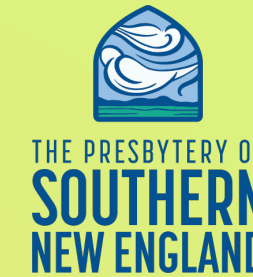
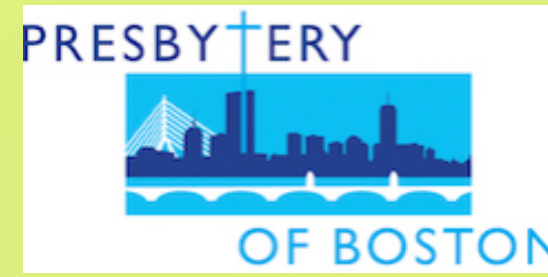


Clerk of Session Training



Outline of topics

- Clerk as Spiritual Leader
- What decisions does the congregation make? and What decisions does the session make?
- Training and examination of new elders/deacons
- Basic responsibilities of the clerk
 - Checklist for the year
 - Basics of minutes taking
- Q & A
- Future Topics to consider

Clerk of Session Training

Leaders

- **Rev. Cindy Kohlmann, Connectional Presbyter and Stated Clerk New Castle Presbytery**
- **Rev. David Baer - Stated Clerk, Southern New England Presbytery**
- **Rev. T.J. Demarco Stated Clerk, Northern New England and Boston Presbyteries**
- **Elder Pieter Visscher, Stated Clerk, Northern New York Presbytery**

Clerk as a Spiritual Leader

- From G-2.03, Ruling Elders are called to the ministry of discernment and guidance
- From G-2.031, Ruling Elder Defined:
[C]ongregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with ministers of the Word and Sacrament, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships.

Qualities of Spiritual Leadership

- Wisdom and maturity of faith
- Skills in leadership
- Compassionate in spirit
- Discern and measure the congregation's fidelity to the Word of God
- Strengthen and nurture the congregation's faith and life

Responsibilities: The Marks of the Church

- From G-3.0201, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).
- The Marks of the Church (F-1.0302)
 - Unity of the Church (through Christ, joined with all Christians)
 - Holiness of the Church (confession and forgiveness)
 - Catholicity of the Church (universality)
 - Apostolicity of the Church (called to give witness to Christ)

Responsibilities: The Notes of the Reformed Church

- **From F-1.0303:**
 - **Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever:**
 - **The Word of God is truly preached and heard (proclaims and hears the Word of God)**
 - **The Sacraments are rightly administered (administers and receives the Sacraments)**
 - **Ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered (nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ)**

Responsibilities: The Great Ends of the Church

- **From F-1.0304:**
 - **The great ends of the Church are:**
 - **The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;**
 - **The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;**
 - **The maintenance of divine worship;**
 - **The preservation of the truth;**
 - **The promotion of social righteousness;**
 - **The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.**

Summary

- The clerk of session holds a unique role of leadership and, alongside the pastor or moderator of session, can help the session discern how God is leading a particular congregation in mission and ministry.
- While there are technical aspects to the role of clerk, the weightier role has to do with helping the session ask again and again if their actions and decisions are in line with the Marks of the Church, the Notes of the Reformed Church, and the Great Ends of the Church.
- Perfect minutes may make the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery smile, but minutes reflecting the work of a session in discerning how best to love both God and neighbor will make the angels rejoice.

Church Governance

The Session and the Congregation

The Congregation

“The congregation is the church engaged in the mission of God in its particular context” (G-1.0101).

Members of the congregation...

- Make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ (G-1.0303).
- Bear witness to God’s love and grace through participation in ministry (G-1.0304).

Congregation Responsibilities

- Meet at least annually, and at other times as needed
- Electing church officers (elders, deacons, trustees)
- Calling a pastor; approving or changing terms of call; requesting dissolution of a pastoral relationship.
- Consenting to the purchase, sale, or encumbrance of real property.

Role of the Session

“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.” - *Book of Order*, G-3.0201

What is the Session?

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by *councils* composed of presbyters elected by the people. The session is the council for the congregation.

Members of the session:

- Elders in active service, elected for a term by the congregation
- Installed pastors (also elected by the congregation, either for a definite or indefinite term)

Session Responsibilities

Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.

- Place for worship, education, and spiritual nurture
- Regular preaching of the Word by a minister (or other trained person)
- Outreach into the community (mission, evangelism)
- Ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community
- Ecumenical witness

Session Responsibilities

Provide that the sacraments may be rightly administered and received.

- Authorize celebration of the Lord's Supper (at least quarterly)
- Authorize Baptism
- Exercise "pastoral care among the congregation in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments."

Session Responsibilities

Nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.

- Receive and dismiss members; review the roll (annually) and encourage the participation of members.
- Train, examine, ordain, and install elders and deacons.
- Promote stewardship.
- Manage the physical property of the church for the furtherance of its mission.
- Direct the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation

Session Responsibilities

*Nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ
(continued.)*

- Lead congregation in the mission of the whole Church.
- Warn, bear witness against error, immorality.
- Serve in judicial matters.

Session Responsibilities

The session also...

- Elects commissioners to presbytery (G-3.0202a)
- Elects the treasurer and sets the budget (G-3.0205)
- Provides full information to the congregation concerning its decisions related to the expenditure of funds contributed

CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Ordered Ministry**
 - **Has direction and focus**
 - **Contrast to 'ad hoc' ministry**
 - **Consistent with Theology and Mission**
 - **Uses member's gifts**
- **Call to Ordered Ministry - threefold**
 - **Movement of Holy Spirit**
 - **Approval of community (election by congregation)**
 - **Concurring judgement of Council (Session)**
- **Judgement of Council**
 - **Training**
 - **Examination**



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Training**
 - **Personal faith (e.g. use faith timeline)**
 - **Examination**
 - **Consistent with Theology and Mission**
 - **Uses member's gifts**
- **Call to Ordered Ministry - threefold**
 - **Movement of Holy Spirit**
 - **Approval of community (election by congregation)**
 - **Concurring judgement of Council (Session)**



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

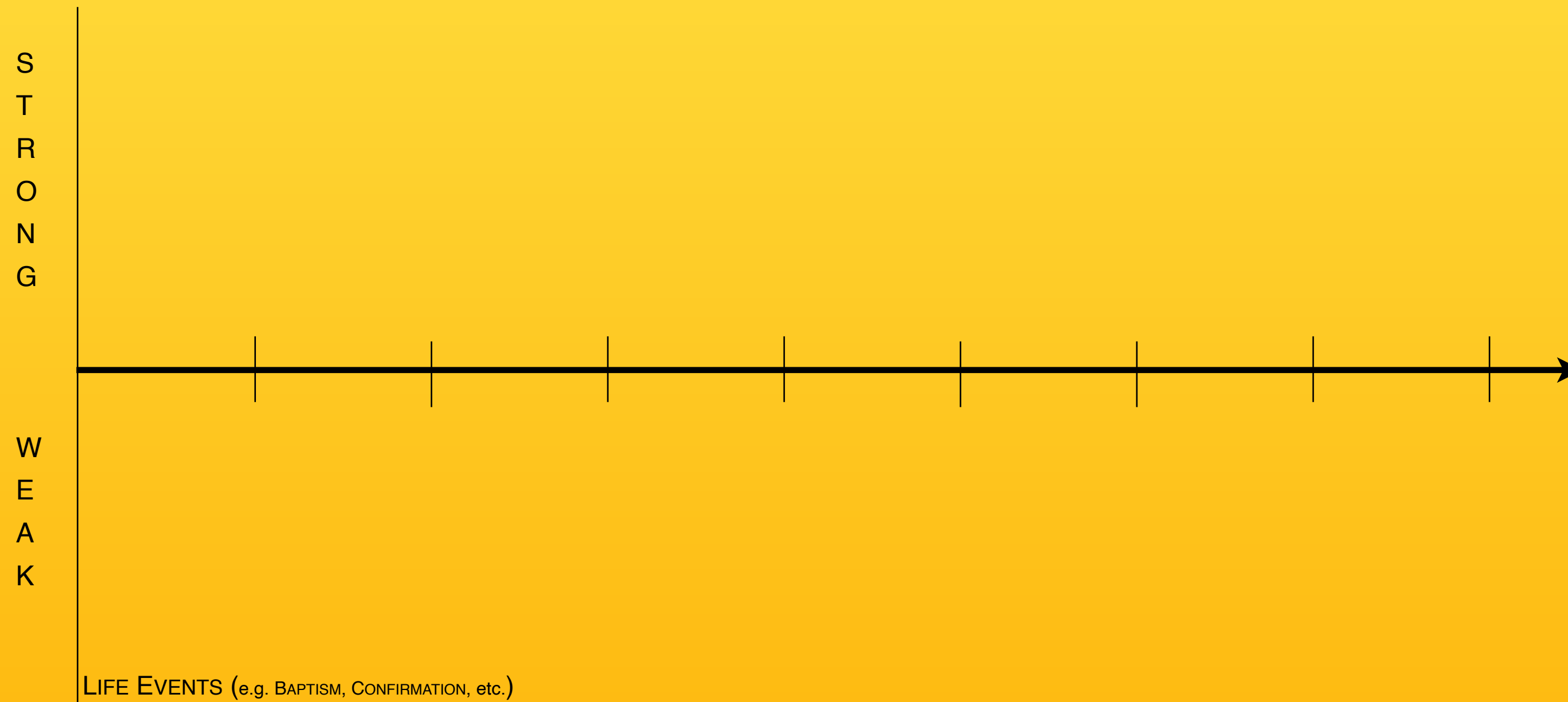
Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Training**
 - **Personal faith (e.g. use faith timeline)**
 - **Doctrine**
 - **Constitution (Confessions & BOO)**
 - **Foundations of Polity**
 - **Presbyterian Organization**
 - **Ordination Questions**
 - **Responsibilities**



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Ruling Elder Responsibilities**
 - **Wisdom & Maturity of Faith**
 - **Demonstrated Leadership**
 - **Compassionate in Spirit**
 - **Measure congregation fidelity to Word of God**
 - **Strengthen & Nurture congregational faith & life**



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Deacon Responsibilities**
 - **Persons of:**
 - **Spiritual character**
 - **Honest repute**
 - **Exemplary lives**
 - **Sisterly and brotherly love**
 - **Sincere compassion**
 - **Sound judgement**
 - **Ministry of copassion, witness and service**
 - **Sharing redeeming love of Jesus Christ**



CLERK OF SESSION TRAINING

Training and Examination of Newly Elected Officers

- **Examination of Candidate**
 - **Calling, gifts, preparation and suitability**
 - **Abide by Ordination Questions (review each)**
 - **Exam guided by Scripture and Confessions**
 - **Personal faith**
 - **Knowledge of Constitution:**
 - **Doctrine**
 - **Government**
 - **Discipline**
 - **Duties of particular ministry**



Session Minutes

Rev. Theodore (T.J.) Demarco, Stated Clerk for Presbyteries of Boston and Northern New England

Session Minutes

Purpose of Minutes

- Minutes preserve the decisions of Session.
- Minutes record important events in the life of the church.
- Minutes prove that all Book of Order requirements have been met.
- Minutes can be used to report Session activity to the church members, if Session approves.

Session Minutes

Form

- Minutes should be typed.
- No need for special paper. All paper is now acid free.
- May use any secure binder.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively.
- Cross out corrections by a single line. Write the new text clearly and the clerk should initial.

Session Minutes

Style

- Write minutes so that decisions are easy to find.
- To do this, when writing an action of session separate it from the paragraph.
- Use bold print to make it easier to find.
- Write in complete sentences to make it easier to understand.
- Be concise but include all necessary details.
- Example: Session **voted** to approve the minutes as amended from the meeting held on February 24, 2021.
- Do not type: Moved, seconded, approved or the shortened version “MVA”
- Do not record who made the motion or who seconded. That information is irrelevant. Once a motion is seconded, it belongs to the body and not to the individual who made the motion.

Session Minutes

Retention of Minutes

- Minutes must be kept forever.
- Keep a backup in case there is a fire. To do this, keep a copy on your computer or a separate hard copy.
- Old minutes may be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society. Their website is: history.pcusa.org

Session Minutes

Attendance

- It is good practice to include a list of session members with their class year in your attendance list. Indicate who is present at each meeting.
- Some like to include a list of excused or unexcused absences. Others find this unnecessary depending on the practices of your session.

Session Minutes

Convene

- The first section of your minutes should have the heading “Convene.”
- Record the date, time and place of the meeting. If it is a Zoom meeting, indicate that the meeting was held via video conference utilizing the Zoom app. Remember, the people looking back at these minutes in 20 years may not know what Zoom was. They will likely know what video conference means.
- Record that the meeting opened with prayer.
- Record the name of the moderator.
- Example: The session of First Presbyterian Church of (town, state) convened with prayer via teleconference utilizing the Zoom app by Rev. John Smith on September 24, 2021 at 7:00 PM.

Session Minutes

Motions/Voting

- All approved actions must be recorded.
- Example: The session voted to allow the Boy Scouts to meet in the church fellowship hall at 7:00 PM on Wednesdays starting next week and ending on June 3, 2021.
- There is no need to record the numbers unless the body voted to do a counted vote.
- There are many ways to vote. All are recorded as indicated above with two exceptions:
 - 1. If the vote was completed by ballot, indicate so in the minutes.
 - 2. If the vote was counted, such as with a ballot indicate the numbers.

Session Minutes

What should be in the clerk's report?

- Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting (s). This may also be included in the “convene” portion of the meeting.
- Approval of excused absences (if you're into that sort of thing)
- Report of changes to the rolls.
- Report any correspondence.
- Include anything else that is customary or that you feel is important to report.

Session Minutes

Pastor's Report

- The pastor's report, as you know, will include information as well as requests for the session to take action.
- Remember that the session must approve baptisms, weddings, and special services.

Session Minutes

Committee Reports

- Record all actions taken by committees.
- Committees often come with requests or recommendations which becomes action items for session. Record all of these successful actions.

Session Minutes

Executive Session

- Session may vote to enter executive session where all non-session members are excluded.
- Minutes are not needed unless action is taken.
- If minutes from the executive session are necessary, keep them in a secure location with reference in the regular session minutes.

Session Minutes

Adjourn

- Record the time adjourned
- Record that session adjourned with prayer.
- Record the date and time of the next meeting.

Yearly Checklist

January

- **Assemble Annual Reports**
- **Compile statistics**
- **Install newly elected officers if elected in November**
- **Annual meeting (or in early Feb) - Approve Pastor Salary**
- **Officer Train & Exam if elected at annual meeting**
- **Elect treasurers/CoS/NomCommChair**

Yearly Checklist

February

- **Report Statistics/Complete Clerk questionnaire online**
- **Submit hard copy statistics, necrology, directory listing, and pastor salary report to presbytery**
- **Install officers following training and examination if elected at annual meeting**
- **Verify minute book and register up-to-date**

Yearly Checklist

March

- **Session record review (may vary by presbytery)**

April through October - take deep breaths, relax and enjoy

Yearly Checklist

November

- **Session approves next year's budget**
- **Session recommends any changes to Pastor's terms of call**
- **Submit Mission Pledge to presbytery**
- **Option: elect officers for next year at special congregational meeting**

Yearly Checklist

November

- **Set Date for Annual Meeting**
- **If new officers elected in Nov.**
 - **Officer Training**
 - **Officer examination**
- **Verify register up-to-date**

Clerk of Session Training

Future Topics?