

# Clerk of Session Training

January 9, 2021

# Agenda

1. Prayer
2. Introductions
3. Theology
4. Overview of clerk responsibilities and topics/Clerking with Covid
5. Background and overview of the *Book of Order*
6. Record Keeping - what, why and how
  - a. Minutes (Session and Congregation)
  - b. Rolls/Registers
7. Parliamentary procedure
8. Other roles in the Session meeting
9. Relationship with the Pastor/Moderator of Session
10. Statistical reports

Prayer



# Introductions

Jim Wilson [jawilson@vorys.com](mailto:jawilson@vorys.com)

# Theology

- The “Reformed” Community is part of the larger Body of Christ: the “Reformed” Tradition lies within the Protestant Reformation of the Christian faith:
- The common beliefs of the *Church* (F-2.03)
  - The mystery of the Trinity
    - In seeking the will of God through the action of the community, we imitate the very nature of the triune God.
  - The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ
    - Because God saves us by sending Jesus Christ into the messes of our world, rather than by lifting us out of them, we can find Christ present even in the mess of a session meeting.

# Theology (continued)

- The common themes of the Reformation (grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone) (F-2.04)
  - The Final Authority of the Holy Spirit speaking through Scripture
    - Our purpose in meeting as a session is not to seek our own will, but the will of God through the voice of the Holy Spirit
  - Justification by grace through faith
    - Each of us is utterly dependent upon the grace of Jesus Christ, even clerks
  - The priesthood of all believers
    - Even the most annoying session member may lead the body to the will of God through his or her prophetic voice
  - The sanctity of common life
    - In the ordinary, even the mundane, we find the holy, even in discussions of church budgets or maintaining the church building

# Theology (continued)

- The distinctively “Reformed” emphases (F-2.05):
  - The affirmation of the sovereignty of God – the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love
    - God in Jesus Christ has already won the victory over sin and death, and will lead the Church to claim that victory in ways we cannot begin to comprehend
  - Election of people for service as well as for salvation
    - Each elder and Minister of Word and Sacrament at a session meeting has been called by God (before the foundations of the world!) to be there.
  - The covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God
    - We are drawn together not by our choice, but by God’s covenant, and therefore separation is not an option.

# Theology (continued)

- The distinctively “Reformed” emphases (F-2.05 continued):
  - Faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks the proper use of the gifts of God’s creation.
    - We are trustees, not owners, of our congregations and the Church.
  - Rejection of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny.
    - Any idolatry, even of Robert’s Rules, is contrary to the will of God
  - The call of the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.
    - Our work must always be about transforming the world, not about self-engagement or petty in-fighting.

# Theology (summed up)

- ▶ Presbyterian polity rests upon a Reformed concern that leaving decision-making in the church to individual church leaders, particularly in a hierarchical structure, has the potential to corrupt the church given humanity's fallen nature.
- ▶ On the other hand, with the bywords "all things decently and in order," Presbyterians, consistent with their Reformed roots, place a high priority on orderly governance.
- ▶ Presbyterians thus believe that decisions made in community reflect God's covenant with humanity, and that seeking to discern God's will in this way imitates the communion of the triune God.

# Overview of clerk responsibilities

- ▶ Minutes
- ▶ Records
- ▶ Reporting
- ▶ The rest depends on your congregation's history and culture!

# Clerking with Covid-19

- ▶ Zoom Session meeting
- ▶ When you meet again in person:
  - ▶ Ratify all actions taken in Zoom meetings
  - ▶ Approve a bylaw/rule allowing meetings by video conference

# Book of Order Responsibilities

## **G-3.0104**

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

## **G-3.0107 Records**

Each council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings. Minutes and all other official records of councils are the property in perpetuity of said councils or their legal successors. When a council ceases to exist, its records shall become the property of the next higher council within whose bounds the lower council was prior to its cessation. The clerk of each council shall make recommendation to that body for the permanent safekeeping of the body's records with the Presbyterian Historical Society or in a temperature and humidity controlled environment of a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **G-3.0204 Minutes and Records**

Minutes of the session shall be subject to the provisions of G-3.0107. They shall contain the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees.

## **G-1.0505 Secretary and Minutes**

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If the clerk of session is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting. The secretary shall record the actions of the congregation in minutes of the meeting.

# Rolls and Registers

Each session shall maintain the following roll and registers:

## a. Membership Roll

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

## b. Registers

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

# Minutes

## Presbytery of Scioto Valley Session Records Review Form for 2018 Records

Session Clerk: Please complete this form prior to the review event. Please bring two copies to the review, along with your SESSION RECORDS and CHURCH REGISTER. The information on this form will be verified at the review.

City \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk of Session \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

This area will be completed at the review event:

Peer Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Presbytery Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Without Exception: \_\_\_\_\_ With Exception \_\_\_\_\_

Exceptions [List Item #(s)]: \_\_\_\_\_

Please record page numbers where each of the following items may be found.

Reviewer: Please check each item you verify in the blank provided.

	Page Number(s)	OK
1. Election of Church Officers (G-2.0401, G-2.0404)		
2. Officer Ordination and/or Installation (W-4.0401)		
3. Annual Officer Training (G-2.0402; G-3.0201)		
4. Annual Review of Membership Roll (G-3.0201c)		
5. Review of Compensation of Pastor(s) (G-2.0804) Check if no installed Pastor _____		
6. Review of other Staff Compensation (G-3.0201c)		
7. Session Approval of Annual Budget (G-3.0113)		
8. Annual Financial Review (G-3.0113) (A full audit is not required)		
9. Were members received? Dismissed? Removed?		
10. Annual Meeting of the Congregation (G-1.0501)		
11. Do you have Deacons? Yes _____ No _____		

If yes, Board _____ or Commissioned _____		
	Page Number(s)	OK
If yes, has Session reviewed the work of the Deacons?		
12. Do you have Trustees? Yes _____ No _____		
If yes, has Session reviewed the work of the Trustees?		
13. Reviewed the work of other committees (G-3.0201c)		
14. Was Communion Celebrated on a Regular basis (G-3.0201b; W2.4012a) Yes _____ No _____ List page number(s) of approval _____		

FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS: Check as Appropriate.

Reviewer: Please check each item you verify in the blank provided.

	YES	No	OK
15. Was Session involved in a Judicial Case last year?			
If yes, details.			
16. Did session meet at least quarterly? (G-3.0203)			
<b>General Content of Record Book:</b>			
17. Does the Church Name appear on outside cover?			
18. Are pages <b>consecutively numbered</b> ?			
19. Are date, time, and place of each meeting recorded?			
20. Is the type of meeting listed? (Regular, Special; Session, Congregation)			
21. Were meetings opened and closed with prayer?			
22. Is the Moderator's full name recorded for each meeting?			
23. Are full names of Ruling Elders recorded?			
24. Was a quorum present for each meeting?			
25. Were actions properly voted?			
26. Are all minutes approved by Session?			
27. Are all minutes signed by the Clerk of Session?			
28. Are minutes free from extensive corrections?			
29. Did Session select a Commissioner to Presbytery?			
30. Were Presbytery reports received by Session?			
31. Was the Church Register presented for review?			

For the Reviewer: check Church Register for the following and answer question.

### Membership Rolls

Alphabetical Roll  
Chronological Roll  
(Both should show status of current and former members)

### Other Rolls and Registers

Pastors and Associate Pastors  
Ruling Elders  
Deacons (if applicable)  
Baptisms

Up To Date	
YES	NO

Thank you very much for participating in our Session Records Review!

The Stated Clerk welcomes your suggestions in making this form and our review process more "user-friendly". You may contact him through the Presbytery Office: Phone: 614-847-0565; 800-244-7207

# Parliamentary Procedure

## Basic Assumptions

1. Because of their size, sessions do not have to (and often do not) strictly follow Roberts Rules of Order
2. However, when a matter is controversial, following basic parliamentary rules insure process is fair and can ease the concerns of those who opposed the decision
3. Parliamentary procedures, as they are used in the church, are grounded in two assumptions, without which our decisions have no valid basis.
  - a. There is a presumption of the overwhelming desire for unity on the part of the members as a visible expression of the Body of Christ. It is from this covenant of Presbyterians with one another that the tenacity and patience to live with and work with differences of opinion derives.
  - b. There is a presumption of the necessity of tension between majority and minority views as the means by which the Spirit is present in the councils of the church

# Parliamentary Procedure

## Three Parliamentary Principles

1. *The Rights and the Unity of the Body Shall Be Preserved*
2. *The Will of the Majority Shall Prevail*
3. *The Rights of the Minority Shall Be Protected*

## Rights of Session Members

1. *The Right to Know*: due notice; approval of minutes.
2. *The Right to Speak*: rules of debate.
3. *The Right to Vote*: definition of membership
4. *The Right to Hold Office*: fair representation

# Parliamentary Procedure

## What a motion needs to contain:

- ▶ *WHAT*—what exactly is to be done.
- ▶ *WHO*—who must approve the recommended action; who will do what needs to be done; who will appoint/nominate/elect the “who.”
- ▶ *WHEN*—when is “it” to be done; when shall the report be made to the responsible body.
- ▶ *HOW*—how much will “it” cost; where will the money come from.

# Other roles in the Session meeting

# Relationship with the Pastor/Moderator of Session

# Statistical Reports!

<https://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/stats/statistical-reporting-faq/>

## Statistical Reporting and Frequently Asked Questions



Churches and presbyteries can *access the year-end statistics online reporting system.*  
*Go to the Online Statistics Entry system.*

\*The system works best with Firefox, Google Chrome and Safari.

\*If you need further assistance contact your Presbytery or email *OGARecords@pcusa.org.*