Presbyteries of Des Moines and North Central Iowa

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Handbook for Clerks of Session

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the office of Clerk of Session!

Thank you so much for your willingness to serve as a Clerk. Your role is vital to your church, your presbytery, and your denomination. The Book of Order mandates that each governing body of the PC(USA) have a moderator and a clerk. Clerks of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving Sessions are called Clerks of Session or Clerks to Session. This depends on whether you are currently serving on Session or not.

As clerk, you will record a good deal of the history of your church as you write the session minutes. The minutes you keep will be what future generations use to learn about what your church did to further Christ's mission in the world. It is very important that you keep accurate records of all the proceedings in 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.

This handbook has been prepared by drawing on information in the Book of Order and in various manuals for clerks of session throughout our denomination.

If you have any questions, or need assistance, please contact me.

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The Office of the Clerk of Session

The Clerk of Session shall be an elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine. The clerk may be a member of the session or may be an elder not currently serving. If the clerk is not a member of session, general privilege of voice is given by virtue of Constitutional office, but s/he may not make motions or vote.

The person chosen to be clerk of session needs to be knowledgeable about session responsibilities, to have an understanding of Presbyterian polity, and be willing to learn basic parliamentary procedure. S/he must be able to write a clear record of the proceedings at session and congregational meetings and make those minutes available promptly following the meeting.

When the pastor or elders need a strong lay leader, the clerk of session is the "first among equals." This responsibility flows to the clerk not because of any explicit statement in the Book of Order, but because this officer receives the correspondence, keeps the records, and routinely discusses the work of the session with the pastor and all of the committee chairpersons to form the agenda and refer business. Presbyterian polity does not provide for any other lay officer to carry out these responsibilities.

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

Responsibilities at a Glance

Annually

1. Complete the annual statistical report requested by the General Assembly accurately and report to the PC(USA) by the deadline noted. Also, return other paperwork requested by the presbytery's stated clerk by the deadline noted (Supplemental Report, Members of Session form, Necrology Report).

2. Have your Session Records Reviewed with your fellow clerks, choosing a date and time from those set by the stated clerk of the presbytery. Bring your minutes since your last review and the Church Register. Include a copy of your Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation and your congregation's Sexual Misconduct Policy (G-3.0106 – now required under the Book of Order).

3. Communicate dates and other information on Presbytery meetings to the Session so that ruling elder commissioners can be elected.

Monthly

1. Send meeting notices by mail or email.

2. Contact committee chairpersons about unfinished and referred business.

3. Ask for recommendations to be in writing.

4. Develop the docket or agenda for the meeting with the moderator.

5. Record the minutes of each meeting. It is helpful to use a template with room to take notes and minutes. This should be a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the session (G-3.0204).

6. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance (G-3.0104). The session shall "provide by rule" the number present for a quorum. (G-3.0203)

7. Bring all official correspondence to the attention of session, and respond as directed by the session.

8. Keep a list of unfinished business, including all matters referred to a committee or a staff member for later report to session, and remind the appropriate persons(s) if not reported expeditiously.

9. 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.

Ongoing

1. Arrange for the careful preservation of session records (G-3.0104), making recommendation to the session for the permanent safe-keeping of its records (G- 3.0107).

2. Furnish extracts from the minutes when required by another governing body of the church (G-3.0104).

3. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of session (G-3.0204a&b).

4. Be responsible for the preservation of the records of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees (G-3.0107).

5. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the session as described in the Book of Order (G-3.0201).

6. Be prepared to respond to questions of parliamentary procedure in meetings if requested to be parliamentarian. (Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order, except in those cases where the Book of Order provides otherwise (G-3.0105). Copies of Robert's Rules of Order and the latest Book of Order should be available at meetings.)

As needed

1. Notify the session or congregation of special meetings, describing accurately the business that will be transacted. Congregations shall provide by their own rule for minimum notification requirements and give notice at regular services of worship prior to the meeting (G-1.0501 and G-1.0502).

2. Serve as secretary for meetings of the congregation (G-1.0505), seeing that the minutes are received by session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book. It is helpful to have the congregation delegate to session the authority to approve minutes of the congregational meetings, but these minutes should be posted for the congregation to see.

3. Receive and submit communications from/to other governing bodies.

4. Notify the stated clerk of the presbytery of changes in the membership of session.

5. Assist the moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested.

6. Assist in church officer training when requested.

7. May moderate the congregational meeting, if requested by the moderator, during the pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary clerk should be appointed.

8. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the session or moderator.

Helpful Hints

- Written reports facilitate the meeting flow.
- Meeting may be informal, but all actions must be approved.
- Each member of session should receive a copy of the minutes soon after the meeting.

Sample Session Docket/Agenda

Your Presbyterian Church Stated Session Meeting Month Date, Year

Call to Order, Declaration of Quorum and Opening Prayer

Approval of the Docket and the Minutes of the previous stated meeting Communications

Clerk's Report

- **Session class of (year) was ordained and installed at the 11:00 am worship service on (Date): list their names**
- **Lord's Supper was celebrated at the 11:00 am worship service on (dates)**
- **Membership report – transfers, deaths, marriages, baptisms**

Session Committee Reports

Action Items

Old and New Business

Spiritual and Pastoral Concerns

Motion for Adjournment and Closing Prayer

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The docket or agenda for a session meeting can be the responsibility of either the clerk or the moderator working together. In some instances, it is compiled by the church secretary. Input from the moderator and other members of session is invaluable. In the case of a pastoral vacancy, the moderator named by the presbytery often will rely on the clerk of session to formulate the docket.

Session dockets should be made available to session members prior to meetings so that the elders may be prepared to do the business of the church. Included in this information are the date, time, location, agenda or order of business, financial data, and other pertinent information as needed and available. The value of a printed docket or agenda is three fold: It provides for an orderly process in the handling of session business. It informs the members of issues to be discussed. It serves as a reminder of the necessary preparation for a meeting.

The clerk of session can take this opportunity to assist the moderator in handling administrative details and sharing in the ministry of the church.

Guidelines for Session Minutes

Minutes of each session meeting shall (i.e., must) include:

1. Whether the meeting is a regular or special meeting.
2. The name of the church, the place, date and time of the meeting.
3. The name of the moderator of the meeting.
4. The opening and closing of each meeting with prayer.
5. The roll, listing elders present, elders absent and any who are excused; the clerk, moderator and other staff present or excused; others present and their identity. (Please use first and last names.)
6. The affirmation of a quorum (G-3.0203). NEW: Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such a quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.
7. The approval of the agenda. (In case of a special meeting, the call to the meeting stating the purpose becomes the agenda.)
8. The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. (Any corrections of previous meeting minutes shall be listed, and then corrected in the prior meeting's minutes.)
9. Clerk's report: may include correspondence, announcements, and report of the serving of the Lord's Supper, in addition to listing of baptisms, marriages, changes in membership rolls.
10. Reports of pastor, other staff, the treasurer and committee chairpersons should be summarized in the minutes.
11. All motions and amendments, if any, and whether they passed or failed. (Details of discussion should not be recorded, except when needed to give a sense of the action.)
12. When a previous action of the session is referred to, the page on which it is recorded, or the date of the meeting at which it occurred, should be designated.

Minutes shall include the following, when applicable:

13. Requests for marriage, baptism or funerals to occur in the church.
14. The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must be reported at the next succeeding regular meeting. When the sacrament has been administered to those unable to attend public worship, the name of the minister officiating and the name of the elder or elders assisting should be noted. (This may be part of the clerk's report, the pastor's report or that of the worship committee.)
15. The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism must be reported at the next succeeding regular meeting, giving the full name of adults baptized including the maiden name of married women; the record of infants baptized, noting the name of the child, date of birth, and the names of the parents or the one rightly exercising parental responsibility (W-2.3014), and including the mother's maiden name. (This may be part of the clerk's report, the pastor's report or that of the appropriate committee.)

16. The full name of applicants for church membership (in the case of married women, include maiden name) and the manner of their reception:

   a. by profession of faith, previously baptized
   b. by profession of faith and baptism
   c. by re-affirmation of faith
   d. by letter of transfer, giving the name of the church received from

17. The name of the church to which a certificate of transfer is granted and the full name of the person transferred with the date of transfer, together with names of baptized children, if applicable.

18. Record (attach to minutes) the job descriptions for employed personnel, both clergy and non-clergy, as they are approved.

19. Name of elders elected to be commissioners to meetings of the presbytery, and the exact period for which elected (G-3.0202(a.)).

20. Record that commissioner(s) to the presbytery reported to session. The report may be summarized.

21. When the session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the “Form of Government” and the “Rules of Discipline” 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. It is most often advisable for session to ask the presbytery to take jurisdiction of any matter of church discipline.

22. In case of a sale, mortgage, gift or lease of property, the session records must show:

   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 Presbytery

Be sure the following is included each year:

1. Approve of the annual budget.

2. Approve of the distribution of the church’s benevolences.

3. Record the annual review with each pastor of the adequacy of compensation.

4. Record the recommendation to be made to the congregation for changes in the terms of call for each pastor.

5. Note the annual review by the personnel committee (or other responsible body appointed by the session) of the adequacy of compensation of all paid staff.

6. Note whether new officers have received training and been examined (G-2.0402).

7. Report the ordination and/or installation of elders and deacons at the next succeeding meeting.

8. Report the recognition of trustees (if any) at the next succeeding meeting.

9. Report that property and liability insurance has been obtained (G-3.0112). (Insert photocopy of the church's certificate of insurance)

10. Record report of annual financial review or audit.

11. Record marriages, births, deaths.

12. Record election of clerk and treasurer.

13. Record annual review of church rolls and if anyone is moved to inactive or removed.

14. Report reception of new members; dismissal/transfer of members to other churches.

15. Record approval of curricula, teachers for the educational program.

16. Attach copy of Annual Statistical Report (to OGA) to minutes.

Clerk's Annual Report

At the last meeting of each calendar year, please include the following in the Clerk's Report:

1. Record that job descriptions have been approved for all employed personnel, both clergy and non-clergy, and indicate by page number where the latest job description for each staff person is located in the minute book.

2. Record changes during the year in the Session, the Board of Deacons and the Trustees through death, resignation, or removal.

3. State the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men and age groups, and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. (This requirement may be fulfilled by photocopying the annual statistical report required by the General Assembly into the session records.)

4. If congregation has a Board of Deacons and/or Trustees, report in the minutes where their records are kept, and that they have been reviewed by session.

5. Include an Annual Narrative Report. (Moderator's annual report, or periodic reports to the session of ongoing church life will satisfy this request.)

NUTS & BOLTS OF SESSION MINUTES

The method of recording session minutes is somewhat dependent on local circumstances. The following is the suggested procedure used by the majority of churches:

1. Clerk takes notes for the minutes at meeting.
2. Clerk writes the minutes and types or arranges for them to be typed.
3. Clerk makes copies and distributes before the next meeting;
4. At the next meeting, the minutes are either approved as distributed or corrections are made and the corrections are noted in that meeting's minutes (as well as originals);
5. Clerk types or arranges for someone to type approved minutes in the session permanent minute book (these may be photocopied as long as archival quality paper is used);
6. If using a computer for minutes in the permanent minute book, a laser printer and archival quality paper must be used;
7. If you wish, pages may be professionally bound into volumes.
8. Do not use erasures, whiteout, strikethroughs or footnotes; or insert in the records separate sheets of paper with written or printed matter on them.
9. The records of each session meeting are to be duly attested (signed in ink) by the clerk. The records of congregational meetings are to be attested by the clerk AND the moderator.
10. The minutes of congregational meetings, the annual report of the church treasurer or treasurers, and the annual statistical report required by General Assembly are to be included with session minutes. These are to be typed or photocopied into the permanent record book.
11. Minutes should be interesting, with enough information so that future generations will know what happened in the church years before. The minutes play a role in recounting the history of the congregation, often retrievable in no other way.
12. The minutes of a meeting should never reflect the clerk's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.
13. Session minutes should be available to any member who asks.
14. It is recommended that a "church office copy" of session and congregational meeting minutes be kept in a notebook for handy reference. Typically this is not the set of minutes to be reviewed by presbytery.

SESSION MEETING MINUTES MUST BE ATTESTED (SIGNED IN INK) BY THE CLERK.

Congregational Meetings

Congregational meetings may be called by the session, the presbytery, or by session by written request of one-fourth of the members of the congregation on the active roll. (G- 1.0502) Your congregation's by-laws should include what constitutes a quorum. (G- 1.0501) Proxy voting is not permitted in church meetings. We believe that the Holy Spirit guides us in our decision making, and one must be present in the room to be open to such guidance by the Spirit. Be prepared for a ballot vote if needed. Minutes of all congregational meetings shall be included in the session record book along with session minutes in chronological order.

Minutes of these meetings shall include:

1. Indication of whether the meeting is "regular" or "special."
2. If it is a "special meeting," the minutes shall include the call to the meeting, which will serve as the agenda.
3. Name of the church.
4. Date, time, and place of the meeting.
5. Name of the moderator or presiding officer.
6. Presence of a quorum.
7. Opening and closing of the meeting with prayer.
8. Record of all actions, whether adopted or lost.
9. When applicable, action by the congregation on any change in each pastor's compensation, with terms of call specified.
10. Minutes of the meeting of the congregation and corporation at which the annual financial reports are made should indicate, at least:
    a. report of a full financial review of the financial records (G-10.0400d) (formerly referred to as "audit")
    b. a complete, itemized report of income and expenditures for the year
    c. provide the complete, itemized budget adopted by the session for the coming year
    d. details of the status of loans from General Assembly, Synod, or Presbytery, if any are outstanding
11. If the congregation does not approve the minutes before adjournment, session may approve the minutes at its next scheduled meeting.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES MUST BE ATTESTED (SIGNED IN INK)
BY THE MODERATOR AND THE CLERK.

The Session's Relationship to Other Organizations

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

G-3.0201 The Session: Composition and Responsibilities
In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to: a. Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. b. Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. c. Nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ … including directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation …

Board of Trustees: G-4.0101
The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.

Board of Deacons or Individual Deacons: G-2.0202
Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need …

Nominating Committee: G-2.0401
The church nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session. It does not report to the session, although the committee may wish to consult with session, and provide updates on their progress to the session. …Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote

Pastor Nominating Committee (When there is a Pastoral Vacancy)
It is vital that the Session and any interim pastor work closely with the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery, through the assigned transition team to the church, and the General Presbyter. This is one of the most significant ways the presbytery serves the local congregation – in the procedures and process guidance of finding a new pastor.

G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy
When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.

G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee
The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation …

The pastor nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session. The committee has several points of contact with the session and the presbytery: The pastor nominating committee develops the Ministry Information Form (MIF) which includes the position description. The session and then the presbytery (through the Committee on Ministry) approve the MIF. The committee negotiates the salary of the new pastor in consultation with the session/board of trustees. The General Presbyter does a reference check on the final candidate(s) for the position. The committee requests session to call a congregational meeting when it is ready to bring a candidate.

Session and Personnel Committee:
G-3.0102 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction [Councils, like the session] … They have the power to establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ. They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church that is under their jurisdiction.

The session supervises all ordained and non-ordained personnel, often through a Personnel Committee. The session recommends to the congregation the "Terms of Call" (salary, including housing, benefits, etc.) of all ordained personnel; the congregation approves these terms of call or any subsequent future changes in the terms of call annually. The terms of call must meet the minimum guidelines set by presbytery unless a waiver is granted.

It is recommended that the Personnel Committee for each church consist of a majority of session members, and several congregation "at large" members.

Outside Organizations
Session controls the use of all church property, including granting permission for the sanctuary to be used for weddings. The purpose of an organization using the church should not be contrary to the mission of the congregation or the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is wise to have a written contract for all organizations using the church building, stipulating any rental fee, maintenance standards, and rooms of the church to be used.

Actions that must be approved by more than one council
One of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is its connectional system. There are a number of actions that require approval beyond the session. Among them are:

- Application to presbytery to take an inquirer under care of the presbytery: session, Committee of Preparation for Ministry, and presbytery.
- Loans that use the church or its property at collateral for a mortgage, and all sales of property: session and trustees, trustees of presbytery, and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate. These also require the initial approval of the congregation.
- All leases of church property for a period of more than five years: session, Finance Committee of presbytery, and the presbytery.
- All changes of church location or church name: session, congregation (ecclesiastical and corporate), Commission on Ministry (COM) of presbytery, and presbytery.

- All changes in the annual terms of call for the pastor: session recommendation, congregational approval, Committee on Ministry, and the presbytery.
- Dissolutions of pastoral calls and calls for new pastors: congregation, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.
- Appointment of moderator of session, or temporary pastoral relationship: session, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.
- Call for a special session meeting when requested by two members of the session in writing. (G-3.0203)
- Call for a special congregational meeting: session, or presbytery, or session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the active members of the congregation. (G- 1.0502)
- Session meeting when a pastor is ill or out-of-town: pastor grants permission and appoints a member of presbytery as moderator pro tem. (G-3.0201)
- All waivers from the Book of Order terms of election (g-2.0404): congregation, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.

Relations with Other Councils G-3.0202
Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

- Elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports.
- Nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same
- See that the guidance and communication of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out.
- Welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits.
- Propose to the presbytery, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and
- Send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information according to the requirements of those bodies, as well s voluntary financial contributions.

ROLLS AND REGISTERS

The Rolls of the church should contain information about those who are members of the local church. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain, or to oversee the maintenance of the Rolls as required in G-3.0204a.

1. Names of members shall be placed upon, removed, or deleted from the rolls of the church only by order of the Session (G-3.0204a)
2. Session shall maintain the following membership rolls (G-1.04):

Baptized Members (G.1.0401)
A Baptized Member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session by who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members receive the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Record the name, date of baptism (if known), church where Sacrament of Baptism occurred. Names should be removed from this roll when profession of faith is made, or when the person moves from the community.

Active Members (G-1.0402)
An Active Member is one who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the Church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of the particular church, and participates in the church's work and worship. Record name, date received into membership, and method of reception. Record date of removal from the particular role and whether by death, transfer to another church, placed on inactive roll, or removed.

Inactive Members (This category is no longer in the Book of Order)
You are not required to keep a roll of Inactive Members, but you may if you want. An Inactive Member is one who no longer participates in the church's work and worship. Record name, date; indicate if inactive member is subsequently removed or reinstated with date of action.

Affiliate Members (G-1.0403)
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 active membership is situated. A certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation should be presented. The person will be received by the session as an Affiliate Member. An Affiliate Member is not eligible to be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation, and does not have a vote in congregational meetings. An example of an affiliate member would be a college student living in your community while attending school. Record name, date of affiliation, name of home church, date of renewal, date of return to home church.

Roll books usually provide double pages for a chronological roll by date of reception into membership with columns for name, how received, name of church from which member transferred if that is the manner of reception, date of deletion from the active roll and reason— by death, inactivity, or transfer, in which case the name of the church to which the member is transferring is listed.

Pages may be provided in the same binder for an alphabetical listing of members along with the membership number that is assigned in the chronological roll.

Pages also may be provided for Baptized, Affiliate and Inactive member rolls in the same binder. Pages containing columns for the information requested may be obtained through Cokesbury, (800) 672-1789 or www.cokesbury.com

Registers

Registers are historical records and need to be carefully maintained. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain or oversee the maintenance of Registers as required in G3.0204b.

All information in the Register should be able to be cross-referenced to the minutes. Please do not erase, cross out, or use “white out”. Use the remarks section to make any changes.

According to the 2013/2015 Book of Order, there shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such registers as the session may deem necessary. These are suggestions for information for the register:

Baptisms
Register of Infant and Adult Baptisms shall include name, parents’ names, and date of birth of those being baptized.

Elders
Register of Elders shall include each elder’s name, the name of the church in which each was ordained, date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

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

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

Although no longer required by the Book of Order, you might want to keep a register of marriages. If so, here is suggested information:

Register of Marriages shall include marriages of members of the church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property.

All registers may be kept in the same binder, or in the binder with the rolls. You may use the Westminster Binder, or simply use a loose-leaf notebook. Special pages for the Westminster Binder may be obtained through Cokesbury Book Stores (800) 672-1789 or www.cokesbury.com.

Annual Statistical Report Introduction

The presbytery must make an annual report to the General Assembly,which specifies the type of information it needs. Much of the information is gathered from local congregations by means of the "Session Annual Statistical Report."

The data entered need not be perfect. The information is used to keep track of trends and much is expected to be subjective. Both the total active membership and the financial data for recent years are available on the General Assembly's web site (www.pcusa.org) for all churches that complete the Report.

Some of the information requested can be difficult to obtain accurately (such as ages of members) and some information related to the budget may be requested in different categories than your bookkeeper has used. The report form comes with a workbook, which provides explanations of each item and provides a place to do a draft before transferring the figures to an online form.

Suggestions are made here to try to make the process easier. As with most jobs, keeping up on a monthly basis rather than waiting until the end of the year makes it easier. In addition, keeping up makes the total time spent less.

The form is divided into two main parts: Membership and Finances. For this discussion, Membership will be considered in two parts: active members and other data.

In order to collect the data, it is suggested that it be done regularly (each month) rather than waiting until the end of the year.

One way is to keep a notebook with pages labeled for various categories and enter the information after each Session meeting. This could also be done using Excel or setting up a table in MSWord.

Those pages are:

- New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 17 & Under
- New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 18 & Over
- New members received by certificate (letter of transfer)
- Other additions: Restoration from Inactive Roll; Correction to make Total correct; etc.
- Active Members transferred to other churches (certificate) Active
- Members lost due to death
- Other losses: Active Members transferred to Inactive Roll; Correction to make Total correct
- Baptisms: children (17 & Under)
- Baptisms: adult

Reporting Active Members

The report gives the number of active members at the beginning of the reporting period. Places are given for active members added in two major categories. A third category is given (All other gains) which also allows for corrections. Places are given for losses in active membership in two major categories plus the All other losses category, which would include transfer to the inactive roll as well as corrections. The result of this portion gives the total number of active members at the end of the reporting period.

Two lines follow for number of persons on the inactive roll and the number of baptized members.

The sum of Active Members, Inactive Members, and Baptized Members is called Total Adherents.

Reporting Other Membership Data

These include:

- Number of female members
- Age distribution of members
- Average attendance at Sunday worship
- Church school enrollment
- Baptisms
- Gender distribution of elders and deacons
- Number of persons with disabilities
- Racial ethnic composition of congregation, session, and deacons

If you are using some sort of computer membership system such as PowerChurch Plus or Ease, it is possible to keep track of some of these items through the proper use of the system. Years of birth of all members may not be known so you will need to make educated guesses in order to determine age distribution.

Note that it requests Church School enrollment not attendance. This includes groups that meet other than on Sunday Morning such as "The Tuesday Bible Study".

Look at the workbook for the definition of a person with a disability. This is not the usual definition. The definition is that the disability "substantially limits participation" but the application of the definition is left to you. Just as in age distribution, use of personal knowledge is expected to be applied rather than a formal survey. Data collected with such a vague definition cannot be worth very much so don't worry about this too much; just do your best. A person in a wheel chair may not be "substantially limited". That person can't help set up tables for a church dinner but neither can the 95-year-old who lives alone and drives to church each week and serves on a church committee. Both of these describe persons in one church who would not consider themselves "substantially limited".

Reporting Finances

The financial reporting is broken down into broad categories. Note that the values to be reported are for the whole congregation. If there are several accounts in the main finances, all must be included. If groups within the church maintain their own accounts (such as Presbyterian Women, Building Fund, and so forth), all of these should be included if their finances are substantial. If these group's monies are small, they can be ignored as long as you do this consistently over the years. The financial reporting is really looking for trends. The workbook is reasonably understandable and gives some specific examples to help.

Other Information

Per Capita Apportionment Payments
Many presbyteries and synods have a per capita apportionment to be used for ecclesiastical expenses. This is figured based on the number of church members multiplied by a figure provided by General Assembly. The amount can be remitted through the presbytery to the General Assembly.

Annual Review of Terms of Call
Each year the Session is required by the Book of Order (G2.0804) 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 changes must be brought to the congregation for approval, contingent upon the approval of presbytery that, finally, approves terms of call and all changes in terms of call. As soon as the congregation has approved new terms of call for its pastor(s), the terms of call forms must be returned to the Committee on Ministry for recommendation to the presbytery.

Minimum Compensation for Pastors
The presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors. These terms are reviewed and updated annually. All terms of call must meet this minimum standard for presbytery to approve the call.

Ruling Elder Commissioners to Presbytery
Presbyterian polity is representative. It works when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect ruling elder commissioners who attend the meetings, stay through the end of the meeting, and report to session. Presbytery of Des Moines holds four stated presbytery meetings a year. North Central Iowa holds two stated meetings per year. The dates and times are published annually and are available on the presbytery's website, www.pbyofnewcovenant.org under the tab "Presbytery Meetings".

Each session is responsible for electing ruling elder commissioners to presbytery. The number of commissioners depends on the size of the congregation. The number of ruling elders to which a congregation is entitled also varies according to the presbytery's Parity Plan. The Book of Order (G-3.0301) states that "the presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of teaching and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation …"

The docket and meeting packet are posted online ten days prior to the meeting, with any additional meeting information posted by the day before the meeting. This information should be given to the commissioners so that they can access the meeting materials, which can also be distributed to members of the congregation, as appropriate.

Commissioners are asked to report to session about the meeting, including 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; and any other matter which will help with the congregation's participation in the total ministry of Jesus Christ.

Session members, including presbytery commissioners, should bear in mind the opportunities and need for nominations to presbytery committees. We are committed to finding Presbyterians with skills and interests in serving on a presbytery committee, and welcome your suggestions. We strive for inclusion so that all voices are represented at the table. Please share the gifts of your congregation with the presbytery.

Writing A Manual of Operations

One of the changes under the New Form of Government (nFOG) was the requirement for each council to develop a manual of administrative operation that specifies the form and guide the work of mission in that council (G-3.0106). Prior to the Book of Order 2011/2013, this was required of those entities above the session. It now includes the session which is considered to be a council of the church.

A manual of operation differs from the church by-laws. Since it falls under the session, it does not need congregational approval, although input from congregation members in its writing might be helpful. Its purpose is to provide guidelines for how the structures of the congregation operate, especially in light of their Mission and Vision statements.

Introductory paragraphs might include a general description of the work of the congregation though the various committees/ministry teams (which would include the session). It could include a line saying, “The contents remain flexible allowing amendments and additions to be made as recommended by the committees and approved by the session.” How the details of the committee work are defined are up to the session.

A manual that uses more “guidelines” than hard and fast “rules” often makes it easier for the work of the church to be accomplished, and to become more “permission giving.” Using the word “ordinarily” instead of the word “shall” assists in that effort.

Committee/Ministry Team (C/MT) structure could include its membership composition (how many members, terms of service), and skills and abilities that are helpful in its work. It could address how meetings are convened – how often, face to face or electronically. It could outline how committee members are assigned tasks and how reporting is done. The tasks or functions of the C/MT could be included, whether written generally or specifically. A C/MT could be able to set up task groups as needed without having to revise the manual of operations.

Use of the property might be addressed. This could include the use by outside groups, who is responsible for maintenance and clean up, any costs for using the facility. Wedding and/or funeral policies could be included.

The manual of administrative operations should be the reference that answers questions about how we do things in this congregation. Each manual will be as unique as each congregation. Writing a manual of operations will help define the policies, procedures and practices of a congregation and to discern what is working and what might need to change. A question to ask is, “What do we need to do to do the work we are called to do?”

Sexual Misconduct Policy
The Book of Order 2011/2013 contained a new directive for all councils of the church which was to “adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy” (G3.0106). Many have wondered how this differs from a “Child Protection Policy.” A sexual misconduct policy is broader in order to protect the whole congregation, and those outside as we engage our communities to make disciples.

Having a sexual misconduct policy gives people language and a framework for discussing these types of issues as an abuse of power. Recognizing that power is given by individuals and communities gives us a greater responsibility to ensure that no one is being abused or mistreated. A sexual misconduct policy helps us to set up appropriate boundaries in our ministry – defining appropriate friendships, counseling limitations, and the complexities of communication technology. No one on the church staff or in a position of leadership is exempt, nor should be the members of the congregation.

The sexual misconduct policy should include the basic principles of conduct and definitions of inappropriate behavior. Sexual misconduct can include sexual abuse including that with children, as well as sexual harassment.

How the church will respond to allegations of sexual misconduct would include reporting requirements as well as the response process. Prevention and risk management should be addressed in the policy, including issues of liability and insurance as well as employment practices.

Education and training are another area to include in the policy, in order to raise awareness of this problem. This could include the requirement for ministers, volunteers, elders, deacons, and staff to be trained, as well as how often.

Another area to consider is how to meet the needs of all involved – the victim, the accused, their families, as well as the congregation. The needs of each will be different but should be fair and compassionate.

A FULL FINANCIAL REVIEW DEFINED

The "Form of Government" of the Presbyterian Church requires the following:

"A full financial review of all financial books and records shall be conducted every year by a public accountant or committee of members versed in accounting procedures. Reviewers should not be related to the treasurer(s). Terminology in this section is meant to provide general guidance and is not intended to require or not require specific audit procedures or practices as understood within the professional accounting community." (G-3.0113)

Therefore, a financial review is required for every church organization or group which has a treasury, and which receives and disburses funds. Groups within the local church whose financial transactions must be reviewed might include the General Operating Fund, Benevolence Fund, Memorial Fund, Wills and Endowments, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Building/ Maintenance Fund, Choir, Youth, Church School, Presbyterian Women etc. This review benefits the treasurers, the contributors and those who benefit from expenditures … giving assurance that donations are used as the donor intended, for the benefit of the specific group, and as a witness to the Lordship of Christ.

The persons making the full financial review do not need to be C.P.A.'s, but there should be some understanding of accounting procedures. Look for persons who have been Trustees or who have some experience in business accounting. Remember that those doing the financial review must not be related to the Treasurer(s).

To be available for review are financial ledgers, records of all forms of income, deposit slips and bank account records, withdrawal slips and canceled checks, authorization of payments, copies of invoices and expense vouchers, and a balance sheet. Financial records from relatively small groups would require less validation; but it is important that each report a Beginning Balance, Income, Expenses, and a Closing Balance.

Unless a congregation and its income/expenses are very large, it is not necessary to have a professional audit made. A full financial review implies that the financial review committee has checked through the records, has spot-checked those records and (hopefully) has approved them, and (if helpful) has made suggestions for improvement to the Treasurer or Finance Committee. The report of the financial review committee must be approved by the Session, Trustees or whichever body has created the committee, and this approval must be recorded in the official minutes of that body.

Quiz on the Constitution

Fill in the blank, or circle the letter for the correct answer.

1. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consists of two parts; they are:
Part I:____________________________________Part II:____________________________________

2. "...The church is a community of people known by its ...
    a. membership size.
    b. building and grounds.
    c. historical documents.
    d. convictions and actions. (F-2.01)

3. The elected leaders who govern the Presbyterian Church are called
    a. Bishops.
    b. Priests.
    c. Clergy.
    d. Presbyters.
    e. None of the above. (F-3.0202)

4. (T) or (F) When session, presbytery, synod or the General Assembly votes, those voting must reflect the will of their constituencies. (F-3.0204)

5. Session must meet
    a. at least quarterly.
    b. at least monthly.
    c. at least twice a year.
    d. at least once a year. (G-3.0203)

6. According to the Book of Order, when does the moderator vote in a congregational meeting?
    a. to break a tie.
    b. to dissolve the terms of call.
    c. to decide matters of special importance.
    d. never. (find the citation ...)

7. (T) or (F) An person who is not baptized may join the church in a private ceremony with friends and family present. (G-1.0301 and G-1.0301a)

8. Meetings of the congregation shall include approval of
    a. the annual budget.
    b. matters related to changes in the sanctuary.
    c. matters related to fund raising.
    d. matters related to the calling of a pastor or pastors. (G-1.0503)

9. The two officers required of a governing body are
- a. an executive and a treasurer.
- b. an executive and a clerk.
- c. a moderator and a vice-moderator.
- d. a clerk and a moderator.
- e. none of the above. (G-3.0104)

10. An associate pastor is related to the session
- a. strictly as an observer, without voice or vote.
- b. an observer with voice.
- c. a member with voice.
- d. a member with voice and vote. (G-3.0201)

11. A candidate for ministry is ordinarily ordained
- a. by the presbytery of care.
- b. by the calling presbytery.
- c. by the calling presbytery jointly with a commission of the presbytery of care.
- d. by the presbytery selected by the candidate. (G-2.0702)

12. The installed pastoral relations to which candidates may now be called are
- a. pastor, associate pastor.
- b. pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor.
- c. co-pastor, pastor, associate pastor.
- d. co-pastor, pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor. (G-2.0504a)

13. The pastoral relationship between a pastor and a church is dissolved by
- a. the congregation.
- b. the session.
- c. the presbytery.
- d. the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry. (G-2.0901)

14. (T) or (F) Ordained ministers serving churches are members of those churches. (G-3.0306)

15. (T) or (F) Pastors in local churches serve on session and the privilege of voice and vote. (G-3.0201)

16. The session has the responsibility and power to
- a. develop and supervise the church school and the educational program of the church.
- b. to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship.
- c. to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God.
- d. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.
- e. none of the above.
- f. all of the above. (G-3.0201)

17. The session shall
   a. hold stated meetings at least monthly.
   b. review and approve the nominees for officers of the particular church.
   c. review the pastor’s sermons.
   d. keep a complete register of marriages. (G-3.02)

18. The congregation shall
   a. approve the annual budget.
   b. review the adequacy of the pastor’s compensation.
   c. determine the mission of the particular church.
   d. elect an assistant pastor. (G-1.0503)

19. Who sets the quorum for a stated session meeting?
   a. set by the presbytery.
   b. set by the pastor.
   c. set by the session.
   d. one third of the members (plus moderator). (G-3.0203)

20. All property held by or for a particular church is held in trust for the use and benefit of
   a. the presbytery.
   b. the synod.
   c. the General Assembly.
   d. the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-4.0203)