



# Clerk of Session

*Using "Serving as Clerk of Session" by the Presbyterian Leader 2012 as guideline with additional information.*

One of the two officers who govern the Session:

Moderator

Clerk of Session



# Tenure

- The clerk “shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine” (G-3.0104).
- The tenure can be a year or more, but has a beginning and ending.
- The clerk can be elected from the active serving session members – has voice and vote
- The clerk can be selected from ruling elders currently not serving on session – has no vote and needs to ask for voice to clarify or offer parliamentary assistance.



# Duties of the Clerk

- Basic Duties of the clerk of session can be found in the Book of Order (G-3.0104).
- Record the minutes of the session
- Keep rolls of membership
- Preserve the records of the session
- Furnish extracts to other governing bodies when required (i.e. Annual Reports)
- Act as secretary to the congregation
- Act as secretary to the corporation
- This short list needs some more explanation in order to know what the job entails.



# Record Session Transactions

- Technically all that is required in the minutes of the session are any motions before the session, the votes taken, and whether the motions passed or not.
- But, the BoO requires “full and accurate record of the proceedings.”
- For the sake of the session in the future, you will want to add a bit more information, enough that the session will understand what was actually going on and why certain decisions were made.
- BUT, you DO NOT ADD comments of your own or gossip!
- *Samples – How to Write your minutes/Minutes & Reports of Officers*



# Session Transactions cont.

- Minutes should include:
  - Type of Meeting (Stated/Called - Session/Congregational)
  - Name of the body
  - Date and place
  - Time convened and adjourned
  - Presider's (Moderator) name
  - Names of those present – elders and guests
  - Attesting that a quorum is present (or not).
  - Opened and closed with prayer (mandated by Book of Order G-3.0105)
  - All main motions, except those withdrawn
  - Significant portions of committee reports
  - Approval of minutes of previous meeting
  - Attested with clerk's signature



# More about Minutes

- Beginning of the year advisable to:
  - Approve dates for celebrating the Lord's Supper
  - Elect Clerk of Session (and any pro tem)
  - Elect Treasurer
  - Approve all special offerings and dates for new year
  - Elect commissioners to the presbytery
  - Approve counters for the year
  - Approve serving the Lord's Supper to shut-ins and authorizing officers to assist or do that



# More about Minutes cont.

- Required recording of these events:
  - Congregational approval of Pastor's Terms of Call
  - Annual review of and statement that Pastor(s) compensation meets the minimum requirements of the presbytery & full terms of call for minutes
  - Review of adequacy of compensation of all staff
  - Report results of presbytery review of minutes
  - Session reply to Presbytery on exceptions
  - Approval of the statistical report for submission to presbytery



# More Items to include in the Minutes

- Although Session/Deacon annual meeting is no longer required, it is recommended to assist with communication and comradery
- Financial Review or audit scheduled & accomplished each year
- Review rolls annually for letter recommendations and purging
- Approve annual budget
- Annual review of Deacon's minutes
- Schedule next year's Congregational Meeting





# More Items to include in the Minutes

- Names of elected Elders, Deacons, Nominating Committee members; approval and schedule of ordination/installation services
- Period of Study/examination of new Elders and Deacons completed
- Approval of items to be recorded in the Register Book:
  - Adult and infant Baptisms
  - New Members – with record that examination occurred
  - Marriages approved and then when they are accomplished
  - Record that the church has property and liability insurance coverage
  - Deaths that have occurred among the members



# Keep the Rolls of Membership/Attendance

- Letters requesting transfers of membership will come to the session for action through you (outgoing). *Examples – Transfer letter*
- Letters requesting transfers of membership will be initiated by the clerk for action by the session (incoming). *Examples – Transfer letter*
- New members join and are listed on the rolls, indicating how they joined (transfer, reaffirmation or profession of faith). *Register Basics*  
Assign a consecutive roll # and record numerically and alphabetically.
- Affiliate Members – Temporarily moved from church of membership. May not vote or be elected to office in your church (i.e. at college).
- Baptized Members



# Keep the Membership Rolls, cont.

- Remove members upon: death, at their request, when they have moved, transferred to another church, after 2 years of not attending or participating in any way. *Forms – inactivity letters*
- **If it is not in the minutes of the session, it did not happen!**
- Actions need to be taken at session first, recorded in the minutes, and THEN recorded in the rolls. (Not the other way around.)



# The Register

- **Record – *Register Forms***
  - Membership
  - Baptisms
  - Deaths – record the roll # by the name (John Joe #123)
  - Marriages – no longer required by BoO, but required by presbytery
  - Ordination and Installation of
    - Elders
    - Deacons
    - Pastors



# Clerk shall preserve the records carefully.

- Make sure minutes are approved, signed, and placed in official minute book.
- A secure location is needed to store the Minute Book and the Register Record. This should be somewhere at the church location, not your home.
- Records that you no longer need to keep handy can be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society for storage in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment.



Furnish extracts from the records when required by another council.

- This rarely occurs, but you may be asked to provide extracts as evidence to a higher council.
- The higher council would probably be the Presbytery. But, it could be the Synod of General Assembly.
- One example is the Statistical Report for GA



# Secretary to the Congregation

- Clerk shall be secretary of meetings of the congregation – take minutes, serve as Parliamentarian, know quorum requirements, be familiar with Bylaws and Manual of Operations for your church.
- Only active members can vote and members must be present – tricky with Covid-19
- Annual meeting required for:
  - Receiving reports from Session
  - Review Pastor's call
  - Voting on Elders and Deacons for the upcoming year
  - Dismissing Nominating Committee and Voting on new Nominating Committee
  - Voting on capital expenditures and mortgage issues
  - Fulfill any legal requirement as a corporation



# Secretary to the Congregation, cont.

- Approval of Congregational Minutes –
  - can be done before adjournment of the meeting if using a computer and reading the completed minutes to the body.
  - Minutes can be approved by the session and that action reported to the congregation at the next congregational meeting. Minutes should be available to the congregation at that time.
  - The clerk and the moderator both sign and attest to the minutes of the congregational meeting.
  - Minutes are entered into the session minute book.





# What Else?

- Meeting dockets – When moderator and clerk communicate about the docket before the session meeting, things run more smoothly and the clerk can be more helpful. *Session Meeting Time Line*
- Correspondence – Writing Occasional letters (transfer requests, thank you's, etc.). All kinds of correspondence is received by the clerk for session attention.
- Organize and submit the information each January for the General Assembly Statistical Report required in GA by mid February each year.



## What Else? Cont.

- Complete the Annual Clerk's Questionnaire
- Report the Pastors' Compensation to the Presbytery each year.
- The Financial Report is "received," not "approved." You might not like it, but you have received it.
- Motions from a committee do not require a second.



# What Else? Cont.

- Annual Review of Records:
  - Once each year, the minutes are to be submitted to presbytery for their review. This means bringing all the books (Minutes, Rolls and Registers) to a gathering of XX Clerks on XX-XX at XX the Presbytery Office or a designated church site. *Requirement page*
  - Fill out the Review of Session Records Form for the year before attending the meeting and bring 2 copies with you. *Review Form*
  - Because of Covid-19, the Review of Minutes may be designed differently this year.



# Survival Hints

- Set up a list of agenda items to be done annually and where in the year they will be addressed. *Sample – Schedule of Things to be done*
- Always review the minutes of the previous meeting before determining the docket for the next meeting.
- Get the checklist for the annual review of the minutes and membership records used by your presbytery and use it as a guideline of requirements. *Sample – Requirement page/Record Review Form*
- Sit next to the moderator at the meeting, if possible.
- Try not to allow business to drag you down. Maintain a sense of humor.



# Survival Hints cont.

- Parliamentarian – The moderator will be acquainted with the BoO, but he/she may look to you for assistance. Become acquainted with the *Book of Order* (particularly the Form of Government section) and with *Robert's Rules of Order* so you can research quickly.

## *Parliamentary Procedure*

- Additional responsibilities will show up when the congregation is without a pastor. Work with the presbytery's Commission on Ministry if that happens.



# Other Resources and Tools

- *Retention Schedule*
- *Essentials of Being Presbyterian and Clerk*
- *Procedures in Small Boards*
- *Updated Resource List*
- *Requirement page for Presbytery Review – (list format)*
- *Review of Records form for Presbytery Review – (review format)*



# Empowerment

- You are empowered to:
  - Educate Session members about the presbytery and General Assembly requirements
  - Work with committees to assure requirements are met annually
  - Enjoy your gift of administration!