14.0300-0314); provide pastoral care and support for candidates under care and all ordained ministers of the Presbytery including those who are retired; make available opportunities for counseling,

continuing education, and spiritual development of candidates and ministers; and encourage pastors in the use of continuing education time and funds specified in the terms of their call.

(Article V (F) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

5. The Council of the Presbytery of Elizabeth The Council of the Presbytery of Elizabeth shall be established in conformity with the provision of the Book of Order G-11.0103v for the purpose of enabling Presbytery to carry out its responsibilities “to establish and superintend the agencies necessary for its work...(and) providing for the regular review of the functional relationship between Presbytery’s structure and its mission.”

The purpose of the Council is to enable the Presbytery to carry out its responsibilities by strengthening the particular churches, agencies and ministries of the presbytery; coordinating the decision-making process, advising the presbytery, Program Units, and the Administrative Support Unit when appropriate; reviewing the evaluating the work of Program Units, and Administrative Support Unit, and the Presbytery leadership and staff; serving as a corporate instrument of witness and ministry for Jesus Christ; facilitating Presbytery’s partnership with the sessions, Synod and General Assembly. (Article II, Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

Council will provide for the worship services at Stated Meetings through the Vice Moderator.

That person will schedule worship leaders, facilitate communications with the host congregation, and provide the worship leaders with the relevant policies of the Presbytery. (Part II, L1 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Council shall review the recommend a proposed Stated Meeting docket to Presbytery. (Part II, L2 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Presbytery packet shall normally be mailed no later than 10 days prior to the Stated Meeting. (Part II, L3 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

Minutes of Council meetings shall be approved by Council at its next meeting. (Part II, L4 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

All Council actions that require Presbytery approval shall come before Presbytery at the next Stated Meeting following that Council meeting. (Part II, L5 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Presbytery Council shall (a) coordinate the equal employment activities of the Presbytery; (b) recommend periodically, to the Presbytery, of equal employment opportunity goals; (c) present to the Presbytery, annual summaries of equal employment opportunity performances within the Presbytery, and; (d) propose to the Presbytery any necessary corrective action. (Part II, L6 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Presbytery Council shall include detailed data and analysis in an annual report to the Presbytery. The Presbytery, through Council, shall conduct an annual evaluation of its work force and purchasing practices to determine the status of its performance in actualizing the denomination’s commitment to inclusiveness as outlined in G-9.0104. (Part II, L7 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Presbytery Council, through its Personnel Committee, shall implement an effective program of search and recruitment, which shall include at least the following:

- (a) Recognition that involvement of persons from the identified groups in the search and recruitment process is necessary;
- (b) Identification of resources related to the identified groups which will yield positive results, e.g. newspaper, networks, caucuses, and employment agencies; and
- (c) Utilization of the internal employment resources of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Position descriptions shall be examined carefully to determine what functional and personal qualifications as to educational attainment, skills, experience, knowledge, characteristics, etc., are actually required by the position so that qualification factors which discriminate against racial ethnic persons, various age groups, women, or persons of various marital condition, or with disabilities are eliminated
- (d) The Presbytery Council shall encourage and support advocacy groups concerned with promoting the welfare of those who have been affected by discrimination, and shall encourage the celebration of progress in equal employment opportunity.
- (e) The Presbytery Council, in consultation with the Stated Clerk, shall include in its personnel policies provision for handling equal employment opportunity grievances for the review of allegations of employment discrimination.
- (f) The Presbytery Council shall insure that all subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers of goods and services are notified of the Presbytery's equal employment opportunity policy. Such subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers shall be requested to share a copy of their equal employment opportunity policy. Review and comment on these vendor plans will be included in the annual report of the Presbytery Council to the Presbytery. (Part II, L8 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

In consultation with the Presbytery Council, each Equal Employment Opportunity agent within the Presbytery (including each organization or agency under the control of the Presbytery) shall:

- (a) Ensure that all personnel guidelines, policies, procedures, and practices are implemented in accordance with the Presbytery's policy on equal employment opportunity, and,
- (b) Initiate special actions required to correct patterns of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, marital condition (married, single, widowed, or divorced), disability or different theological positions consistent with Reformed tradition.
- (c) Each session personnel committee is encouraged, by Council through the Presbytery Executive, to ensure that all personnel guidelines, policies, procedures, and practices are implemented in accordance with the Presbytery's policy on equal employment opportunity.
- (d) The Congregational Strategy and Resources Unit, in its responsibility for the review of Session Minutes and recommendation to Presbytery for approval, shall ascertain that the Presbytery's Mission Statement and Goals and policy on equal employment opportunity have been properly observed. (Part II, L9 Standing Rules of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

6. **Trustees of the Presbytery of Elizabeth** The Trustees shall fulfill the requirements of the state of New Jersey, thereby constituting the legal corporation to hold property of the presbytery; advise the presbytery at all times of its responsibilities in carrying out all the provisions of the Book of Order, Chapter VIII, The Church and its Property (G-8.000-8.0701); meet at least quarterly and report all proceedings to the council and presbytery for review and action as required by civil law; and consist of six members elected by presbytery for three-year terms. The president of the trustees will be a member of council. The trustees shall elect from among its membership its vice president/secretary/treasurer. (Article IV Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for matters outlined in Chapter VIII “The Church and Its Property” of the Book of Order and shall include, but is not limited to the following:

1. The Trustees shall, with the counsel and support of the Congregational Strategy and Resources Unit, review all applications with specific recommendations to the Council for information, and to Presbytery for action in the purchasing, receipt, sale, and leasing of church properties including manses, and granting of easements.
2. Review all requests from Presbytery churches for permission to borrow funds such that, when added to a debt already incurred, total indebtedness will be greater than 15% of the current year’s budget.
3. Referrals from the Presbytery concerning properties held in the name of the Presbytery.

The Board of Trustees is accountable to the Presbytery for all actions in carrying out their responsibilities. (Article IV Bylaws of the Trustees of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

7. **Permanent Judicial Commission** There shall be at all times within the structure of the Presbytery a Permanent Judicial Commission whose membership, election, powers and procedures shall be in complete conformity with the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order (D-4.0100-4.0500).

The membership of the Permanent Judicial Commission within the Presbytery shall consist of not less than seven members with not more than one of its elder members from any one of its constituent churches.

The Commission shall organize at the June meeting of Presbytery biennially to elect a Moderator and Clerk.

They shall meet at the call of the Stated Clerk. (Article VI Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

PROGRAM COMMITTEES OF PRESBYTERY

1. **Evangelism and Church Vitality Unit.** There shall be an Evangelism and Church Vitality. This unit shall support and challenge congregations to call women and men to faith in Christ, and commitment to Christ through the church; and be responsible for all phases of planning and

carrying through new church development. (Article V (D) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth) The Unit all shall support congregations in the strengthening of their current ministries, mission, and education, and assist them in development new initiatives; assist congregations in undertaking Mission Studies and the gathering of data; facilitate connections among congregations; and provide for the review of Session records. (Article V (A) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

2. Educational and Discipleship Unit There shall be an Educational Discipleship Unit. This unit shall encourage, develop and train laity for ministry in and through the local congregation; and equip and support employed and volunteer lay church staff in their responsibilities and ministries. (Article V (C) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

3. Financial Development Committee There shall be a Financial Development Committee. This Committee shall:

1. Be responsible to Council for overseeing the financial system of the Presbytery.
2. Monitor income and expenditures, develop the budget, determine short and long term financial plans, oversee Presbytery investments, and provide for the auditing of the financial records.
3. Work with all program Units in analyzing and recommending funding for mission programs and shall consider other requests for Presbytery support.
4. Interpret to congregations the financial needs of the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly.

This Committee shall report to Council. (Article III (A) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

4. Worship and Theology Team There shall be a Worship and Theology Team. The goal of this committee is to assist the Presbytery and its churches to examine, understand, and practice the worship of God which is theologically based, historically informed and sensitive to the needs of the people.

5. Personnel Committee There shall be a Personnel Committee. This Committee shall:

1. Monitor all matters pertaining to Presbytery employed lay and ordained staff.
2. Perform those tasks required of the committee by the Standing Rules, Part II, Presbytery Operations, Section H Personnel.

This Committee shall report to Council. (Article III (E) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

6. Outreach and Social Concerns There shall be an Outreach and Social Concerns Committee. This Unit shall support and participate with congregations in developing programs of compassion, healing, and service; interpret the mission work of the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.), including projects proposed and/or undertaken by congregations, Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly; work with the Financial Development Committee of the Administrative Support and Trustee Unit to analyze requests for the funding of mission programs; be responsible for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of on-going mission programs of the Presbytery; provide analysis of select social/justice issues and make recommendations through the Council to the Presbytery; advocate to congregations, government, corporate policy makers, and the public at large positions taken by the Presbytery with regard to the causes of those involved in struggles for peace, justice and human rights. The General Assembly mandated Self-Development of People Committee shall report through this unit. (Article V (E) Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

7. **Bills and Overtures Committee** There shall be a Bills and Overtures Committee. This committee shall assist any group or person to write overtures to the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly; review overtures to Synod and General Assembly referred by other governing bodies to this presbytery for its concurrence and present such recommendations to the presbytery; and review the Book of Order amendments sent by the most recent General Assembly to the presbyteries for their votes and devise a process for their review and vote by presbytery. (Article IX Bylaws of the Presbytery of Elizabeth)

LEGAL QUESTIONS

In recent years, litigation against the churches has become more and more frequent. This section is intended to accommodate legal opinions which session may receive from its own lawyer or from presbytery from time to time. Church law is becoming a special field of the law. **IF SESSION IS AT ALL IN DOUBT, CONSULT A LAWYER OR CALL THE PRESBYTERY FOR HELP.** Session may wish to recommend to the congregation that the congregational bylaws be amended to include an indemnification clause for church officers.

AREAS OF LEGAL CONCERN

***Workers' Compensation Insurance**

Workers' Compensation Insurance **must** be paid for church employees. The church is liable for unpaid back compensation plus interest.

***Accident claims on Church Property** Be sure your insurance policy covers the liability you have in relation to the programs that you have at the church. Talk to your insurance agent. Each session is required by the *Book of Order* to provide adequate insurance for the church and note annually in session minutes.

***Nursery or Child Care Programs** The church must meet state safety codes for child care centers. This is not true of Sunday School programs unless the church plans a remodeling program, in which case, the church is held to the state codes. Do not start a day care or childcare program without talking to your insurance agent and New Jersey State Law. Child harassment has become an important area of concern. Churches are advised to screen all people who volunteer or are employed by the church for a record of child abuse.

***Transportation** Churches are advised to register annually with their insurance company the names of the people in the congregation who will be driving other people to church events. This is particularly true for retreats or youth events. The insurance company will check the driving records of the people whose names are submitted and notify the church of any names which must be removed. In case of accident, the insurance company will stand behind the names they have checked.

***Non-Profit Organization Privileges Recently, some churches' non-profit status has been challenged. Non-profit bulk mailing privileges have been denied by some post offices. If you need to prove your non-profit status as a church, please contact the Office of Legal Services of the General Assembly who will provide you with a letter.** An excellent resource for session is Church Law and Tax Report, published bimonthly by Christian Ministry Resources, P. O. Box 1098, Matthews, NC 28106.