



PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA

CLERK OF SESSION
HANDBOOK

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PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA CLERK OF SESSION HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the office of Clerk of Session! You have joined a unique and important group of people within 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-3.0104). Clerks of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving sessions are called Clerks of Session.

This Handbook for Clerks of Session is written with the following assumptions, that the Clerk of Session:

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

The clerk of a governing body:

- understands that our order is to be derived from Scripture, as it is expressed in the Confessions of our Church;
- understands our order expresses the principle that we must live our lives together in accord with our faith and as a witness to the demands of Scripture;
- respects the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as our covenant with one another about how we can, in our diversity, be such a witness;
- 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 ruling elders, deacons, members, and ministers of word and sacrament;
- a representative form of government in which both ruling elders and ministers of word and sacrament have care of the congregation; and
- 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. (F-1.0304)

As clerk, you will record a good deal of history of your church as you write the minutes of your session. 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 the session meetings and in congregational meetings.

This Handbook has been prepared to provide Clerks of Session with information to assist them in their work and to ensure that they have easily accessible information about what must be included in the session record books.

The primary duties of the clerk are to

- record the minutes of the session
- keep rolls of membership and attendance of the session
- preserve the records of the session
- furnish extracts to other governing bodies when required
- assist the pastor by keeping the pastor informed and providing information to the pastor as requested.

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

- The clerk is responsible for the preservation of the minutes of both the session and the congregation. (G-3.0204) This means not only recording the minutes but also seeing that they are approved, signed, and placed into the official minutes book. Once each year, the minutes are to be submitted to presbytery for their review. The stated clerk of presbytery will notify the clerk of the arrangements.
- The session is responsible for maintaining rolls and in practical terms this usually means the clerk is responsible. When a new member is received by letter of transfer, the clerk should write to the transferring church requesting the letter. When a member transfers to another church, the clerk should verify the membership, obtain session approval, and issue the letter of transfer. Forms are available from Cokesbury.
- The clerk of session serves as secretary of congregational meetings.

There are other responsibilities that show up in the Book of Order indirectly or by inference. Additional duties can be assigned or negotiated.

Each year the presbytery is required to file a statistical report with the General Assembly. This is now done online but the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery can enter the information you provide if you cannot complete it online. Using the workbook to compile the statistics before going online makes the process much easier.

IF YOU ARE A NEW CLERK OF SESSION

As a new Clerk of Session, your priorities should be to:

1. Locate the minute book and church register. Locate all previous record books. Are they properly stored? These records should never be taken from the church and should be kept in a

locked, fireproof safe or cabinet when not in use. You are the only person who can authorize entries into these books.

2. Locate a current Book of Order. Section G-3.02 of the Book of Order discusses the duties of session. You will find most of the information you need immediately in that chapter. That chapter also describes the rolls and registers of the church and gives instructions on how to maintain them. Note that the Book of Order is usually updated and reissued early summer following a General Assembly meeting.
3. Locate a copy of your church bylaws and congregational charter. Where the Book of Order is silent, the congregation's by-laws often will tell you what needs to be done.
4. Locate copies of church architectural drawings, mortgage papers, and church histories and make sure that they are stored properly.
5. Keep the following information close at hand:
 - Presbytery physical address: 3368 Harmony Road, Chipley, FL 32428
 - Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7, Chipley, FL 32428-0007;
 - Telephone number: (850) 535-2335
 - Fax: (844) 361-9448
 - Office Email: office@presbyteryofflorida.com
 - Website address: www.presbyteryofflorida.net (*Note the difference between the two addresses*)
6. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Florida is the person to whom you directly relate. For help with your questions and knowledge of whom to call, contact the stated clerk at:
 - Email: statedclerk@presbyteryofflorida.com
 - Phone: (850) 535-2335 ext. 3
7. Other websites that you may need are:
 - The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) www.pcusa.org
 - The Synod of South Atlantic www.synodofsouthatlantic.org
 - The Board of Pensions www.pensions.org
8. Make sure that you have the proper supplies.
 - Cokesbury Books & Church Supplies, www.cokesbury.com, has many of the supplies and resources you will need. Look under 'Supplies' and then 'church record-keeping'.
 - If you use the traditional Session Minutes book and Church Registry book, you will need paper of at least 25% rag content (we recommend that you buy unnumbered paper); register fillers; minute and register binders. In addition to Cokesbury, Staples has paper with 25% rag content and register binders available online at www.Staples.com. The brand of paper preferred by the Presbyterian Historical Society is Mowhawk Superfine. Because register binders are very expensive, we recommend that when your minute book is filled, you have the pages bound and reuse your present binder.
 - The Presbyterian Historical Society now allows for minutes and records to be kept in regular 3-ring binders. They do ask, however, that everyone use acid-free paper.

- Minutes and records may also be stored digitally. But make sure you have backups (plural) in the event of a computer crash.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLERK OF SESSION AT A GLANCE

1. Keep a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the session (G-3.0204).
2. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance (G-3.0104).
3. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records (G-3.0104), making recommendations to the session for the permanent safe keeping of its records (G-3.0107).
4. Furnish extracts from the minutes when required by another council (governing body) of the church (G-3.0104 and G-3.0108a).
5. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of session (G-3.0204a, b).
6. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the joint meetings with (if any) the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees (G-3.0204).
7. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in the Book of Order (G-3.0201).
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 usually is given on two successive Sundays (G-1.0501 and G-1.0502) “Adequate notice” is the time specified in the Book of Order, but it should be clearly specified in the manual of operations].
9. Be sure that the annual statistical form requested by the General Assembly is completed accurately and reported to the PCUSA by the deadline noted in an email from the presbytery Stated Clerk in December or January. Note that the deadline for entry of statistical information is set by the PC(USA) and the presbytery staff cannot extend it. That email will contain the login and password information for your church. Clerks of Session are expected to enter this information themselves. If you are experiencing any difficulty with the on-line statistical entry system, please contact the presbytery office or the Stated Clerk. Also, be sure to return other paperwork requested by the Stated Clerk by the deadlines noted. (See Local Church Leaders form in Addenda, page 27)
10. Bring the session minute book and the rolls and registers to one of the Minutes Reading meetings of the presbytery for annual review. (See the Minutes Review Form in the Addenda, page 21.)
11. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation (G-1.0505), making sure that the minutes are received by session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book.
12. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of the pastor/moderator and the 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 reporting to session, and remind the appropriate persons(s) if not reported expeditiously.
14. Be prepared to respond to questions about parliamentary procedure in meetings if requested. (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-3.0105). 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 presbytery office of essential staff member/volunteers (See the Minutes Review Form in the Addenda, page 27.)
17. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested. (See Sample Agenda Template in the Addenda, page 18.)
18. Assist the moderator in church officer training when requested.
19. Remind the moderator of required annual actions. (The Minutes Review form is a great help in this.)
20. 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.
21. May moderate the congregational meeting, if requested by the pastor or session vote with pastor's concurrence, during the pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary clerk should be appointed.
22. File the Florida Annual Non-Profit Corporation Report if you have had a change in your corporate officers during the preceding calendar year. The by-laws will specify who the officers are. (Usually the treasurer files this, but you should make sure it is done).
23. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the moderator or the session.

RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS

Note that the ***Book of Order*** requires:

1. Accurate Recording of Proceedings

Each council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings. Minutes and all other official records of councils are the property in perpetuity of said councils or their legal successors. When a council ceases to exist, its records shall become the property of the next higher council within whose bounds the lower council was prior to its cessation. The clerk of each council shall make recommendation to that body for the permanent safekeeping of the body's records with the Presbyterian Historical Society or in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment of a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G- 3.0107)

The Presbyterian Historical Society will preserve records for congregations. See their web site at <http://www.history.pcusa.org/> or call them for information. Their address is 425 Lombard St., Philadelphia, PA 19147. Telephone: 215-627-1852, Fax: 215-627- 0509. Hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (eastern).

Records of existing congregations remain the property of the congregation and may be recalled at any time if needed. In addition, records that are more than 50 years old may be made available to researchers, especially genealogical researchers.

2. *Congregational Meetings*

a. Secretary for Congregational Meetings

For congregational meetings, the Book of Order specifies that the clerk of session is to be the secretary of the congregation for the meeting. In the absence of the clerk, the congregation is to elect its own secretary for that particular meeting. The secretary is to take the minutes of the meeting.

b. Parliamentarian

Since the secretary (clerk) is also parliamentarian, it is necessary to be familiar with the whole section of the Book of Order related to Meetings of the Congregation (G-1.05). This includes what business can and cannot be transacted and what constitutes a quorum. Minutes of congregational meetings can be approved by the Session at its next meeting or by the congregation at the next congregational meeting.

c. Electing Elders and/or Deacons

Other information related to meetings of the congregation appears under the election and ordination of elders and deacons.

d. Nominating Committee

The election of a Nominating Committee requires one member of the session. The composition of the committee should be specified in the manual of operations. It is good practice for the session to make these appointments in advance of the congregational meeting so that the congregation has this information when it votes on its at-large representatives. G-2.0401 notes your manual may provide your rule for the nominating committee, but it shall meet all 3 criteria of G-2.0401. The session representatives should be active on the session during the time they serve on the nominating committee.

After there has been a vote to close nominations, if the number of nominees equals the number of vacancies, the election may be by voice vote or show of hands to elect the slate by unanimous consent (or by acclamation). While the Book of Order does not require that nominees give permission for their names to be entered into nomination, it is good practice for the church to have such a requirement written into its bylaws. Robert's Rules of Order specify that no person can make more than one nomination and that nominations do not need to be seconded. The Book of Order does not require a secret ballot for this type of election when the number of nominees exceeds the number of vacancies, but it is good public relations practice to do so. This means that the clerk should have ballots prepared in advance.

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

e. Capital Expenditures

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

f. Buying and Selling Church Property

In case of a sale, mortgage, gift, or lease of property, the session records must show (in addition to the record of congregational approval as stated in the Book of Order (G-1.0503d & G-4.0101):

- a. Name, address and legal description of the property
- b. Name of buyer/lessee
- c. Sale price
- d. Loan amount purpose and terms, including the name of the lender
- e. Lease terms and liability insurance
- f. Concurrence of the presbytery

g. Annual Meetings

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

h. Other Business

Other less frequent actions of the congregation may require that the clerk take a leading role. These include the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the formation of a pastor nominating committee, and the subsequent election of a pastor. All of these actions require consultation with and/or approval by presbytery. Early discussion with the presbytery's Ministry of Pastoral Transitions is encouraged.

When calling a pastor or dealing with other sensitive matters, secret ballots should be used. Again, proxies are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote. The Session may, in advance of the congregational meeting, specify that a vote should be by secret ballot. According to Robert's Rules of Order secret ballots are used when specified by the constitution or by-laws or when specifically voted on (by majority vote) by the congregation. For a vote by ballot where the actual motion may not be known in advance can be handled by the use of a generic ballot.

SPECIFICS ON SESSION MEETINGS

1. *Open or Closed Meetings:* Session meetings may or may not be regarded as open meetings, depending on the bylaws, written policies, and common practice of the church. Keep in mind that the general preference is for open meetings.

If the meeting is closed, attendance is restricted to the members and any guests (such as staff) whom the session invites. Members of the congregation wishing to attend are to secure an invitation from the moderator or the clerk. The session should convene without those who asked to be invited; the moderator or clerk explains the reason for the request to be invited, and the session affirms the invitation – either by general consent or by a motion seconded and passed – or does not affirm it. It is the session's meeting, and only the session can render it open to invitees.

A session may, if it wishes, adopt an "open meeting policy" which in effect invites any or all members of the congregation to all meetings unless a decision is made to close a meeting or part of a meeting to consider sensitive, confidential matters.

In either an open, or a closed meeting, those who are not members of the body do not have “voice” or the right to address the body unless they are granted that privilege.

2. *Moderator:* The pastor of the church is the moderator; where there are co-pastors, they alternate moderating the session meeting. When the pulpit is vacant, either the interim pastor or another pastor appointed by the presbytery is the moderator (G-3.0104). A session cannot meet in the absence of the pastor/moderator except:
 - a. If the pastor thinks it advisable, he/she with the session’s concurrence invites another minister of the presbytery to moderate.
 - b. If the session is directed to meet by presbytery, the clerk and/or the moderator consult with representatives of the presbytery; depending on circumstances, it may be advisable for a representative of the presbytery to moderate the meeting.
 - c. If there is no installed pastor or if installed pastor is unable to moderate and cannot name another minister of word and sacrament as moderator, the presbytery will appoint a moderator (G-1.0504).
3. *Quorum:* A quorum of session must be present to have a legal meeting at which actions may be taken. The session or the bylaws of the congregation set the quorum for the session. A suggested quorum of the session might be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders or a specific percentage. For the reception and dismissing of members, your session’s rule might even set the quorum as the moderator and two members of the session as it was in the in the Book of Order prior to 2011.
4. Session meetings in most churches are informal. As Clerk, however, 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.
5. 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.]

MINUTES OF SESSION MEETINGS

The Book of Order requires that a session keep “full and accurate record of its proceedings”. No guidelines are given regarding the details for doing this. In the absence of parliamentary procedures in the Book of Order, the instructions from Robert’s Rules of Order are to be followed. The following is a summary of what has become the norm for session minutes. This is rooted both in the Book of Order and in Robert’s Rules of Order and is to ensure that the important information is included and that the proper procedures have been followed.

A. *Essential Parts*

Every set of minutes should contain the following information.

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

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

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

After the minutes have been approved by the session, they should be placed in the official Minute Book and signed by the moderator or the clerk. In this electronic age it is not necessary that minutes actually be typed into the Minute Book. Previously printed pages can be photocopied onto the Minute Book pages.

Electronic storage, in place of paper storage, might not be acceptable because there is no way to attest by signature to the accuracy and correctness of the documents and due to long term storage problems. The Minute Book needs to be kept in a secure fireproof environment.

Motions from a committee do not require a second. The minutes should record who makes a motion (when made by an individual) but not who seconds the motion.

B. *As Needed*

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

- Attendance at worship. The number of people attending each worship service should be recorded. This will permit calculation of average attendance per week for the Session Annual Statistical Report. The attendance at Sunday School could also be included.

- Financial report. Session should receive (not approve) the financial report. A summary of the report could be included, if desired.

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

- Authorization to celebrate the Lord's Supper at times other than normal. Session normally has a continuing approval for authorization at regular times such as the first Sunday of every month. The celebration of the Lord's Supper at other times, such as at a church retreat, needs special approval. The January minutes should note the usual approval dates for celebrating the Lord's Supper for the year.
- Session action in receiving and dismissing members. The record should include the full name of the persons and family relationships where appropriate. For those transferring, the name, city, and state of the transferring church should be included. The method of reception (transfer, affirmation of faith, or reaffirmation of faith) should be recorded.
- Session action in removing members from the active roll. Active members should not be removed until the inactivity has been for a period of at least two years. (G-3.0204a) Inactivity is determined as no attendance or participation, and no financial giving.
- Approval of guest ministers or others to conduct the worship service. At times when the pastor is not present for a worship service, such as during vacation time, the person to conduct the worship service and to preach the Word should be approved by session.
- Authorization and recording of baptisms. The authorization of session is needed for all baptisms. After the baptism, the occurrence should be recorded. The full name, birthdate, and place of birth of the person being baptized and the name(s) of parents(s) for infant baptisms should be recorded.
- Deaths. The death of any member should be recorded.
- Weddings. Any wedding taking place in the church and weddings performed by the pastor either at the church or elsewhere should be recorded.
- Commissioners to presbytery. The election of commissioners to presbytery and the receiving of the commissioners' report to the session after the presbytery meeting should be in the minutes.

C. *Annually*

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

- Annual Statistical Report. This report must be approved by session and included in the minutes.
- Annual budget. Session is responsible for the budget and expenditures of the church. The budget requires approval by session and should be included, at least in summary form, in the minutes.
- Election of the church treasurer and the clerk of session for a term specified in the manual of operations.
- Church Nominating Committee. Session needs to appoint its representative(s) to this committee and to set the date for the congregational meeting for the election. In many churches this election is held at the annual congregational meeting. The composition of the Church Nominating Committee needs to be specified in the manual of operations. The manual should also state that the committee moderator is an elder currently on the session.
- Annual congregational/corporation meeting. Session needs to set the date and time for an annual congregational meeting. If the church is incorporated, a meeting of the corporation is

required by law. In Florida, the meeting of the corporation may be held in conjunction with the congregational meeting. Annual reports should be presented at this meeting of the corporation.

- Newly elected elders. Session needs to arrange for the instruction, examination, ordination (where required), and installation of newly elected elders. This also applies to deacons for churches not under the unicameral system.
- Composition of session and congregation with respect to racial ethnic members, women, men, and age groups. These data are to be in the minutes. Since this information is in the Annual Statistical report, including that report in the minutes will fulfill this requirement.
- Pastor's Call. Session needs to call a congregational meeting or include in the agenda of another meeting, a review by the congregation of the pastor's call. The pastor's call includes salary, other financial benefits, vacation (minimum of 4 weeks required), and study leave (minimum of 2 weeks required).
- Insurance information (policy number, amount of coverage, insurance company)
- An Annual Audit or Review of Financial Records (G-3.0113) and Annual Review of the work of the Deacons (if any) (G-2.0202)

D. *Other*

Each person needs to work out the best ways for handling the preparation of the minutes. One suggestion is to prepare a template for use in taking the minutes during the meeting. (See Sample Minute Template, Addenda, page 19.) This template would include the list of elders' names (to aid in taking the roll) and major category headings with blank spaces for writing in the information.

If the meetings do not follow a regular format, the use of a template is limited. Using a printed template to take minutes may cause some difficulties since it may be difficult to predict how much space to leave.

Some people use a template file and a laptop computer and take notes on the computer during the meeting. A good, rather complete agenda makes this approach more feasible.

Either the template or the checklist has an additional benefit in that it will help you and the moderator to remember what needs to be done. This can be carried further by the clerk and the pastor meeting in advance of the session meeting with the purpose of including more details in the template or check list.

When typing the minutes using a computer word processor, it is suggested, again, that a template be established and the information be typed into the appropriate places. This avoids retyping some information such as the list of elders present and helps ensure that items are not missed.

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

When it comes time to prepare the Session Annual Statistical Report, the Annual Minutes Review, or when inserting data into the Church Register, being complete in the minutes will help.

THE CHURCH REGISTER

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

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

Arrangements need to be made for providing certificates to all new members, to all persons baptized, and to all persons ordained and/or installed. Appropriate certificates are available for purchase from the Presbyterian Publishing House. Alternatively, a church may print its own certificates if a suitable word processor and printer are available. The circular seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be downloaded from the world-wide web at <http://www.pcusa.org> as *cirseal.pcx*. This is in color, if you have a color printer.

1. *Membership*

There are three membership rolls to be kept:

- active members
- baptized members
- affiliate members

Active members, of course, are those who have been received into active membership by the session.

Baptized members are persons who attend regularly (and who may even participate in church activities) but who have not been received into active membership by the session.

The largest percentage of this group will probably be the children of the congregation prior to their participation in a confirmation class. At the end of each calendar year, the Annual Statistical Report asks for the number of people in each of these categories.

The report also asks for the means by which new members were received into active membership:

- affirmation of faith
- reaffirmation of faith
- transfer

It also asks the means by which people were removed from the active roll:

- Removal
- Transfer to another church
- Death

It is suggested that lists be kept of each membership transaction as the year progresses so that at the end of the year the data will be readily available. Otherwise, it would be necessary to read through all the minutes at the end of the year to compile these lists. Updating the lists after each session meeting reduces

the time required and results in fewer errors. If a computer program is used, the information could be entered each month using codes to enable the extraction of the required information at the end of the year.

Affiliate Members: An affiliate member is a member of another congregation of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the congregation of membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member may participate in the life of the congregation in the same manner as an active member except that an affiliate member may not vote in congregational meetings or be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation.

Inactive Members: Note that in the current Book of Order there is *no longer provision for inactive members*. One suggestion is for children of members that no longer attend, e.g., to create an informal “Friends of the Congregation” list.

2. *Baptisms*

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

3. *Deaths*

The Church Register provides a section for listing deaths. This information also needs to be recorded in the membership roll. Report deaths of ruling elders (whether actively serving or not) to the presbytery annually. The deaths from October 1 to September 30 are reported at the Fall Meeting.

4. *Ordination and Installation*

The Church Register provides sections for listing all ordinations and installations of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

POLICY ON ELECTRONIC MEETINGS

In cases where routine matters must be presented to the members of session for action before its next scheduled meeting, then session may conduct this routine business by conference call or electronic means which bring members together, or by polling, either by telephone or other electronic means. The requirements for such meetings are:

- A reasonable attempt shall be made to reach all members.
- There shall be a quorum of members responding.
- In the event that any two members object to the electronic or telephone procedure, then in that case the decision shall either be postponed until the next regular meeting, or a special meeting must be convened.
- Any action resulting from a telephone or electronic meeting shall be confirmed at the next scheduled meeting, so that it can be included in the minutes of the session.

There should be a provision for voting in meetings conducted by telephone or internet, as contested voice votes can be very difficult to determine. If a matter is in controversy, perhaps a traditional meeting would be a better option. The session may wish to consider provisions for individuals to participate electronically in an otherwise traditional meeting if technology, including hardware, software and internet bandwidth permit. Keep in mind that both the participants and the meeting site must have adequate, compatible technology.

DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

When the session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Form of Government and Church Discipline in the Book of Order should be carefully studied by a committee of the session and if discipline be administered, the minutes of the session must contain such a record of the proceedings, which will enable the presbytery to know who was disciplined, why, and how. If you need guidance regarding a disciplinary matter, contact the stated clerk's office as soon as possible.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SESSION AND PRESBYTERY

- **Official Communications**

Communication between session and presbytery is from the clerk of session to the stated clerk of presbytery. The relationship between the session of a congregation and presbytery is set forth in the Book of Order and in the Manual of the Presbytery of Florida. This can be found on the Presbytery's website. Each minister has a copy of this Manual. The Manual and most of the information routinely needed by Clerks of Session can be found on the presbytery's website, PresbyteryOfFlorida.net

- **Sending Commissioners to Presbytery Meetings**

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity. It works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect elder commissioners who attend the meeting and stay through the end of the meeting, and report to the session. There are four regular presbytery meetings each year: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Currently the Ministry Coordinating Council sets the dates for the coming year in time to be announced at the Fall meeting.

Each session is responsible for electing commissioners to presbytery. The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the congregation. (G-3.0301) The number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled also varies according to the annual plan for ruling elder equalization. Each church is entitled to one commissioner. Churches with membership of over 500 have additional commissioners. That information is found in the docket material for each presbytery meeting.

Sessions are encouraged to elect their commissioners for the entire year, preferably for two or three years. Some churches elect different commissioners for each meeting.

Notices of presbytery meetings are sent to clerks of sessions to be distributed to the duly elected commissioners before the presbytery meeting by email. Business papers for the presbytery meeting are available online at the presbytery's web site two weeks before the presbytery meeting. Information

about the meeting is also included in the weekly eUpdate from the presbytery office. Informational and promotional papers are distributed at the presbytery meeting. These papers should be distributed by the commissioners when the commissioners return to their churches.

Each commissioner is required by the Book of Order to report to session about the meeting: significant actions taken by the presbytery; a summary of issues deliberated upon; policy decisions made; implications of presbytery actions 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.

- **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 Ministry of Congregational and Pastoral Care 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 Ministry of Congregational and Pastoral Care for recommendations to presbytery. Please be sure that this form is returned each year. The terms of call report must be submitted even if you already have submitted a renewed contract for a temporary or interim pastor. The form must also be submitted even if there is no change in the terms of call from the previous year.

- **Minimum Compensation for Pastors**

Each year the presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors and certified Christian educators. 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 via the report of the Ministry of Congregational and Pastoral Care to the presbytery. Annually, session will receive notification of minimum terms of call as soon as they are adopted by presbytery.

- **Approval of Certain Actions**

Certain actions sought to be taken by sessions must first be approved by presbytery and/or a committee thereof, including sale or encumbrance of property, taking an Inquirer under care, changing the name of the church, waiving the limitations of terms of officers, etc.

- **Overtures to Presbytery, Synod, 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. Overtures must be presented to and approved by the presbytery in order to meet published deadlines set for each General Assembly and must comport with the rules set forth for the assembly. For information on overtures, including deadlines, contact the Stated Clerk's office.

- **Assistance with Required Policies**

All councils are required by the Book of Order to have a manual of administrative operations, a policies on sexual misconduct, child, youth and vulnerable adults protection, harassment, and anti-racism. (G-3.0106). The Stated Clerk's office can provide assistance and examples if your church needs to prepare one of these policies. Child and youth protection policies, which often also cover

vulnerable adults, should be highly customized to suite the circumstance of each church. A free resource to assist with drafting a child and youth protection policy may be found at: <https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/safeconduct-workbench/>

- **Annual List of Church Leaders**

The clerk should report to the presbytery office each year the list of church leaders. A form can be found on the presbytery's website. A sample of what information is sought is in the addenda.

- **Incorporation**

Florida law does allow a congregation to be incorporated (G-4.01). It is important to file an annual report with the Secretary of State (via SunBiz.org) and to update the list of corporate officers. The manual of operations should specify who on session serves as corporate officers and this should be reviewed every January. The treasurer usually takes care of this filing, but it is the clerk's responsibility to see that it is properly taken care of.

- **Annual Review of Session Records**

Annually the Presbytery will schedule a review of session records including required policies, the church register, and the minutes of session and congregational meetings per (G-3.0108a). A good practice to assist with meeting Book of Order requirements and presbytery expectations is to refer to the Checklist for Annual Review of Session Records (page 21) using it as a guide throughout the year.



ADDENDA



Stated Session Meeting Agenda

[Sample] Presbyterian Church of [City]

Date

Class of 2029: _____ Jane Smith _____ Timmy Two-shoes _____ Sally Sweet _____ Red Rose
Class of 2030: _____ John Dough _____ Richard Rockets _____ Betty Boop _____ Mary Poppins
Class of 2031: _____ Bob O’Link _____ Robin Hood _____ Silly Goose _____ Nonny Moose

Moderator: Rev. Jen Erosity

Others Present: Monee Baggs, Treasurer

ITEM

PRESENTER

Quorum Declared and Opening PrayerRev. Jen Erosity

Approval of Agenda.....Rev. Jen Erosity

Clerk’s Report Bob O’Link

- Approval of Previous Minutes
- Communications
- Action Items

Treasurer’s ReportMonee Baggs

Ministry Reports

- Worship Ministry Jane Smith
- Christian Education Ministry Red Rose
- Congregational Life..... John Dough
- Mission and Outreach..... Mary Poppins
- Finance..... Robin Hood
- Property..... Nonny Moose
- PastorRev. Jen Erosity
- Others

Items for Discussion

-

New Items

-

Other Items

-

Next Meeting [Date , 2029] at [time]

Adjourn with Prayer

MINUTES
STATED SESSION MEETING
[Sample] Presbyterian Church, [City], Florida
[Date and Time]

Attendance

Members Present:
Members Excused:
Members Absent:

Declaration of Quorum

With a quorum of elders present the [Date] Stated Session meeting was called to order by Moderator [Name]. [Person] opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made by [Name] and seconded to approve the agenda as submitted/amended. The motion passed.

Communications and Correspondence

Ministry Reports

Clerk

Correspondence:
Highlights for the past month:
Action Items for approval:
 Approval of Previous Minutes:
 Others:
Other Items:

Treasurer

Budget Report
Action Items for Approval
Other:

Worship

Highlights for the past month:
Current Ministry focus:
Important calendar dates:
Next Ministry meeting date:

Christian Education

Highlights for the past month:
Current Ministry focus:
Important calendar dates:
Items to be placed on the church calendar:
Action Items for approval:
Next Ministry meeting date:

Congregational Life

Highlights for the past month:
Current Ministry focus:

Session Record Review Sheet

Church Name/City _____ Year Being Reviewed _____

Clerk of Session who prepared this sheet _____ Date: _____

Name of Reviewer _____ Date: _____

Clerk's Comments are to be filled in by Clerk of Session *before* the review: *Include page numbers or other identifying and pertinent information.*

Reviewer's Comments to be completed by Reviewer *during* the review.

ITEMS TO BE RECORDED AT EACH MEETING

Recorded Item	Reference	Page Numbers/ Clerk's Comments	Reviewer's Comments
Date, time, place of each meeting, and stated or special meeting, quorum present	G-3.0203		
Meeting at least quarterly.	G-3-0203		
Full names of ruling elders present, excused or absent.	Robert's Rules		
Full name of moderator	Robert's Rules		
Opened and closed each meeting with prayer	G-3.0105 W-3.6103		
Minutes approved by session	Robert's Rules		
Signature of Clerk of Session or Moderator for each meeting	Robert's Rules		

Financial report at each meeting or regularly	G-3.0205		
Session authorization of Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (at least quarterly) including home bound members.	G-3.0201b W-2.4010		
Approval of the Sacrament of Baptism and report of its administration	G-3.0201b W-2-3011		
Commissioner(s) to presbytery meetings elected by session	G-3.0202		
Report of Commissioner(s) given at next session meeting following each presbytery meeting.	G-3.0202		

Notes:

ITEMS TO BE RECORDED ANNUALLY IN MINUTES

Recorded Item	Reference	Page Numbers/ Clerk's Comments	Reviewer's Comments
Training, examination of newly elected ruling elders and deacons.	G-3.0201c		
Ordination and Installation of ruling elders and deacons	G-3.0201c		
Election of Church Treasurer(s) by Session	G-3.0205		
Election of Clerk of Session by Session	G-3.0104		

Report of annual review of compensation for pastor and all other staff	G-2.0804 G-3.0106		
Review of congregation's sexual misconduct prevention policy	G-3.0106		
Review of congregation's child/youth protection policy	G-3.0106		
Session approval of budget.	G-3.0205		
Financial review or audit	G-3.0113		
Insurance Review - adequate property and liability coverage, including officers	G-3.0112		
Session review of annual statistical report.	G-3.0202f		
Annual statistical report included with minutes.	Presbytery of Florida		
Session composition with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men, age groups,	G-3.0103		

Notes:

MINUTES OF CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Recorded Item	Reference	Page Numbers/ Clerk's Comments	Reviewer's Comments
Congregation met at least annually	G-1.0501		
Presentation of Session approved budget in minutes	G-3.0205		
Election of Nominating Committee by congregation	G-2.0401		
Election of elders, deacons, trustees (where applicable).	G-1.0503		
Minutes of all congregational meetings are approved and signed by clerk.	G-1.0505 Robert's Rules		
Approval of Terms of Call of pastor(s) by the congregation and inclusion in the minutes.	G-1.0503		

Notes:

CHURCH ROLLS AND REGISTERS

Recorded Item	Reference	Yes/No	Reviewer's Comments
Roll of Active Members maintained by Session	G-3.0204a		
Roll of Baptized Members maintained by Session	G-3.0204a		

Roll of Affiliate Members, if any, maintained by Session	G-3.0204a		
List of Ruling Elders and Deacons, with ordination date	G-3.0204b		
List of Pastors, Associates, with dates of service	G-3.0204b		
Record baptisms with date of birth and name of parents.	G-3.0204b		
Record of Marriages	G-30204b		

Notes:

Narrative Questions - use additional pages as needed:

1. As a clerk of session, what do you need from the Presbytery of Florida to do your job?

2. Are there mission stories from your congregation that you would like to share?

Annual Statistic Report

Membership			
Prior Active Members	375	Adjusted membership	375
Gains		Losses	
Certificate	4	Certificate	5
Youth Professions		Deaths	11
Professions & Reaffirmations	2	Deleted for any Other Reason	
Total Gains	6	Total Losses	16
Total Ending Active Members	365		
Baptisms		Average Weekly Worship Attendance	130
Presented by Others	3	Friends of the Congregation	34
At Confirmation		Ruling Elders on Session	14
All Other		Do you have Deacons?	No
Age Distribution of Active Members		People with Disabilities	
17 & Under	59	Hearing impairment	3
18 - 25	22	Sight impairment	1
26 - 40	72	Mobility impairment	12
41 - 55	26	Other impairment	2
56 - 70	105		
Over 70	81	Gender Distribution	
Total Age Distribution	365	Women	203
		Men	162
		Non-Binary	
Youth in Congregation			
Age 4 and under	29	Middle School (6th – 8th grade)	5
Elementary School (K-5th grade)	13	High School (9th – 12th grade)	12
		Total Youth	59
Racial Ethnic			
Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian	1	Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	0
Black/African American/African	3	White	359
Middle Eastern/North African	0	Multiracial	0
Hispanic/Latino-a	2		
		Total Racial Ethnic	365
Budgeted Income	1,763,042		
Budgeted Expense	1,819,788		
Receipts			
Regular Contributions	760,300	Bequests	25,000
Capital Building Fund	209,512	Other Income	1,151,214
Investment Income	100,928	Subsidy or Aid	3,000
Expenditures			
Local Program	1,934,836	Investment Expenditures	157,848
Local Mission	117,798	Per Capita Apprt	19,219
Capital Expenditures	545,531	Other Mission	15,967

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Page: 1 of 1

THE PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA

20__ Local Church Leaders

In order to send the proper members of your congregation essential information throughout the year, we ask that you provide the appropriate information for the positions listed below. If more than one person serves in a position, please list the PRIMARY person only. Return this form to the Presbytery of Florida even if no changes have been made since the previous year.

NOTE: Please notify Melissa Willis at 850/535-2335 or mwillis@presbyteryofflorida.com of any personnel changes as they occur during the year.

CHURCH _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL _____ WEBSITE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

This form also is available as a fillable pdf at <http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/other-resources/for-clerks-of-session/>

KEY POSITION	NAME	ADDRESS/CITY/STATE/ZIP	PHONE #(s)	E-MAIL
Clerk of Session				
Church Secretary				
Newsletter Editor				
Minister/Director of Music				
Stewardship/Funding Chair				
Treasurer/Finance Officer				

Continue on other side

Director or Chair of Christian Education				
Youth Director or Advisor(s) (Jr. High)				
Youth Director or Advisor(s) (Sr. High)				
Children's Coordinator				
Dogwood Acres Contact Person				
Evangelism Chair or Contact				
2 Centa A Meal Contact Person				
Global Missions Chair or Contact				
Older Adult Coordinator or Contact				
Young Adult Group Coordinator or Contact				
Presbyterian Men Contact				
Presbyterian Women Contact				

Date our officers began serving: _____ *Please complete and return this form as soon as possible.*

RECORD PRESERVATION

Permanent

- Minutes
- Registers
- Annual Reports
- Bylaws/Charters
- Incorporation Records
- Annual Budgets
- Annual Audits
- Annual Financial Statements
- Subject Files: correspondence, minutes, or other records surrounding subject matter of continuing administrative or legal value, or comprising of information on the mission, vision, and actions of the congregation.
- Manuals and handbooks
- Newspapers and Newsletters
- Brochures, promotional material (1)
- Photographs
- Architectural drawings, blueprints, plats, plans
- Wills, Bequests
- Legal/judicial cases records

Satisfaction plus 20 years

- Loan agreements

Twenty (20) years after sale

- Property appraisals, records of sales

Seven (7) Years

- Personnel/Employee records
- Bank statements
- Canceled checks
- Cash receipt records
- Donations (regular, weekly)
- Expense Reports
- FICA/W2 Records
- Payroll Records
- Petty Cash records
- Receipts of purchases

Three (3) Years

- Bank deposit slips
- Routine correspondence
- Travel plan/arrangements

Two (2) Years

- Periodic financial statements

One (1) Year

- Invitations
- Meeting notices

While in Use (Active)

- Mailing lists
- References/resource materials

HOUSING ALLOWANCE RESOLUTION SAMPLE

The following resolution was duly adopted by the Session of [Name of Church] at a regularly scheduled meeting held on [Day, Month, Year], a quorum being present:

Whereas, ministers who own or rent their home do not pay federal income taxes on the amount of their compensation that their employing church designates in advance as a housing allowance, to the extent that the allowance represents compensation for ministerial services, is used to pay housing expenses, and does not exceed the fair rental value of the home (furnished, plus utilities); and

Whereas, Pastor [First and Last Name] is compensated by [Name of Church] exclusively for services as a minister of the gospel; and

Whereas, [Name of Church] does not provide Pastor [First and Last Name] with a parsonage; therefore, it is hereby

Resolved, that the total compensation paid to Pastor [First and Last Name] for calendar year 20__ shall be [\$____], of which [\$____] is hereby designated to be a housing allowance; and it is further

Resolved, that the designation of [\$____] as a housing allowance shall apply to calendar year 20__ and all future years unless otherwise provided.