

# Handbook for Clerk of Session 2023





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## Introduction

Welcome to the office of Clerk of Session! You have joined a unique and essential group of people within the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Book of Order mandates that each governing body of the PCUSA have a moderator and a Clerk. (G-3.0104) Clerks of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly are called Stated Clerks. Those serving sessions are called Clerks of Session.

The Handbook for Clerks of Session is written by Clerks to guide the Clerk of Session's responsibilities. It is written with the following assumptions that the Clerk of Session:

- Plays a vital role within the Presbyterian Church (USA);
- maintains the history of the faithfulness of the Church through careful minutes and records; is interested in and knowledgeable about Presbyterian polity;
- along with the Moderator, is the liaison between Session and Presbytery;
- is always striving to be a servant to Session in the fullest New Testament sense and is equipped spiritually to fulfill the servant role;
- is elected to be the continuing ecclesiastical officer of the Congregation. In this capacity, the Clerk is responsible for seeing that worship takes place and that the pulpit is filled.

A Clerk of a governing body understands that our order is to be derived from Scripture, as expressed in our Church's Confessions. Our order represents the principle that we must live our lives together according to our faith and as a witness to the demands of Scripture. A Clerk of a governing body respects the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as our covenant with one another about how we can, in our diversity, be such a witness. A Clerk knows that our rules are never an end in themselves but rather an attempt to be faithful to our covenant. Our polity commits to a shared ministry among ruling elders, deacons, members, and teaching elders; it commits to a representative form of government in which both ruling and teaching elders have care of the Congregation; and it commits to corporate governance in which decisions are always corporate, never singular. Together, the Moderator and the Clerk of Session are the guardians of this polity, all to further the Great Ends of the Church.

As Clerk, you will record a good deal of your Church's history as you write the minutes of your Session. Future generations will learn what your Church did to further Christ's mission in the world by reading the minutes you write. It follows then that it is essential to keep accurate records of all the proceedings in the Session meetings and congregational meetings. This Handbook has been prepared to provide the Clerks of Sessions with information and examples to assist them in their work and ensure that they have easily accessible information about what must be included in the session record books.

## Role of the Clerk of Session

The Clerk of Session's primary role is to maintain and preserve the Church's records, including the minutes of Session and congregational meetings and the rolls and registers. Clerks may assist the Moderator in docket preparation or serve as a sounding board for the Moderator. An essential role of the Clerk is to assist the Pastor by keeping the Pastor informed and providing information to the Pastor as requested. Other assistance will be determined by the relationship between the Pastor and the Clerk and the Pastor's needs.

### As a new Clerk of Session, your priorities should be to:

1. Locate the minute book and Church register. Locate all previous record books. Are they adequately stored? These records should never be taken from the Church and kept in a fireproof safe when not in use. You are the only person who can authorize entries into these books.
2. Locate a current Book of Order. G-3.02 discusses the duties of the Session. You will find most of the information you need immediately in that chapter. That chapter also describes the rolls and registers of the Church and gives instructions on maintaining them. The Book of Order may be downloaded free from the Presbyterian Church (USA) 's website at <https://www.pcusastore.com>. [Download](#)
3. Locate a copy of your church by-laws. Where the Book of Order is silent, the Congregation's by-laws will often tell you what needs to be done.
4. Keep the presbytery address, telephone number, and website address. You will find help on almost every problem at Presbytery. The Stated Clerk of The Presbytery of Long Island is the person you directly relate to. For help with your questions and knowledge of whom to call, contact:

#### Office of the Stated Clerk,

The Presbytery of Long Island  
109 Udall Road West Islip NY 11795  
Phone (631)-499-7171  
[www.presbyteryofli.org](http://www.presbyteryofli.org)

#### Other websites that you may need are:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)  
The Synod of the Northeast, [www.synodne.org](http://www.synodne.org)  
The Board of Pensions, [www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org)

5. Make sure that you have the proper supplies.  
You will need acid-free archival copy paper for the final minutes. ([GAYLORD ARCHIVAL paper](#))  
We no longer recommend having them in the ringed binders. Place each year in a labeled acid-free folder ([GAYLORD ARCHIVAL storage](#))
6. Plan to attend the annual Clerk's training each year. You will receive notice of the training. Here you will receive answers to your questions, additional help, and fellowship with other Clerks of Session.

## Responsibilities of Clerk of Session at a Glance

1. Keep a complete and accurate record of the Session proceedings (G-3.0204).
2. Keep the roll of session membership and attendance (G-3.0104).
3. Please arrange for the careful preservation of session records (G-3.0104), making a recommendation to the Session for the permanent safekeeping of its records-G-3.0107
4. Furnish extracts from the minutes required by another Council (governing body) of the Church (G-3.0104).
5. Maintain and preserve rolls and registers required of Session (G-3.0204a).
6. Be familiar with the Session's responsibilities as described in the Book of Order G-3.0201
7. Notify the Session or Congregation of special meetings, describing the business that will be transacted accurately. Notification of annual and special meetings of the Congregation usually is given on two successive Sundays (G-1.0501 and G-1.0502)].
8. Be sure that the annual statistical form requested by the General Assembly is completed accurately and reported to the PCUSA by the deadline noted in a letter from the Presbytery Stated Clerk. Also, return other paperwork requested by the Stated Clerk by the deadlines noted.
9. Bring the session minute book to one of the Minutes Reading meetings of the Presbytery for annual review.
10. Serve as secretary for the Congregation meetings (G-1.0507), making sure that the minutes are received by Session and are inscribed in the permanent session minute book
11. Bring all official correspondence to the pastor/moderator's attention and the Session and respond as directed by the Session.
12. Keep a list of unfinished business, including all matters referred to a committee or a staff member for a later report to Session, and remind the appropriate persons(s) if not reported expeditiously.
13. Be prepared to respond to questions of parliamentary procedure in meetings if requested. (Meetings shall be conducted following the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order (2011) except in those cases where the Book of Order provides otherwise (G-3.0105).
14. Receive and submit communications from/to other governing bodies.
15. Notify the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of changes in Session membership.
16. Assist the Moderator in preparing the agenda for session meetings, as requested.
17. Assist the Moderator in church officer training when requested. Remind Moderator of required annual actions.
18. In consultation with the Moderator, prepare a statement of highlights of session actions and reports following the meeting for information for the Congregation.  
Note: Confidential matters should not be included.
19. May moderate the congregational meeting, if requested by the pastor or session vote with the Pastor's concurrence, during the Pastor's salary review. If this occurs, a temporary Clerk should be appointed.

## TimeLine for Clerks Related to Session Meetings

Below is a "SUGGESTED LIST," meet with your Pastor to figure out what works with your Session.

The church secretary aids many Clerks. However, the Clerk is accountable for the following responsibilities and directs the church secretary in the following tasks.

### Two Weeks Before Session

- Send meeting notices. Contact committee chairs about unfinished and referred business for which they are responsible. Remind chairs that all recommendations need to be in writing with enough copies for the Session members.
- The call of a special meeting must include the exact purpose for which the meeting is called, and no business other than that named can be transacted.

### One Week Before

- Develop the Session's docket with the Moderator to handle all business most efficiently. The docket becomes the outline for the session minutes.

### Session Meeting

- Seek approval of the previous meeting minutes and record the meeting minutes.
- Most sessions have found that written reports enable the flow of business. Only the recommendations appear in session minutes unless Session orders the entire report on the minutes. Many sessions find it very helpful for committees to have their reports ready to be emailed with the agenda.

### After the Session

- Complete your minutes
- Send minutes to Session members to be reviewed
- Send excerpts from the minutes to each chair of all motions related to the particular committee.
- Complete all correspondence directed by the minutes, including letters of transfer.
- Record in the rolls and registers all membership changes ordered by Session.

**NOTE:** These are manageable tasks if done regularly. If a Clerk falls behind, the task becomes challenging, and memory fades. Set a regular schedule for yourself. Some clerks have church secretaries primarily responsible for the minutes, rolls, and registers. The Clerk of Session supervises the church secretary in all matters related to the minutes, rolls, and register. These records' accuracy is the Clerk's responsibility, not the secretary's.



## What to Take to the Session Meeting

You are responsible for all papers and documents that aid the Session in reaching its decision. It will be helpful to have the following at each meeting:

- a current Book of Order
- the congregational by-laws
- the session committee membership list
- the current-year session minutes
- a list of all referred and unfinished business
- a copy of Robert's Rules of Order. Notes on Session

### Notes on Session Meetings

1. Session meetings are not regarded as open meetings, and attendance is generally restricted to the members and any guests (such as staff) whom the Session invites. Members of the Congregation wishing to attend are to secure an invitation from the Moderator or the Clerk.
2. The Church's Pastor is the Moderator; some co-pastors alternate moderating the session meeting. When the pulpit is vacant, either the interim Pastor or another pastor appointed by the Presbytery is the Moderator.  
A session cannot meet in the absence of the pastor/Moderator except:
  - a) If the Pastor thinks it advisable, with the Session's concurrence, they will invite another minister of the Presbytery to moderate.
  - b) If the Session is directed to meet by Presbytery, the Clerk and the Moderator consult with the Presbytery representatives; depending on circumstances, it may be advisable for a Presbytery representative to moderate the meeting.
  - c) If no Pastor can moderate and cannot name another teaching elder as Moderator, the COM-Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator (G-1.0504).
3. A quorum of Session must be present to have a legal meeting at which actions may be taken. The Session or the Congregation's By-laws set the quorum for the Session. If the By-laws do not state, the number needed cannot be less than a majority. (a ten-member Session, six members, would be a majority so that the quorum would be six members)
4. As Clerk, you can require that all motions be in writing. If not, stop the meeting until you are given the exact wording of the motion in writing.
5. You may find it necessary to help members of the Session word their motions. Helpful questions to ask about every session action are: What exactly will be done? Who is going to do it? When will it be completed or reported? How much will it cost? Where will the money come from?

## Electronic Session Meeting

Sometimes we are faced with matters that need immediate action. If calling an in-person Session Meeting is impractical. In those cases, the Session may adopt a policy for electronic meetings. A policy should include provisions to reach all members, for two or more members to object and thus cancel the electronic meeting, and for any decisions to be included in the next regular session meeting minutes. If the Session adopts such a policy, then the policy should be recorded in the session meeting minutes.

### Presbytery of Long Island Electronic Meeting Policy

Electronic meetings of the Presbytery or any of its entities shall be conducted under the following provisions:

#### 1. Meeting

- Electronic meetings are permissible only if every member of the Presbytery, committee or other Presbytery entity has access to the technology that allows participation in the meeting.
- Electronic meetings must allow participants to hear and fully participate in discussing issues being considered using whatever technologies are available.
- Motions shall be processed in the same manner as in a regular meeting. The chair shall also consider technical issues that might impact a person's ability to participate fully and allow adjustments before the business is taken up. Before a vote is taken or consent is measured, the chair will also determine whether any members are no longer present due to technological disruption.
- Outside of these provisions, the by-laws for in-person meetings apply.

#### 2. Email Voting

- When an email is used to share information and come to a consensus on a matter, the resulting decision shall be confirmed or rejected by vote at the next meeting of the Presbytery, committee, or other Presbytery entity.
- An email vote shall only be allowed in the instance that the business to be transacted has already been discussed in a traditional or electronic meeting. The vote shall be unanimous. If a negative vote is cast, the issue shall be considered in a traditional or electronic meeting.

## Guidelines for Session Minutes

The Minutes of each session meeting must include the following:

1. Whether the meeting is regular or special
2. The name of the Church, the place, date, and time of the meeting.
3. The name of the Moderator of the meeting
4. The opening and closing of each meeting with prayer
5. The roll listing Elders present, absent, and excused; the Clerk, Moderator, other staff, and others present and their identity. (first and last names and title.)
6. The affirmation of a quorum (G-3.0203)
7. The approval of the agenda. (In case of a special meeting, the call to the meeting stating the purpose becomes the agenda.)
8. The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. (Any corrections "corrected minutes approved...")
9. Clerk's report: may include correspondence, announcements, and reporting of the serving of the Lord's Supper, in addition to a listing of baptisms, marriages, and changes in membership rolls.
10. As a general rule, minutes record what was done, not what was said. *A carefully selected inclusion makes the minutes a more valuable historical record of the Church.*
  - If included, reports of the Pastor, other staff, and the treasurer and committee chairpersons should be summarized in the minutes.
  - If a report is received, note that in the minutes. If the report contains recommendations for actions, those become the body's main motions and are acted upon.
  - If the Session endorses, approves, or adopts a report or a policy. The full text of adopted reports and policies must be placed in the minutes. They may be added as attachments to the minutes.
11. The Clerk has broad discretion but should be sure that the inclusion represents the Session's wishes. If any, all motions and amendments and whether they passed or failed.
  - Details of discussion should not be recorded except when needed to give a sense of the action.
  - Unless asked, do not record the numerical outcome of votes taken or the names of those who voted in opposition.
  - ALL motions Passed or Failed need to be recorded in the minutes.

- When a previous action of the Session is referred to, the page on which it is recorded, or the date of the meeting at which it occurred, should be designated.

**When appropriate, include the following:**

1. The prior authorization by the Session of the celebration of the Lord's Supper (W 2.4012). *Note: The administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must be reported at the next succeeding regular meeting. (This may be part of the Clerk's report or the report of the worship committee.) when the sacrament has been administered to those unable to attend public worship, the Minister's name officiating and the name of the elder or elders assisting should be noted.*
2. The prior authorization by the Session of each Baptism (W-2.3011). *Note: The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism at the next succeeding regular meeting, giving the full name of adults baptized, including the maiden name of married women; the record of infants baptized, noting the name of the child, date of birth, and the names of the parents or the one rightly exercising parental responsibility (W-2.3014) and may include the mother's maiden name. (This may be part of the Clerk's report, the Pastor's report, or that of the appropriate committee.)*
3. The full name of applicants for church membership and the manner of their reception:
  - a) By profession of faith, previously baptized
  - b) By profession of faith and baptism
  - c) By reaffirmation of faith
  - d) By letter of transfer, giving the name of the Church from which received. *The Church's name to which a certificate of transfer is granted and the person's name transferred with the transfer date.*
4. Record the job descriptions for employed personnel, clergy, and non-clergy, as approved.
5. The elders elected to be commissioners to the Presbytery meetings, and the exact term for elected (G-3.0202).
6. A record that commissioner(s) went to a presbytery meeting and made a report on that meeting to the Session. *The report may be summarized.*
7. When the Session finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline should be carefully studied by a committee of the Session, and if discipline is administered, the minutes of the Session must contain such a record of the proceedings, which will enable the Presbytery to know who was disciplined, why and how. Disciplining a congregation member may be difficult; the Presbytery can be requested to undertake such discipline.
8. In case of a sale, mortgage, gift, or lease of property, the Session records must show *(in addition to the record of congregational approval as stated in the Book of Order (G-1.0503d & G-4.0101):*
  - a) Name, address, and legal description of the property

- b) Name of buyer/lessee
- c) Sale price
- d) Loan amount purpose and terms, including the name of the lender
- e) Lease terms and liability insurance
- f) **The concurrence of the Presbytery**

***Be sure the following are included EVERY YEAR: you can find an annual CK list on the Presbytery web page under***

- 9. Approval of the annual budget (*Complete budget should be included in minutes*)
- 10. The annual review with Pastor(s) of the adequacy of compensation
- 11. Recommendations to be made to the Congregation for changes or no change in the terms of call for each Pastor
- 12. Whether new officers have received training and been examined (G-2.0402)
- 13. The Ordination and Installation of elders and deacons at the next succeeding meeting
- 14. The recognition of Trustees (if any)
- 15. An Annual Audit or Review of Financial Records (G-3.0113)
- 16. Record changes during the year in the Session, the Board of Deacons, and the Trustees through death, resignation, or removal.
- 17. The Annual Statistical Report required by the General Assembly into the session records
- 18. The Annual Report produced by the Church should be inserted in the minutes.

**Keeping minutes safe:**

- 19. **Electronic storage, in place of paper storage, is unacceptable** because there is no way to attest by signature to the accuracy and correctness of the documents and long-term storage and accessibility problems.
- 20. Because official church records are to be held in perpetuity, the only acceptable ways for keeping these records are to have them on paper, printed with a laser printer or copier on acid-free paper, or on microfilm.

21. Pages must be numbered consecutively on both sides of the page, including any attachments. It is essential for loose pages or pages kept in a loose-leaf binder to be numbered. If a page or section of a page is intentionally blank, mark it with a stamp that says "Intentionally Left Blank" or mark it with a large X.
22. Acceptable numbering schemes are:
  - a) A "one-up numbering system" starts at the beginning of each year, proceeding with the number and then the year. (1-2021, 2-2021...)
23. The [Presbyterian Historical Society](#) will preserve records for congregations. Information on our Website

## Clerks of Session and the Congregational Meeting

1. An annual meeting of the Congregation is required (G-1.0501). Special meetings must/shall be called by the Session when it deems it necessary, when requested in writing by one-fourth of the members on the active role, and when Presbytery directs Session to call a meeting.
2. The Clerk of Session is the secretary to the congregational meeting, both ecclesiastical and corporate. (G-7.0307) If your Congregation does not have a unicameral board (G-7.0307) the Congregation elects the secretary of the corporate meeting. The person elected may be the Clerk. (G-7.0403)
3. The Book of Order requires that "adequate public notice be given" and that the by-laws provide a "rule for minimum notification requirements" (G-1.0502).
  - The nature of the business to be conducted governs the notice of meeting requirements.
  - Ordinarily, two Sundays of notice, which may be written in the bulletin or made verbally or both, suffice – and the meeting can be held on the second Sunday.
  - But when the purpose is to elect a pastor nominating committee or to hear its report and vote on it, a suggested notice requirement is at least ten (10) days, including two Sundays.
4. Meetings of the Congregation related to the pastor nominating committee are special meetings, and there are no other agenda items. Additional special meetings may be called to consider matters related to the Congregation's powers and responsibilities (G-1.0503) and have limited agendas.
5. A congregational petition for the Session to call a congregational meeting, in addition to the requirement that it must be signed by one-fourth of the members on the active roll, must be called to consider one of the matters outlined in G-1.0503. If it is called to consider any matter outside the scope of this provision of the Form of Government, Session is to decline the petition with a full explanation.
6. Check the Book of Order and your by-laws for the congregational meeting's quorum. (G-7.0305)
7. The Session, NOT the Congregation, adopts the budget. However, Session must inform the Congregation of the budget. If the Congregation disapproves of the use of its gifts, the members will not give. Recommendation: at an informal Congregation meeting after worship or church supper, the Session should present the budget, invite comments, and solicit suggestions. No actions should be taken at this meeting.
8. The Pastor(s) salary must be approved annually by the Congregation and reported to Presbytery for approval (*Commission on Ministry*).
9. Proxy voting is NOT permitted in church meetings, ecclesiastical or corporate.
10. Always be prepared for a paper ballot vote to elect officers. If there is more than one nominee for an office, the election must be by ballot. (G-14.0204b).

11. The election of a pastor by paper ballot is suggested but not mandatory.
  
12. Since only the active roll members can vote, have your roll book current and bring it with you to the meeting. If there is considerable tension about a particular vote, have active Congregation members come to your desk to pick up a ballot.
  
13. If your Congregation does not have By-laws/Standing rules, please get in touch with the Stated Clerk for information about how to establish them.



## Minutes of Congregational Meetings

Minutes of all congregational meetings shall be included in the session record book along with session minutes in one chronological order. The Minutes of these meetings shall consist of:

1. Indication of whether the meeting is "regular" or "special" and if it is a "rolling" congregational meeting.
2. If it is a "special meeting," the minutes shall include the call to the meeting. The business to be transacted is limited to those items listed in the call for the meeting. *(G-1.0501)*
3. Name of the Church.
4. Date, time, and place of the meeting.
5. Name of the Moderator or presiding officer.
6. Presence of a quorum. Indicate the number of active members needed to satisfy the quorum requirement *(G-1.0501)* and record the actual number of active members present. *(Congregations shall provide by rule the quorum necessary to conduct business. The quorum must be specified in the by-laws of the Congregation.)*
7. Opening and closing of the meeting with prayer.
8. A record of all actions, whether adopted or lost.
9. At a congregational meeting for the purpose of calling a Pastor, in order for each person to be able to vote his/her conscience, a written ballot should be used.
10. Action by the Congregation on each Pastor's terms of call.
11. Minutes of the meeting of the Congregation or corporation at which the annual financial reports are made should indicate, at least:
  - a) Report of a full financial review of the financial records *(G-3.0205)*;
  - b) A complete, itemized report of income and expenditures for the year;
  - c) Provide the complete, itemized proposed budget adopted by the Session for the coming year;
  - d) Details of the status of loans from the General Assembly, Synod, or Presbytery, if any, are outstanding.
12. If the Congregation does not approve the minutes before adjournment, the Session may approve the minutes at its next meeting if this provision is part of the by-laws.
13. The Clerk and Moderator must attest (in ink) the Congregational Meeting Minutes.

## Rolls and Register - Types of Members

**The Session is the only group that can change the membership rolls; the Clerk maintains them. (G-3.0204a)**

There are only three rolls required by the Book of Order (notice "Inactive" is not one of them):

### 1. Active Members *G-1.0402*

- 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).
- Record their Name, Date received, and Method of Reception (Baptism, Profession, Reaffirmation, Transfer)
- Date of removal and method of removal (transfer, death, request of the member, lack of activity).

Unless a member moves, the period of inactivity before removal must be at least two years. The session "shall seek to restore members to active participation and provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity." You don't have to remove inactive members.

### 2. Baptized Members (*cradle roll*) *G-1.0401*

- 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
- Record their Name, Date, and Church where their baptism occurred.
- Note if they are confirmed or once they leave the Church

### 3. Affiliate Members

- G-1.0403 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 offices in the Congregation.**
- E.g., college student, snowbird, etc
- strongly suggested it be renewed every two years
- Record their Name, Date of Affiliation, Home Church, Date of Renewal, and Date of Return to Home Church

### **Inactive Members (optional)**

- This is no longer a requirement, but if a session would like to keep this roll, there can be advantages: at times when a member would object to having a relative removed from the rolls entirely, for instance.

### **Roll Books**

Roll books usually provide double pages for a chronological roll by date of reception into membership with columns for name, how received, name of Church from which member transferred if that is the manner of reception, date of deletion from the active roll, and reason - by death, inactivity, or transfer, in which case the name of the Church to which the member is transferring is listed.

Pages may be provided in the same binder for an alphabetical listing of members and the membership number assigned in the chronological roll. Many find it easier to keep the alphabetical listing electronically, printing the list and the member number at least annually. Pages also should be provided for Baptized, Affiliate, and pages for Other Participants or Inactive members may also be included in the same roll binder. Pages containing columns for the information requested may be obtained through Cokesbury.

### **Paper vs. Electronic Rolls**

For many reasons that appropriate paper records of session minutes are required, a chronological paper record of rolls and registers shall also be kept. Electronic records help count the various categories of members and maintain an alphabetical list.

## Registers

Registers are historical records and need to be carefully maintained. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to maintain or oversee the maintenance of registers as required in G-3.014, which says the Clerk must "maintain and required registers," which would include "baptisms authorized by the session, ruling elders and deacons, installed pastors with dates of service and such other registers as the session may deem necessary." (G-3.02040).

### **Required by the Book of Order:**

**1. Baptisms**

Register of Infant and Adult Baptisms shall include name, parents' names (if applicable), name of Minister, and date of birth and baptism of those baptized.

**2. Elders**

Register of Elders shall include each elder's name, the name of the Church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

**3. Deacons**

Register of Deacons shall include each deacon's name, the name of the Church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and record of removals.

**4. Pastors**

Register of Pastors shall include the names of pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the Church, with dates of service.

**5. Marriages (Optional)**

Before 2011, sessions were also required to maintain a register of marriages. If you wish to continue this register, they should include marriages of members of the Church, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the Church, and all marriages performed on church property

## **Interactions between The Clerk of Session - Sessions - Presbytery**

Official communication between Session and Presbytery is from the Clerk of Session to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. The relationship between the Session of a congregation and the Presbytery is outlined in the Book of Order.

Sessions interact with Presbytery in the following ways:

### **Sending Commissioners to Presbytery Meetings**

Presbyterian polity is a representative polity. It works only when each Church takes responsibility seriously to elect elder commissioners who attend the meeting, stay through the end of the meeting, and report to the Session. Each year, there are four regular presbytery meetings: January, April/March, June, and September. A list of presbytery meetings for the current year is available on the Presbytery's website, [www.presbyteryofli.org](http://www.presbyteryofli.org).

Each Session is responsible for electing commissioners to Presbytery. The number of commissioners depends upon the size of the Congregation. (G-11.0101) the number of commissioners to which a congregation is entitled also varies according to the annual plan for ruling elder equalization. Before the first presbytery meeting of each new year, the Clerk of Session will be notified if there is a change in the number of elders to which the Congregation is entitled.

Churches can elect their commissioners for the entire year or one for each meeting.

Notices of presbytery meetings are sent to Clerks of sessions to be distributed to the duly elected commissioners before the presbytery meeting. Business papers for the presbytery meeting are available online at Presbytery's website, [www.presbyteryofli.org](http://www.presbyteryofli.org).

The Book of Order requires each commissioner to report to Session about the meeting:

- 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;
- the raising of consciousness of the Congregation's participation in the entire ministry of Jesus Christ.

### **Annual General Assembly Statistical Report**

The Annual GA Statistical Report is the Session's report to the General Assembly and is the Session's specific responsibility and the Clerk of Session. The Stated Clerk of Presbytery will notify the Clerk when the Portal opens, usually in early December, and is due mid-February. Call the Stated Clerk's office immediately if you have missed the deadline. [Online Session Annual Statistical Report](#)

*If you do not submit, membership and financial figures will be used from the previous year. This does a great disservice to the Congregation, mainly if it searches for a Pastor. Also, your per capita assessment is based on these membership reports.*

## **Annual Review of Session Records**

The Presbytery organizes three required Annual Review of Session Records meetings in three locations (Naussa, East Suffolk, and the Presbytery Office). At the meeting, Clerks will have a chance to read the minutes kept by another Clerk, ask questions, and share experiences with other Clerks.

- A completed [Checklist](#) is required to accompany the minutes
- [Dates](#) for Annual Review of Session Records meetings are available on the presbytery website

## **Annual Review of the Call**

Each year the Session is required by the Book of Order to review the adequacy of all pastoral staff salaries. If Session wishes to make any change in the terms of call as they were last approved by Presbytery, the change in terms of call must be brought to the Congregation for approval, contingent upon the approval of Presbytery, which, 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 call forms must be returned to the Commission on Ministry for recommendation to Presbytery. Please be sure that this form is returned each year.

## **Minimum Compensation for Pastors**

Each September, the Presbytery adopts minimum terms of call for all installed pastors - [Compensation and Benefits](#). 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 Commission on Ministry. Annually, Session will receive notification of minimum terms of call as soon as Presbytery adopts them.

## **Approval of Specific Actions**

Specific actions sought to be taken by sessions must first be approved by Presbytery and a committee thereof, including the sale of a property, taking an Inquirer under care, changing the Church's name, waving the limitations of terms of officers, etc.

## **Overtures to Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly**

A session may petition or Overture Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly through the Presbytery. A member of the Congregation may ask the Session to petition the Presbytery. The Session can not overture Synod or General Assembly directly. For information on overtures, contact the Stated Clerk's office.

## **A Suggested Notebook for Session Members**

Some churches have developed notebooks, or manuals, for each session member, including the necessary documents and information for intelligent decision-making. Such a tool helps orient new session members to their tasks.

Suggested items for such a notebook include:

- Introduction or Letter from Pastor and Clerk of Session
- Information on Church Programs and Activities (Include contact people, telephone numbers and email addresses, meeting times, and places.)
- List of Church Officers and Staff (Includes names, addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers.)
- By-laws/Standing Rules of the Congregation
- A Summary of Session Functions, Duties, and Responsibilities (Includes ordination vows.)
- List of Session Committees (Include objectives and duties and a list of committee members.)
- List of Other Committees such as Deacons, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men
- The Current Annual Budget
- List of Special Purpose Funds
- Special Rules and Regulations
- Session Minutes
- Church Membership List
- Notes.