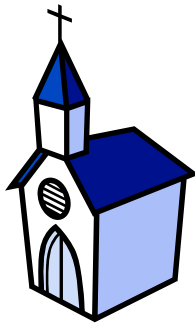


Name of Church:

Please pass this book to your successor.

CLERK OF SESSION HANDBOOK

Presbytery of Northern New England



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Who and What is a Clerk of Session

The Clerk of Session (COS) is a key leader in the church. The responsibilities of the COS are often considerably beyond those listed in the Book of Order, which are very sparse.

G-9.0200: Every governing body must have a clerk.

G-9.0203a: The clerk records the transactions of the governing body and keeps its records.

G-9.0203b: The Clerk of Session must be an Elder.

The Clerk of Session also has important duties regarding disciplinary procedures that will be discussed later.

Every governing body in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) (PCUSA) has a clerk. For a church, that clerk is called the Clerk of Session. In higher bodies, such as the presbytery, the clerk is called the Stated Clerk. The Clerks in each governing body have many similar responsibilities, although the responsibilities and authorities generally increase in the higher governing bodies.

This handbook will describe the role, duties, responsibilities and authorities of the Clerk of Session. It is important to remember that whatever you do is at the request or delegation of the governing body. Presbyterians don't believe in much individual power, but in government by groups guided by the Holy Spirit. We believe in servant leadership not leadership by power.

Every church is encouraged to better define the role of the COS in their bylaws and/or administrative manual.

Relationships

As a key leader in the church, the COS has many and varied relationships. Some of these are mandated by the Book of Order, some may be delegated to the COS by Session and others are assumed by common practice.

Relationship with the Session

The COS is elected by the Session for a fixed period of time.

Perhaps, the most noticeable duty is to take complete and accurate minutes of each Session meeting. Details about the minutes will be discussed later.

Session is responsible for maintaining the membership rolls of the church and the recording of these rolls is the responsibility of the COS. Details about the rolls will be discussed later.

The COS is often the parliamentarian for Session meetings. This usually depends on the COS's knowledge of parliamentary procedures and the size of the session. Parliamentary procedures will be discussed later in this handbook.

The COS often assists the moderator in keeping a session meeting on schedule and to ensure all mandated rules are followed.

Relationship with the Pastor(s)

The relationship of the COS and the pastor will vary from church to church. Generally, the COS and pastor should have a close working relationship. Together they may develop the agenda for each Session meeting. Together they can discuss and strategize about important issues. Either the pastor (moderator) or the COS may be the one to receive reports and motions from session members for an upcoming session meeting.

Often, the division of duties between the pastor and COS will depend on the COS's knowledge, experience and available time.

Although the personnel committee has the primary responsibility for issues relating to the pastor's job, sometimes the COS can just casually mention a problem to the pastor to provide a low key way to deal with it. The ability to do this depends considerably on the relationship between the pastor and COS. Be very careful not to encroach on the personnel committee responsibilities. When in doubt, defer to the personnel committee.

It is useful for the COS and pastor to get together occasionally to discuss the health and operations of the church. This is often done in a very informal setting, such as over lunch. This is also a good time for the COS and pastor to brainstorm ideas to enhance the church's programs and operations.

Relationship with the Congregation

The COS acts as the secretary and often the parliamentarian for congregational meetings.

The COS often represents Session before the congregation at occasions such as baptisms and reception of new members. Some churches use other elders for this role.

The COS is often perceived by the congregation to be one of the most important leaders of the church and thus the COS's actions should be in line with this role, setting a good example of behavior and leadership.

Relationship with the Presbytery

The Presbytery has the responsibility to review all Session records annually. This is done by the COS working with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. The primary purpose of this review is not to just look at the form of the minutes, but to examine the governance of the church as reflected in the minutes. This is an important part of the required oversight of the church by presbytery.

The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery is a resource to the COS and pastors to assist in solving problems. The Stated Clerk is also the officer in the Presbytery that is responsible for assistance in interpreting the Book of Order when it is not clear on a matter. Thus, the COS should confer with the Stated Clerk when a situation arises that does not seem to be handled clearly in the Book of Order. Never hesitate to contact the Stated Clerk when needed.

Each church sends one or more Elder commissioners to each presbytery meeting. The COS should be sure this is done and can be a commissioner her/his self. Even if not a commissioner, the COS is always welcome at presbytery meetings as a non-voting elder.

The moderator of Session is a member of presbytery and thus represents presbytery on the session as part of our connectional system of polity.

Relationship with those outside the Church

The COS is sometimes called upon to be the spokesperson for interaction with news publications and other outside interests. This is often handled by the pastor, but sometimes it is not appropriate for the pastor to handle a situation. The church is sometimes better served to use an elder or member experienced in such matter as the "press secretary".

Accountability

The COS is accountable to Session and only to Session. The COS cannot be removed from office except by a vote of Session or as a result of a disciplinary action. Thus, the COS cannot be fired by the pastor, the congregation or anyone other than Session.

That said, the COS will do well to listen to other people and groups. This may help him/her to do the job better. Also, such interaction may detect a problem among the congregation, session, pastor, etc. that can be handled early and quietly. However, don't think you have to handle problems yourself. When appropriate take the issue to the pastor and/or session to resolve.

Term of Office

The COS is elected by Session to a fixed term of office. The term is often one year, but can be of any fixed length of time; it cannot be indefinite.

The Session

The Session consists of a number of Elders elected by the congregation and the pastor(s), who moderate the Session.

The Session is the *only* governing body of a church. All other groups such as committees, deacons and trustees are accountable to Session.

Moderator

The moderator presides over Session meetings is normally a pastor of the church. If the church is without a pastor, a moderator will be appointed by the presbytery Committee on Ministry. For a short term absence, such as the moderator being ill or called away to an emergency, the moderator can ask an elder to moderate. The COS is often the one chosen for this.

The moderator is a voting member of session, although they will often choose not to vote to avoid a sense of bias. The moderator is also a representative of Presbytery to the Session.

If the moderator is absent for a short time, the session can invite another minister member of the presbytery to moderate. The Committee on Ministry should be consulted on this when possible.

The Moderator of Session must be a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, or an Elder who is the Moderator of the Presbytery, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery or a current or former member of the Committee on Ministry.

Membership

The Session consists of Elders elected by the congregation and installed by Session. Session ordains the person elected if not already ordained.

Although the congregation elects the session members, the ordination and installation is an act of Session. Session must train and examine each newly elected person to ensure s/he would be a productive member of session and of good character and faith. If Session decides not to ordain / install a person, then the congregation must elect someone else.

Session members are grouped into classes. There are two or three classes and the session members are elected to two or three year terms. A session member can be reelected, but cannot serve more than six consecutive years. After six years, the elder must wait at least a year before being eligible for reelection.

A Session cannot be less than two members. The Book of Order defines a Session quorum as one third of the Session, but not less than two. The quorum may be set at a higher level by the church. You need at least two to have a quorum. However, a two person Session is not wise if it can possibly be avoided. If one person is absent, no business can be conducted, since, if only one is present, there is not a quorum.

Also, a three member session is not wise. Although with one absent, the remaining two may constitute a quorum, a majority can not be obtained and all decisions must be unanimous. Note that a majority is more than half of those present and voting. So, if only two are present, it takes both to have more than half. It can sometimes be hard for small churches to get enough elders for Session, but try to have more than three.

Trustees

The trustees of a church are responsible for managing property and funds as directed by the bylaws and session.

Trustees are optional. If trustees are not used, then the responsibilities are handled by session, often by a committee.

When trustees are used, the church is said to have a bicameral organization. If no trustees, then it has a unicameral organization. These terms are somewhat misleading in that bicameral may imply equality. This is not the case. The trustees are accountable to Session which may direct the trustees and even take over their duties if necessary.

When trustees are used, there is often tension between Session and trustees that can sometimes lead to severe conflict and disruption in the church. So, if trustees are used, it is important that Session promotes harmony in the relationship.

A large majority of the churches in our presbytery do not have trustees.

Form of Government

The Presbyterian form of government is government by representation, much like that of the United States. In our civil government, we elect senators and congressmen that make decisions on our behalf.

In the Presbyterian form of government, the church elects representatives, which we call the Session, to represent them in governance. The Session then makes most of the decisions for the church on behalf of the congregation. The congregation has very little direct power aside from electing officers, like the people of the US have little direct power other than electing our representative.

However, it is important to note that each Session member votes as guided by the Holy Spirit. Session members do not vote as the congregation directs, although that input should be received and considered with grace.

The Presbyterian form of government is connectional. Each governing level has connections to those above and below it.

We have four levels of government.

General Assembly (GA)		<p>The General Assembly is the highest governing body in the denomination and meets every other year to determine the rules and policies of the denomination. The agencies of the GA provide the ongoing operation of the GA.</p> <p>There is one GA.</p>
Presbytery	Synod	<p>The Synod has several Book of Order functions. It has a court that acts as an appellate court to the Presbytery. It reviews presbytery records and it approves special examinations for candidates. The Synod also acts as a resource and coordinator to the presbyteries. The Synod is accountable to the GA.</p> <p>There are 16 Synods.</p>
Presbytery		<p>The Presbytery is the primary governing body. In some areas it is accountable to the Synod, but in others it is accountable directly to GA.</p> <p>The Presbytery provides oversight and support of the churches and ministers within its jurisdiction. The Presbytery can ordain and install ministers.</p> <p>There are 173 Presbyteries.</p>
Session		<p>The Session is the governing body of a particular church. It makes most decisions for the church and is accountable to the Presbytery.</p> <p>The Session can ordain and install Elders and Deacons.</p> <p>There is one Session per church.</p>

The Constitution

A COS respects the constitution of the PCUSA as a covenant with one another that enables us to live together in our diversity and conduct ourselves in an orderly and decent manner to the glory of God.

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consists of two parts: The Book of Confessions and The Book of Order.

Part I: The Book of Confessions

The Book of Confessions (BOC) contains 9 documents that have provided guidance to our faith for various times in our long history. Sometimes you will hear that there are 11 documents – it depends on how you count – one document (The Westminster Confession) has 3 parts. Either count can be considered valid.

These documents were generally produced during times of stress and challenge of faith. They were written in an attempt to better define our faith and to bring disparate parties together.

These documents are an important foundation for our beliefs. Pastors sometimes give short courses on the confessions. If not, you may want to ask your pastor to consider it.

Part II: The Book of Order

The Book of Order (BOO) provides the rules and policies for our church government, referred to as “polity”. Every COS **must** have a current copy of the BOO. If you don’t have one, have your church order one for you. After Scripture, this is the primary resource for the COS.

One thing that is very important in interpreting the BOO is the meaning of a few words.

Shall means mandated. Thus, the statement “coffee shall be provided” means that coffee **MUST** be provided; there is no option.

Should means strongly recommended but not required. The statement “coffee should be provided” indicates that it is expected, but not required.

Is appropriate means a practice that is commended as suitable, but not required. The statement “coffee is appropriate” indicates that coffee would be welcome, but is not required.

May signifies a practice that is optional – permitted, but not required. The statement “coffee may be provided” indicates that coffee is not expected, but can be provided if desired.

When reading the BOO always pay particular attention to these words. Especially pay attention to the word *shall* since those practices are absolutely required, there is no choice.

The BOO is divided into three parts: Government, Worship and Discipline.

The first part contains the rules for governing. The paragraphs in this section all start with “G-“ and these paragraph numbers are used for reference into the BOO.

The COS should be especially familiar with the following sections of the BOO.

G-1.000 gives the basic principles of church governance.

G-5.000 gives fundamental information on church membership.

G-7.000 gives important information on the church, including congregational meetings and congregational authorities.

G-10.000 gives the specific responsibilities of the Session and the rules for keeping the church rolls.

The second part contains the rules for worship. The paragraphs in this section all start with “W-“.

This section contains the rules for such things as Baptisms and celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The COS should be generally familiar with this section. Special attention should be given to the following.

W-1.4004 states that Session sets the time, date and place of worship and sees that the word is preached and sacraments are provided.

W-2.4012 states that Session approves when the Lord’s Supper is celebrated and who presides.

W-2.0312 states that Session approves baptisms

W-4.9003 states that Session approves weddings. A wedding is a worship service and Session approves worship, thus Session approves weddings.

W-1.4005 gives the pastor certain authorities that do not require session approval – or even involvement. In general, Session is responsible to see that worship happens and the pastor has control over the content of a worship service.

The third part contains the rules for discipline. The paragraphs in this section all start with “D-“.

This section details how we deal with church members, officers and ministers that misbehave and governing bodies that commit a delinquency or irregularity. More will be said about the judicial process later.

Scripture

Scripture stands above the constitution and always takes precedence. However, since there is sometimes disagreement about how to interpret scripture, there will also be disagreements on the interpretation of the constitution. In these situations, we must pray together for guidance and listen to each other and the Holy Spirit and try to resolve the problem.

Let us never forget that Jesus Christ is the head of the PCUSA and all churches.

Responsibilities of Session

As the governing body of the church, the Session has many responsibilities which are delineated in the Book of Order G-10.0102. Just a very brief summary will be presented here. All Session members **MUST** read G-10.0102. COS's should read it several times!

- a. provide for evangelism
- b. receive members
- c. lead in mission
- d. provide for worship
- e. provide for growth in faith and equip for ministry
- f. supervise church school and educational program
- g. lead in community reconciliation
- h. challenge the people in Christian stewardship
- i. establish the annual budget
- j. lead in discovering God's work in the world
- k. engage in education and growth of session members
- l. instruct, examine, ordain and install elders and deacons
- m. supervise deacons, trustees and all other organizations within the church
- n. provide church administration
- o. manage property
- p. maintain relationships with higher governing bodies
- q. establish and maintain ecumenical relationships
- r. serve in judicial matters
- s. keep accurate and complete rolls of members

As stated before, this is an extremely abbreviated list of responsibilities included as an overview. Session members **MUST** read section G-10.0102 and the COS should be very familiar with this section.

Session Meetings

Session conducts its business collectively in meetings of the entire Session. Session may delegate certain responsibilities and authorities to commissions, committees and task groups, but that does not reduce the Session's responsibilities. Session is responsible for the proper conduct of its committees and task groups.

Subgroups of Session

A commission is a group that is delegated very specific responsibilities and authorities by session and may make decisions on behalf of session. A commission generally has a finite lifetime. Commissions used frequently by presbytery, but not often by Sessions.

A committee is a group that has continuing responsibility for organizing and conducting the operations of a specific area. For example, the worship committee organizes the details of the worship services, such as, providing ushers, greeters, music, etc. Committees have limited authority for making decisions. Most important decisions must be taken to Session for action.

A task group is like a temporary committee. It is given very specific tasks and expected to complete its work in a short time.

Attendance

Attendance must be recorded at all Session meetings. This should include those present, excused and absent.

A quorum, according to the Book of Order is 1/3 of the Session members, but no less than two. This can be set at a higher level by each church. Since anyone reading the minutes may not know the quorum it must be attested by the COS. Just listing who is present, absent and excused is not sufficient. The COS must know the definition of the quorum for the church and must attest to a quorum being present at each meeting.

Only two things can be done if a quorum is not present: 1) to set a date and time for the next meeting in hope that a quorum will be present (this is called an adjourned meeting) and 2) adjourn.

Visitors may or may not attend Session meetings as determined by Session. Often Session meetings are open to anyone wishing to observe, but each Session may set its own policy on visitors.

Visitors may only speak if given voice by a vote of Session. In no case can anyone vote other than an installed member of Session.

If a sensitive subject is to be discussed, Session may vote to enter "executive session". In this case, all non-members of Session must leave the room. Session may vote to allow a non-member to attend all or part of the executive session when required. For example, the treasurer may be asked to attend if a financial matter is to be discussed. Executive session is terminated by vote.

Stated Meetings

A Stated Meeting is one that is scheduled for a regular time. For example, Session may meet on the first Monday of each month at 7PM at the church.

At a stated meeting, any business may be brought before the Session, although there may be some administrative rules for how new business is handled. For example, at a stated meeting of the Presbytery, new business can be moved and discussed, but not voted on until the next meeting, unless it is an emergency.

Stated meetings must always be opened to new business.

Called Meetings

A Called Meeting is one that is called for a specific purpose. Such meetings may be called by vote of Session, or called by the moderator of Session when the moderator sees a need for the meeting. The moderator must call a special meeting if two Session members give the moderator a written request for the special meeting. The Presbytery may also call a Session meeting.

Adequate notice must be given of the time and place of a called meeting. What is adequate depends on the circumstances. This may be by letters or phone calls to Session members, or an announcement at worship. If time permits, the notice should be enough in advance of the meeting to be reasonable for Session members to plan for the meeting. The notice must state the reason for the called meeting.

At a called meeting, the only business that may be handled at the meeting is that for which the meeting is called. No other business may be discussed or voted except for routine, non-controversial matters, such as approving a baptism.

Voting

Only those present at a meeting can vote. We do not recognize absentee ballots. We believe that the Holy Spirit moves within the group to lead the group to the proper decision. By listening to each other, praying together and being open to changing one's view, the Holy Spirit can work within the group. Thus, only those present can participate in voting.

More will be said about this in the Parliamentary Procedures section.

Parliamentary Procedures

Parliamentary procedures are according to Robert's Rules of Order, 10th Edition, Newly Revised. This applies to all parliamentary situations unless the Book of Order specifies a different handling of the situation. The Book of Order takes precedence over Robert's Rules.

The PCUSA publishes a small brochure that describes the most common parliamentary rules. This is available free if you download it at

http://www.pcusa.org/ga214/02parliamentary_procedure.pdf

I will just cover a few of the more important points here.

Principles

The basic principles of parliamentary procedure are as follows.

1. Provides order and consistency to a meeting.
2. The will of the majority prevails.
3. The rights of the minority are protected.

In small groups, such as committees and some small sessions, these rules can be relaxed somewhat if all agree. However, the minutes must reflect all motions that passed, even by consensus.

Motions

A motion must be concise, but must cover the what, where, who, when and how much issues. Here are examples of two motions.

BAD MOTION: "The worship committee recommends that we hold a fund raiser for hymnals."

GOOD MOTION: "Moved that Session approves a fund raiser to be held on Sunday, November 2, 2005 for the purpose of purchasing hymnals. The fund raiser is to be managed by the worship committee and consist of donations for a dedication plate in a hymnal at \$15 each. Proceeds will go to the purchase of hymnals. Any excess will be used to support the church music program as determined by the worship committee."

Not all good motions need to be this long (most are not), but the point is to be thorough, but no more that necessary.

A motion should not contain any background material. Background can be provided separately (often on the same paper). Keep the motion focused on the decision to be made without any superfluous material. Usually, the background can be described in the minutes, or many times the basis of the motion is evident in itself.

Sometimes a formal motion may be used in the following format.

Whereas,

And Whereas,

Be it resolved that

The “whereas” clauses are used for background material to support the motion. This formal motion form is often used for commemorative motions, such as the following.

Whereas, Rev. Smith has served First Church faithfully for ten years,

And Whereas, he has moderated Session with fairness and good humor,

And Whereas, he has served the congregation with compassion,

And Whereas, he has served the Presbytery on the Council,

Be it Resolved that, Rev. Smith is commended for his dedication to this church and to Christ.

Omnibus Motion

The omnibus motion, also call consent agenda, is a collection of motions that are all voted at once. This is used to quickly dispense with non-controversial motions.

If any one or more persons desires to discuss and/or vote separately on an item, that person just speaks up and requests that item to be removed from the omnibus motion. The removed item is then handled separately as any normal motion.

You can see an example of the omnibus motion in the sample minutes in Appendix D.

Voting

All decisions are decided by vote. In most cases, a motion is passed on a majority. A simple majority is more than half of those present and voting. In some cases, a 2/3 majority is required. Generally, a 2/3 vote is required when the rights of the minority are at issue.

There are several ways to vote.

1. A voice vote is taken by asking those in favor to say yes and those opposed to say no. Often the result is clear. If not, the vote can be taken by standing or raising hands. In larger groups such as the congregation or presbytery, standing is preferred since it can be difficult to count raised hands at people move them about.
2. A vote may be taken by ballot. This is required if voting for a person to be elected to an office or other position and more than one person is nominated. A ballot can just be a plain piece of paper where each person writes his/her vote. At least two people should count the ballots. The use of colored paper is recommended to reduce the possibility of false votes. A ballot vote can be required by majority vote.
3. A vote may be by general consent. The moderator will ask “if there are no objections, then”. If no one objects, the motion is passed. This is generally used for non-controversial matters. If anyone objects, then a formal vote must be taken.

In all cases, these votes are to be recorded as motions in the minutes. These are just different ways of voting on a motion.

Only those present and voting are counted. Abstentions count for a quorum, but not for the number voting. Here's an example of what can happen

Say there are 8 members on Session and the quorum is more than half of the members.

5 members are present, thus having a quorum.

2 members abstain, so only 3 vote.

The 3 voters vote 2 for and 1 against – a valid majority.

Thus, only 2 votes carried a motion for an 8 member session.

In such case, if the issue is controversial and time permits, you may want to move to reconsider the motion and then postpone the decision to a later meeting when more will be present. Otherwise, this situation can lead to hurt feelings and worse.

Teleconference

There are situations when a motion cannot wait until the next stated meeting. In that case, a called meeting can be held by telephone.

There are conference call facilities available where each member dials a number and enters a code. Then that member is connected to the other members. This works very well. The Presbytery office can assist you in locating such a facility.

It is important that a teleconference be conducted in a very orderly manner. If more than one person speaks, neither may be heard clearly.

Minutes must be recorded for a teleconference meeting like any other meeting.

Email Voting

Today, it is not unusual for all Session members to have email. This can be a great productivity tool. For routine matters, that are not expected to be controversial, and where time pressures do not allow waiting to the next stated meeting, a vote may be taken by email.

The moderator or COS emails the motion to each member and asks each person to reply with their vote by a set date.

If anyone objects to this manner of voting, or if anyone votes against the motion, the email vote should be cancelled and another forum used. Sometimes, a teleconference will work in this case. Otherwise, a special meeting must be called.

Administrative Manual

It is recommended that the Session have an Administrative Manual that specifies the rules and policies of Session operation. The reasons for this manual include the following.

1. Provide continuity of rules and policies as the Session changes, although any Session can change the manual by vote.
2. Provide a manual for new Session members to read for an overview of Session and their role.
3. To simplify the bylaws to enable many things to be handled by Session rather than the less efficient process of calling a congregational meeting.

The Administrative Manual may be referenced in the bylaws as an officially recognized manual of continuing rules and policies.

Some items to be considered for the Administrative Manual are as follows.

1. List of committees and their responsibilities and authorities.

2. Specify the legal agent for the church. This is who can sign legal documents, such as contracts on behalf of Session. This is often the COS.
3. Specify any persons that automatically get voice at a Session meeting. This might include the Treasurer, Deacon or Trustee liaison or the COS if the clerk is not a member of Session.
4. Specify copyright rules for the church in making copies of church school material, music, etc.
5. Specify how Session will conduct its oversight of committees, the Deacons and Trustees (if used). This is often done by distributing the minutes of each group's as well as oral reports to Session.
6. Building use policy can be defined.
7. Instructions for lay leaders participating in worship, baptisms and the Lord's Supper can be included.
8. Financial procedures, such as the budget process and auditing can be included.
9. Specify the rules for amending the Administrative Manual.

The Congregation

Bylaws

Every church should have bylaws. They should satisfy any civil government requirements. This is usually required for a church to incorporate. A church must incorporate if permitted by state law.

The bylaws should also specify other matters which the congregation wishes and are within the scope of what the congregation may do as specified in G-7.0304. This may include whether the church is unicameral (no trustees) or bicameral (have trustees); the quorum for a congregational meeting; the quorum of a Session meeting.

The bylaws are voted by the congregation and require at least prior notice and a 2/3 majority. More stringent rules can be specified if desired. The bylaws should not be easy to change and should not require changing often. If this is not the case, then you probably have too many details in your bylaws. Details should be handled by an administrative manual as discussed earlier.

The following items should be considered to be included in your bylaws.

1. Name of Church
2. Corporate status
3. Affiliation with Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)
4. Whether unicameral (no trustees) or bicameral (have trustees).
5. Number and classes of elders on session.
6. Number and classes of deacons on board of deacons (if any).
7. Number and classes of Trustees (if any).
8. Time of annual meeting. Allow some flexibility, such as "in February". Specific dates, such as first Sunday in February, can cause problems (e.g. heavy snow that day).
9. Quorum for a congregational meeting. This must be at least 10% of the members on the roll, but can be set higher if desired.

10. Number and constitution of the nominating committee (see G-14.0201b).
11. Designation of fiscal year.
12. Method of amending bylaws. By Robert's Rules, this must at least be reasonable notice and a 2/3 majority. Additional conditions may be set.
13. Indemnification and Liability of officers.

Powers of the Congregation

The powers of the congregation are quite limited. They are specified in the Book of Order G-7.0304. A simple summary is as follows.

1. Elect elders, deacons and/or trustees if these offices are used.
2. Call a pastor.
3. Change the call of pastor or dissolve pastoral relationship.
4. Approve the purchase, sale or encumbrance of property.
5. Approve matters such as bylaws, unicameral vs. bicameral organization and exemptions.

These are the ONLY things that a congregation can do, and should be interpreted strictly. All other responsibilities and authorities rest with Session.

One particular item that is often misunderstood is that **Session approves the budget**, not the congregation. The budget must be presented to the congregation as information, but not for approval. The only part of the budget that can be affected by the congregation is the approval of the terms of call.

What if the congregation wants to change the terms of call at a congregational meeting? This presents a sticky problem if the payment to the pastor(s) is increased. Any change in the terms of call affects the budget, but the congregation cannot approve changes to the budget. Thus, there are basically two options.

1. Leave the budget open and Session will meet and determine where to get the extra funds (usually, what to reduce).
2. Better – move that the motion to change the terms of call be referred back to Session. Session can then meet and determine how to modify the budget to meet the congregations wishes, recommend the new terms of call to the congregation and present the new budget to the congregation. If the pain in changing the spending is too great, Session can explain that to the congregation and recommend against changing the terms of call.

Congregational Meetings

Annual Meeting

Congregations are required to meet once per year to approve the pastor's terms of call. Other business that may be transacted include the election of officers and hearing reports of Session.

An Annual Meeting is open to any new business that the congregation wishes to move. However, any decisions made must be within the scope of the permitted powers of the congregation as stated above.

Notice must be given for an Annual Meeting at least two Sundays in advance. The second Sunday can be the day of the meeting.

Called Meetings

A called meeting of the congregation may be called by Session or the Moderator when business within the powers of the congregation needs to be handled, or if the congregation needs to hear a report.

Notice of a called meeting must be given at least two Sundays in advance along with the reason for the meeting.

No business other than that stated in the call of the meeting can be transacted.

In the special case of calling a pastor, notice of the meeting must be given ten days in advance.

Record Keeping

Session is responsible for maintaining the records of the church including the minutes of Session and congregational meetings and the church rolls.

The COS is responsible to Session for the maintenance of these records.

Session Minutes

Session minutes must provide an accurate, complete and timely documentation of the meeting. A checklist is included as Appendix C that details certain requirements of the form of the minutes and the content.

Session minutes must be on acid free paper and in a *secure* binder. They do not have to be in one of the expensive binders often used for this purpose.

Session minutes must be submitted to the Presbytery annually for review and approval. This is usually done by peer review at meetings held each fall. Normally, at least three meetings are held, one in Maine, one in New Hampshire / Massachusetts and one in Vermont. These meetings usually take place during mid-September to mid-November. It is very important that all clerks attend one of these annual meetings. The meetings are also used for clerk of session training and fellowship.

Failure to voluntarily submit your minutes for review can lead to the presbytery demanding the presentation of your minutes at a certain time and place. We don't want to go there.

Sample minutes are provided in Appendix D.

Executive Session

It is best to use executive session for discussion and avoid decisions when possible so that no minutes are required. However, any motions passed in an executive session must be recorded in the minutes.

Sensitive minutes may be kept in a secure location which is referenced in the normal minutes. These minutes are available to anyone who was authorized to be present at the executive session, such as absent session members.

Executive session minutes must be submitted to presbytery for review annually. However, you may request that these minutes only be read by the Stated Clerk.

The Church Rolls

Session is responsible for maintaining the church rolls. This is normally delegated to the clerk of session. There are a number of rolls that must be maintained. Most churches use a formal bound roll book for this purpose which has sections for each of the rolls that must be kept.

The records may also be kept by computer. However, computer disks are not recognized as a suitable long term storage medium by the Presbyterian Historical Society. They recommend that you regularly print the rolls on acid free paper for historical preservation.

The following information about the specific rolls is explained in detail in the Book of Order G-10.0302. This is not intended to replace the Book of Order explanation but to provide some clarity and some comments that may help you. When in doubt, the Book of Order always prevails.

Active Members

Those active in the church are listed as active members. Each church may decide what it means to be "active". A common definition of an active member is one that has been received into church membership by Session and does at least one of the following: 1) regularly attends worship, 2) active in committees, choirs, teaching church school or other church activities or 3) pledges gifts of time, talent and/or treasure.

Affiliate Members

These are persons that are active members of a home church, but are temporarily located in your area and desire to be active in the life of your church. These persons may be listed as affiliate members and remain active members of their home church.

Inactive Members

At least once every year, the roll of active members shall be reviewed to determine if any listed members no longer meet the criteria of active membership and have not met these criteria for at least a year. If any such members are found, then Session considers moving them to the inactive roll. There are some steps that need to take place in this process.

1. Determine that there are no extenuating circumstances such as illness that prevents the person from being active in the life of the church. Only those who choose to not participate should be considered for inactive status.
2. Session must make a diligent effort to contact the person, try to discover why they are no longer active and try to restore them to active participants.
3. If Session is unable to contact the members or unable to restore them to active service, then Session may vote to move them to the inactive roll.
4. If moved to inactive status, the member must be notified that this has been done. It is important to advise them that pastoral services are still available to them and they can be restored to active status by a simple vote of Session for a period of up to two years.
5. If inactive for two or more years, then Session may vote to drop them from the rolls with no further notice or action.

One reason to "clean" the rolls annually is that the church must pay per capita for each active member. If someone is not active in the life of the church and is moved to inactive status, per capita is not paid for that member.

However, a more important reason to contact them is to find out if there is something bothering them and preventing them to be active. Sometimes just a phone call is enough to let them know they are missed.

It is important to note that a member has no say in whether they remain on the active roll. This is entirely a Session decision. Often, when a member is contacted and told they are being considered for inactive status, they will say they are planning to be active soon and want to remain on the active roll. Session will have to make a judgment whether this is likely to happen. One way of handling this is to tell them that they will be moved to the inactive roll, but when they become active again within the next two years, they can easily be restored to the active roll.

Baptized Members

A baptized member is someone who

1. Is baptized in your church and has not yet made a profession of faith
2. Is a baptized child of an active member who transferred into your church.
3. Is a baptized child of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament that worships in your church.

A roll is kept of all such baptized members.

Letter of Transfer

When a member of your church moves to another church, that church may ask for a letter of transfer. This is a certificate that attests that the person is a member in good standing.

Similarly, when a member that is active in another church wants to transfer to your church, you should ask the previous church for a letter of transfer.

One important point here is that the letter of transfer is requested by the new church, not the member. A member cannot say "send me a letter of transfer" or "send a letter of transfer to xxx church". The request must come from the church itself which indicates that the person has indeed joined that church.

When you receive a member by letter of transfer, you send an acknowledgment back to the transferring church that that member has been received. There's a tear off on the letter of transfer for this purpose, if you use the standard form.

When you transfer a member to another church, do not delete that member from your rolls until you get the acknowledgment from the other church that the member has been received by them. However, this notice is not always received and some judgment will have to be used to determine if they are indeed gone. If nothing else, in a year they can be transferred to inactive status.

A member may be transferred from any denomination in which we are in correspondence. This includes most main line protestant churches. Notable exceptions are Roman Catholic, Mormon and many Baptist conventions. If in doubt, check with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

Other Rolls

Other rolls that are kept are records of all marriages, baptisms, elders, deacons and pastors. Most roll books have sections for these rolls.

Deletion from the Rolls

The Book of Order, section G-10.0302b gives a number of situations where a person may be deleted from the rolls.

When someone is deleted from the roll, the name is not erased from the book, but simply marked as deleted and the date deleted.

Certificate of Transfer

We covered this above.

When Church is Dissolved

When a church is dissolved, the church roll book is turned over to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. The Stated Clerk will then issue certificates of transfer for any members of the pre-dissolved church for at least a year. It is very important that the rolls are in good order before turning over to the Stated Clerk, since the Stated Clerk will have no knowledge of these members other than what is in the roll book.

When a church is dissolved, and unless otherwise directed by the Stated Clerk, the church minutes should be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia for safe keeping. See the section in this book on preservation of records.

Member Requests Termination

This is similar to moving a member to the inactive roll. Session must make a diligent effort to determine why the member is requesting termination and make an effort to persuade them to stay.

If they do not agree to stay, then the member is deleted from the roll.

Joins Another Church

If Session learns that a member has joined another church, without asking for a certificate of transfer, that member is deleted from the roll.

Inactive Members

If a member has been on the inactive roll for more than two years, Session may delete that member from the roll without any notice.

If the member on the inactive roll is not resident in the local area, then the member can be deleted from the roll after one year.

Moved and Unknown

When it is no longer possible to contact a member, then that member can be deleted from the rolls.

This may happen when Session considers moving an active member to the inactive roll and is unable to contact them. It may also happen when mailings such as newsletters are returned with the addressee unknown.

The method that is often used to determine that a member cannot be contacted is as follows.

1. Try to phone them. If the line has been disconnected or if someone answers that does not know the member, they probably moved.
2. Talk to anyone in the congregation that might know them.
3. Send them a first class letter. If they recently moved, then the letter should be forwarded to them. If after a few weeks, the member has not responded, then s/he is either beyond the forwarding time or do not which to respond. You may also request that any forwarding address be sent to you by the Post Office (for a small fee).

If unable to contact the member by these methods, or other methods you deem appropriate, then you may delete that member from the rolls

Member Dies

When a member dies, the date of death is recorded in the roll book and the member is deleted from the rolls.

Preservation of Records

Historical Society

Historical records should be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia (<http://www.history.pcusa.org>). They have special climate controlled, fire resistant storage for these records. You can retrieve the records from them anytime you need them.

When to preserve old records is a matter of judgment. You need to determine how much history needs to be kept at the church. Usually somewhere between 3 to 10 years is adequate.

You can also make a copy of the records before sending, so you have the records for reference and the original is properly protected. These days, the records are often in computer files that can be backed up to provide a local reference.

Once the records are at the Historical Society, you can still get access to them. They will send you the originals or microfiche copies on demand. You still own the records. However, there can be a substantial delay in acquiring the records, so a local backup is often helpful.

When records should be sent is entirely a matter for the church to decide.

DO NOT send the expensive binders when you send records to the Historical Society. They just remove the binders and throw them away. Keep them for future use.

Backup Copies

For all minutes not yet sent to the Historical Society, please keep a backup copy. Most clerks use a computer to write their minutes, so an easy backup is to copy the computer files of the minutes to some removable media such as a floppy disk or CD.

If you don't use a computer, then you can use a copy machine to make a backup copy.

Which ever method you use, keep the backup at a different location than the original. For example, if you keep the official minute book at the church, keep the backup at home. Note that the minutes for one church in our presbytery were lost when there was a fire at the clerk's house where the minutes were kept. All minutes were lost since there was no backup. Don't let this happen to you.

Statistical Reporting

Every year, each church must report statistical data to the General Assembly and to the presbytery. These records are important and are done near the beginning of each year.

Usually, the instructions and forms are sent to the clerk in December with the reports due in mid-February. Of course, much of the data cannot be sent until the end of year books are closed and the church annual meeting is past. This means that there is a very narrow window between the time all the data is available and when the report is due. Thus, the clerk must plan for some substantial time to be available in early February for submitting the reports.

All of these reports are now submitted by computer. In the rare case where a COS does not have a computer, please try to find someone in your church, a friend or neighbor that can help you with it. If no one can be found, talk to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

You will find links to all the computer reports on the Presbytery web site: www.pnne.org. Click on "Documents" and then on "Clerk of Session".

DO NOT wait until the last few days before the deadline to submit your reports. The computer gets very very busy during this time because of all the other clerks who waited until the last minute. Try to complete your reports at least one week prior to the deadline.

Around December of each year, you will receive a packet of information in the mail that will contain report forms and instructions.

The reports are described below.

Annual Statistical Report

Statistics on membership are reported annually. This includes such things as changes in membership, distribution of gender, age and ethnic groups in congregations, sessions and deacons. There is some financial data included.

This information is used to establish your church membership and the presbytery membership. The data is also used for various statistical purposes, much of which helps the denomination understand its members and guide evangelism.

The procedure for the annual statistical report is presented in Appendix A.

Necrology Report

Annually, each church reports on any elders who have died during the past year. This report includes their date of death and their date of ordination (if known). The report only includes elders, not deacons or congregational members.

An example of the Necrology Report form is shown in Appendix B.

Clerk of Session Report

There is a report of some miscellaneous information called the clerk of session report (in addition to the other reports above).

Judicial Process

The church provides a judicial process when someone or some governmental body is thought to have committed an offense or misbehaved in some way. There are two types of judicial process.

Remedial: When a governing body commits an irregularity or delinquency, it's called a remedial action. The next higher governing body always handles remedial actions. Since there is no governing body under the Session, so the Session never has to worry about remedial actions.

Disciplinary: When a church member commits an offense, it is called a disciplinary action. This is started by the accuser giving a written allegation to the clerk. This allegation must be received by the clerk, not the pastor or anyone else.

An allegation against a minister is given to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. An allegation against a church member (including elders and deacons) is given to the Clerk of Session.

When the clerk receives an allegation it is very important to maintain confidentiality. This information is only passed to those with a need to know. Usually, the pastor will be in this category, but not the session.

Some background information should be provided by the accuser as to why the person is being so alleged, but this information can be brief.

Under no circumstances should the clerk or the pastor investigate the allegation or try to "fix" it. It is the job of an investigating committee to examine evidence and determine if an offense is likely to have been committed.

If anyone initiates a disciplinary process, before doing anything else, call the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. This is a difficult process and the Stated Clerk has been trained to handle it. If it is mishandled, the case might be dismissed due to that mishandling.

Getting Help

The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery is available for assistance and consulting whenever needed.

The Stated Clerk also assists in interpreting the constitution for the Presbytery and its churches. So, when the Book of Order is not clear, contact the Stated Clerk for help. It is common for the

Stated Clerk to receive calls from the Clerk of Session or pastor asking for help interpreting the constitution or various procedures and rules. So, don't think you are the only one that needs help.

The Stated Clerk has many contacts at OGA (Office of General Assembly) that s/he can call for help and frequently does. So, as the Stated Clerk does not hesitate to get help from General Assembly, the clerk of session should not hesitate to ask for help from the Stated Clerk.

The current stated clerk can be contacted as follows. Use email, phone, fax, mail, smoke signals, whatever works, just ask for help when you need it.

Cliff Creel, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Northern New England
33 Appledor Rd
Bedford, NH 03110
Email: cliff@savantnh.com
Office: 603-471-0868
Home: 603-471-0179
Fax: 603-488-1632
Cell: 603-714-4038

Appendix A: Annual Statistical Report Procedure

This report is required by the Book of Order (G-10.0102p(7)) and is done only by computer.

You can reach the computer over the internet at <http://ogasys2.pcusa.org>. Or, you can go to the Presbytery web site www.pnne.org, click on documents and then click on "clerk of session".

There is a workbook included with the packet. It will be easiest for you to first fill in the data in the workbook and then go on-line and enter it in the computer.

Your user name for this system is your church PIN. Your church PIN and your password are printed on a paper included in your packet. If your PIN begins with a zero, you must enter that zero.

When entering the data, do not click on the "Submit" button until you are absolutely sure that all your data is entered. Once you click on submit, you will not be able to make any more changes. I can "unsubmit" your data, but all data entered will be lost. If you do not click on submit, then your report is automatically submitted at midnight on deadline date.

This report MUST be entered in the computer no later than the deadline date. Do not wait until the last few days because the computer gets very busy and thus very slow during the few days before the deadline because of all the people that waited until the last day. It has taken some up to 3 hours to enter the data on the last day, when it usually takes well less than an hour.

If you have any problem submitting this data before the deadline, contact the Stated Clerk.

Appendix B: Necrology Report Form

Please list all **elders** on your rolls who **died during the past year**. These names will be included in a moment of remembrance at the March 5, 2005 Presbytery Meeting. They will also be reported in the minutes.

Email, fax or mail this information to the Stated Clerk no later than the statistic report deadline.

Name of Church _____

Full Name of Elder	Date of Death	Date of Ordination (if known)

Appendix C: Session Minutes Checklist

Session Minutes Checklist 2006

Presbytery of Northern New England

Name of Church _____

City _____ State _____

Complete this checklist **BEFORE** the meeting and bring it with you to the meeting. Fill in the page number from your minutes book of one or more instances where the item can be found. Leave the “Yes” and “No” columns blank, they will be filled in by the reviewer. You may add comments to an item if desired. Also, complete the top part of the last page. The information in the parentheses are references to where the requirement is specified. See the end of this table for the definition of terms.

If you have any questions about any part of this process, contact the Stated Clerk for help.

Review of Minutes

Item	Page	Yes	No	Comments
Opening and closing prayer (G-9.0301b)				
Date, time and place of meeting (RRO §48-p451)				
Record of attendance: elders present / excused / absent, ministers, guests (G-10.0202)				
Record of who is moderator. (G-10.0103, G-9.0202b)				
Attestation of quorum present (G-10.0202)				
Approval of docket recorded (RRO §48-p451)				
Previous minutes approved as written or corrected (RRO §48-p452)				
Communications received (RRO §3-p27)				
Motions fully and properly stated with outcome (RRO §4)				
Administration of Lord's Supper authorization (W-2.4012)				
Administration of Lord's Supper date and presiding minister (W-2.4012)				
Baptism authorization, name of child & parents or full name of adult being baptized, name of pastor presiding, place of birth. (W-2.3011, W-2.3012)				
Marriage authorization, names, date and pastor presiding. (W-4.9003)				

Item	Page	Yes	No	Comments
Reception and recording of new members: a. full name b. certificate, reaffirmation, profession of faith, baptism c. preparation for membership recorded (G-10.0102s)				
Transfer of membership: full name and name of church transferred to. (G-10.0102s, G-10.0302b(1))				
Annual review of membership: names moved to inactive status, names removed from rolls. (G-10.0302(2)c)				
Election of commissioners to Presbytery (G-10.0102p)				
Report of commissioners to Presbytery (G-10.0102p(1))				
Officer (Elder, Deacon) election, examination, ordination, installation (G-10.0102L)				
Review of Deacon's minutes (if applicable) (G-10.0102m)				
Review of Trustee's minutes (if applicable) (G-10.0102m)				
Review of Committee minutes (G-10.0102m)				
Minutes of congregational meetings: date, time, place, purpose (RRO §48-p451)				
Session minutes address representation & composition of Session. (G-10.0301)				
Budget approved by Session (G-10.0102i)				
Review of pastor terms of call (G-10.0102n)				
Review of staff salaries (G-10.0102n)				
Election of clerk of session (G-0903a)				
Election of treasurer (G-10.0401)				
Hiring based on equal opportunity and fair employment practices (G-10.0102n)				
Annual statistical report present (G-10.0102p(7))				
Approval of use of property by outside groups (G-10.0102o)				
Annual review of insurance coverage (g-10.0201o)				
If discipline exercised, then minutes included in detail (D-7.0701)				

Item	Page	Yes	No	Comments
Annual meeting with Session and Deacons where no binding decisions are made. (G-6.0405)				
Minutes written legibly (GP)				
Pages numbered consecutively (GP)				
Line drawn through any substantial blank space and initialed by clerk. (GP)				
Any erasures or corrections initialed by clerk. (GP)				
Session minutes signed and attested by clerk (RRO §48-p454)				
Congregational minutes signed and attested by clerk and moderator. (G-7.0307)				
Minutes submitted approximately one year ago for review and have stamp of approval from Stated Clerk (G-10.0301, G-9-0406b)				
Financial audit reported (G-10.0401d)				
Minutes on acid free paper (GP)				
Minutes in secure binder (GP)				
No information taped in place (GP)				
No footnotes (GP)				
No insertions of pages (GP)				
Church Rolls: cross check Session minutes and the Roll Book that the following are properly reflected in each.				
Baptisms				
Members received				
Members transferred				
Members deceased				
Members transferred to inactive				
Weddings				
Ordinations				

The information in parentheses after each item is the citation that explains that requirement. These are interpreted as:

G-, W-, D- are Book of Order citations with the numbers following giving the item

RRO p is a citation from Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Edition (G-7.0302c, G-9.0302)

GP indicates Good Practice with no particular citation.

Session Minutes Review 2006

Presbytery of Northern New England

This page will be left with the Stated Clerk following the review. The clerk of session must fill in the top part of this form prior to the review.

Name of Church _____

City _____ State _____

Clerk of Session Contact Information

Name:		Home Phone:	
Home Address:			
City:		State:	Zip:
Email:			

Do you prefer to receive mail ___ at home ___ at church ?

If your term as clerk is nearing its end (you're not standing for re-election) then give the date your term expires: _____ and the name of your replacement, if known: _____.

The remainder of this form to be filled out by the reviewer after determination of exceptions.

Exceptions:

Commendations:

Name of reviewer: _____

Date of review: _____

Appendix D: Sample Minutes

E X A M P L E

MINUTES of STATED SESSION MEETING

BEDFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

January 7, 2008

Attendance Roll

P	E	Session Members	P	E	Pastors
P		Ashley, Geoff (2009)	P		Van Gombos, Nicholas
P		Cowen, Sharon (2008)		E	Hagy, Karen
P		Deleault, Jill (2009)			Clerk
P		Dickey, Dave (2008)	P		Creel, Cliff
P		Munoz, Gigi (2010)			Deacon
P		Rizzo, Frank (2008)		E	Kim Sampson
P		Sexton, Patti (2009)			Visitors
P		Sferrazza, Marty (2009)			Session Members Elect
P		Stevens, Douglas (2008)	P		Blake, Kathy (2010)
P		Wickwire, Nancy (2009)	P		Boshears, Gary (2010)
	E	Woodhull, Todd (2008)		E	Chagnon, Cindy (2010)
			P		Conery, Frank (2008)
			P		Myers, Eric (2010)
			P		Wasielewski, Laura (2008)
			P		Wittenberg, Eric (2010)
				E	Myers, Samantha (Youth Elder)

P=Present, E=Excused, blank=Absent

A quorum being present, the Session was convened by the Moderator, Rev. Van Gombos, at the Bedford Presbyterian Church at 7:05 PM with devotions and prayer.

The docket is approved by consensus.

Voted that the visitors be granted voice without vote.

Clerk's Report

Voted that the minutes of the Stated Session meeting of 12/3/2007 are approved.

The following changes to the roll are reported.

Voted to transfer John Smith to the First Methodist Church, Tulsa, OK.

After training and affirmative answers to the membership questions, voted to receive Jane Smith into membership.

Voted to move John Doe to the inactive roll after unsuccessful attempts to contact him.

Roll count as of 12/31/2007	556
Transfer John Smith	-1
Receive Jane Smith	1
John Doe to inactive roll	-1
Roll Count as of 1/7/2008	555

Voted the following omnibus motion:

- 1. Session authorizes but does not require celebration of the Lord's Supper by either or both pastors on the first Sunday of each month, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter and Christmas Eve. The Lord's Supper must be celebrated at least quarterly.*
- ~~2. All committees and the Deacons shall distribute all minutes of their meetings to Session promptly following each meeting to satisfy the requirement of Session oversight of these groups.~~*
- 3. Newly elected, ordained and/or installed elders Eric Myers, Gigi Munoz, Kathy Blake, Cindy Chagnon, Gary Boshears, Eric Wittenberg, Frank Conery, Laura Wasielewski and Samantha Myers are seated on Session and welcomed to this ministry pending their ordination.*
- 4. Session reports its composition as 9 females and 10 males, all Caucasian, which is representative of this congregation.*
- 5. All hiring must be done in accordance with equal opportunity, affirmative action and fair labor practices.*
- 6. The Clerk of Session is authorized to complete and submit the annual statistical report to the denomination on behalf of Session.*
- 7. The Clerk of Session is the legal agent of the Session and is authorized to sign legal and binding documents on behalf of Session. If the Clerk of Session is not available, then the chair of Finance may substitute.*
- 8. Elder Cindy Chagnon is elected as Session representative to the Nominating Committee and chair of the Nominating Committee.*
- 9. Excused absences are approved as determined by the Clerk of Session.*
- 10. Session authorizes the pastors to perform funerals as needed.*
- 11. Cliff Creel is elected Clerk of Session for 2008.*
- 12. Lauren Tennett is elected Treasurer for 2008.*
- 13. Susan Reese is elected Pledge Administrator for 2008.*

14. Session authorizes the staff to approve use of property by outside groups.

15. Voted to elect as commissioners to presbytery for 2008: Sharon Cowen, Dave Dickey, Frank Conery

Item 2 was removed from the omnibus:

Session and Deacons are reminded of the requirement to distribute minutes. It's essential for Session to exercise its oversight responsibility.

Voted that all committees and the Deacons shall distribute all minutes of their meetings to Session promptly following each meeting to satisfy the requirement of Session oversight of these groups.

Miscellaneous

The Lord's Supper was celebrated on January 5, 2008 with Pastor Van Gombos presiding.

Deacons' Report

Adopt a family was very successful. The store where we purchase food for the Thanksgiving baskets at a discount is no longer in business. So, we need to find a new place to purchase the food.

The Deacons had a good year financially.

Pastor Reports

Senior Pastor

Annual reports needed from Buildings and Grounds, Stewardship, Finance and Parish Life. Time and talent sheets have been collated by Ann Mitchell and are distributed to committee chairs.

Voted to approve the wedding, of Amy Nordstrum on February 9, 2008.

Associate Pastor

Voted to approve the wedding of Amy Robator and Keith Richard on July 9, 2008.

All Session members are asked to mark their calendars for the confirmation dinner on April 10, 2008 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Karen will be away February 9th through 12th on Presbytery business. She will be away March 1st through 4th with a clergy group at Austin Seminary sponsored by Lilly Foundation. She preached at the memorial services for Margaret Park and Priscilla Hayes. She is working on the confirmation class and new member's class

Committee Reports

Personnel

By consensus, it was decided to acknowledge Michelle's 20th anniversary with a special reception after church on February 3.

Youth Ministry

Voted to hold the annual super-bowl offering with funds to go to New Horizons.

Adult Ministry

By consensus, the annual worship service by the Women's Fellowship and Ministry Circle (WFMC) is approved for April 24, with the theme of recognizing women.

Buildings & Grounds

It is reported that the sanctuary ceiling will be assessed by "Design Day Mechanicals Inc." They will develop plans for addressing the ventilation of the church sanctuary for \$1500. It is reported that the sanctuary ceiling will be repaired with the scraping of loose paint and spot priming bare plaster, followed by a light touch up coat of flat latex finish to match existing ceiling paint.

Children's Ministry

A child care person was contracted on a part time basis to provide child care Sundays from 8:30 to 11:45 AM.

Finance

Voted to approve new terms of call for the pastors as shown below.

	Rev. Van Gombos	Rev. Hagy
Salary	26,350	13,000
Deferred Compensation (403B)	525	5,943
Housing Allowance	36,000	24,000
Utilites	6,000	3,700
Medical Deductible	1,396	960
Dental Insurance	0	1,338
Life Insurance	900	0
Total Effective Salary	71,171	48,941
Board of Pensions Dues	7,829	5,383
Disability	712	489
Medical Insurance	13,522	9,299
Social Security Contribution (SECA)	5,445	0
Total Benefits	27,508	15,171
Continuing Education	1,959	2,058.04
Books	552.20	200
General Expenses	3,900	3,000
Total Reimbursable Expenses	6,411.20	5,258.04
Total Remuneration	105,090.20	69,370.04

Mission

Confirmed an email vote that Session approves a "Benefit Concert for Hurricane Relief" to be held February 12, 2008 in the Sanctuary at 7 PM. There will be a free will offering with all proceeds going to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for use in Hurricane relief.

Stewardship

We need to increase pledges to cover the \$65,000 shortfall in the budget. Those who have not

pledged yet but did in 2007 will be contacted. This could provide an additional \$30,000. Another letter will be sent to everyone asking them to consider increasing their pledges.

Youth Ministry

Voted to approve an offering for Souper Bowl Sunday on February 6, 2008.

Adjournment

Marty Sferrazza will do the February devotions.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 9:33 PM.

The next regular meeting is on February 4, 2008 at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted and attested,

Cliff Creel, Clerk of Session