

Clerk of Session Training

Third Thursday Training Series

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 if already added to the binder. 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 <https://www.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. Recording absences is not required.

Session Minutes

Opening Section

- 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:
 - If the vote was completed by ballot, indicate so in the minutes.
 - 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 “opening” portion of the meeting.
- Report of changes to the rolls.
- Report any correspondence.
- Actions related to annual requirements like reviewing the insurance or rolls.
- 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.
- If the pastor submits a written report, you may include it as an attachment or copy/paste the report into the minutes if deemed appropriate. Remember that minutes are public, so check before including sensitive information.

Session Minutes

Committee Reports

- Record all actions taken by committees.
- Committee reports may be included as attachments, but it is not necessary to include anything other than the actions taken.
- Committees often come with requests or recommendations which become action items for session. Record any motions and their outcomes.

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.
- Any action taken must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 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.
- It is not necessary to vote to adjourn. Once the business on the agenda/docket is completed, the meeting is over.
- Record that session adjourned with prayer.
- Record the date and time of the next meeting.

Session Minute Review Checklist

- Congregational Meetings
- Annual Budget
- Changes in Membership and Review of the Rolls
- Observance of the Lord's Supper
- Meetings opened and closed with prayer
- Annual Audit or Financial Review
- Commissioners to Presbytery meetings elected
- Review of Insurance
- Review of Safe Church Policy