

# HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS OF SESSION



## INTRODUCTION

In what we now call the “new Form of Government” – contained in the 2011/2013 edition of the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in G-3.0104, there are just a few lines of text devoted to the role and responsibilities of a Clerk of Session in a Presbyterian Church.

### *G-3.0104 Officers*

*... Each council shall elect a clerk who shall record the transactions of the council, keep its rolls of membership and attendance, maintain any required registers, preserve its records, and furnish extracts from them when required by another council of the church. Such extracts, verified by the clerk, shall be evidence in any council of the church. The clerk of the session shall be a ruling elder elected by the session for such term as it may determine.*

We know there is far more to the clerk's work than those brief sentences suggest. And whether you're experienced or new to the assignment, you know that too.

The Office of Stated Clerk of New Castle Presbytery (*held by the Connectional Presbyter*) offers you this *Handbook for Clerks of Session* with appreciation for your calling and prayers for your work of ministry as a clerk or someone who supports the clerk.

In this resource we suggest some theological background to Presbyterian polity, mention some resources to consider placing next to your Bible, walk you through the definitions and details of the moderator and clerk, touch on relationships with other councils (formerly called “governing bodies) and organizations in our Presbyterian connectional system, and delve into details of minutes and other session records for which you are responsible.

In a separate section we offer explanations that may assist you in your ongoing work on Session and Congregational Meeting Minutes as well as the annual review of these church records by the presbytery – a review which is called for in the *Book of Order* and conducted by the Office of Stated Clerk of New Castle Presbytery.

This *Handbook* was originally compiled by Ruling Elder Mary White, a former Clerk of Session of Pewee Valley Presbyterian Church and has been previously updated by Teaching Elder Ken Hockenberry and Ruling Elder Reid Beveridge.

## PRESBYTERIANS: WHO WE ARE

Although Scripture does not clearly set down any form of church order as such, the Bible does reveal the nature of God, our relationship to God, and our relationship to the fellowship of believers. It does give us the experience of the early church and the beginnings of some form of organization.

Out of the Protestant Reformation came a specific form of Protestant church government: Presbyterian, that is, *government (or rule) by elders*. In fact, *presbyter* is the Greek term for elder. Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders are considered to be chosen and ordained to serve in their respective positions of leadership. You are called by God and by your congregation to this position of service and leadership.

As “presbyters” (ruling elders and teaching elders), you are called *not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ*. (F-3.0204). So the Session is called to collectively to seek and find and represent the will of Christ. As a ruling elder you are to be a leader and a listener to the congregation. You are responsible, not to the congregation, but to Jesus Christ for the decisions you make.

## PARLIAMENTARY LAW

Parliamentary law is not really law as such, but a body of conventions or customs used in decision making. It encompasses common sense and courtesy, is a model for effective conflict resolution, and - when used correctly - will provide accuracy, efficiency, impartiality, objectivity, and uniformity. It helps us transact our business decently and in order.

Especially in the church, it is always out of order to use parliamentary procedure as an instrument to subvert the will of the Holy Spirit as our guide as we seek the truth.

## SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

As Presbyterians, we covenant to work with one another as visible expressions of the Body of Christ and as representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

As Presbyterians we also hold to several historic principles of church order, and the first two of these are held in tension: the right of “private judgment” and “corporate judgment.”

### *F-3.0101 God Is Lord of the Conscience*

- a. That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men<sup>2</sup> which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”<sup>3</sup>*

b. Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others.

### F-3.0102 Corporate Judgment

That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

Therefore a measure of “mutual forbearance” is in order. We are to seek unity, yet encourage diversity, and understand that through discussion and prayer we can more clearly discern God’s will and direction. So we are challenged to strive for a balance of expression of individual conscience and the will of the majority. As individuals, we have several rights, among them: the right to know what is going on and why; the right to speak and to be heard under the rules of debate; the right to vote; and the right to hold office.

Serious conflict does arise from premature resolution of an issue without regard to members’ rights. Care must be taken within our polity and parliamentary practice to assure that rights of the minority as well as the majority are protected.

Our call is to seek the truth, not win a battle. In parliamentary procedure, there is no “battle” as such, but there will be open debate.

Even though there is no battle, our polity carries the right of the minority further, with the right to dissent and protest.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

The *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* is divided into two parts: the *Book of Confessions* (Part I; see below) and the *Book of Order* (Part II).

The *Book of Confessions (Part 1)* contains our historic Christian confessions that are basic to the theology of the church. Individuals called to ordered ministry as Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons are asked to affirm that they will be instructed by

these confessions; therefore it is essential that this book be available for individual and group study as well as to be used at times of ordination and installation of officers. While not required to agree with everything in these confessions, those called to ordered ministry are required to "sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and [to] be instructed and led by those confessions as [they] lead the people of God." (W-4.4003) Through the *Book of Confessions*, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declares to its members and to the world who, what, and why of our beliefs.

**The *Book of Order (Part 2)* contains summary theological materials as well as polity of our church (system of government). It is essential for the clerk of session to study the *Book of Order* because it contains the fundamentals for working within the church.**

The four sections of the *Book of Order* that specifically govern the life of the congregation are the *Foundations of Presbyterian Polity*, the *Form of Government*, the *Directory for Worship*, and the *Rules of Discipline*.

The *Foundations of Presbyterian Polity* gives a theological and biblical of what we believe as Presbyterians, upon which we build our system of government for the church. It is focused around mission.

The *Form of Government* may be seen as the particular applications of our foundations. It explains the polity of orderly workings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with the use of "advisory handbooks." We turn to the *Form of Government* to find answers to our frequent questions, and it is one of the standards under which the church makes decisions.

The *Directory for Worship* "reflects the conviction that the life of the Church is one, and that its worship, witness, and service are inseparable," as its Preface declares.

The *Rules of Discipline* contain information regarding the nature and discipline of the church. In it you will find judicial process, administrative review, jurisdiction and process of permanent judicial commissions, procedural safeguards, and much more. The Preamble to the *Rules of Discipline* reminds us that church discipline is for the building up of Christ's church, not for tearing it down, and for restoration to wholeness of the offender. Church discipline is never taken lightly.

*New Castle Presbytery website:* [www.ncpresbytery.org](http://www.ncpresbytery.org)

*Companion to the Constitution: Polity for the Local Church (Revised)*, by Frank A. Beattie (Geneva Press, 1999), although out of date (written before the NFOG process) this is an effective, simply written book that is a how, what, and why to-do book.

*Presbyterian Planning Calendar.* This program calendar for the whole church contains useful information, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of the national staff, maps and other useful information.

*Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers*, 4th Edition, by Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker (Geneva Press, 2012), is considered exceptional reading. This is the *Book of Order* in simple terms.

*Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* by Marianne L. Wolfe is a booklet that fits into the *Book of Order* and is a valuable rapid reference.

The most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* is mandated for use by the *Book of Order* for all "councils of the church." Parliamentary law is common sense and politeness put into practice in meetings. It is a body of conventions and customs that aids decision making, a model for conflict resolution, and it seeks the protection of individual rights in the church. [*Robert's Rules of Order: Newly Revised*, Licensed by the Robert heirs, previously published by Scott Foresman, now Da Capo Press, a division of Perseus Press, 2011].

A very good new resource for rules of order is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief*. It is an authorized concise guide, and contains most of the rules of parliamentary procedures that would be used in a Session or Congregational meeting: also Da Capo Press, 2004, and updated for 2011.

The PCUSA website – <http://www.pcusa.org/>

The Thoughtful Christian - <https://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/>

### ***New Castle Presbytery Directory***

- Available upon request from the New Castle Presbytery office – and Donna Scully – [dscully@ncpresbytery.org](mailto:dscully@ncpresbytery.org) or Phone: 302.366-0595 and online (*password protected, available from the Presbytery office*).
- Includes:
  - Staff, Churches, Ministers, and Commissioners - including addresses and telephone numbers, rosters of extra-parish clergy, Christian educators, and others.
  - Committee Members - officers and structure, including Presbytery Council, committees, and other related names, addresses, and telephone numbers.

## AUTHORITY OF THE SESSION

### *G-3.02 THE SESSION*

#### *G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities*

*The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active serviced as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors. All members of the session are entitled to vote. The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator. . . .*

*The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. . .*

Specific responsibilities are listed in Chapter 3 of the Form of Government, using three summary responsibilities (the same for all councils of the church):

*In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:*

- a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*
- b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
- c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*

Although most churches hold session meetings at least monthly, “the session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly.” (G-3.0203)

Open or closed meetings: Frequently the question is asked, “Are session meetings opened or closed to the congregation?” The answer is “open” – unless there is a vote to meet in “executive session” according to Roberts Rules. Visitors may be granted “the privilege of the floor,” that is, voice at a meeting, but not a vote.

#### ***By-laws***

If your congregation does not have by-laws, please contact the stated clerk of the presbytery for information about how to establish them.

#### ***Incorporation***

The *Book of Order* (G-4.0101) states, “*Where permitted by civil law, each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained..*” This language is not considered permissive as the word “shall” is used. [“Shall” and “is to be/are to be” signify practice that is mandated: *Preface*]. New Castle Presbytery continues to urge congregations to be incorporated. If your congregation has not done so, please contact the stated clerk of the presbytery for suggestions on how to begin.

### ***Insurance***

The *Book of Order* (G-3.0112 Insurance) states, “Each council shall obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers.” Churches should consider registering with their insurance company the names of people in the congregation who will be driving for church events. This is particularly true for retreats or youth events.

**NEW FOR 2019:** A copy of the certificate of insurance must be presented to the Stated Clerk during the annual session minutes review.

### **MODERATOR OF THE SESSION**

*The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator. The moderator possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body. He or she shall convene and adjourn the body in accordance with its own action. (G-3.0104 Officers)*

### **CLERK OF SESSION**

#### **Annual Responsibilities**

1. Congregation’s annual statistical reports sent from the Stated Clerk.
2. Minute Book and Church Rolls and Registers for the annual review by the Church Administration Committee of the presbytery, using the “review sheet.”
3. Communicate dates and other information on Presbytery meetings to the Session. (Session elects ruling elder commissioners to each presbytery meeting).

#### **Monthly Responsibilities**

Many clerks are aided by the church secretary. However, the clerk is accountable for the following responsibilities and directs the church secretary in the following tasks:

- Before the session meeting, send meeting notices – mail or email.
- Contact committee chairpersons about unfinished and referred business.
- Ask for copies of recommendations in writing and by email.
- Develop the docket or agenda for the meeting with the moderator.
- Ensure that minutes of all meetings are reviewed and approved.

- Record the minutes of each meeting – using a docket / agenda “template” – which is the docket of the meeting with lots of white open space after each item, for you to take notes and minutes.
- Written reports facilitate the flow of business. Historical and informational material always comes first in the report and recommendations come last.
- A quorum of session must be present to have a meeting at which actions are taken. The session “shall provide by rule” the number present for a quorum.
- Session meetings may be conducted informally. However, as clerk, require that all actions by the session be voted upon. You can require that all motions be in writing.
- After the session meeting, prepare the minutes. Each member of the session should receive a copy.
- Prepare a “Session Highlights” for the church newsletter.
- Complete any correspondence directed by the Session, any membership letters of transfer, and so on.
- Record in the rolls and registers all membership changes ordered by the session.

### **SESSION DOCKET / AGENDA**

The docket or agenda for a session meeting can be the responsibility of either the clerk in consultation with the pastor or the pastor in consultation with the clerk, and perhaps the church secretary. Your input and frequent contact the pastor, the secretary, and with other session members is invaluable. In case of a pastoral vacancy, the moderator named by the presbytery often will rely on the clerk of session to formulate the docket.

Session dockets should be made available to session members prior to meetings so that the elders may be prepared to do the business of the church. Included in this information are the date, time, location, agenda or order of business, financial data, and other pertinent information as needed and available.

The value of a printed docket or agenda is three-fold:

1. It provides for an orderly process in the handling of session business.
2. It informs the members of issues to be discussed.
3. It serves as a reminder of the necessary preparation for a meeting.

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

**Refer to the Sample Docket / Agenda on the next page for more guidance.**

**Your Presbyterian Church  
Stated Session Meeting  
February 20, 2017**

***Docket or Agenda***

1. Call to Order, Declaration of Quorum, and Opening Prayer
2. Approval of the Docket and Minutes of Stated Meeting of January 17, 2012
3. Communications
4. Clerk's Report / Narration
  - (a) Session Class of 20\_\_ ordained and installed at the 11:00 A.M. worship service on January 28 (list names of ruling elders)
  - (b) Lord's Supper celebrated at the 11:00 A.M. worship service on (dates)
  - (c) Membership of Sam Jones transferred to the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, on (date)
  - (d) Ellen Smith died on (date)
  - (e) Tim Brown married Jane Doe on Saturday, on (date) at Your Presbyterian Church, Rev. (name) officiating
  - (e) Mark White and Karen (Harris) White accepted by transfer of membership from the First Methodist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, on (date) along with their baptized children, (name) born July 1, 1995, in Louisville, Kentucky; and (name) born August 12, 1999, in Louisville, Kentucky
6. Session Committee Reports
7. Old and New Business:
  - (a) Report from Commissioners to Meeting of New Castle Presbytery on (date)
  - (b) Audit Committee Report
8. Spiritual and Pastoral Concerns
9. Motion for Adjournment and Closing Prayer

## THE SESSION'S RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

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

### *G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities*

*. . . In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:*

- a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*
- b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
- c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*

*(Including) directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation;. . .*

### Board of Trustees: G-4.0401

*The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.*

### Board of Deacons or Individual Deacons: G-2.0202

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

### Nominating Committee: G-2.0401 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons

[The church nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session. It does not report to session, although the committee may wish to consult with session, and update the session on the progress on the nomination process. ]

*Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation, and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote. . . .*

### Pastor Nominating Committee: (When there is a Pastoral Vacancy)

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

### *G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy*

*When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral*

*relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.*

*G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee*

*The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation. .*

..

The pastor nominating committee is a committee of the congregation, not the session. The committee has several points of contact with the session and the presbytery:

- the pastor nominating committee develops the church information form (CIF) which includes the position description
- the session and then the presbytery (through the Commission on Ministry), approve the CIF.
- the committee negotiates the salary of the new pastor in consultation with the session/board of trustees.
- the general presbyter does a reference check on the final candidate(s) for the position.
- the committee requests session to call a congregational meeting when it is ready to bring a candidate.

Session and Personnel Committee: G-3.0102 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

*[Councils – like the Session] . . . They have power to establish plans and rules for the worship, mission, government, and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ. They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church that is under their jurisdiction.*

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

Outside organizations:

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

## ACTIONS THAT MUST BE APPROVED BY MORE THAN ONE COUNCIL

Because the connectional system is one of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), there are a number of actions that require approval beyond the session. Among them:

- Application to presbytery to take an “inquirer” under care of presbytery: session, Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and presbytery.
- Loans that use the church or its property as collateral for a mortgage, and all sales of property: session and trustees, trustees of presbytery, and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate). These also require the initial approval of the congregation.
- All leases of church property for a period of more than five years: session, Finance Committee of presbytery, and the presbytery.
- All changes of church location or church name: session, congregation (ecclesiastical and corporate), Finance Committee of presbytery, and presbytery (ecclesiastical and corporate).
- All changes in the annual terms of call for the pastor: session recommendation, congregation approval, the Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.
- Dissolutions of pastoral calls and calls for new pastors: congregation, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.
- Appointment of moderator of session, stated supply, or interim pastor in the case of a vacant pulpit: session, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.
- Call for special session meeting when requested by two members of the session, in writing. (G-3.0203)
- Call for a special congregational meeting: session, or presbytery, or session when requested in writing by one-fourth of the active members of the congregation (G-1.0502)
- Session meeting when pastor is ill or is out-of-town: pastor grants permission and appoints a member of presbytery as moderator pro tem. (G-3.0201)
- All waivers from the *Book of Order* terms of election (G-2.0404): congregation, Committee on Ministry, and presbytery.

## MINUTES, ROLLS, AND REGISTERS

### Session Minutes

Session minutes are to be kept in a book designated solely for that purpose. This book should be a loose-leaf binder of good quality with the best quality acid-free paper available. Pages should be numbered, but you may want to purchase a minute book without numbers. Having a separate numbering device allows you to include other items (approved budget, copy of annual statistical report to the General Assembly, and record of examination of session records) that cannot be copied on pre-numbered sheets. A standard selection of Minute and Register books used by Presbyterian churches is available through Cokesbury bookstores. <http://www.cokesbury.com> Search for “Session Minutes Book”

According to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, the record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly is usually called the Minutes. In ordinary society, unless the minutes are to be published, they should contain mainly a record of what was *done*, not what was *said*, by the members. Using a modified journalistic approach of reporting who, what, where, when, how, and why is suggested for accurate accountability. However you do not need to “name” the person who makes a motion or seconds a motion.

It is recommended that minutes be interesting, with enough information so that our grandchildren will know what happened in this church years before. One of the primary reasons for the emphasis on precise, accurate record-keeping is the role that the minutes play in recounting the history of the congregation, often retrievable in no other way.

The minutes of a meeting should never reflect the clerk’s opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.

The moderator and all active elders should receive and approve the minutes of all session meetings. The *Book of Order* as well as *Robert’s Rules of Order*, specify that ownership of these records resides with the body that constituted them. In other words, the session has ownership and the clerk has responsibility for preserving these records.

Should a situation arise in the congregation where a member other than a session member asks for permission to read session minutes, you are encouraged to make these minutes available to any member who asks. Also be prepared to discuss and explain any questions about actions. In the church, we have no room for mistrust.

It is recommended that a “church office copy” of session and congregational meeting minutes be kept in a notebook for handy reference. [However this is not the set of minutes to be presented to Presbytery for annual review.]

Because session minutes are unique to various churches and clerks of session, the suggested form of **Minutes of Stated Meeting of Session and additional detail on the following pages** are to be used only as a sample or guideline.

**NEW FOR 2019:** A copy of the certificate of insurance must be presented to the Stated Clerk during the annual session minutes review.

**Minutes of Stated Meeting of the Session  
of Your Presbyterian Church  
February 20, 2017**

The Session of Your Presbyterian Church held its Stated Meeting in the library on February 1, 2017, at 7:00 P.M. The meeting was called to order by Moderator (name), who declared a quorum was present and opened the meeting with prayer.

**Attendance:** The following persons were in attendance: Ruling Elders (name), (name), (name), (name), and (name); Visitors (name) and (name). Excused: (name).

**Docket:** It was moved and seconded that the Docket be approved; motion approved.

**Minutes:** It was moved and seconded that the Minutes of the Stated Meeting of January 2, 2012 be approved as written; motion approved.

**Communication:** Rev. (name) read a letter from the New Castle Presbytery that our church please be responsible for providing the refreshments for the World Day of Prayer. Motion was made and seconded that the Hospitality Committee be asked to assume this responsibility; motion approved.

**Clerk's Report / Narration:**

- It was moved and seconded that the membership of Martha Green be transferred to the Ocean City Presbyterian Church; motion approved.
- Motion was made and seconded that James Smith and Jennifer (Young) Smith be accepted by transfer of membership from the Brick United Church of Christ, Cincinnati, Ohio, along with their baptized children, (name) born November 30, 1996, in Cincinnati, and (name), born June 19, 1999, in Louisville, Kentucky. The motion was approved.
- The Clerk also informed the session that William Clark died on January 19, 2017 and funeral services were held at the church with (name) officiating.
- (Name) also officiated at the wedding of John Rowe and Judith Williams held at the church on Saturday, February 3, 2017.
- (name), daughter of (name) and (name), was born February 5, 2017 in Louisville, Kentucky, was baptized during the 11:00 A.M. worship service on January 1, 2012, as previously approved by the Session on December 15, 2011.

The following committee reports were heard:

**Christian Education Committee:**

**Finance Committee:**

**Worship Committee:**

**Property Committee:**

(Actions, if any  
It was moved and seconded that \_\_\_\_\_; the motion was approved. )

**Old and New Business:**

**Report from Commissioners to Meeting of New Castle Presbytery on November 15, 2011:** (Name) and (name) served as commissioners to the meeting of the New Castle Presbytery held at First Presbyterian Church in Louisville. (Name) reported that \_\_\_\_\_ A report was also heard of work being done at Cedar Ridge Camp.

**Financial Review Committee Report:** The chairperson / moderator of the Financial Review Committee reported that the 2017 financial records of the church have been reviewed by the committee. No discrepancies were found, and the following recommendations were made: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Spiritual and Pastoral Concerns:** Prayer concerns were requested for session ruling elder Fred Smith, who is facing surgery next week. Pastor Bob expressed his thanks to the session for their support of his study leave request. All Elders were asked to remember in prayer the work of our Preschool as they face a change of director.

**Motion for Adjournment and Closing Prayer:** There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned; the motion was approved. The meeting was closed at 9:00 PM with prayer led by (name).

Respectfully submitted,

(name)  
Clerk of Session

## Congregational and Corporation Meetings

Here in check-list form is information about the role and responsibilities of the clerk of session related to congregational and corporation meetings.

- A congregational meeting may be called only by the session, by the presbytery, or by session by written request of one-fourth of the members of the congregation on the active roll (G-1.0502)
- Check both the *Book of Order* and the congregation's by-laws for what constitutes “adequate notice” for a congregational meeting. At the very least, public notice should be given to the congregation the Sunday before and the Sunday of the meeting. To elect a pastor nominating committee or to call a pastor, public notice should be given two Sundays before the congregational meeting. (G-1.0502)
- Check your congregation's by-laws for the quorum of the congregational meeting. The new and current *Book of Order* states: *Congregations shall provide by rule the quorum necessary to conduct business. (G-1.0501).*
- What business may be done at a congregational meeting? As clerk, you should take particular care to alert the moderator of the congregational meeting when business is out of order. The business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the publicly announced call for the meeting. No other business may be transacted at this meeting. You will find a careful listing of such business in G-1.0503 of the *Book of Order*.
- One common misunderstanding: The budget is adopted by the session, not the congregation. However, session must inform the congregation of the budget.
- Any motion to “dissolve the terms of the pastor’s call” is out of order unless this notice of this motion was published in the call to the meeting. The Presbytery, initially by the Committee on Ministry, must also approve this action.
- Business to be transacted at meetings of a congregation may be of two kinds: ecclesiastical and corporate. Whenever permitted by civil law, both kinds of business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting. In other words, the annual meeting of the corporation and a regular annual meeting can be held on the same day and at the same time. Be sure this is noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- The terms of the pastor or pastors call must be reviewed annually by the Session, approved annually by the congregation and reported to presbytery for its approval. The committee on ministry will provide this form. The congregation approves the pastor’s salary for recommendation to presbytery (G-2.0805).

- Proxy voting is not permitted in church meetings, ecclesiastical or corporate. We believe the Holy Spirit guides us in our decision making (and therefore with voting), and one must be present in the room to be open to such guidance by the Spirit.
- Always be prepared for a ballot vote if needed to elect ruling elders or deacons, or for other matters. Voting by ballot is no longer required, but it is generally a good idea for election of a pastor.
- Minutes of the Congregation - information is included in G-3.0204 Minutes and Records: *Minutes of the session shall be subject to the provisions of G-3.0107 (Each council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings...property of...safekeeping.). They shall contain the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees.* The session may take action to approve the minutes of the congregation, and report its action at the next congregational meeting. The congregation minutes should be signed by the moderator and the clerk.

In addition to the session minutes, the minutes of the annual meeting of the congregation and all other congregational meetings should be printed in the session minute book, including a copy of all approved reports, which includes the annual statistical report submitted to the Presbytery. One of the duties of the clerk of session is to serve as secretary for all congregational meetings; therefore, all your minutes are to be recorded in one book.

As with the sample of session minutes, the minutes of congregational and corporation meetings are unique to various churches and clerks of session. Again, the **Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting on the following page** are to be used only as a sample or guideline.

**Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting  
Your Presbyterian Church  
January 29, 2012**

The congregation of Your Presbyterian Church was called to meet on Sunday, January 29, 2012, immediately following the 11:00 A.M. worship service. The meeting was called to order by the Pastor and Moderator (name), opened the meeting with prayer.

**Clerk / Secretary:** (name) was present and served as secretary. The clerk advised the moderator that a quorum was present; the moderator agreed. The clerk reminded everyone of the voting eligibility for this meeting.

**[Reading of the Call** (for Special or Called Meeting)..... The call was found to be in order.]

**Approval of the Docket:** The docket was found to be in order and approved by consent.

**Members who, in 2011, joined the Church Triumphant**

The clerk read the names of those members who died in 2011, and the pastor offered a commemoration prayer.

**Minutes of the Congregational Meeting for 2011:** The Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting of February 8, 2011, and the Called Congregational Meeting of September 27, 2011, were distributed; they have been reviewed and accepted by the Session as an accurate reflection of the actions taken at those meetings.

**Review of the “Summary for 2011” and 2011 Annual Report Supplement:** The summary for 2011 and the 2011 Annual Report Supplement (with Minutes, Statistical, and Financial reports) were distributed and discussed by the congregation. Copies of the full Annual Reports were made available in printed and/or electronic means, and upon request. Members asked questions about the statistical and financial reports.

**Review of the Session Approved Church Budget for 2012:** The treasurer reviewed the 2012 Church budget which was approved by the Session on January 17, 2012. Questions were asked; opportunity was offered for any member to make any budget recommendations to the Session for their consideration.

**Approval of the Change in the Pastor’s Call:**

The Session reviewed the Pastor’s Terms of Call and made the following recommendation for changes: From a salary of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (of which \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is designated as Housing Allowance) to a salary of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (of which \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is designated as Housing Allowance). Auto expenses, business expenses, from \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to \$ \_\_\_\_\_; Board of Pension medical insurance and pension dues as required, 4 weeks vacation, 2 weeks study leave (insert other terms especially if there is a “change” in the terms of call). This change in the pastor’s call

represents a 1% increase. The pastor spoke to these terms and left the room; the clerk assumed the chair. Discussion followed; the motion was approved. The pastor was welcomed back to the meeting room with applause.

**Congregational Nominating Committee:** The Nominating committee is comprised of two members from the Session, one from the Deacons, and four from the congregation. The following persons were nominated to serve on the committee (names). A motion was made to elect (names) to the Nominating Committee; the motion was approved.

**Old / New Business**  
(note, if any)

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the meeting, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The meeting closed at 12:30 P.M. with prayer by (name).

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator

Clerk / Secretary

## Church Rolls and Registers

The counterpart of the session minute book is the church roll and register. They contain all vital information on the life of the congregation. It is part of the Church Administration Committee's annual review and subsequent approval by the presbytery.

The *Book of Order* has this citation on session rolls and registers:

*G-3.0204 Minutes and Records*

*. . . Each session shall maintain the following roll and registers:*

*a. Membership Roll*

*There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members in accordance with G-1.0401, G-1.0402 and G-1.0403. The session shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The session may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.*

*b. Registers*

*There shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.*

There is no longer a requirement to maintain an "inactive" roll; however any Session can take an action to maintain such a roll.

Although by some churches' tradition, the pastor or the church secretary may maintain the church rolls and registers, it is ultimately the responsibility of the clerk of session to ascertain that they are kept up to date and are accurate.

The importance of accurate church rolls and registers emerges when church members request information that has civil as well as ecclesiastical value. Civil officials will usually accept information recorded in the church register to fulfill details of birth, marriage, and other family data. Church bodies occasionally make requests for recorded information. If these records are accurate and properly kept, such requests can be easily facilitated.

There are now three church rolls, based on the three categories of church membership contained in G-1.0400. There is also a section on "other participants" and the Session may wish to maintain a roll of such participants as needed.

*G-1.0401 Baptized Member*

*A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.*

*Such baptized members receive the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.*

*G-1.0402 Active Member*

*An active member is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been*

*baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. In*

*addition, active members participate in the governance of the church and may be elected to ordered ministry (see G-2.0102). Active members shall regularly, after prayerful consideration, recommit themselves to the disciplines and responsibilities of membership outlined in G-1.0304. The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become active members of the congregation.*

*G-1.0403 Affiliate Member*

*An affiliate member is a member of another congregation of this denomination or of*

*another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the congregation of membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member.*

*An affiliate member may participate in the life of the congregation in the same manner as an active member except that an affiliate member may not vote in congregational meetings or be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation.*

*G-1.0404 Other Participants*

*Persons who are not members of, or who may have ceased active participation in, the*

*Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are welcome and may participate in the life and worship of*

*this church and receive its pastoral care and instruction. The invitation to the Lord's Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love (W-2.4011).*

*Confessing members of other Christian churches may present children for baptism, in conformity with W-2.3014.*

In maintaining these three (or four) rolls there are several recommendations for consideration:

**Baptized roll:** This is **not** the list of baptisms in a given year. The baptized roll lists all infants, children, and adults baptized in your church or transferred into your church. In the case of infant baptism, the parents' names must be listed. In the case of adult baptism, the name of the person baptized is always entered on the active roll (both chronological and alphabetical sections). Adult baptism is always accompanied by joining the church and joining the church is always accompanied by baptism if the person has not yet been baptized. A name is removed from the baptized roll by profession of faith (at which point the person is entered on the active roll, both chronological and alphabetical sections), or transfer, or death.

**Active roll:** The active roll is divided into two sections, Chronological and Alphabetical.

- **Chronological:** The chronological section has numbers down the left side of a double page. Each member of the church is assigned a sequential number at the time that person joins the church. Columns to the right offer space for necessary comments from time to time. A name is removed from this roll by action of the session or because of death. A name can be removed by transfer to another church, transfer to the inactive roll, death, or termination or removal from membership.
- **Alphabetical:** The alphabetical section groups church members according to the first letter of their last names. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll by membership number.
- **Affiliate roll (G-5.0204):** The affiliate roll enables a member who is away from his or her home church to temporarily join another church while remaining on the active roll of the home church.

Note: Please do not remove by crossing out or erasing or “whiting out” any names from any roll or register; use the note or remark section to note any changes. Remember these are historical documents

## **CERTIFICATES USED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

Certificates are used to denote baptism, church membership, ordination of ruling elders and deacons, transfer of membership, and marriage. One task of the clerk of session is to see that all certificates are properly completed. Correct spelling, dating, and other details are important to the person receiving them. The information on the certificates should agree with the records in the session minute book and the church register. Certificate blanks are available on the PCUSA website: [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

## PRESERVING YOUR RECORDS

The clerk, in keeping records, is creating the history of your church for posterity. The Department of History of the General Assembly [425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147; (215) 627-1852] and is the nationally recognized archive for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is important that you protect your minutes and register book from loss, theft, and fire or water damage. Current records that have not been microfilmed should be stored in the church in a waterproof safe. All councils are encouraged to microfilm their official records. The Department of History will microfilm your records; contact them for details.

## REPORTS TO PRESBYTERY

The clerk is responsible for a timely filing of several reports to presbytery.

### Session Annual Statistical Report

The Session Annual Statistical Report is session's report to the General Assembly and is the specific responsibility of the session and the clerk of session. It is sent by the stated clerk of presbytery to the church; **the due date is always the same - February 1**, in the new year, for the last calendar year (the 2011 report is due February 1, 2012). The report is completed by the clerk (with help from other church staff). Some of the report is completed online using a computer and the Internet; other sections are mailed to the Presbytery Office. It is important for the clerk to locate this report, which is usually mailed out from the Presbytery Office in late December or early January. The stated clerk's office should be notified if it has not been received by early January.

Tips on completing the report:

- Complete the membership part of the form immediately after your last session meeting of the year.
- Early in January, work with the treasurer on the definition of expenditures that you will find in the online workbook.
- During January, work on the programmatic questions of the report, referring each question to the proper person for an answer.
- If it is not possible to meet the deadline, please call or email the stated clerk and discuss when you hope to finish the report.
- The clerk of session relates directly to the stated clerk of presbytery. All correspondence between presbytery and the session is sent to the clerk of session with a copy to the moderator.

## **Per Capita Apportionment Payments**

The per capita apportionment is adopted by the presbytery and an invoice is sent to each church treasurer in the fall or early winter of each year. The per capita payment is due in January; however payment may be made quarterly or monthly.

The per capita apportionment for the coming year is figured upon the latest published reported membership times the total per capita adopted by General Assembly, synod, and presbytery. For example: December 31, 2009 church membership (reported in early 2010) times per capita dollar amount equals total payment for 2011 (so think three years.). The per capita apportionment is used for ecclesiastical expenses, those mandated by the *Book of Order*.

## **Annual Review of Call**

Each year the session is required by the *Book of Order* to review the adequacy of the salaries of all pastoral staff. If session wishes to make any change in the terms of call as they were last approved by presbytery, the changes in terms of call must be brought to the congregation for approval, contingent upon the approval of presbytery that, finally, approves all terms of call and all changes in terms of call. As soon as the congregation has approved new terms of call for its pastor(s), the terms of call forms (contained in the annual reports sent to each church) must be returned to the Committee on Ministry for recommendation to presbytery. (Note: this applies only to churches with installed pastors).

## **Minimum Compensation for Pastors**

The presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors; these terms are reviewed and updated from time to time. All terms of call must meet this minimum standard for presbytery to approve the call. The minimum terms of call are published to the churches each fall through a letter to the session from the Committee on Ministry. The Presbytery is required to consult with sessions (through the commissioners to presbytery meetings) whenever a change in the minimum terms of call is anticipated. Sessions may apply to the presbytery to ask for a relief in meeting the minimum terms.

## ANNUAL REVIEW OF SESSION RECORDS

### *G-3.0107 Records*

*Each council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings. Minutes and all other official records of councils are the property in perpetuity of said councils or their legal successors. . . .*

And

### *G-3.0108 Administrative Review*

*Higher councils shall review the work of lower councils in the following ways:*

#### *a. General Administrative Review*

*Each council shall review annually or biennially, based on the body's meeting frequency, the proceedings and actions of all entities related to the body, all officers able to act on behalf of the body, and lower councils within its jurisdiction. In reviewing the procedures of the lower council, the higher body shall determine whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded, have been in accordance with this Constitution, have been prudent and equitable, and have been faithful to the mission of the whole church. It shall also determine whether lawful injunctions of a higher body have been obeyed.*

#### *b. Special Administrative Review*

*If a higher council learns at any time of an alleged irregularity or delinquency of a lower council, it may require the lower body to produce any records and to take appropriate action.*

#### *c. Directed Response*

*The higher council may direct the lower council to reconsider and take corrective action if matters are determined to be out of compliance. In addition to administrative review, review and correction may be sought by initiating judicial process as described in the Rules of Discipline.*

In the Presbytery of New Castle the responsibility for “general administrative review” has been assigned to the Church Administration Committee.

The Session Minute and Church Rolls and Registers Review Sheet is available on the Presbytery web site, in the Recourse documents section, in the Clerk's Corner

## **Section 1. Minutes of Session Meetings**

### **Form**

Session minutes should be kept in a book designated solely for that purpose. Pages must be numbered, and both sides of the pages should be used with no blank pages. There are two types of meetings: either stated (regular) or called (or special). All

records of meetings must include the date, time, place of meeting, and kind of meeting, and that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer. Attendance of elders and moderator must be recorded. All minutes must be signed by the clerk. Since there are occasional corrections made to minutes, all minutes must include attestation (signature) by either the clerk or the moderator to verify that minutes filed are accurate.

## Members

It is the responsibility of the session to *receive* and *dismiss* all members. Minutes should reflect the receiving of new members prior to public reception. When members are received by transfer of membership, the name of the transferring church must be recorded. In the case of minor children, parental relationships should also be recorded.

Motion was made and seconded to receive (name) and (name), along with their baptized children (name) born (date) in (city and state). Motion was approved.

In addition, when members are *dismissed* to another congregation, the full name and address of the receiving church must be recorded.

Motion was made and seconded to transfer the membership of (name) to the (name of church), (city and state). Motion was approved.

Recording of *parental relationship* is also necessary for confirmation classes.

Rev. (name) welcomed the members of the spring confirmation class: (name) daughter of (parents' names), (name) son of (parents' names). The class was taught by (name), with the class being instructed in the Apostles' Creed, the sacraments, duties and responsibilities of church membership, and the way we grow in the Christian life. All members of the class were baptized as infants. Motion was made and seconded to receive the class into full adult membership and that they be confirmed at the worship service on (date). Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

Sessions are also charged with the responsibility of regular (at least annual) review of *church membership rolls*. It must be recorded in the session minutes when this is done, along with any actions taken.

The clerk reported that, as instructed by the session, letters were sent to members who have not been attending for some time, asking if it is their desire to remain on the active roll. As no positive responses were received, motion was made that (names) be removed the active roll. Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

## Worship

The session is responsible for *authorizing and approving baptism* and this must be reflected in session minutes.

Upon recommendation of the pastor, it was moved and seconded that the session authorize the baptism of (name), son of (father and mother), born (date) in (city and state), to be held during the 11:00 A.M. service of worship on (date). Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

The *administration of the Sacrament of Baptism* must also be recorded in the next meeting minutes, in the Clerk's report / Narration section.

(Name), daughter of (father and mother), was baptized during the 11:00 worship service on (date).

The session is additionally responsible for *authorizing the observance of the Lord's Supper*.

Upon recommendation of the Worship Committee, it was moved that the session authorize the celebration of The Lord's Supper on the following dates (dates) . Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

Record of *administration of the Lord's Supper* should be included in session minutes in the Clerk's Report / Narration section.

The Lord's Supper was observed during the 11:00 A.M. service of worship on (date).

## Administration and Program

The session is responsible for receiving annually a *summary of congregational events*, as well as an annual review from each committee, body, and organization. Many congregations do this in the form of an annual report to the congregation. These reports may be included as part of the session records or their acceptance referred to. Deacon records (if applicable) must be reviewed annually.

The session is responsible for *approval of an annual budget*, and, when approved, a copy of this budget must be included in the session minutes. The session should receive regular financial reporting – hopefully monthly.

(Name), moderator of the Finance Committee, distributed the November operating budget report, which were received as information and filed for audit.

An *annual review of the financial records* of all funds of the congregation must be made. Financial records may be reviewed by a CPA or other designated persons who have no routine responsibilities for financial matters of the church.

Motion was made and seconded to appoint (names) to serve as the Financial Review Committee to review the church financial records for 2010. Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

A report of that review must be included in session minutes along with the name of the reviewer, as well as a report made to the congregation.

The session submits annually a *statistical report* to the General Assembly. It is the responsibility of the session to approve this report, and a copy must be filed with the minutes.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the annual statistical report, and to send this report to the presbytery and General Assembly office. Discussion followed; the motion was approved.

When *new members of the session* are elected, the session must examine them and oversee their instruction.

The session spent time examining the ruling elders-elect as to their personal faith, knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the Church; and the duties of office. Each shared something of their personal faith story, and desire to serve on the session. After a period of discussion, it was moved and seconded that the examination be upheld and that the ordination of (names) take place during the 11:00 A.M. service of worship on (date). The motion was approved.

Minutes must reflect *ordination and installation* of new officers in the Clerk's Report / Narration section.

(Ruling elder names) and (deacon names) were duly ordained and installed during the worship service on Sunday (date)

### **Mission and Work of the Church**

Each session elects *ruling elder commissioners* to each presbytery meeting. A record of those appointments must be reflected in session minutes.

(Name) and (name) were elected commissioners to presbytery for (particular meeting / or year).

Commissioners should report back to the session any significant events that took place at presbytery meetings; that report is included in the minutes of the session meeting.

Any information reflecting significant mission and ministry of the church should also be included in session minutes. This information may be recorded in the annual report made to the congregation of committee work and congregational events.

## **Section 2: Minutes of Congregational and Corporation Meetings**

### **Form**

The clerk of session is secretary to the congregational meetings. The *Book of Order* or the congregation's by-laws outline what constitutes due notice for a congregational meeting. At the very least, public notice should be given to the congregation the Sunday before and the Sunday of the meeting. Minutes must list the date, time, place of meeting, the name of the moderator, and declaration of quorum.

The congregation of the (name) Presbyterian Church was called to meet on (date) immediately following the 11:00 A.M. service of worship in the (location). The meeting was called to order by Moderator (name), who declared a quorum present and opened the meeting with prayer.

Since the session is responsible for calling all congregational meetings, *reading of the call* must be included in the minutes of the meeting.

The Moderator read the call for the meeting as recorded in the minutes of the special meeting of the session of (date): That the Annual Congregational Meeting of the (name) Presbyterian Church be held immediately following the 11:00 A.M. worship service on (date) for the purpose of holding the annual meeting of the congregation and corporation of the church. The call was found to be in order.

Minutes of the meeting must be attested to by both the moderator and the secretary of the meeting.

### **Content**

Meetings of the congregation must be held at least annually. At this time, adequacy of compensation of pastor must be reviewed, and the congregation must approve any changes in terms of call. (see example above in sample minutes)

The congregation elects members of the session.

In a related action, the congregation elects members of the next year's officer nominating committee. (see example above).

### Section 3: Rolls and Registers

The session is responsible for maintaining all membership rolls and registers. Books are available through church supply agencies (such as Cokesbury) that are already set up for each of the different membership rolls, or you may elect to format your own. In either case, records for these categories must be maintained:

**Active roll** is recorded chronologically (with a number assigned for each member) and alphabetically by last name. The chronological section has columns to the right for necessary comments. Any session action should be noted in this column, such as when an active member is placed on the inactive roll or membership is transferred. The active roll must be kept up to date.

**Baptized roll** lists infants, children, and adults baptized in your church or transferred into your church, with name of the minister who performed the baptism. This must be kept current. In the case of adult baptism, the name of the person baptized is always entered on the chronological and alphabetical rolls. Adult baptism is always accompanied by joining the church and joining the church is always accompanied by baptism if the person had not been baptized earlier.

**Affiliate roll** lists those who temporarily unite with a church when away from his or her home church. The affiliate member remains on the active roll of the home church.

Other records to be maintained by the session include listing of each class of **elders and deacons**, as well as a record of **ministers** who serve the congregation. A separate section is maintained for **marriages**. **Deaths** of members may be maintained in a separate section or noted in the chronological section. These all must be kept up to date.

#### RULING ELDER COMMISSIONERS TO PRESBYTERY

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity. It works only when each church takes seriously its responsibility to elect ruling elder commissioners who attend the meeting, stay through the end of the meeting, and report to the session. New Castle Presbytery holds five regular presbytery meetings each year. Times and dates are published annually.

Each session is responsible for electing ruling elder commissioners to presbytery. The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the congregation. The number of ruling elder commissioners to which a congregation is entitled also varies according to equalization. Before the first presbytery meeting of each year, the stated clerk of presbytery will notify each clerk of session of the number of elders to which the congregation is entitled.

Sessions are encouraged to elect one or more designated ruling elder commissioners, those who serve for the entire year or longer. Some churches elect different commissioners for each meeting of presbytery. In order to assure continuity and understanding of presbytery business, it is best to elect Designated Commissioners for extended periods. An alternative would be to elect a commissioner and an alternate for each meeting, with the alternate becoming the commissioner at the next meeting.

The docket and the papers for each presbytery meeting are emailed to the church the week before the meeting to be distributed to the commissioners prior to the meeting. Informational and promotional papers are also distributed at the presbytery meetings, often found on the “stuff table.” These papers should be distributed by the commissioners to the appropriate people in the congregation when the commissioners return to their churches.

Commissioners are requested to report to session about the meeting, including significant actions taken by the presbytery; a summary of issues deliberated upon; policy decisions made; implications of presbytery actions for the congregation; concerns and opportunities open to the congregation through presbytery; and any other matter which will help with the congregation’s participation in the total ministry of Jesus Christ. A helpful reporting blank is contained in each packet of materials for the presbytery meetings.

Session members, including presbytery commissioners, should bear in mind the opportunities and need for nominations to presbytery units and committees. New Castle Presbytery is committed to finding Presbyterians - and especially racial/ethnic minority members of our churches - with skills and interests in serving on a presbytery committee. Nomination forms are available at the presbytery office. Please share the gifts of your congregation with your presbytery.

## **OVERTURES AND AMENDMENTS - GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

General Assembly meets every other year, and when it does, overtures are sent in by one or more presbyteries or other agencies of the church. When the General Assembly adopts an overture which proposes a change in the church Constitution (*the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order*), a set of Proposed Amendments to the Constitution is sent to each presbytery for their consideration and vote.

If a majority of presbyteries approve, the *Book of Order* is amended. (See G-6.03 and G-6.04) New Castle Presbytery generally votes on the overtures at its December or March meeting. Prior to the meeting at which the overtures will be acted on, the stated clerk makes available the overture books (also available online). Depending on the nature of the overtures to be acted on, Church Administration Committee may hold informational meetings so Presbyterians can provide input to that Committee's recommendations to presbytery and can discuss issues of importance in light of the potential impact on the *Book of Order*.

Although ruling elder commissioners cannot be pledged by session to vote in a particular way, it is useful for session to spend time studying and discussing the overtures so that the elder commissioners will have guidance when they vote on the overtures.

## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES - ON MAKING MOTIONS

As an active ruling elder on session or a commissioner to the presbytery, you have the right to make a motion at a presbytery meeting. It is important to rise, or raise your hand, state your name, and say something like this: “Moderator, I move the following motion, and if it is seconded I will speak to it.” State your motion. It is not discussion time yet. If it is seconded you may then speak for your motion. As the maker of the motion you have the right to speak first. All motions of any length must be given in writing to the stated clerk. This is imperative if debate is lengthy. Only one motion will be considered at a time.

Motions should briefly and clearly state what the motion is, who is affected, when it is to be done, how it will be done, and why it will be done.

### MOTIONS

Main motion: Any motion that proposes an action to be taken by the council (session, presbytery, synod or general assembly). Main motions are debatable.

To amend: A motion to amend is to change or improve the main motion; therefore an amendment contrary to the intent of the main motion is out of order. A motion to amend a motion takes precedence over the main motion. It must be adopted or rejected before the main motion is considered. If adopted, it becomes part of the main motion. It is debatable.

To substitute: A motion to substitute is a form of amendment. It takes precedence over a main motion. If approved, it replaces the main motion.

To postpone indefinitely: This is a motion to kill consideration. It is debatable.

To postpone definitely: This motion includes a specific time and/or date on which this motion will be presented to the deliberative body.

To commit or refer: A motion to refer must include the body to which this action is referred. It is debatable.

To reconsider: Once a question has been decided, it must not be reconsidered again at the same assembly unless a motion to reconsider is made by a person who voted *with the majority*. It is debatable.

To move the previous question: This is a motion to close debate and to bring the issue to vote. It requires a two-thirds vote and should not be used to close off debate or opposition prematurely. This motion requires a second and is not debatable.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING OVERTURES**

An overture is a request by a Presbyterian governing body to a higher governing body to take action or express an opinion. Session may overture presbytery. Presbytery may overture synod or General Assembly. Synod may overture General Assembly.

There is a separate document detailing how to write and submit an Overture; please contact the stated clerk of presbytery.

### **Helpful documents available online**

[www.ncpresbytery.org](http://www.ncpresbytery.org)

Here you can find meeting dates, the Presbytery Manual with appendices 1 through Q (including Sexual Misconduct Policy, Clergy Code of Ethics) and other documents.