HANDBOOK FOR SESSION CLERKS

2015 Edition

Presbytery of Newton

390 Route 10 West
Randolph, NJ 07869
(973) 361-0084
www.newtonpresbytery.org

GETTING STARTED AS A SESSION CLERK

The following pages contain tips that should help you if you've recently been elected clerk of session at your church, if you need a refresher, or if you want some new ideas.

What should I do first?

A successful clerk of session is not made overnight. Knowledge of your resources and diligence in using them will help you become proficient in this rewarding task. The following is a checklist of priorities to pursue from the day you are elected.

1. **Locate the Session Minutes Book and the Church Register.** They are likely to be in your church office, but may be elsewhere. Locate all previous record books. Are they properly stored?

> *These records should NEVER be taken from the church (except when the minutes are being reviewed annually by the presbytery or are sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society archives for storage). They should be kept in a fireproof safe or file cabinet when not in use.* ***You are the ONLY person who may authorize entries into these books, or provide official excerpts from them.***

2. Obtain a current *Book of Order*.

3. Locate the By-Laws and Manual of Administrative Operations. It is the function of By-Laws to make the general provisions of the *Book of Order* specific to the local situation. For example, while the *Book of Order* specifies three classes of elders and deacons, it does not specify the size of those classes. But remember:

> *Where there is a tension between the By-Laws and the Book of Order, the Book of Order* ***always*** *takes precedence.*
> *Congregation By-Laws may not conflict with Book of Order requirements.*

4. Keep the presbytery stated clerk's email address and phone number close at hand. They are on the cover page of this Handbook. The stated clerk of presbytery is the one to whom you relate directly. **Please do not hesitate to call or email.**

5. Locate a copy of the current Presbytery Directory. If you call the presbytery office you can arrange with Sonja Gaertner, the Office Manager, to pick one up or have one mailed to you.

<u>Supplies you will need:</u>
Minutes book papers and binders are available through Cokesbury (800) 672-1789. Since the binders are very expensive, we suggest that when your minutes book is filled, you have the paper bound (or stored in acid-free folders). Then re-use the binder.

What resources do I need?

"Must Have" Tools for Clerks of Session

A current edition of the *Book of Order*

Every other year, the General Assembly prints a new edition of the *Book of Order*. It is available for purchase and incorporates recent amendments to the *Book of Order*. The 2015-2017 edition will be available later this year. You may also download the *Book of Order* through the church store at store.pcusa.org.

A current copy of the *Book of Confessions*

New editions are only published if there is a revision of a confession or a new confession. Watch for a new edition late in 2015. This is also available for downloaded.

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition ~ DaCapo Press (Perseus Books Group)

This is going to sound like one of those TV commercials, but ***buy only the DaCapo Press edition***. There are many Robert's Rules books out there, but it is the DaCapo edition that is the "Bible" of parliamentarians worldwide.

* You might find it more helpful to use *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief* (same publisher as above). Be sure you get the Fully Updated 2nd Edition.

If You Want to Go Deeper

Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers, Fourth Edition, Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker

This book is excellent. It is written by church officers for church officers. It is complete, accurate, and an excellent resource. It is particularly good when it deals with the "why's behind how we do things as Presbyterians.

You can purchase these books at Amazon.com.

* * * * * * * * *

The Session Meeting

The Session cannot meet without its Moderator, who ordinarily is the pastor of the church. If the church is without a pastor, the Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator. If the moderator is not able to attend a meeting he/she will ask another pastor to moderate.

A quorum of the session must be present to have a meeting at which actions may be taken. A session shall provide by rule for the quorum [G-3,0203]. The quorum must include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of ruling elders in current service.

Session meetings in most congregations are informal. Many of the actions will be approved by consensus, and *Robert's Rules of Order* is loosely applied. That is OK. As clerk of session you record all actions taken by the session whether or not the vote is formal (with a motion) or is by consensus. If you are not sure what the exact wording of a motion is, ask the moderator to stop the meeting briefly so this can be clarified.

Do not include the names of the mover and seconder of a motion. Naming movers and seconders is a tradition that is dictated by custom, not by rule. The preferred format is simple:

"The session VOTED to . . . ."

The purpose of a second is **only** to get the item to the floor. A seconder is not even bound to vote in favor of the motion. In Presbyterian polity, once an action is taken it is an action of the body, making it completely irrelevant who made the motion.

You may occasionally be asked to help a session member to word a motion. Helpful questions to ask in framing a motion for session action are:

What—exactly—is going to be done?
Who is going to do it?
When will it be completed and/or reported?
How much will it cost?
Where will the money come from?
Is the action compatible with the *Book of Order*? (If not, the action is inappropriate.)

Do not include a summary of discussion in your minutes. Record only the motions made and their disposition (along with any subsidiary motions adopted, e.g. amendments). If you include other information include only that which will help a reader understand the motion (e.g. background information, rationale).

You may choose to include a notation of other topics discussed. This can be helpful if there is a need to know when a topic was brought to the session.

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised [11th edition] governs all procedures of session in cases not specifically provided for in the *Book of Order*.

After the Meeting . . .

Write up the minutes **immediately.** Prepare a draft and provide it to the session as soon as possible for their review and approval at the next meeting.

When the minutes have been approved, transcribe them or have them transcribed into the minutes book. Everything must be typed or printed onto the pages. Many clerks wait until the end of the year to print all the minutes so they can be continuous (uses less of the expensive paper!) **Never include attachments (i.e. committee reports, pastor's reports, etc.) and never place inserts into the minutes book.**

Make all necessary entries into the rolls and registers. No entry or deletions should be made unless a session action which appears in the minutes directs that entry or deletion.

Complete or direct to be completed all necessary correspondence related to actions of the session. Among and between governing bodies of the PC(USA), **all** official correspondence is **clerk-to-clerk**. The clerk's signature and no one else's authenticates any document coming from the session. **THE MODERATOR OF SESSION HAS NO AUTHORITY TO ATTEST TO SESSION ACTIONS.**

*NOTE: Some clerks are fortunate to have church secretaries who will print minutes or update rolls and registers. Some congregations even have a "rolls clerk" for the latter task. Still **the clerk of session supervises the church secretary or the roll clerk in all maters related to the minutes and the rolls.** The accuracy of those records is always the responsibility of the clerk of session.*

<u>Email Meetings and the Use of Email</u>

Robert's Rules lifts up the importance of what it means to be a "deliberative assembly." A session meeting is considered such an assembly. The assumed conditions or parameters for a deliberative assembly:

- The **face-to-face** nature of deliberation.
- The crucial importance of **being able to hear one another simultaneously**.
- The importance of interacting with one another directly in deliberating as a body.

These are, for lack of a better phrase, the *bottom-line* requirements for deliberating. Any form of meeting which eliminates one of these requirements is inappropriate, from both a parliamentary and an ecclesiastical standpoint.

Many clerks and session members have asked about "electronic voting" (read: "email voting"). *"May we conduct a vote by e-mail?"*

- One answer is "Yes, **as long as provision has been made for <u>everyone</u> to participate in debate on the issue <u>prior</u> to taking the email vote."**
- Your stated clerk's opinion is: "Don't vote via email" **unless** it is a routine issue that relates to the ability to conduct business (e.g. establishing the date of a special meeting) or to finalize details related to an item already discussed at a session meeting. Still, face-to-face discussion is the ideal even for a routine issue (some of these so-called routine issues are not always so). Skype is a reasonable alternative when someone can't attend the meeting in person or there is a need to meet when everyone can't gather in one location.
- What is clear in *Robert's* is that it is not appropriate to conduct deliberation via email. Why? Because there is no opportunity for "simultaneous aural communication."

Finally . . . it is clear from both *Robert's* and the Office of the General Assembly that **email meetings are not appropriate and are never allowed.** While a *vote* may be conducted by e-mail (see above) a *meeting* may not be conducted by e-mail (or text, or twitter, or Facebook, or other such media)

FURTHER GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF E-MAIL

- Use email ONLY for routine business, such as:
  - Establishing the date/time of a meeting
  - Providing preparatory materials to all participants prior to a meeting
  - Sending an agenda for a meeting
  - Inviting participants to provide preparatory materials or reports (with a deadline for submitting)
  - Working on a document to which several people are contributing (see below)

- Make sure that every member of the group has a complete and accurate list of the email addresses of all members of the group.

- If one or more group members do not have email, either (1) do NOT use e-mail communication (recommended as a best practice), or (2) make sure that those non-electronically-connected members have a copy of what is sent by email.

- In all cases **require** that if group members reply to an email related to the work of the group, they **always** "reply all."

- If the purpose of email is to work on a document:
  - Designate ONE PERSON to be the manager of submissions.
  - Require that all submissions or comments be "reply all"

- The manager of submissions would be responsible for maintaining the central copy of the document.

- **Never . . . ever . . .** use email to discuss an issue. Email is an ineffective, inappropriate, and even destructive way of conducting dialogue. I have seen many church conflicts begin or become worse when email destructive email is forwarded to others.

- Dialogue must **always** be face-to-face.

- **Never . . . ever . . .** employ "blind carbon copy" in group related emails.

- **Never . . . ever . . .** broadcast any group related email beyond the group UNLESS the group has granted permission to do so at a face-to-face meeting, and ONLY with respect to a particular document.

How Do I Prepare the Minutes of a Meeting?

This section of the Handbook for Clerks of Session is intended as a **helpful guide**. What is offered here is offered (a) as suggestion only and (b) incorporates both helpful suggestions and some "best practices" for recording minutes of meetings. In general, this guide will apply to regular meetings of session, special meetings of session, and congregation meetings.

The minutes of a council are a record of the **decisions** and **actions** taken by the council. The minutes serve the practical function of accurately recording what the particular group has done.

- Minutes ensure that there is an accurate record of proceedings and who participated.
- Accurate minutes are a significant help in developing the resources to communicate to a congregation what their leaders are doing to further the ministry of the church.
- Minutes are a significant historical record of the life of a particular congregation, and its witness to the call of Christ to be faithful witnesses to God's love.
- Should there ever be a question about what the council has done, or should there ever be a complaint against what the council has done, the minutes provide accurate documentation, so that it may be determined fairly whether the particular action was or was not an irregularity, or whether the session has overlooked something important. [**This is rare**, but it does happen.]

In the following sections, suggestions and commentary are indented and printed in italics.

How Do I Begin the Minutes?

Minutes should be titled, and should include: (1) the type of meeting, the name of the church, the date/time of the meeting, and the location of the meeting (e.g. session meeting room, fellowship hall, classroom, library, etc.) The minutes should include a clear indication of who was present and absent, the presence of the moderator, and the names of any guests. If there are guests who are given permission to speak, that should be noted as well.

*Here is a **suggested format** for the opening part of the minutes (NOTE – You DO NOT have to use this format. Use what works best for you.).*

MINUTES
Regular [or **Special**] **Meeting of the Session [or congregation]**
________ Presbyterian Church, _______, NJ
[date, time, location]

CLASS OF 2012 CLASS OF 2013 CLASS OF 2014

P	Name	P	Name	P	Name
Ex	Name	P	Name	P	Name
P	Name	P	Name	P	Name
P	Name	Ex	Name		VACANT

Moderator: The Rev. [name]
Guests:

The session of the ____________ Presbyterian Church of ______, NJ held a regular/special meeting in the [location] at [time] on [date]. A quorum being present, the Moderator called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with prayer.

*Meetings of session and the congregation **must** be opened and closed with prayer. If it is your session's practice for an elder to offer the devotion and prayer, the above sentence would read, "A quorum being present, the Moderator called the meeting to order. [name] offered the devotion and the opening prayer." You **must** indicate that a quorum was present. (You don't need to specify what the quorum is.)*

If the meeting is a special meeting, then you would list the call of the meeting in this way:
CALL FOR THE MEETING (this is ONLY for special meetings)

The meeting was called for the following purpose:

- State the purpose of the meeting here.
- ONLY the business stated in the purpose may be conducted at a special meeting.

How should I format the minutes?

First: The main concern for minutes is ***accuracy***. The minutes must be an accurate record of the meeting.
Second: (And this comes as a surprise to many people) The minutes do not have to be **chronological**. There is no requirement that the particular minutes of a particular meeting reflect the *chronology* of the meeting. Again, the question is, "Is it an accurate record." *Robert's Rules of Order* suggest that all minutes follow the same order. Let's take a look at this:

What are the benefits of recording minutes chronologically?

- They are slightly easier for the clerk to record. It is a bit easier to record the meeting and actions as they happen, rather than fitting those actions and events into a pre-determined order. And . . . most meetings generally follow the habit of a particular order of business.

What are the benefits of recording minutes by a "standard" or "non-chronological" order?

- A standard/non-chronological order makes the minutes easier to review by persons who read them (either for the annual review, or for a person researching the historical record).
- It is easier for a subsequent clerk to learn the "pattern" of recording minutes.
- Should there be a question months later about a particular decision in a particular area of the council's work, that decision will be easier to find.

Some clerks will record a brief "table of contents" for the minutes of each meeting. This is rare, but it is another way of tracking actions. It would also be helpful for reviewing minutes that are recorded chronologically.

Simply know that you have a choice in how to organize your minutes. However you record the minutes, be sure to use clear **headings** for each section of the minutes. These are some examples of how clerks have organized their minutes:

LEFT MARGIN HEADING Section of the minutes to the right.
Subsections recorded as appropriate.

SINGLE LINE HEADING
Section of the minutes recorded below the heading.
Subsections recorded as appropriate.

NUMBERED SECTIONS This is a common format for non-chronological minutes.
If this is used, a list of the numbers should be provided at the beginning of each section of minutes. For example:

1.0 Opening
2.0 Routine Business
3.0 Committee reports
 1.1 Worship Committee
 1.2 Christian Education Committee

How Do I Record Routine Business?

Routine business is that which usually occurs at every meeting, and which does not involve much discussion, if any. Routine business may be scheduled at any time in the meeting. Some sessions take care of it right away; others handle routine business at the end of the meeting. When it is handled does not matter.

Routine business includes:

- Approval of the **agenda** of the meeting. *This is **required** for every meeting and does have to occur at the beginning.*
- Approval of the **minutes** of previous meetings (including the most recent congregation meeting). Simply list the date of the meeting and the type of meeting.
- Reports of **services of** baptism:
  - Name of person baptized (and parents—including maiden name of mother—if the person baptized is an infant or small child
  - Date, time, and location of the baptism
  - Name of officiant (usually the pastor, but it might be someone else)
- Reports of **services of the Lord's Supper:**
  - Date, time, and location
  - **ALL** services of the Lord's Supper must be approved by the session, and **must** be recorded. (This would include services at other times than Sunday morning, services at locations like a nursing home or senior center, home communion services, services at retreats or other gatherings, etc.)
  - **A session may (annually) give approval for regular services of the Lord's Supper at other times than Sunday morning.** All such services **must** be reported to the session. Here are some examples:
    - Approval for communion at confirmation retreats during the next year
    - Approval for monthly communion at a senior living center
    - Other regular celebrations of the Lord's Supper (i.e. special seasonal services)
- Reports of **weddings:**
  - Name of the couple (including the bride's maiden name)
  - Date, time, location, and the name of the officiating minister
- Reports of **funerals**:
  - Name of deceased
  - Date and location of the funeral service and name of the officiating minister

- Location of interment or burial (and date, if different from the date of the funeral)

- Report of the **ordination and installation** of officers:
  - Date and time of the worship service during which the installation occurred
  - Name of the persons ordained/installed and the office to which each was installed
  - *The minutes of a previous meeting will have recorded **that** persons were approved for ordination/installation. Later minutes **must** record that the ordination/installation occurred.*

- Report of the **public welcome** of new members:
  - Name of persons welcomed
  - Date and time of worship service during which they were welcomed
  - *Persons become members of a congregation **when they are received by the session**, and NOT when they are welcomed publicly. However, they must be publicly welcomed during worship, and that public welcome must be reported.*
- Report of **routine membership actions**:
  - Transfers of membership at a person's request
  - Actions subsequent to the review of church rolls
- Report of **significant correspondence** received and referral of the correspondence. Examples:
  - A letter from the General Assembly, thanking the congregation for General Mission Giving—referred to the Stewardship Committee for sharing with the congregation
  - A request that our congregation participate in an upcoming county-wide evangelism event—referred to the _____ Committee
  - Correspondence that requires action by the session would not be placed in Routine Business, but would be scheduled as an agenda item
- Report of the **Moderator** if written (other than items listed above)
- Report of the **clerk of session** if written (other than items listed above)
-

***Routine business may be handled by a single motion**, if the following requirements have been satisfied:*
  - *The list of routine business was provided ahead of time.*
  - *Opportunity was given for specific items to be lifted out for further discussion.*

***If no items are lifted out for discussion**, the routine business may be handled in one motion. That motion would be recorded like this:*

Routine Business

The following Routine Business (may also be called a Consent Agenda or an Omnibus Motion) was presented for action by single vote:

{List the routine business here]

***If items are lifted out for discussion**, they may be handled (1) after the vote on the remaining routine business is taken, or (2) at a later point in the meeting. You would record it this way:*

Routine Business

The following Routine Business was presented for action by single vote:

{List the routine business here]

Request was made to lift the following items for discussion:

[List lifted items here]

The session VOTED to approve the Routine Business items that were not lifted out.

Then you would either (1) note disposition of items as discussed, or (2) note when the items would be dealt with later in the meeting and record disposition at the time of discussion.

How Do I Record Motions?

The simplest way to record motions is this:

Upon motion and second, the session VOTED to . . . .

--OR—

Upon recommendation by the ____ Committee, the session VOTED to . . .

The record of the motion **must** include:

- A **clear** statement of the action taken.
- **Who will follow through** to implement the motion (whether an individual or individuals, or a committee or board).
- The **anticipated deadline** for implementation of the motion –OR—the anticipated time of a **report** regarding progress.
- If finances are involved, an indication of (1) the amount and (2) the budget line to be charged, **and** an indication of who will inform the treasurer of that information.
- If the motion is taken by other than voice vote (e.g. counted vote or secret ballot), both the manner of voting and the results must be recorded in the minutes.
- If it is appropriate to the record, it is good (even advisable) to record below the motion the **rationale** for the action. That rationale may have been presented with the motion, or the session may deem it important to express the rationale.

It is not necessary to indicate who made the motion and who seconded the motion.

- It is inappropriate to record the name of the person who seconded a motion, because a second ONLY means that the person agrees that the item should be discussed and acted on. Contrary to common assumption, a person who seconds is NOT obliged to vote "yes."
- Within Presbyterian theology and ecclesiology, naming the mover is unnecessary because once a motion is approved or disapproved, the action belongs to the body. You may name the person who moved the motion if you desire, but it is not necessary.

How Do I Report the Annual Review of Session Records?

Here is a suggested format:

REPORT OF ANNUAL REVIEW OF SESSION RECORDS.
The session received from the clerk the report of the annual review of the session records. The records were reviewed on [date] at [location].

The session celebrated that the records were reviewed with no exceptions.

OR

The session noted the following exceptions to the minutes:

List each exception, and the session's response to the exception (including steps to be taken to correct it). If the session disagrees with an exception, that disagreement may be noted next to or under the exception.

What Routine Reports Are Required?

The minutes are required to include certain routine reports:

- A regular report of the Treasurer
- Election by session of a commissioner to presbytery meetings, and a report by that commissioner to the session meeting following a meeting of the presbytery. *Some sessions elect their commissioner meeting-by-meeting; others elect a commissioner for an annual term. Either is fine, but it must be done. The report of the presbytery meeting should not be included in Routine Business.*
- Annual Approval of the Budget

- Annual review of church membership

Here are suggested formats for recording these required reports:

REPORT OF THE TREASURER
The session VOTED to receive the report of the Treasurer for the period ending [date], summarized as follows:

Receipts for [month]	$________
Expenses for [month]	$________
Receipts, year to date	$________
Expenses, year to date	$________
Net Income, year to date	$________

ELECTION OF PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONER
The session VOTED to elect Ruling Elder ____________ as commissioner to the stated (or special) meeting of the Presbytery of Newton, to be held on [date] at [location]. *See below for another way of handling this.*

OR

The session VOTED to elect Ruling Elder __________ as commissioner to all stated and special meetings of the Presbytery of Newton during [note the year or the time frame].

REPORT OF PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONER
Ruling Elder [name] presented a report of the recent meeting of the Presbytery of Newton held on [date] at [location].

A summary of the report may be made, for inclusion in the minutes.

If the commissioner has recommendations, they would be acted on and noted this way:
Upon recommendation from the commissioner, the session VOTED to:

List the action taken

ANNUAL APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET
When the report of the budget proposal is made, the minutes should record session action on the budget, and the approved budget should be included in the minutes, either at that place in the minutes or as an appendix. Note: although the Book of Order does not require that the budget be included, it can be helpful to do so for reference and for historical information.

The session should note its **recommendation** of the pastor's terms of call (for installed pastors only!) for the following year. If there are changes in the terms of call, the congregation must approve those at the annual meeting or a duly-called congregation meeting. If there are no changes in the terms of call, that is simply noted in the budget. It is **vitally** important that the terms of call be included in the session minutes, for the sake of the pastor.

- The Internal Revenue Service requires that the terms of compensation be listed in the minutes
- Housing allowance MUST be noted, and it cannot be noted retroactively. **It is important to note the housing allowance in minutes PRIOR TO THE END OF THE YEAR BEFORE THAT HOUSING ALLOWANCE TAKES EFFECT.**
- It is important (for tax purposes) to specify reimbursable parts of the pastor's benefits

ANNUAL REVIEW OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
It is the session's responsibility annually both to (1) review the rolls of membership, and (2) invite persons to consider the integrity of their membership. There are various models for this, but the action of reviewing the rolls must be included in the minutes. Record any recommendations of the review group, and the disposition of those recommendations.

How Do I Record The Annual Report of the Congregation?

You do not need to include the entire annual report in the session minutes book.

In the minutes of the annual meeting, simply record something like this:

> The congregation VOTED to receive the Annual Report for [year], with thanks to all those who submitted reports for inclusion. The [year] Annual Report includes the following program reports:
> > [List here]
>
> The [year] Annual Report includes the following financial reports:
> > [List here]

How Do I Record The Annual Statistical Report?

First . . . The session does not vote to "approve" the annual statistical report; it votes to "receive" the annual statistical report.

As to recording the report:
You have two options:

1. You may say in the minutes: The session VOTED to receive the annual statistical report for [previous year], which is inserted as Appendix 1 following these minutes. *This is the easiest option!*
2. You may say in the minutes: The session VOTED to receive the annual statistical report for [previous year], summarized as follows: [*then type in a very basis summary of the report*]

The session does not vote to receive/approve and you do not need to include The Clerk's Annual Questionnaire in the minutes. This report is only for data gathering by the denomination.

How Do I Record Other Session Business?

REPORT OF SESSION COMMITTEES
(Name of Committee)
Ruling Elder [name] presented the report of the [name] Committee.
> *You may list a brief summary here.*
>
> *If there are recommendations you would note them this way:*
> Upon recommendation by the [name] Committee, the Session voted to:
> > *List the action taken*

DISCUSSION OF AN ISSUE BEFORE THE SESSION
The session engaged in discussion of [*state the subject or the issue*].
> *ONLY record pertinent facts, background, points of disussion.*
> *IF THE SESSION EXPLORED OPTIONS, list them.*
> *IF THE SESSION MADE DECISIONS, record them.*
> *It is important to list follow-through information:*
> > *Describe **who** will do **what**, and by what **deadline**.*
> > *If there is a cost, describe what it is, how much, and where it will come from in the budget.*
> > *Describe other follow-through actions and their responsibility.*

CLOSING
> The meeting of the session ended with prayer offered by ______________________.

How Do I Clerk a Congregation Meeting?

The clerk of session is the secretary of both regular and special congregation meetings. [G-1.0505] If the clerk of session is unable to serve, the congregation must—as a first item of business—elect a secretary for the meeting. That action is recorded in the minutes. Minutes are taken exactly as for a session meeting.

A congregation meeting may be called only by the session, the presbytery, or by the session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the active members of the congregation.

It is important to ensure that **adequate public notice** be given for a meeting of the congregation. [G-1.0502] That notice **must** specify the nature of the business for which the meeting is called. The *Book of Order* specifies that the congregation shall provide by its own rule for the minimum notification requirements. The *Book of Order* requires that notice shall be given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting (but does not specify details as to how many worship services).

The *Book of Order* specifies the business that may be conducted at congregation meetings: G-1.0503. The annual meeting of a congregation may include in the call for the meeting a phrase like ". . . and other business which may rightly come before the congregation." Such other business must be within the parameters of G-1.0503.

A special or called meeting of the congregation may ONLY consider the business listed in the call for that particular meeting. **The phrase ". . . and other business which may rightly come before the congregation" is NOT PERMISSIBLE for a special or called meeting.**

The church budget is adopted by the session, NOT by the congregation. The session has a duty and responsibility to inform the congregation of the budget they have approved.

Changes to the pastor's compensation package (terms of call) must be approved by the congregation and reported to the presbytery. With respect to the pastor's compensation, the session has only the authority to recommend. This is the one part of the church budget for which the congregation has authority. This is the case only for an installed pastor. *All temporary pastors (interim, stated supply, temporary supply) are serving under a covenant with the session*.

Proxy voting and absentee voting is not allowed for any meeting, congregation or corporate. Only active members who are present may vote.

The congregation is responsible for establishing the **quorum** for congregation meetings. [G-1.0501] **Best practice:** At the next congregation meeting, have the session recommend a quorum, to be followed at that meeting and subsequent meetings.

Minutes of the congregation meeting may be approved by the session at the next session meeting following the congregation meeting. Those approved minutes would be reported at the next regular or special congregation meeting.

How Do I Maintain the Membership Rolls and Registers?

First . . . Take a look at Page 6 of this Handbook, Item 2. Your session will have to decide how to handle the previous category of "Inactive Members." THIS IS IMPORTANT**.** Please know that the new Form of Government makes no provision for the previous category of "Inactive Member." You are not *prohibited* from having such a category; it is simply not a part of the new Form of Government.

It will be important for your session to have a serious discussion of the observation of the Form of Government Task Force that the term "inactive member" is meaningless. Their rationale is that "one is either an active member or not." They recommended not continuing the practice of naming a "member" as "inactive." The question they did not answer is ***how a session deals with that now-eliminated former practice.***

What follows is a set of suggestions for how to maintain the rolls and registers. Each membership scenario is listed in bold print, followed by the "tip" for making entries in the rolls and registers.

The standard Church Register book has the following sections:

- Roll of Pastors
- Roll of Elders
- Roll of Deacons
- Chronological Roll of Members (recorded by date of their being received as members)
- Alphabetical Roll of Members
- Roll of Baptized Members
- Register of Baptisms

Other registers may include:

- Register of Deaths
- Register of Marriages

An important general principle: **Every entry or change in a membership roll or register MUST be connected to a particular action of the session** (or congregation in the case of calling an installed pastor or dissolving the relationship with an installed pastor)**.** Every one. Without exception.

++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++

The Rev. So-and-So becomes pastor of the congregation.

1. Record the full name of the pastor on the Roll of Pastors.
2. Record whether the person is pastor, associate pastor, co-pastor, interim pastor, stated supply, temporary supply or commissioned lay pastor
3. If the pastor is installed (pastor, associate pastor, co-pastor) list the date of installation
4. If the pastor is temporary (interim, stated supply, temporary supply, commissioned lay pastor), note the date their service begins.

The relationship with the Rev. So-and-So is dissolved.

1. If the pastor is installed, record next to their name (1) the date of congregation action dissolving the relationship and (2) the date that the pastor's service ends. [*Those dates are not always the same.*]
2. If the pastor is temporary, record next to their name (1) the date of session action ending the service and (2) the date that the pastor's service ends.

A member of the church is ordained as an elder or a deacon (never having previously served as an elder or a deacon).

1. Record the person's name on the Roll of Elders or the Roll of Deacons.
2. Note the date of the Service of Ordination and Installation.
3. When the person's term of service ends, note that date next to their name on the appropriate roll.
4. If the person is re-elected to a second term in the same office, they would be installed to that second term, and you would note the date of that installation.

A member of the church who previously served as an elder or deacon is some years later elected to serve again in that office.

1. Next to the person's previously-entered name for that office, note the date of their installation for their new term.

Mr. & Mrs. John Adams are received as members by letters of transfer.

1. Record John [middle name] Adams on the chronological roll, opposite the first free membership number. Indicate the way he joined the church (letter of transfer), the church from which they transferred, and the date of the session action.
2. Record Abigail (maiden name) Adams on the chronological roll in the same manner as with Mr. Adams.
3. Record both members in the alphabetical roll, noting their chronological membership numbers.

Mr. & Mrs. Adams have a three year old son, John Quincy, who was baptized in the former church.

1. List John Quincy Adams on the roll of Baptized Members, with the date and place of his baptism, and the names of his parents (including mother's maiden name).

Mr. & Mrs. Adams' infant daughter, Elizabeth, is baptized after they join the church.

1. List Elizabeth (middle name) Adams on the Register of Baptisms, with the date and place of her baptism and the names of her parents (including mother's maiden name).

__If the child is the child of a single mother or father__ who does not wish to list the other parent's name, list only the mother's or father's name (including mother's maiden name).

__If the child is the adopted or legal ward__ of the parents, their names are listed as the parents.

Benjamin Harrison has never been a member of any church, nor has he been baptized.

1. Session votes to receive Mr. Harrison by profession of faith with baptism.
2. List Benjamin (middle name) Harrison on the chronological roll, opposite the first free membership number.
3. Note that he was received by profession of faith and the date of session's action.
4. Record his baptism on the Register of Baptisms. It is helpful to note that he is an adult.
5. List his full name on the alphabetical roll, noting his chronological membership number.

Martha Washington was a member of another church, but (a) it has been many, many years since she was active, or (b) she can't remember where she was a member, or (c) that previous denomination does not provide letters of transfer.

1. Session votes to receive Mrs. Washington by reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ.
2. List Martha (maiden name) Washington on the chronological roll, opposite the first free membership number.
3. Note that she was received by reaffirmation of faith and the date of session's action.
4. List her full name on the alphabetical roll, noting her chronological membership number.

Andrew Jackson requests that session transfer his membership to First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee.

1. Session votes to transfer Mr. Jackson.
2. Fill out the transfer certificate, noting on the back any ordinations Mr. Jackson holds (Ruling Elder, deacon) and the date(s) of ordination and date(s) of service. You may write a letter of transfer in lieu of the certificate. Include the same information in the letter.
3. Next to Mr. Jackson's name on the chronological roll note the date of transfer and the church to which he was transferred. Do this **after** you have received notice that he has been received by the other church.

Mr. Jackson's ten year old son, Archibald, is on the roll of Baptized Members.

1. Note Archibald's name on the back of Mr. Jackson's transfer form or in the letter, along with the date and location of his baptism.
2. Draw a thin line through Archibald's name on the roll of Baptized Members, and note that his baptism was transferred to the First Presbyterian Church of Nashville, Tennessee.

Dolly Madison dies.

1. Draw a thin line through her name on the chronological roll, and note the date of her death.
2. If you have a death register, list her name in that register along with the date of death, the date of her funeral, the location of her funeral service, and the location of her interment or burial.

John Tyler requests that he be removed from the membership roll.

1. Session acts on the request for removal.
2. Next to Mr. Tyler's name on the chronological roll indicate the date of the session action to remove him from the roll, and that it was by Mr. Tyler's request.

The following tips anticipate what the clerk would do, depending on the decision to maintain a roll of Inactive Members or to follow the new Form of Government's category of "Other Participants."

John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt lives in town but has not been involved in the church for several years.

If your session continues to maintain an Inactive Roll . . .

1. The session makes attempts to encourage Mr. Schmidt's participation in the church, including inviting him to communicate how he understands his membership.
2. If there is no response to those attempts, session notifies Mr. Schmidt that at, after a certain reasonable time for response, they will move him to the Inactive Roll.
3. The session votes to place Mr. Schmidt on the Inactive Roll.
4. Note that action next to his name on the chronological roll, and the date of the action.
5. If after two years Mr. Schmidt fails to return to active membership, the session may vote to remove his name from the roll.
6. Note the date of session action removing him.

If your session uses the "Other Participants" provision of the New Form of Government . . .

1. The session makes attempts to encourage Mr. Schmidt's participation in the church, including inviting him to communicate how he understands his membership.
2. If there is no response to these attempts, session notifies Mr. Schmidt that, after a certain reasonable time for response they will remove his name from the roll of Active Members, at which time he will become an Other Participant.
3. Session acts to remove Mr. Schmidt from the roll of Active Members.
4. Note the date of the action and that he is an "Other Participant."

If Mr. Schmidt is on the Inactive Roll or is an "Other Participant" and subsequently desires that his membership be transferred to another church . . .

1. Session acts to restore him to active membership.
2. Session acts to transfer his membership to the other church.
3. Note both actions next to his name on the chronological roll.

If Mr. Schmidt is an "Other Participant" or on the Inactive Roll and resumes activity in the church, and desires to restore his membership . . .

1. Session acts to receive him as a member by reaffirmation of faith.
2. List his name on the chronological roll next opposite the first free membership number (yes, you are creating a new entry) and note the date of session action.
3. Note the new membership number next to his name on the alphabetical roll.

How Do I Manage The *Baptized Members* Roll?

Who is placed on the Baptized Members roll?

The roll of Baptized members is for all persons who have been baptized, but who have not made a profession of faith.

If an infant is baptized in our church, is he/she placed on the roll of Baptized Members?

Yes. You would also add her to the Register of Baptisms.
For an infant or young child, you would list his/her name on the roll, along with the date and location of the baptism (sanctuary, lake, river, etc.).

What *adults* would be on the roll of Baptized Members?

If a baptized child grows to adulthood, but has not made public profession of faith, he or she would remain on the roll of baptized members.
If a family moves to your church and one of the spouses becomes a member but the other does not, you would put that other person on the roll of baptized members.

What happens when a child on the roll becomes confirmed, our an adult on the roll becomes a member?

You would do four things:

1. Make a note by their name on the roll Baptized Members the date of the session's action receiving them as a member. For a child that would most likely be when the session received her or him after confirmation. For an adult that would be when the session received them as a member of the church.
2. Draw a thin line through their name on the roll of Baptized Members.
3. List her/his name on the chronological roll of Active Members by the next available number, and note the date of session action receiving her/him as a member.
4. List her/his name on the alphabetical list of members, with their chronological roll number.

What do I do when they and/or their family moves?

In the case of an infant or young child on the roll of Baptized Members: If the family moves and requests a membership transfer, you would note the name and baptism date on the transfer form (or letter), note the family's move next to the child's name on the roll, and draw a thin line through the child's name.

In the case of an adult on the roll of Baptized Members: You would simply draw a thin line through their name.

What Do I Do With Old Session Minutes Books and Registers?

Preserving church records is a key responsibility of PC(USA) stated clerks and clerks of session. The Book of Order charges clerks with the "permanent safekeeping" of all official records. Certain types of records are deemed permanent because of their legal, administrative, or historic nature. Permanent records document many aspects of the historic development of the denomination and the commitment to the community of faith. In addition, they are valuable in understanding legal and financial developments and have ongoing administrative uses within the synod, presbytery, congregation, and national office. The Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) offers services to assist you. See more at: www.history.pcusa.org (select the "Services" tab).

Records older than the current century (i.e. prior to 2000) should be sent to the archives at the Presbyterian Historical Society. PHS holds original records of permanent value on deposit in an environmentally controlled archival storage area with specialized fire detection and security systems. Congregations can deposit records at no charge. The church retains ownership of the records and may request their return at any time with written authorization from the clerk of session. PHS also offers digitization of records (for a fee).

You can find information on records retention on the PHS website.

If you have any questions on how to be an effective clerk of session or need assistance contact the Presbytery Office!