

MINUTES AND REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Notes: ~~Strike throughs~~ are generally not relevant to session meetings. *Italics* are PCUSA-specific substitutions.

MINUTES:

The official record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly *such as a session of a PCUSA congregation* is usually called the minutes, ~~or sometimes—particularly in legislative bodies—the journal~~. In an ordinary society, the minutes should contain mainly a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members. The minutes should never reflect the *clerk's* opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done. The minutes should be kept in a substantial book or binder.

CONTENT OF THE MINUTES: The first paragraph of the minutes should contain the following information (which need not, however, be divided into numbered or separated items directly corresponding to those below):

1. The kind of meeting: regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special;
2. The name of the society or assembly;
3. The date and time of the meeting, and the place, if it is not always the same;
4. The fact that the regular *moderator* and *clerk* were present or, in their absence, the names of the persons who substituted for them; *and the opening of the meeting with prayer*; and
5. [page 469] whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved – as read, or as corrected – and the date of that meeting ~~if it was other than a regular business meeting~~. Any correction approved by the assembly is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes were approved “as corrected,” without specifying what the correction was (see form, p.472, ll. 8-9).

The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter, and should show:

6. All main motions (10) or motions to bring a main question again before the assembly (pp. 74-79; 34-37) that were make or taken up – except, normally, any that were withdrawn* - stating:
 - a. The wording in which each motion was adopted or otherwise disposed of (with the facts as to whether the motion may have been debated or amended before disposition being mentioned only parenthetically); and
 - b. The disposition of the motion, including – if it was temporarily disposed of (pp. 90-91), 340-41) – any primary and secondary amendments and all adhering secondary motions that were then pending;
7. [page 470] ~~secondary motions that were not lost or withdrawn, in cases where it is necessary to record them for completeness or clarity – for example, motions to Recess or to Fix the Time to Which to~~

~~Adjourn (among the privileged motions), or motions to Suspend the Rules or grant a Request to Be Excused from a Duty (among the incidental motions), generally only alluding to the adoption of such motions, however, as “...the matter having been advanced in the agenda on motion of ...” or “...a ballot vote having been ordered, the tellers...”.~~

8. The complete substance of oral committee reports that are permitted to be given in small assemblies in particular cases as provided on pages 525-27;
9. All notices of motions (pp. 121-24); and
10. All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, together with the reasons given by the chair for his or her ruling.

The last paragraph should state:

11. The hour of adjournment and *the closing of the meeting with prayer.*

Additional rules and practices relating to the content of the minutes are the following:

- ~~The name of the maker of a main motion should be entered in the minutes, but the name of the seconder should not be entered unless ordered by the assembly. (*Most session minutes do not use names.*) When a count has been ordered or the vote is by ballot, the number of votes on each side should be entered; and when the voting is by roll call, the names of those voting on each side and those answering “Present” should be entered. If members fail to respond on a roll call vote, enough of their names should be recorded as present to [page 471] reflect that a quorum was present at the time of the vote. If the chair voted, no special mention of this fact is made in the minutes.~~
- ~~The proceedings of a committee of the whole, or a quasi-committee of the whole, should not be entered in the minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into committee of the whole (or quasi-committee of the whole) and the committee report should be recorded (see 52). [*Most session business is conducted as if in committee of the whole*].~~
- ~~When a question is considered informally, the same information should be recorded as under the regular rules, since the only informality in the proceedings is in the debate.~~
- When a committee report is of great importance or should be recorded to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it “to be entered in the minutes,” in which case the secretary copies it in full in the minutes.
- The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given, but no effort should be made to summarize his remarks.

- ~~The declaration by the chair in “naming” and offending member as a part of disciplinary procedures— as well as any disorderly words that led to such naming and that the chair directed the secretary to take down—is entered in the minutes (See pp.646-47).~~

The use by the secretary of a recording device can be of great benefit in preparing the minutes, but a transcription from it should never be used as the minutes themselves.

THE SIGNATURE: Minutes should be signed by the *clerk of session* and can also be signed, if the *session* or *presbytery* wishes, by the *moderator*. The words “Respectfully submitted” – although occasionally used – represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes.

READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: When the next regular ~~business-session meeting~~ will be held within a quarterly time interval (see pp. 89-90), when the session does not last longer than one day, and when there will be no change or replacement of a portion of the membership before the next session, procedures relative to the reading and approval of minutes are as follows:

- The minutes of the meeting are normally read and approved at the beginning of the next regular meeting, immediately after the call to order and any opening ceremonies. An adjourned meeting of an ordinary society approves the minutes of the meeting that established the adjourned meeting; its own minutes are approved at the next adjourned or regular meeting, whichever occurs first. A special meeting does not approve minutes; [page 474] its minutes should be approved at the next regular meeting.
- Corrections, if any, and approval of the minutes are normally done by unanimous consent. The *moderator* calls for the reading of the minutes, asks for any corrections, then declares the minutes approved, as shown on pages 354-55.
- If the assembly does not wish to carry out the reading and approval of the minutes at the regular time, it may, by majority vote without debate, “dispense with the reading of the minutes.” The minutes can then be taken up by majority vote without debate at any later time during the meeting while no business is pending. If the minutes are not thus taken up before adjournment, they are read and approved at the following meeting, before the later minutes are taken up. A motion to “dispense with the reading of the minutes” is not a request to omit their reading altogether.
- A draft of the minutes of the preceding meeting can be sent to all members in advance, usually with the notice. In such a case, it is presumed that the members have used this opportunity to review the, and they are not read unless this is requested by any member. Correction of them and approval, however, is handled in the usual way. It must be understood in such a case that the formal copy placed in the minute book contains all corrections that were made and that none of the many copies circulated to members and marked by them is authoritative (see also p. 355).

~~When the next regular business session will not be held within a quarterly time interval (see pp. 89-90), and the session does not last longer than one day, or in an organization in which there will be a change or replacement of a portion of the membership, the executive board or a committee appointed for the [page 475] purpose should be authorized to approve the minutes. The fact that the minutes are not then read for~~

~~approval at the next meeting does not prevent a member from having a relevant excerpt read for information; nor does it prevent the assembly in such a case from making additional corrections, treating the minutes as having been previously approved (see third paragraph below).~~

~~In session lasting longer than one day, such as conventions, the minutes of meetings held the preceding day are read and are approved by the convention at the beginning of each day's business after the first (and minutes that have not been approved previously should be read before the final adjournment)—except as the convention may authorize the executive board or a committee to approve the minutes at a later time.~~

When the minutes are approved, the word Approved, with the *clerk of session's* initials and the date, should be written below them.

If the existence of an error material omission in the minutes becomes reasonably established after approval – even many years later – the minutes can then be corrected by means of the motion to Amend Something Previously Adopted (35), which requires a two-thirds vote, or a majority vote with notice, ~~or the vote of a majority of the entire membership~~, or unanimous consent.

In small boards, and in committees, most parliamentary rules apply, but certain modifications permitting greater flexibility and informality are commonly allowed. Whenever reference is made in this book to “small boards,” the size implied will depend somewhat on conditions, but such boards are usually to be understood as [page 10] consisting of not more than about a dozen persons.

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EXAMPLE:

[page 472] **FORM OF THE MINUTES:** The principles stated above are illustrated in the following model form for minutes:

The regular monthly meeting of the *First Presbyterian Church of Happiness Session* was held on Thursday, January 4, 20__, at 8:30 P.M., in the church library, the moderator, Rev. Merry Days, being in the chair and the clerk of session, Terry Long, being present. Grace Notes opened the meeting with prayer after a short devotion. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved as corrected.

The Treasurer reported the receipt of a bill from the Downs Construction Company in the amount of \$5,000 for the improvements recently made in the *church fellowship hall*. The question put by the moderator "that the bill be paid" was adopted.

Mr. Johnson, reporting on behalf of the Membership Committee, moved "that John R. Brown and Sally Forth Brown be admitted to membership in the *congregation*." The motion was adopted after debate [*What's not right here??*]

The report of the *Mission Program Committee* was received and placed on file.

The special committee that was appointed to investigate and report on suitable parking facilities near the *congregation's* building reported, through its chairman, Cora Smith, a resolution, which, after debate and amendment, was adopted as follows: "Resolved, that[its exact words immediately before acted upon, incorporating all amendments]."

The resolution relating to the use of the *church's kitchen* by nonmembers, which was postponed from the last meeting, was then taken up. This motion and a pending amendment were laid on the table after the chair announced that the guest speaker had received a phone message which would require his early departure.

The President introduced the guest speaker, Mr. James F. Mitchell, whose subject was _____.

[page 473] At the conclusion of Mr. Mitchell's talk, the resolution relating to the use of the *church's kitchen* by nonmembers was taken from the table. After amendment and further debate, the resolution was adopted as follows: "Resolved, that.....[its exact wording immediately before being voted on]."

Sylvia Gordon moved "that the *session sponsor* the establishment of a summer camp for boys on its lakefront property." *Harold* Thomas moved to amend this motion by inserting the word "underprivileged" before "boys." On motion of *John* Dorsey, the motion to establish the camp, with the pending amendment, was referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair with instructions to report at the next meeting. The chair appointed *Elders* Flynn, Dorsey, and Fine to the committee.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by the moderator at 10:05 P.M.

Margaret Duffy, Secretary