

# HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS

PRESBYTERIES AND SYNODS



CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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**HANDBOOK  
FOR CLERKS OF SESSIONS, PRESBYTERIES, AND SYNODS  
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**THE TERM "STATED CLERK"**

“The term ‘Stated Clerk’ first appears in the records of Presbyterianism in America in 1789 when the General Assembly of that year gave this title (apparently without any formal action) to the officer charged with the duties of the clerk or secretary. Evidently he became the ‘Stated Clerk’ to distinguish him from other clerks who were appointed as his assistants.”

Garrison, *Presbyterian Polity and Procedures*, (PCUS), P. 98

“The clerk is called the Stated Clerk, to distinguish him from those appointed to help him. At first, the Clerk was able to perform the whole duty required, but after the union of the two Synods of New York and Philadelphia his work so increased that in 1763 he was granted an assistant. They were called the Clerk and his Assistant. At the organization of the Assembly (in 1789) the title ‘Stated Clerk’ appears in describing the Clerk of that body, and the clerks of Presbytery, of Synod and of the General Assembly have since been called the Stated Clerk of those judicatories.”

Hodge, *What is Presbyterian Law*, P. 501

**DUTIES OF A STATED CLERK (RULES OF ORDER 3.0)**

Each judicatory shall elect a stated clerk who shall preserve all minutes, documents, and papers committed to the office of stated clerk and submit these records to the next higher judicatory in compliance with that judicatory's rules and regulations. (3.1)

The stated clerk shall be elected for a definite term (normally three years) and shall hold office until a successor is elected. (3.2) Note: the minutes of the meeting must reflect the election of the clerk.

All records and documents are the property of the judicatory and shall be kept and stored in accordance with the provision of the Constitution. Upon leaving office, the stated clerk shall transfer all such records and documents to the successor. (3.3)

It shall be the duty of the stated clerk to record all minutes in permanent form and to supply extracts from them when properly requested. The stated clerk shall perform the duties of the office of stated clerk during the meeting of the judicatory unless otherwise determined by the judicatory. Other duties of the stated clerk shall be:

- a. to keep on file all committee records;
- b. to keep the judicatory's official membership roll;
- c. to make copies of the official minutes of the judicatory and distribute them to the members prior to the next stated meeting (unless otherwise determined by the judicatory);
- d. to notify officers, committee members and delegates of their election or appointment, to furnish committees with whatever documents are required for the performance of

their duties and to have on hand at each meeting a list of all existing committees and their members;

- e. to certify delegates or commissioners;
- f. to sign the minutes of all meetings;
- g. to read all papers to be acted upon (unless otherwise determined by the judicatory), and
- h. to record any vote which requires more than a majority following a polling of the judicatory or a division of the house. (3.4)

The stated clerk shall record only those motions which are adopted unless instructed otherwise by the judicatory. (3.5)

The stated clerk may or may not be a member of the judicatory. (3.6)

Minutes and all other official records of sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies are the property in perpetuity of said judicatories or their legal successors. When congregations, presbyteries, or synods are dissolved, their records are held for them by the next highest judicatory within whose bounds they were before dissolution. All minutes and other official records of existing and dissolved sessions, presbyteries, and synods, or copies thereof, are to be deposited for safe keeping in the Historical Foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America. It is the responsibility of the clerk of each judicatory to make recommendation to the judicatory for the permanent safe keeping of that judicatory's records. (*Constitution* 3.08)

#### **TREASURER OF PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD (*RULES OF ORDER*, 4.0)**

The treasurer shall be elected for a definite period of time (normally three-year term). (4.1)

The treasurer shall keep the books properly posted so as to be able to provide a current report on the financial condition of the judicatory. (4.2)

The treasurer shall prepare a detailed annual report at the end of each fiscal year and such supplemental reports as the judicatory may require. (4.3)

The treasurer shall present the financial records for an annual review or audit, the nature of such to be determined by the judicatory. (4.4)

The treasurer shall not disburse any funds without proper authorization from the judicatory. (4.5)

The treasurer may or may not be a member of the judicatory. (4.6)

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The stated clerk's office often carries with it the responsibility of treasurer of the judicatory.

All records may be kept in the computer. With the use of spread sheets, accurate financial

records are readily available. If you do not have access to a computer, an inexpensive uncomplicated journal may be used to record cash receipts, disbursements, and a balance column to show cash on hand.

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## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLERKS TO HIGHER JUDICATORIES (CONSTITUTION)**

### **1. Responsibilities of Presbyterial Clerks to Synodic Clerks**

The presbytery shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings and submit them to the synod for review at its stated meeting. It shall report regularly to synod and to the General Assembly its roll, including all candidates, licentiates, ministers, session clerks, and churches. In addition, it shall report on licensures and ordinations; on reception, dismissal, or death of ministers; on the union, division, and formation of churches, and on such statistical and other information as may be required to describe the state of religion in its midst. (5.7)

### **2. Responsibilities of Presbyterial Clerks to General Assembly Clerk**

- a. Report changes, e.g., new presbyterial clerk, licensures, ordinations, removals from roll; formation, union, division and dropping of churches.
- b. Congregational and presbyterial data for *Yearbook* and other statistical information required by February 10.
- c. Report the action on any question submitted from the General Assembly for vote of presbyteries.
- d. Send memorials to General Assembly. These should be sent following adoption by the presbytery. There is a 30 day deadline previous to the annual meeting of General Assembly (GA Regulation E-4). These will be acknowledged.
- e. Certify commissioners and youth delegates on official forms or email. (It is recommended that commissioners be elected in the fall.)
- f. Certify any person formally endorsed by the presbytery for the office of Moderator of the General Assembly.
- g. Provide a copy of each presbyterial minute to the General Assembly Office for our files.
- h. Report to the Office of the General Assembly after each presbytery.

### **3. Responsibilities of Synodic Clerks to General Assembly Clerk (See *Constitution*, 8.6)**

The synod shall keep full and accurate records of its proceedings, submit them to the General Assembly for review at its stated meetings, and in general, report on all important changes and the state of religion within its bounds, as well as supplying other information which may be requested by the General Assembly. (8.6)

Some of the specific needs of the General Assembly Office from Synod are:

1. Send Minutes to be examined. In 1983 the General Assembly directed that the Stated Clerk is to mail one copy of the minutes to the Office of General Assembly and a copy to each member of the Permanent Committee on Judiciary.

2. Report any important changes, e.g., presbyterial boundaries, new synodic clerk, etc.
3. Memorials from synod to General Assembly. There is a 30 day deadline previous to the annual meeting of General Assembly (GA Regulation E-4). These will be acknowledged.
4. Pertinent information regarding appeals.
5. Any statistical information required.
6. Assist in getting data sheets on prospective board members--1 for every 1,000 active members in synod (GA Regulation B-9).

**ANNUAL REPORTS OF CONGREGATIONS AND PRESBYTERIAL CLERKS  
(GEN. REG. E-2)**

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall mail to session clerks statistical forms for reporting congregational data on December 1 each year. Session clerks shall mail the completed forms to presbyterial clerks by February 1 of each year. The composite statistical report for all congregations of a presbytery shall be mailed by the presbyterial clerk to the Stated Clerk of General Assembly by February 10 of each year.

When a session clerk is delinquent, a phone call or personal visit is recommended.

The presbyterial clerk as he/she has opportunity should get to know session clerks. Watch for them at meetings and cultivate the clerking relationship.

**QUORUM, FREQUENCY, AND PLACE OF MEETING (*RULES OF ORDER, 6.0*)**

**1. Quorum**

(Presbytery) Four members shall constitute a quorum for the presbytery provided at least one minister and one elder are present. (6.2)

(Synod) Six members from at least three presbyteries shall constitute a quorum for synod providing this includes at least one minister and one elder. (6.3)

**2. Frequency of Meeting (*Constitution 5.8, 8.7*)**

The presbytery shall meet as often as once a year on its own adjournment.....

Presbytery Called Meeting - When an emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator, or, in case of the moderator's absence, death, or inability to act, the stated clerk, shall with written concurrence or at the written request of two minister members and two session members of different churches, call a special meeting. The call shall give notice, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every minister and session of every particular church on its roll, at least ten days prior to the proposed time of meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such called meeting other than the particular business for which the presbytery was convened. (5.8)

Synod - The synod shall meet as often as once every two years on its own adjournment.....

Synod Called Meeting - When an emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator, or in case of the moderator's absence, death, or inability to act, the stated clerk shall with written concurrence or at the written request of three minister members and three session members, with representation from at least three presbyteries, call a special meeting. The call shall give notice, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every minister and session of every particular church on its roll, at least thirty days prior to the proposed time of meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such a called meeting other than the particular business for which the synod was convened. (8.7)

Who Should Sign the Call? - 5.8 is interpreted to mean that two ministers and two elders, who are not officers of the presbytery should sign the request for a call (2003, page 176) 5.8 specifies that the elders must be session members from different congregations. The Moderator has to call the meeting in response to the request and the stated clerk has to attest the call.

Sections 5.8, 8.7 and 9.2 of the Constitution deal with the method of calling a special meeting of a judicatory. The General Assembly affirmed that the moderator of a judiciary must call a special meeting upon the receipt of a properly signed request for a meeting. Persons calling a meeting should be mindful that the Constitution provides for special meetings only in the event of an emergency. (2004, page 101)

Electronic mail may be used for official notification of a called meeting “While the use of electronic mail (email) as an alternative method of official communication can contribute to more efficient and economical administration of church business, individuals and agencies who choose to use this form of communication should use care to determine that all intended recipients of a communication have electronic mail capabilities. (2003, pages 346-347)

Rescinding a Called Meeting - A called meeting of a judicatory may be rescinded when a majority of those signing the request for the called meeting communicate in writing with the Moderator, or in the Moderator's absence or illness, the Stated Clerk, their desire to rescind the call. This request must be made in writing at least five days before the called meeting. (3.06)

### **3. May a judicatory meet outside its geographical bounds?**

It may hold its sessions wherever convenient to its members (*Digest*, 4.3, 8.7).

### **4. Ecclesiastical Commission (*Constitution*, 3.12, 6.203, 6.35)**

Licensures and ordinations shall be by the presbytery at either a regular, an adjourned, or a called meeting; or they may be by a commission of the presbytery, which must consist of a quorum of the body and include two ordained ministers. Commissions may also be elected for other purposes. A majority of a commission shall constitute a quorum.

In 1990 (pages 164, 241) the General Assembly affirmed that commissions are appointed by the process of election, and this action cannot be delegated. In 2002 (pages 170-171) every commission shall have quorum of the judicatory since it is empowered to act for the body. At the time a commission is elected, elders named must be members of the body. To become a



member of the body, an elder must be elected by the session and enrolled at the meeting of the duly constituted judicatory.

## MINISTERIAL MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD

### 1. How a Minister Becomes a Member of a Presbytery

There are but two ways by which a person can become a member of the presbytery: (1)By regular process of trial, licensure, and ordination, whereby one is constituted a minister of Jesus Christ, and (2)By a letter of dismissal from one presbytery to another. (*C. P. Digest*, p. 54, Section 5.6a interpretive)

Presbyterial records should include the history of preparation for ordination of each probationer.

In 1991 the General Assembly gave the following interpretation in regard to exceptions to ordination standards set forth in the *Constitution*, “That an exception be granted only by a two thirds vote of the members of the presbytery present. A full account of the reasons for such an exception shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery.” (*C. P. Digest*, p. 88, Section 6.34 interpretive)

In 1999 the General Assembly gave the following interpretation for persons enrolled in the Program of Alternate Studies. The General Assembly interprets the educational requirements for licensing of students in the Program of Alternate Studies (Constitution 6.202), “In such cases the candidate shall not be licensed until he/she has completed satisfactorily, under the direction of the committee on the ministry, a three year program of alternate studies approved by the General Assembly,” to mean the successful completion of at least sixty hours of course work on the college level and sixteen courses in the Program of Alternate Studies. In 1999 General Assembly interpreted 6.202 that a program of alternate studies to fulfill the constitutional requirements for licensure in lieu of an undergraduate degree be defined as the completion of sixty (60) semester hours of undergraduate study at a regionally accredited college or university, or the equivalent. The courses distributed among the following disciplines, will satisfy the educational requirement for licensure: English grammar and composition, literature, speech, history (both American and world), the sciences, economics, sociology and philosophy. The General Assembly also affirmed that no more than ten percent of the English speaking admissions may be admitted to the Program of Alternate Studies without the required 60 semester hours. Cross cultural ministers standards are to be determined by the Program of Alternate Studies staff in consultation with the Board of Missions. (2004, page 341)

For ordination, the General Assembly interprets the educational requirements for ordination for students in the Program of Alternate Studies (*Constitution* 6.34) In such cases a licentiate shall not be ordained until he or she has satisfactorily completed under the direction of the presbytery a two year program of alternate studies approved by the General Assembly to mean the completion of thirty-two courses in the Program of Alternate Studies.

## **2. Minister Must Hold Membership in Presbytery Where He/She Resides**

If a minister lives outside the bounds of the presbytery in which he or she desires to hold membership, he or she must receive the consent of the synod in which that presbytery is located to hold membership in that presbytery. (*Constitution 6.52*)

## **3. Approving Pastoral Relations**

When a session calls a new pastor, he/she is not officially the pastor until approved by presbytery. See *Constitution 7.06*. The session clerk and the new minister should ask for the approval of the relationship. When a church has given a call to a minister to serve as a pastor and the minister has accepted the call, the request for the approval of the relationship implies the need for the presbytery to elect a commission to install the pastor. (*Digest, page 97*) Until the minister is actually received into the presbytery, he/she is approved as stated supply. Again, this is to be in writing to either the presbyterial clerk or the chair of the Presbyterial Board of Missions. The presbyterial clerk or the chair of the Presbyterial Board of Missions should be notified immediately when a new minister has been called.

## **4. Dissolution of Pastoral Relations (*Constitution 7.06*)**

The relationship between a minister, licentiate, or candidate and a particular church may be dissolved only by presbytery, acting on the request of both parties, or on the request of one party if sufficient reasons are presented, or when, in the opinion of the presbytery, the well-being of the particular church demands it. (The session clerk and the minister should each send a correspondence asking for the dissolution or they may send one letter jointly provided both sign the letter. The letter can be sent to the presbyterial clerk or to the chair of the Presbyterial Board of Missions. The presbyterial clerk should be notified immediately when a minister is leaving a congregation.)

## **5. Chaplain Members**

Though chaplains render a special kind of pastoral ministry, their membership involves the same basic discipline and responsibilities as other ministerial members. They should receive mailings, serve as commissioners to General Assembly, etc. and give account of their ministry as do other members of presbytery.

It should also be noted that reserve chaplains are subject to mobilization by the Armed Forces; the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains therefore recommends that pastors who also serve as reserve chaplains execute mobilization agreements with their individual congregations to cover such contingencies as filling the pulpit and occupation of the manse by the chaplain's family, as well as other pertinent situations. The General Assembly's Commission on Chaplains was requested to obtain copies of a sample mobilization agreement to be made available to presbyterial committees on the ministry. (Approved by 1985 GA, p. 220, Recommendations 6 and 7.)

## **6. Presbytery Has Jurisdiction Over Dismissed Ministers (*Constitution 6.51*)**

A letter of dismissal for a minister, licentiate, or candidate shall be granted to a particular presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in

America or another ecclesiastical body. A minister, licentiate, or candidate shall remain under the appropriate jurisdiction of the presbytery granting the letter of dismissal until proper notification of reception by the presbytery or other ecclesiastical body to which the letter was granted. No minister, licentiate, or candidate of one presbytery shall be received by another presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America without a duly certified letter of dismissal from the former presbytery.

The letter granted to a minister may not be used as evidence of good standing after twelve months from its date of issue. When holding a letter which is more than one year old he should present same to the presbytery granting the letter and furnish satisfactory evidence of his good conduct during the period of his lost membership. He/she is to be carried on the roll of the presbytery granting the letter and a new letter would need to be issued to join another presbytery. (*C. P. Digest*, Section 5.6b of the *Constitution*, Interpretive)

When ordained ministers seek to move to a different presbytery, the new presbytery may not examine the minister, but may refuse to receive a letter. (*C. P. Digest*, page 53, Section 5.6)

The presbytery does not grant a letter by giving a promise early in the proceedings that a letter will be granted at the end of the day. To fulfill the promise a motion would be required to grant the letter at the time earlier promised. (*C. P. Digest*, page 56, Section 5:6b Interpretive)

#### **7. Minister in Transit**

A minister in transit cannot sit as a member of synod (*Digest*, 3.07).

A minister in transit should be seated as an Advisory Member (*Digest*, 3.07).

#### **8. Dropping A Minister At His/Her Own Request (*Constitution* 6.53)**

A minister against whom no charges are pending or who is under no disciplinary action, if fully satisfied that God has not called him or her to the ministry, or if he or she has satisfactory evidence of his or her inability to serve as a minister, or if he or she shall for any other reason desire to do so, may request that his or her ordination be revoked and that he or she be divested of the office. The committee on the ministry shall be directed to counsel with the person, if it has not already done so, and report to the next stated meeting of the presbytery. If the person remains firm in his or her request, the presbytery shall approve the request, noting that it is not a disciplinary action.

#### **9. Do Not Drop a Minister Without Proper Presbyterial Authorization**

Never drop a minister from the roll unless he/she dies, his/her transfer is received from another presbytery, or until presbytery authorizes that he/she be dropped from the roll.

#### **10. Temporary Members of Presbytery (*Constitution*, 5.3--Adopted 1981-82)**

A minister of another church with whom the General Assembly has a reciprocal agreement whose ecclesiastical relations have been certified by that church, who has become a minister of a congregation or of a larger parish composed of denominational units, at least one of which is associated with this church, a minister of a union church or a minister of a church outside

of the United States with whom the General Assembly has a reciprocal agreement who is serving in a ministerial capacity in this church, including employment as a professor in a college or seminary of this church, may be enrolled for the period of such service as a member of the presbytery and have temporarily the rights and privileges of such membership.

**11. Advisory Members and Visiting Brethren (*Constitution 3.07*)**

Ministers in good standing in other presbyteries of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America or in churches with which the General Assembly is in correspondence who are present at any meeting of a presbytery or synod, may be seated as advisory members, which grants them the privilege to speak to any matter before the body. Ministers in good standing in other ecclesiastical bodies may be seated as visiting ministers. Persons so seated shall be introduced to the presbytery or synod by the moderator.

**12. Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations (*Constitution 6.40*)**

a. A minister of another ecclesiastical body who desires to become a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church shall appear before the committee on the ministry of the presbytery in which he or she wishes to be received. The committee on the ministry shall investigate the following:

- (1) Whether the minister has proper credentials from his or her ecclesiastical body;
- (2) Whether the minister has a degree from a college and graduate school of theology;
- (3) Whether the minister has a knowledge of the history, theology, and government of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/ Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America;
- (4) Whether the minister seems fit for service as a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. (6.41)

b. Standards For Receiving Persons from Other Denominations as Ordained Ministers (6.42)

The committee on the ministry, if satisfied in each of the areas described in Section 6.41, may recommend to presbytery that the minister be received as an ordained minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, upon giving affirmative answer to the questions put to licentiates at their ordination. Such procedure shall not exclude the opportunity for presbytery to examine the minister.

c. Procedure for Receiving Persons Ordained by Denominations Who Do Not Meet Cumberland Presbyterian Standards for Ordinations (6.43)

If the person seeking to become a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/ Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America neither has degrees from a college and a graduate school of theology nor has completed a course of study comparable to the program of alternate studies approved by the General Assembly, he or she shall be required during a probationary period to meet the educational standards for ordination. A person who does not have a college degree or has not completed the program of alternate studies shall have the status of a candidate. A person who has a college degree

or has completed the program of alternate studies required of a licentiate shall have the status of a licentiate. When the educational requirements have been satisfied, the probationary period may be ended and the minister's previous ordination confirmed upon giving affirmative answer to the questions put to licentiates at their ordination. Such procedure shall not exclude the opportunity for presbytery to examine the minister.

d. Receiving Ministers/Congregations in Cross Cultural Ministries

General Assembly interprets section 6.40 of the Constitution to provide for the recognition of ordination specifically for a Non-Anglo ordained minister who does not meet ordination standards, but who is going to serve within his/her own ethnic community to be received on a probationary period, be enrolled as a member of the presbytery, and the respective minister would submit to the oversight and mentoring of the Committee on the Ministry, during the provisional period. Section 6:34 of the Constitution in regard to "exceptional clause" is interpreted to allow persons in cross cultural ministries to be received. Presbyterian Committees on the Ministry are encouraged to work with the General Assembly Board of Missions staff in providing guidance for ministers and probationers in cross culture ministries.

**13. Letters of Dismission of Ministers/Probationers Can Only Be Granted to Another Presbytery (*Constitution 6.51*)**

A letter of dismission for a minister, licentiate, or candidate shall be granted to a particular presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America or another ecclesiastical body. A minister, licentiate, or candidate shall remain under the appropriate jurisdiction of the presbytery granting the letter of dismission until proper notification of reception by the presbytery or other ecclesiastical body to which the letter was granted. No minister licentiate, or candidate of one presbytery shall be received by another presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church/Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America without a duly certified letter of dismission from the former presbytery.

A candidate or a licentiate must receive a letter of dismission from a local congregation and join a congregation in the new presbytery before being received as a probationer.

**CONGREGATION REPRESENTATION IN PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD**

**1. Elder Representatives (*Constitution 5.4, 8.2, and 3.06*)**

Each congregation having an active membership of 1 to 300 shall be entitled to send one ruling elder representative to presbytery and synod; a congregation having 301-600 shall be entitled to two ruling elder delegates; the basis for representation shall continue in this proportion. All elders may be required to give proper evidence of their election by the session they represent (5.4). Synod may also designate representatives from each presbytery consisting of (1) elder and (1) minister for every 1000 active members or a portion thereof within the presbytery; the elders being from different churches (8.2).

All delegates shall be certified prior to the meeting of presbytery or synod on a form provided by the Stated Clerk and will receive Preliminary Minutes prior to the meeting.

Elder delegates shall be certified prior to the meeting of a presbytery or synod on a form provided by the Stated Clerk and will receive preliminary minutes prior to the meeting.

Called meetings of presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly shall be composed of the same representatives, or their alternates, who constituted the preceding stated meeting, unless the judicatory elects someone else as its representative. An elder whose tenure of office on the session has expired is not eligible to serve as a representative to a called meeting of a judicatory. (3.06)

In 1998 the General Assembly interpreted Section 5.4 that a particular church under the direction of a presbyterial commission is not entitled to be represented in presbytery. (*C. P. Digest*, p. 52b, *Constitution* Section 5.4 Interpretive)

**2. Do Not Drop a Church From the Roll Until Authorized by Presbytery**

The clerk should not drop a church from the roll until a final presbyterial action authorizes it; otherwise church property could be jeopardized.

**3. Transfer of a Congregation From one Presbytery to Another (*Digest*, 8.5)**

Only by action of the synod may a congregation be transferred from one presbytery to another. Synods have no right to change the presbyterial relations of a minister or ministers except in constituting new presbyteries, in which case they have constitutional jurisdiction in reference to both territory and ministers. (*Digest*, page 101)

**4. Elder Not Elected by Session May Be Seated By Presbytery (*Digest*, 5.4)**

There may be exceptional instances that would make it proper for the presbytery to accept evidence other than election by the church session as the right of a ruling elder to represent his session.

**5. Excusing Elders/Sessions at Presbytery (*Digest*, 8.2)**

The 172<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly interpreted 5.1 that since elders are elected to represent the session at the meeting of the judicatory, excuses for non attendance should come from the session. (2002, pages 170-171) (Editor's note: Presbyteries excuse session and sessions excuse their own elected representatives.)

**SOME COMMON ERRORS IN PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE CORRECTED**

**1. Election by Acclamation**

A motion to elect by acclamation does not elect. When such a motion carries, the moderator must then carry out the intent of the motion by calling for the vote that would elect the person to the office. It is this last vote that elects.

## **2. When the Question is Called For**

When a member of the body calls for the question, the moderator must take the vote to determine if the body is ready to vote on the previous question. Once it is determined that the body is ready to close debate the moderator then states the immediate pending motion and calls for the vote. At this point clarification is in order but not debate.

## **3. Two-thirds Majority Required to Cut Off Debate**

Cumberland Presbyterian Rules of Order do not state the vote required to cut off debate when the question is called for. Since we have no rule we follow *Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 37, which requires a two-thirds majority. (The general principle is that any motion that takes away rights or limits freedom requires more than a majority vote.)

## **4. Negative Vote Must Be Taken**

Even though it seems to the moderator that the positive vote is a clear majority, the negative vote must be taken; otherwise the action could be questioned.

## **5. Presentation of Report of Nominating Committee**

The report of a Nominating Committee is read to the body and treated as any other nomination(s). No action or motion to receive is necessary (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 46). At the appropriate time the moderator must allow for nominations from the floor for each office to be filled.

## **6. Nominations Need Not Be Seconded (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Sec. 46)**

## **7. Voting Not Limited to Nominees**

When the vote is by ballot a member is at liberty to vote for any member who is not declared ineligible by the bylaws (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Sec. 47).

## **8. Appoint a Committee; Elect a Commission**

Presbytery may appoint a committee, however, a commission must be elected. A commission reports directly to the presbytery/synod, then is dissolved by the proper judicatory after the task is completed. A commission for ordination must have at least two ordained ministers, and one or more elders who were members of the presbytery approving the ordination. The presbytery could approve elders serving on the commission if they had not been a member of the particular presbytery, so long as some elders on the commission were members of the presbytery. Elders on any commission must be active on their session as commissions are authorized to conduct the particular business of the judicatory, therefore, elders must be eligible to be a part of the judicatory from which they were elected.

## **9. Vote of Presbyteries on Constitutional Matters Referred by General Assembly**

Presbyteries shall act upon an amendment referred by the General Assembly within the first year of the referral and report their vote no later than the next meeting of the General Assembly, after the amendment was transmitted to the presbyteries. (*Constitution*, Section 11.4.c.)

The vote of presbytery on any constitutional matter referred to it by the General Assembly requires only a majority vote to certify the presbytery to be in favor of the change.

## **10. Making a Motion**

In making a motion some address the moderator and say “I move you...” One does not move the moderator. It is proper to address the moderator and say “I move that...” (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Sec. 2).

## **11. Closing the Sessions**

The moderator of every judicatory above the session, in closing its meeting, may have a hymn to be sung in addition to the praying of a closing prayer or the pronouncement of a benediction. (*Rules of Order*, 5.4)

## **CHURCHES IN CORRESPONDENCE**

The 147th General Assembly recommended that the Stated Clerk publish a list of churches with whom the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is in correspondence. Being in correspondence was interpreted as “those churches with whom there is official communication at the direction of the General Assembly, with whom the Assembly exchanges fraternal delegates, or who are members of a cooperative body to which the Cumberland Presbyterian Church belongs as a denomination.” (1977 *Minutes*, pp. 142-143, III-B, 1 and 6; 189, III-B)

Such bodies in North America are:

Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
Guyana Congregational Union  
Guyana Presbyterian Church  
Hungarian Reformed Church in America  
Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformado En Cuba  
Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church  
Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Presbyterian Church in Grenada  
Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago  
Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)  
Presbytery of Guyana  
Reformed Church in America  
United Church of Canada



United Church of Christ  
United Church of Jamaica and The Grand Cayman  
United Methodist Church

### **PRESBYTERIAL REPRESENTATIVES TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

1. Each presbytery is entitled to elect commissioners to the General Assembly on the basis of its total active church membership (including ordained clergy) according to the following proportions: 1 - 1250, one minister and one elder; 1251 - 2500, two ministers and two elders; the basis continuing in this proportion (*Constitution*, 9.2).
2. Each presbytery is eligible to elect two youth advisory (non-voting) delegates to the General Assembly. (GA Regulation A-3).
3. A ruling elder must be serving as a member of his/her church session to be eligible to be elected to represent his presbytery at General Assembly, and must still be on the session when the General Assembly meets. (GA General Regulation A-2). It is a good practice to inquire if the elder(s) nominated will rotate off the session prior to the time they will serve as commissioners.
4. The names of commissioners and youth advisory delegates must be certified on official forms furnished by the General Assembly's Stated Clerk (GA Regulation A-4).
5. The Commissioners should be elected at fall meetings of presbyteries, if at all possible, so the General Assembly Office may compile a list of commissioners and youth advisory delegates prior to the meeting of the General Assembly's Program Planning Committee in early December.
6. The General Assembly cannot direct presbyteries whom to send as representatives to General Assembly. It has, however, asked church leaders to work toward "drawing more women into a more active, visible role in the Church." (1973 *MINUTES*, pp. 71, 98, and 203).

### **RECORDING MINUTES**

The ABC's of minutes are accuracy, brevity, and clarity. Generally, minutes should state what was done, not what was said. They should reflect no personal opinions or criticisms.

#### **1. Minutes should include:**

- a. name of body
- b. date and place of meeting
- c. kind of meeting (regular, called, adjourned session, congregational)
- d. presiding officer (who took the chair?)
- e. roll - making sure a quorum is present
- f. constituting prayer—"All church courts shall be opened and closed with prayer." (*Constitution* 3.05, *Rules of Order*, 5.1, 5.4)
- g. any action regarding previous minutes, (e.g., called meeting)
- h. correspondences received or acted upon

- i. reports received (committee, etc.)
- j. actions of the body (motions, consents, program records...)
- k. approval of minutes
- l. adjournment and prayer

**2. Minutes must be signed by clerk and, when necessary, the moderator. (*Rules of Order*, 1.4 & 3.4f)**

Generally, in practice, most presbyteries require the clerk and the moderator to sign the minutes. Historically, when clerks wrote the minutes in long-hand, the handwriting verified who had written the minutes. Today, with printed minutes, the signatures have become necessary to certify the minutes. Rules of Order 1.4 i, the moderator is to authenticate by signature, when necessary all acts, orders, and proceedings of the judicatory. Rules of Order 3.4 f, it is the responsibility of the Stated Clerk to sign the minutes of all meetings also. (It would be a good practice to have the Moderator and the Stated Clerk to sign the file copies.)

**3. Committee of the Whole**

The proceedings of a Committee of the Whole should not be entered in the minutes, but the report of the Committee should be entered (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 32).

**4. Recording motions**

The clerk shall record motions, resolutions and items of business in separate paragraphs that they may be easily discovered (*Robert's Rules of Order*). It is good practice to give headings to as many items as is practical.

The clerk will not record, unless required by the judicatory, any motion or resolution not adopted (*Rules of Order*, 3.5). The body may direct the clerk to record a main motion that was lost in order to have a record of how a business item was disposed of.

The clerk may request that the mover of any motion reduce it to writing (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Secs. 4, 54).

Some examples of how motions may be recorded are:

- a. The following position statement was adopted by the session (presbytery, synod):.....
- b. On motion Obion Presbytery (the session, Synod) adjourned to meet (date and time).
- c. The Report of the Committee on Missions was read, amended, concurred in, its recommendations adopted, marked Appendix "A" and filed.

It is not required to record the mover of the motion. The one who seconded the motion should not be recorded (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 51).

**5. Recording the Vote**

Record the vote when required such as when a 2/3 majority is necessary. (*Rules of Order*, 3.4-h). It is always required when there is a change in a standing rule or any regular motion carried

that requires more than a majority of votes. In a roll call vote the name of the moderator shall be the last called (*Rules of Order*, 12.4). When you tabulate a vote give the results to the moderator to announce to the body (*Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 38).

Any member may request that their vote be recorded.

## **6. Roll**

The clerk maintains a roll of the body, keeps it current during the meeting and makes it available to the moderator (*Rules of Order*, 3.4-b).

It may be advisable for your presbytery or synod to request certification of ruling elders in advance. This will assist you in compiling a roll at the time of registration or roll call.

## **7. Committee Appointments**

The clerk is responsible for notifying persons of committee appointments, and election to Board/agencies and referrals to the committees/boards. (*Rules of Order*, 3.4 d)

## **8. Agenda**

The clerk should keep a record of changes in the agenda and assist the moderator concerning the orders of the day.

## **9. Board Reports Cannot Be Changed**

“The presbytery does not have power to delete items from the reports of its boards and agencies in the compiling of its minutes.” (*Digest*, Rules of Order 13.09). “Board reports which are reviewed by a select committee cannot be amended by the judicatory and, if printed, shall be printed as submitted by the board. However, board reports which are brought directly to the floor of the judicatory for review and action shall be treated as committee reports and be subject to amendment, but the judicatory shall not make such a board report (or a committee or commission report) appear to say something different from the wording that was actually reported. For this reason, the published report would show clearly whatever changes the judicatory makes by the use of brackets, underlining, italics, or other appropriate means.” (*Rules of Order*, 13.09).

### **REVIEW OF RECORDS BY HIGHER JUDICATORY**

Every judicatory above the session shall, at stated intervals, as prescribed, review the proceedings of the judicatory next below. If any judicatory shall fail to send its records to the next highest judicatory for this purpose, it may be ordered to do so immediately or on a specified date, or else face disciplinary action (*Rules of Discipline*, 4.11).

In reviewing the records of a lower judicatory, it is proper to examine whether: (a) the proceedings have been correct; (b) the proceedings have been wise and equitable and for the edification of the church; (c) the proceedings have been correctly recorded; (d) the directives of the higher judicatories have been obeyed. (*Rules of Discipline*, 4.12).

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE EXAMINATION OF PRESBYTERIAL RECORDS**

Minutes of each of its presbyteries are to be examined by synod to ascertain:

1. if the actions taken by the presbytery are legal in the light of the *Constitution*, the *Rules of Order*, and the directives of the General Assembly.
2. if the report of the proceedings of the presbytery is recorded in such manner as to assure historical clarity;
3. if the presbytery is functioning as a presbytery in carrying out the program of the Church;
4. when the presbytery is using effective or innovative procedures or programs, information concerning the synod which might well advise its other constituent presbyteries;
5. if the presbytery has filed annually with the General Assembly's Commission on the Ministry the Questionnaire for reporting on ministerial relations, including a statement on any censures or ordinations, and if the standards for censures and ordinations were met.

-1976 *MINUTES* of the General Assembly, pp. 101, 190

### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE EXAMINATION OF PRESBYTERIAL RECORDS**

The minutes are to reflect records of preparation for ordination. When persons are approved for the Program of Alternate Studies: Did the Presbytery have a two thirds vote? Write in the minutes the reason for the probationer attending an alternate route. Send the forms to the Commission on the Ministry for its review. Does the probationer have a minimum of 60 graduate hours before enrolling in PAS? (Interpretative 6.202, 1999 and 2004, page 82) Does the presbytery follow the Confession of Faith in the standards for licensure and ordination?

1. Do the Minutes reflect that the presbytery through the proper agency has given approval to a pastoral relationship prior to a minister moving on the field. (Constitution 7..06)
2. In case of disciplinary proceedings, does the presbyterial record contain a complete record of the proceedings?
3. Has the presbytery made provision for continuing education for ministers? (Page 58) (This is a role that could be assumed by synod.)
4. Does the presbytery make a concerted effort to promote Our United Outreach? (Digest, page 60)
5. Is a Moderator elected at each meeting of the presbytery? (Digest, page 166) Is a Moderator appointed for each vacant church? (Digest, page 66)
6. If elders are authorized to serve communion with a particular congregation (Constitution 4.6 and 5.6 p), does the presbytery review this annually? The 1994 General Assembly directed that presbyteries are to insure regular preaching and the availability of the sacraments. (Digest, page 66 b) Is there any record that the presbyteries are following through with this directive?

## PRINCIPLES FOR SETTING PRESBYTERIAL BOUNDARIES

8.5 c Advisory Opinion (1958, page 127)

1. A synod should arrange its presbyteries in such a manner as will provide the most effective ministry to its churches. Sentiment with respect to a name or a traditional organizational arrangement should not take precedence over the needs of the churches.
2. To be effective, a presbytery should include enough resident ministers and congregations to insure a functioning organization at all times. Specifically, this means competent leadership, both lay and ministerial, to staff the various presbyterial agencies that are required for an effective functioning unit. This also means financial expansion within its own bounds.
3. Presbyterial lines should be drawn with reference to areas of responsibility, rather than simply with reference to existing churches.
4. In any effort toward presbyterial re-alignments, the synod should reconsider the overall picture within its bounds, rather than thinking simply of the combination of weak presbyteries.
5. When presbyterial re-alignments are attempted, competent legal counsel should be secured in order to protect property rights, endowments, etc.

## APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

An appeal removes a case already decided from a lower to the next higher judicatory (*Rules of Discipline* 4.201).

Any person or judicatory that wishes to appeal an action must give notice in writing of the intention and reasons for doing so. Notice must be given by persons before the adjournment of the judicatory whose actions are being appealed, or within ten days to its moderator or stated clerk; and by a judicatory in writing within sixty days following the date of the action it wishes to appeal (*Rules of Discipline*, 4.203).

## PRESERVATION OF RECORDS

All records and documents are the property of the judicatory and shall be kept and stored in accordance with the provision of the Constitution. Upon leaving office, the stated clerk shall transfer all such records and documents to the successor. (*Rules of Order* 3.3)

It shall be the duty of the stated clerk to record all minutes in permanent form and to supply extracts from them when properly requested.....(*Rules of Order* 3.4)

### 1. The Official Copy of the Minutes

The official minutes of the judicatory may be the master copy from which the published minutes are printed, or the published minutes provided any errors are corrected and they are certified by the signatures of the moderator and clerk (*Digest*, Rules of Order 3.4). If the master copies are

the official copies they should be bound in permanent covers, e.g., session record book binders. Either way it would be worthwhile to have bound into book form copies of all published minutes. Several minutes may be bound into one volume.

## **2. Copies of the Minutes Should Be Sent to Archives**

Four copies of all presbyterial and synodic minutes should be sent to the Historical Archives of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1978 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104. A copy also should be sent to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

Copies of session minutes which are not needed for frequent reference may also be sent to the Historical Archives. All old session records, originals (preferably) or copies, should be sent to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery for deposit in the archives of the Historical Foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

The following would appreciate a copy of your minutes: Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard St., Philadelphia, PA 19147; and Historical Foundation of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, NC 28757.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **1. Lay Preacher**

“Lay minister” is not proper nomenclature. (*Digest*, 2.61). The role of a licentiate is that of a “lay preacher” if he, with the approval of presbytery, shall choose to terminate specific preparation toward ordination. (*Digest*, 6.207)

### **2. When Moderator is Absent**

If the moderator of a session is absent, or if the session is without a moderator, the clerk, or in his/her absence a member of the session, shall preside until a moderator pro tem is elected. In a congregation without a pastor, the moderator pro tem may be a member of the session or any ordained minister of the presbytery. (*Rules of Order* 1.7) A session meeting should not be held without notifying the presbytery-appointed moderator when a church is being served by laypersons, licentiates, candidates, or ministers of another denomination. The session should adjust its meeting to cooperate with the presbyterial-appointed moderator.

### **3. Receiving a Congregation From Another Denomination**

When a congregation of another denomination requests that it be received by presbytery be certain that all requirements of the Constitution are met (See *Constitution*, 10.2).

### **4. Names of Congregation**

The use of “Presbyterian Church, Cumberland” for directory or publicity purposes is not illegal. However, the use of “Cumberland Presbyterian” in deeds, legal instruments, and legal matters is imperative. (1962 Minutes, page 131)

(*Digest*, page 37) All church property should be deeded to the presbytery to be held in trust for the local congregation.

**5. Church Property Sale Proceeds**

Proceeds from sale of church property recommended for mission churches. (Digest, page 62)

**SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A MEMORIAL**

The following is an ordinary outline, with the word WHEREAS set in caps, the first word after it not capitalized unless it is a proper name, and no comma after WHEREAS unless punctuation is necessary for the sense of the sentence. The word RESOLVED is set in caps and followed by a comma and a capital letter. The "Therefore be it" is set on the line above RESOLVED.

WHEREAS it has become necessary.....  
.....; and

WHEREAS conditions are such as to warrant.....  
.....; and

WHEREAS, moreover, on the 18th of May, 1970, .....  
.....: Therefore be it

RESOLVED, That.....  
.....; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That.....

I certify that this is a true copy of a memorial adopted by \_\_\_\_\_  
Presbytery on \_\_\_\_\_.

Date

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Stated Clerk

**PRINTING THE MINUTES**

Certified minutes may be printed, photocopied or mimeographed as long as they are officially signed by the Moderator and Clerk. (*Digest, Rules of Order 3.4*).

**GENERAL DUTIES OF CLERKS**

***Robert's Rules of Order***

1. Located at the meeting so as to allow convenient private conversation with the Moderator.
2. Act in the absence of the Moderator in calling emergency meetings and calling meetings to order.
3. In consultation with the Moderator prepare a proposed agenda for the meeting.
4. Report to the Moderator the number of votes on each side when a division of the house is called for.

## **Cumberland Presbyterian *Rules of Order***

1. Record all minutes in permanent form and preserve minutes, documents, and papers, and submit such records to higher judicatories. (3.1 and 3.4)
2. Store documents in accordance with the *Constitution* and transfer records and documents to successor. (3.3)
3. Keep on file committee records and membership roll. (3.4)
4. Copy and distribute to the members the minutes of the previous meeting. (3.4)
5. Notify officers, committee members and delegates of their election. (3.4)
6. Certify delegates or commissioners. (3.4)
7. Sign the minutes. (3.4)
8. Read papers to be acted upon, unless otherwise determined by the judicatory. (3.4)

## **MINUTE KEEPING FOR CLERKS**

### ***Robert's Rules of Order***

1. Record books should have margins sufficient for corrections.
2. Minutes should reflect objectivity, without personal comments.
3. Generally the minutes should record what is done, not what is said.
4. Lost motions are not recorded.
5. When the vote is by ballot, the results of the vote should be reported.
6. When the vote is by roll call, each member's vote should be indicated.
7. Previous minutes may be amended.
8. Names of makers of motion may be recorded but not those who second.  
(Other authorities contend that the actions taken are the action of the whole body and therefore the names of those who offer motions need not be recorded.)

### ***CP Rules of Order:***

1. Record only motions adopted.
2. Clerk verifies extracts of minutes for higher judicatories.



**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE OF BLANK MINUTES**

\_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery  
Regular (adjourned, called) Session  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery met in (regular, adjourned, called) session on (date) at (location).

Moderator (full name) called the meeting to order at (time).  
A quorum (or the total number of ministers and elders) was present.

The opening prayer was led by (full name).

If there is a service of worship or a devotional, it may be summarized here.

This is the likely place in the program to elect the moderator.  
Indicate the opportunity for nominations, list those nominated and the person elected.

Members in attendance were:  
(Distinguish ministers from elders and indicate the church which each elder represents. A separate attendance roll attached as an appendix is often clearer)

Advisory Members were: (Full name and presbytery to which each belongs)

Visitors were: (Full name and title, if relevant)

Previous minutes approved (if this has not already been done)

(If a called meeting, the call should be recorded at this point.)

Communications:Excuses for absence (Possibly headed under general reasons: illness, death in family, funeral or other church duties)

Official communications requiring action or referral

General communications containing information but not requiring action

Committee Reports:

The report of the Committee or Board on \_\_\_\_\_ was presented by (full name).

Amendment: (Proposed amendments which fail need not be recorded unless the presbytery so directs)

On motion, the report was adopted (as amended) (by a vote of \_\_\_ to \_\_\_, if a count is required or called for) and filed as Appendix \_\_\_\_\_.

After committee reports are concluded, other scheduled business may be prepared for, such as elections.

A slate of nominees was presented by the Committee on Nominations. Opportunity was given for nominations from the floor. There being none, the slate was elected by acclamation. OR Nominations were also made from the floor.

Those elected were:

(Listing the boards or committees and the people elected alphabetically makes it easier to find a name; for example:

Board of Christian Education

Mr. Joe Brown, Shiloh Church (or in the case of synod, presbytery), be elected for a (designate the number of years) term or to succeed himself for a \_\_\_\_\_year term.

Mrs. Mary Smith, Cleveland Church, to fill the one (or other) year unexpired term of (insert name of person).

Other (New) Business

(Record carefully the motions made and adopted. Your notes may contain motions which eventually fail. These need to be recorded only on instruction of the body.)

On motion, the meeting was adjourned at (time) to meet in adjourned session on (date), (time), (place). OR

The next regular meeting will be on (date, time, place.)

**APPENDIX B**  
**SAMPLE OF BLANK MINUTES**

Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Cumberland Presbyterian Church  
Regular (called, congregational) Meeting  
Date

The session of \_\_\_\_\_ Cumberland Presbyterian Church met in (regular, called, congregational) session on (date) at (location).

Moderator (full name) called the meeting to order at (time).  
A quorum (or the total number of members) was present.

The opening prayer was led by (full name).  
If there is a devotional, it may be summarized here.

Members in attendance were:  
(Listing names alphabetically makes it easier to find a particular name.)

Previous minutes approved (if this has not already been done)

Communications:  
Excuses for absence  
Official communications requiring action or referral  
General communications containing information but not requiring action

Committee Reports:

The report of the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_ was presented.

Amendment: (Proposed amendments which fail need not be recorded unless the presbytery so directs)

On motion, the report was adopted (as amended) (by a vote of \_\_\_ to \_\_\_, if some part of the report affects a standing rule and thus requires a 2/3 majority) and filed as Appendix \_\_\_\_.

After committee reports are concluded, other scheduled business may be prepared for, such as elections or nominations to the congregation.

A slate of nominees was presented by the committee on Nominations. Opportunity was given for other nominations. There being none, the slate was elected by acclamation. OR Nominations were also made from the floor.

Those elected (or nominated) were:  
(Listing the boards or committees and the people elected alphabetically makes it easier to find a name; for example:

Committee on Christian Education

Mr. Joe Brown, Class of 1995

Mrs. Jill McInnes, Class of 1996

Mrs. Mary Smith, Class of 1994 (filling unexpired term of John Green)

Other (New) Business

(Record carefully the motions made and adopted. Your notes may contain motions which eventually fail. These need to be recorded only on instruction of the body.

On motion, the meeting was adjourned at (time) with prayer by \_\_\_\_\_.

An adjourned meeting is scheduled for (date, time, place) OR The next regular meeting will be on (date, time, place).

---

Session Clerk

---

Moderator

**APPENDIX C**  
**SAMPLE CHECKLIST FOR REVIEW OF SESSION MINUTES**

	Yes	No
1. Records are carefully and neatly kept.	_____	_____
2. Indication of meetings frequently enough to attend to church business.	_____	_____
3. Complete data on place, date, hour, names of those present and presence of quorum	_____	_____
4. Indication of prayer at beginning and ending of all meetings.	_____	_____
5. Indication that minutes were read and approved.	_____	_____
6. Complete motions and actions.	_____	_____
7. Election of delegates to presbytery indicated.	_____	_____
8. Report of delegates to presbytery.	_____	_____
9. Injunctions of higher judicatories carried out.	_____	_____
10. Review of minutes of General Assembly.	_____	_____
11. Review of minutes of Diaconate.	_____	_____
12. Minutes signed by Moderator and Clerk.	_____	_____
13. Officer election, ordination, and installation.	_____	_____
14. Statistical report for year entered into record or attached as appendix.	_____	_____
15. Minutes sent to presbytery for review on schedule.	_____	_____
16. Minutes of congregational meetings included.	_____	_____
17. Indication that regular financial reports are given and attached as appendix.	_____	_____
18. Indication of baptisms, reception of members, marriages, deaths.	_____	_____

**APPENDIX D**  
**Sample Checklist for Review of Session Records**

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Moderator \_\_\_\_\_ Clerk \_\_\_\_\_

Satisfactory compliance on these items.

Indicates failure to comply with procedure indicated.

SESSION MINUTES AND RECORDS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes of session in order and signed.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Duly constituted; quorum, opened and closed with prayer.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Read and approved previous minutes, recorded approval.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Communications read, referred or acted upon.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Inclusion of committee reports with action taken.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Reference to previous actions include dates of actions.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Election and reports of presbytery delegates.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Membership and session rolls in order.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Purpose and procedure of called meetings.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Budget and treasurer's report accepted and approved.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

11. \_\_\_\_\_ Calling congregational meeting and purpose of meeting.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Nominating committee report to congregation with tenures.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes of meeting recorded and approved by session.

GENERAL REVIEW AND CONTROL

14. \_\_\_\_\_ Elders and deacons properly ordained and installed.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Reflects session's spiritual oversight of congregation.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ "...proceedings have been correct."
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Reports from church school, CPWM, trustees, etc.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Historical records given to archives.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Directives of presbytery have been followed.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Directives of general assembly have been obeyed.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ Worship and sacraments provided regularly.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelism planned and conducted by the session.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ Christian education and Bible study maintained regularly.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ Visitation of the sick, care of families and bereaved.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Special attention to special needs of community.
26. \_\_\_\_\_ Outreach for new members, help for the poor and needy.
27. \_\_\_\_\_ Indicates the last time minutes approved by presbytery.
28. \_\_\_\_\_ Paid presbyterial, synodic and denominational asking.

MEMBERSHIP ROLLS

29. \_\_\_\_\_ Active and inactive membership roll up-to-date.
30. \_\_\_\_\_ Recorded baptisms, marriages, dismissals, funerals.
31. \_\_\_\_\_ Roll of active elders, deacons and trustees with tenure.

COMMENTS ON ITEMS NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL COMMENTS:







## Functions of Judicatories

### **The session has the responsibility to:**

- ▶ Call a pastor, subject to the approval of presbytery.
- ▶ Admonish or suspend members found guilty in a disciplinary hearing, subject to appeal to presbytery.
- ▶ Elect representatives to report from higher church judicatories.
- ▶ Observe and carry out injunctions of the higher judicatories.
- ▶ Submit accurate record of its proceedings to presbytery, at least annually.

### **The presbytery has the responsibility to:**

- ▶ Approve ministers to serve as pastors, establish the pastoral relation and dissolve it.
- ▶ Review session records and discipline sessions for whatever they may have done contrary to order.
- ▶ Examine and decide appeals, protests and referrals brought before it.
- ▶ See that the injunctions of the higher judicatories are obeyed.
- ▶ Visit particular churches, inquire into their condition and redress the evils that may have arisen in them.
- ▶ Settle differences regarding church property and its use.
- ▶ Approve location of new churches, relocation of existing churches and proposals and plans of churches considering building or adding to church facilities.
- ▶ Unite, divide and dissolve churches; form and receive new churches.
- ▶ Take oversight of churches without services of a minister, appointing a minister to moderate the session.
- ▶ Provide training elders who are authorized to preside over Communion and to review the authorization annually.

- ▶ Formulate budgets and assign shares to churches.
- ▶ Elect representatives to higher judicatories.
- ▶ Propose measures to the synod or the General Assembly as may be for the good of the church or society in general.
- ▶ Submit full and accurate records of proceedings to the synod for review.

### **The synod has the responsibility to:**

- ▶ Examine and decide appeals, protests and referrals sent up from presbyteries.
- ▶ Review records of presbyteries and redress whatever may have been done contrary to order.
- ▶ Organize, divide or dissolve presbyteries.
- ▶ Formulate budgets and assign shares to presbyteries.
- ▶ Settle differences regarding church property and its use, upon appeal.
- ▶ Propose measures to the General assembly as may be of common advantage to the entire church.
- ▶ Submit full and accurate records of proceedings to the General Assembly.

### **The General Assembly has responsibility to:**

- ▶ Receive and decide appeals, protests and referrals brought before it.
- ▶ Give counsel concerning the government of the church in all cases submitted.
- ▶ Review records of the synods.
- ▶ Formulate budgets.
- ▶ Promote the prosperity and enlargement of the church; create, divide or dissolve synods.
- ▶ Oversee the affairs of the whole church.

(For a more complete listing see *Constitution*, Sections 4.1-4.7; 5.6-5.7; 8.5-8.6; and 9.4.)

## Serving as Representatives to Higher Judicatories

A delegate to presbytery	A delegate to synod	A commissioner to General Assembly
▶ is an elder currently serving on the session	▶ is an elder currently serving on the session	▶ is an elder currently serving on the session
▶ is elected as a delegate by the session	▶ is elected by the presbytery	▶ is elected as a commissioner by the presbytery
▶ is expected to be present for the duration of the presbytery meeting	▶ is expected to be present for the duration of the synod meeting	▶ is expected to be present for the duration of the General Assembly meeting
▶ is expected to serve on committees as needed	▶ is expected to serve on committees as needed	▶ is expected to serve on committees
▶ may be asked to assist in worship and serving of Holy Communion	▶ may be asked to assist in worship and serving of Holy Communion	▶ may be asked to assist in worship and serving of Holy Communion
▶ is expected to represent the session by voting on issues before the presbytery*	▶ is expected to represent the presbytery by voting on issues before the synod*	▶ is expected to represent the presbytery by voting on issues before the General Assembly*
▶ is expected to report to the session the decisions of the presbytery	▶ is expected to report to the presbytery the decisions of the synod	▶ is expected to report to the presbytery the decisions of the General Assembly

\*A judicatory after having elected one of its members to represent it at a higher judicatory shall not instruct that member how to vote on the issues; however, counseling representatives is always in order. (*Rules of Order*, section 11.6)

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