

SESSION RECORDS GUIDELINES

Presbytery of Cincinnati

The following guidelines have been developed to assist the Presbytery of Cincinnati in carrying out its responsibilities to review annually the minutes of the churches of the Presbytery, in accordance with *Book of Order G-11.0103x*; and to be a guide for Clerks of the Session in carrying out their responsibilities. The actions of Session must be in accordance with the church's Constitution and promote the mission and spiritual welfare of the church.

Items including the *Book of Order* reference in bold type are considered to be mandated and if omitted from the minutes, will ordinarily be recorded as exceptions.

GENERAL APPEARANCE AND FORMAT

1. The minutes must be printed on acid-free or 25% rag content paper, and secured in such a way that pages will not be lost.

Pages must be numbered consecutively, with minutes being printed on both sides of each sheet of paper. The pages of the appendix should be numbered in continuation of the last page of the minutes. (e.g. if the number of the last page of the minutes was 12, the pages of the appendix that immediately follow would be 13, 14, and 15.)

Minutes must be legible. There shall be no footnotes, insertions of text between lines. Do not insert extra pages or pieces of paper, whether stapled, pasted, or loose, as part of the official record. Erasures should be avoided.

If a serious mistake has been made, cross through it, sign and date in margin. If necessary, refer to another page where the corrected material is to be found. Include Session's authorization for same when required. If the necessary correction would significantly alter the records that have been approved by Presbytery, the Clerk should request approval of the change in writing through the Committee on Church Order.

Leave no empty spaces in the minute book large enough for an unauthorized insertions. If space has been so left, the Clerk should mark it "Intentionally Left Blank" with lines extending to the top and bottom of the area.

REQUIRED EACH SESSION MEETING

2. The first part of the minutes must contain:

Robert's, 451-452

the kind of meeting: stated, special, adjourned stated or adjourned special;

the name of the session;

the date, time and place of the meeting;

name of the moderator presiding; and

G-9.0301b: the opening of each meeting with prayer

3. **G-10.0202:** Include a statement that a quorum was present. A quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders but no fewer than two, except for the reception and dismissal of members, when the quorum shall be the moderator and two members of the session. The session may fix its own quorum at any higher number.
4. Include the first and last names of every member of the session showing whether present, absent, or excused. Also include the first and last names of every guest and reason for their attendance.
5. **G-10.0201:** In the minutes of a special meeting of the session, include the call of the meeting noting in the call whether the meeting was: a) at the discretion of the moderator, b) the written request of two session members (include their names), or c) at the direction of the presbytery.
6. **Robert's, 343-344:** Record the review and adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting as submitted or as corrected. If corrections are made in the minutes of any previous meeting, only the fact of correction shall be made in the minutes of the meeting at which the correction was made. The actual corrections shall be made in the minutes of the meeting corrected either through electronic editing or through the strike through and insertions with red ink.
7. Record the motions, passed or defeated, and plans adopted, communications received, and brief list of important reports made. Normally, omit details of discussions, unless the Session specifically orders otherwise.
8. **Robert's, 453:** Record the ending time of each meeting and **G-9.0301b:** the closing of each meeting with prayer.
9. **Robert's, 454:** Minutes must be signed by the clerk or the clerk *pro tempore* of the session. The signature should appear at the end of minutes, prior to the appendix or supplement.
10. Record the date and place of next stated meeting, and time, if known.

PERIODIC ACTIONS

A record is required of each of following actions if and when it occurs.

11. **G-10.0102p(1):** Receive the report(s) of commissioner(s) to Presbytery.
12. **W-2.4012a:** The session is responsible for authorizing all observances of the Lord's Supper.
13. **W-2.4012a:** Record all communion services with date, by whom administered if not an installed pastor of the church, and (optionally) the number participating.
14. **W-2.3011a:** For reasons of order, Baptism shall be authorized by the session.
15. **W-2.3011a(4)** Baptisms should be reported by the officiating minister or commissioned lay pastor and recorded by the session.
16. Record all actions taken regarding the church's membership.
 - **G-10.0302:** In recording membership and membership changes, include full names of all

persons dismissed, deceased, deleted, placed on inactive roll, received, or restored. A man's full name may include two (2) or even three (3) given names and perhaps "senior" or "junior", etc. A woman's full name should, if known, include her maiden name and always her own given name, not just her husband's. For easy reference, include chronological number in minutes of session with any membership change.

- **G-10.0102b:** State the method of receiving each new member
 - On examination, having been baptized in infancy;
 - On examination, by profession of faith, with baptism administered afterward;
 - By certificate and from what church (full title with city and state/country);
 - By reaffirmation of faith (previous denomination may be indicated);
 - By restoration from the inactive roll.
- **G-10.0302b(1-8)** In case of deletion of a member's name from the active roll, state sufficient facts to constitute due cause for Session's actions, or cite the applicable passage in the *Book of Order* for constitutional authority.
- **G-10.0302b(1):** Record, in the minutes, members dismissed to other churches, either from the active or inactive roll, recording the full name of the church to which they are transferring, including city and state.
- **G-10.0302b(8):** Record the deaths of active members in the minutes and on the chronological roll. Record the deaths of baptized children and inactive persons, if known, in minutes and on proper roll.

17. When a funeral or memorial service is led by pastoral staff of this church, the date and place of death and service, name of the deceased, and place of interment or cremation, if known, should be recorded as part of the staff person's report to the session and included in the register.
18. **G-10.0302c(1):** Report marriages in the minutes of the Session and keep complete registers of: Marriages, including marriages of all members of the church, all marriages conducted by the pastoral staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property.
19. **G-9.0203b:** Record election and term for Clerk by Session at time of election.
20. For any disciplinary case involving a church member or any remedial complaint involving the session, make a full record as prescribed in the *Book of Order's Rules of Discipline*.

ANNUAL REQUIREMENTS

21. **G-10.0301:** The Session's minute books and register shall be submitted annually or on call, for examination on behalf of Presbytery. The Session at its next meeting should note the results of the examination including exceptions in its minutes.
22. **G-10.0302a(2):** Record in the minutes, membership and financial figures in summary form, from the Session Annual Statistical Report concerning the life and activity of the church. (This may be part of the minutes of the annual congregational meeting.)
23. **G-10.0301:** "The minutes shall state the composition of the session with regard to racial ethnic members, women, men, age groups, and persons with disabilities and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation." This statement is to be entered annually following the installation of

new elders.

24. **G-10.0201i:** Copy into the Minute Book, the budget, or summary thereof, as adopted by the Session for the ensuing year and corresponding financial reports of income and expenditures for the preceding year.
25. **G-10.0401d:** Record that a full financial review of accounts was conducted. If there is a separate Board of Trustees, this might also be in its minutes.
26. **G-10.0401:** Record annual election of Church Treasurer by Session.
27. **G-10.0102p(1), (2):** Record the election of commissioners to Presbytery, the term for which elected and the report of their participation, when such report is given. Also, record the names of persons nominated as commissioners to Synod and General Assembly, if any.
28. **G-5.0602:** "The session shall review the roll of members at least annually, and shall counsel with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership."
29. **G-14.0240:** Record in the minutes the training, examination, and ordination and installation of Elders and of Deacons (if any) and the installation of Trustees (if separate from Session).
30. **G-7.0302a:** Record Session's annual review and recommended changes in terms of call for installed pastor, co-pastors and associate pastors, for the congregation's approval. **G-10.0102n:** Record annual review or changes in position description and compensation of lay employees as approved by Session.
31. **G-10.0102o:** Record the session's review of the adequacy of the church's property and liability insurance.
32. **G-6.0405:** If there is a Board of Deacons, it must meet with the Session at least annually.
33. **G-6.0404:** If there is a Board of Deacons, the Session must review the board's records.
34. **G-10.0102m:** If the Board of Trustees is separate from Session, the Session must review the board's work.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

- **G-7.0307:** Minutes of Congregational Meetings are to be recorded in a minute book of the Session, preferably inserted by date, and signed by both the Moderator and the Secretary. The Clerk of Session serves as Secretary of the Congregational meeting. If unable to do so the Congregation elects a Secretary. See G-7.0307 for procedures for approving minutes of congregational meetings.

35. The first part of the minutes must contain:

Robert's, 451-452

the kind of meeting: stated, special, adjourned stated or adjourned special;

the name of the congregation;

the date, time and place of the meeting;
name of the moderator presiding; and
G-9.0301b: the opening of each meeting with prayer

36. **G-7.0305:** Indicate the number constituting a quorum and whether a quorum is present.
37. **G-7.0302, G-7.0303:** Record the call and purpose of special meetings, and the Secretary's certification that such call is in order, proper notice having been given to the congregation.
38. **Robert's, 453:** Record the ending time of each meeting and **G-9.0301b:** the closing of each meeting with prayer.
39. **G-7.0307:** The minutes of each meeting of the congregation shall be attested by the moderator and the secretary [i.e., the clerk] and shall be entered in the minute book of the session.
40. **G-14.0201a:** Record the names of all officers elected (Elders, Deacons, Trustees) by class.
G-14.0201b: Record the names of members elected to the Nominating Committee, how designated, and that the representatives of the congregation constitute a majority of the committee.
41. **G-7.0302a:** Include the congregation's action to approve the terms of call for the pastor, co-pastors, or associate pastor. The Clerk shall inform the Presbytery of these actions. Revised terms of call must be stated in full.
42. **G-10.0102i:** The session reports, for information, the annual budget.
43. Record all other actions taken by the congregation. All proceedings of the congregation must conform to other limitations and requirements of the *Book of Order*.

CHURCH ROLLS AND REGISTERS

CHURCH ROLLS G-10.0302a

The session is required to maintain roll of members. It has the responsibility for taking actions that result in adding or deleting names from the rolls.

The clerk of the session is required to “keep” the rolls (G-9.0203a). He or she is responsible for seeing that names are entered or deleted based on session decisions.

The rolls are described in the *Book of Order* (G-10.0302). Read these pages carefully.

The church rolls record every member who has ever belonged to your church. These rolls are LEGAL DOCUMENTS and must be kept current. Do not despair if your predecessor clerks did not keep the rolls up to date. Exert your best efforts to do so.

While some churches find it convenient to keep records of individuals in a card file or in a computer, the official church rolls must be kept on archival, non-acid paper. You may purchase roll books from Cokesbury. There are four church rolls:

Baptized Members Roll G-10.302a(1): For most churches, the baptized members' roll is the same as the register of baptisms. The baptized roll lists all infants, children and adults baptized in your church or transferred into you church with the name of the minister who baptized them. In the case of infant baptisms, list the parents' full names. In the case of adult baptism, the name of the person baptized is always entered on the chronological and alphabetical rolls. Adult baptism is always accompanied by joining the church, and joining the church is always accompanied by baptism if the person is unbaptized. The only ways a name can be removed from the baptized roll are by profession of faith, transfer, or death.

Active Members Roll G-10.0302a(2)

- a. Chronological roll: The chronological roll has numbers down the left side of a double page. Each member of the church is assigned a number at the time that person joins the church. Columns to the right offer space for necessary comments from time to time. A name is removed from this roll by action of session or because of death. The only ways a name can be removed are by transfer to another church, transfer to the inactive roll, removal from the inactive roll, death, deletion or removal from membership.

- b. Alphabetical roll: The alphabetical roll groups church members according to the first letter of their last names. This roll is cross-indexed with the chronological roll by membership number.

Inactive Members Roll G-10.302a(3) (a) and (b)

The inactive roll lists the names of members of the church, who, in the judgment of session, have willfully let their active membership in the church lapse. The person must have been inactive for at least one year and session must have diligently tried to discover the cause of the member's nonparticipation. A member must be notified when placed on the inactive roll.

Affiliate Members Roll G-10.0302a(4)

The affiliate roll includes people (such as college students or "snowbirds") who "join" you church temporarily while remaining on their home church's active roll. Their status must be renewed every two years.

Deletions G-10.0302b(1-8): When a member's name is removed from the roll of members, post such action to the chronological list under "termination", the date, and cause. Strike one thin line through the person's name so that it can still be read.

Optionally, keep a supplementary chronological listing of all names as removed from the active roll, with date, method of termination (according to headings in the Annual Statistical Report), This may save research and facilities verifying the statistical figures.

CHURCH REGISTERS G-10.0302c

The session shall keep complete registers of

Marriages G-10.0302c(1): include full names, date, name of officiate for all marriages

- of members of the church wherever conducted while a member

- conducted by the ministerial staff of the church
- performed on church property

Baptisms (G-10.0302c(2):

For infants/children, include:

Full name
 Parents' full names (include mother's maiden),
 Date of birth of those being baptized,
 Name of person(s) presenting the children for baptism

For adults, include:

Full name
 Parents' full names (include mother's maiden),
 Date of birth of those being baptized

Elders G-10.0302c(3):

Full name
 Name of church in which the person was ordained
 Date of ordination
 Terms of active service
 Record of removals

Deacons G-10.0302c(4):

Full name
 Name of church in which the person was ordained
 Date of ordination
 Terms of active service
 Record of removals

Pastors, co-pastors, *et al.* G-10.0302c(5):

Include full names of pastor, co-pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service. Although the *Book of Order* does not require it, it is a good idea to include the names of designated pastors and commissioned lay pastors and their dates of service.