HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS OF SESSION

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Preface

This handbook is intended to be of help to those of us called to be clerks in the Presbyterian Church USA. It is certainly not exhaustive…one thing I have learned about clerk work is that a new situation always presents itself! I continue to discover new things every week…and as clerks, you will as well

When the Form of Government was completely overhauled and approved by the presbyteries in 2011, the Church received a Constitution intended to be more flexible thus enabling ministries to flourish in their particular context. This has been a great thing for the church…but has presented a few challenges for clerks!

What are some of those challenges? Because there are not as many "rules" defined, I have received many calls with questions of, "Is such and such 'legal' according to the Book of Order?" The general rule of thumb is, if the Book is silent on something, it is permissible…but not always!!! Therefore, as clerks we are required to make more judgment decisions than ever before.

As clerks, we need to help churches keep the best records possible. For example, the Book of Order does not define what is needed for a quorum for a congregational meeting. That is up to the churches…and their by-laws should reflect that. In minutes, the quorum should be stated in the beginning of the year so we know what it is…as it may be different for every one of our churches!! A small example…but the idea is there…we need to help our churches realize the importance of sharing their determinations about things that used to be stated clearly in the Book of Order.

This handbook is organized by discussing the responsibilities of Clerks…and fleshing those sections out. I hope it accomplishes this in a helpful way.

Finally, I have included some templates in the appendix that I hope will be helpful.

Donna

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Election and Duties of the Clerk

The clerk of session is elected by the session. The length of the term is determined by the session and that should be noted at the time of election.

The clerk must be a ruling elder and of course a member of the congregation, but does not need to be a current active member of the session.

The overall responsibilities of the clerk are to:

- Be the Keeper of the Rolls of the Church
- Be the Communicator with the congregation, the pastor and the outside world
- Be the Parliamentarian
- Take the minutes of session meetings, congregational meetings and any called meetings
- Provide information through the various forms and reports of the denomination
- Preserve the minutes

Important to remember:

If you are the clerk and **<u>are not</u>** a current sitting elder, your job is to take minutes and facilitate the meeting with the moderator. You are NOT allowed to enter into debate or offer any opinions other than clarification of a process or parliamentary procedure. You may be granted the privilege of the floor by the session (either for the year or per meeting), in which case you may certainly speak and participate.

If you are the clerk and **<u>are</u>** a current sitting elder, you may add to the discussion as any other elder present. Be mindful however, that as clerk your primary role is to take the minutes and help with process…so don't forget to do that if you get caught up in a debate.

Needed for all clerks:

1. You need to be sure you have a current Book of Order
2. You need to purchase the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order
3. You should have a copy of the latest by-laws of the church
4. You should have a copy of the church's manual of operations
5. You should have a list of all current session members and contact information

Keeper of the Rolls

In today's digital age, many churches have abandoned handwritten, or notebook type rolls for computer programs that facilitate the keeping of the various rolls. It is absolutely fine to use computer programs and maintain the rolls with this system; however, it is VITAL that paper copies of the rolls be produced once a year and kept in an old fashioned notebook! Why? When your computer program becomes outdated, or the disks used for storage become outdated, you will never be able to find the information you need. Clerks will get inquiries from folks 30 to 40 years after the fact looking for confirmation of a baptism, membership, or death… and the information can always be retrieved when placed in a book that houses this information.

Any style of book can be used; however, if using a binder notebook the paper should have a rag content of 25% in order to better facilitate its preservation. Most office supply stores will have this quality paper. There are the old fashioned roll books with very high quality paper that can be obtained from Cokesbury Stores. This paper is expensive but may be worth the investment.

Whatever you use, it will be helpful to label with dividers, index, table of contents or some kind of method to help with cross referencing and locating the information. A reminder: one important reason we keep these rolls is in order to retrieve needed information at some later date

There are three **membership rolls** that must be kept by the clerk:

a. Baptized members…"are people who have received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in your congregation or elsewhere, and who have been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith" (Book of Order (BOO) G-1.0401; 2015-2017) Primarily these are the children and young people of your church. This roll is extremely important as baptismal records are needed for all kinds of things…identification for documents, permission to be married in another denomination's church, etc. *See template "a" in appendix*
b. Active members…are those people who have made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, have been baptized and have been received by the session into membership. *See template "b" in appendix*
c. Affiliate members…are those people who are members of other congregations in this denomination or another Christian body; have presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate governing body of that congregation, and have been received by session as an affiliate member (G-1.0403; BOO 2015-2017). Examples of these folks are college students in your midst but keep their home church as their membership; a spouse of a member who wishes to retain their denominational affiliation.

Optional roll: Inactive members

When the Form of Government was revised in 2011, the roll of inactive members was no longer included in the list of rolls of the church. Churches however, may have an inactive roll if they choose. If so, the session makes the determination of how someone gets put on the inactive roll, and what constitutes putting someone back on the active roll. Notification by letter should be made of any person moving from the active to inactive roll…and an indication of what is needed for that person to be restored, along with a time line on when that needs to be achieved for restoration. If the session maintains an Inactive roll, this list should be kept with the roll book.

Dropping/Deletion from the rolls:

It is each session's responsibility to determine what constitutes active membership. It is therefore important for the session (with the help of the clerk) to review the rolls on a yearly basis and determine if anyone should be "dropped/deleted from the rolls." The criteria should be agreed upon by session, consistent in nature and noted for the record. If a person is not meeting the criteria and session wishes to remove the person, a letter of notification should be sent to that individual of the action.

Additional registers that should be maintained:

a. **Elders:** all folks who are ordained as ruling elders should be listed by name and date of their ordination. These are people ordained in this particular congregation, not those who transfer and were ordained elsewhere. Those ordinations should be noted in their membership information. You can arrange this alphabetically, but you may wish to do it chronologically. If your church has never kept this roll, just start one now. *See template "c"in appendix*
b. **Deacons:** if your church still has deacons, those who are elected and ordained to this office should be recorded. This is a different office than elder, so people may appear on both rolls. Follow the same type of template as your elder roll.
c. **Pastors:** This roll is simply a chronological roll of those pastors who have served your church as either installed or long time interim or contract. This should also include any associate pastors. You do not need to include pastors who preach on occasion. *See template "d" in appendix*
d. **Deaths:** This roll is simply a listing each year of the deaths of those in the congregation along with the date of death. You may also wish to make a notation if the person was an elder or deacon.

Optional register: Marriages

Marriages: The Book of Order no long requires that a register of those marriages that have taken place on church property or marriages that your pastor performed outside of church property be maintained. I recommend that you at least keep a register of the marriages that took place on church property. You may get inquiries from people in later years trying to verify this information. If you would like to see an example, *see template "e" in the appendix*

Communicator

Communicator with the pastor:

The clerk and pastor work on the docket for the session meeting together…but Book of Order wise, the clerk is the primary person responsible for this.

There may be times that members of the congregation voice concerns to the session and that correspondence will come to you, which in turn you would share with the pastor as how best to proceed.

The primary thing to keep in mind is that you and the pastor serve as a partnership…the better working relationship that you have, the more smoothly your church will function.

Communicator with the session:

As the clerk, along with the pastor, your responsibility is to set the agenda, and get all the needed materials in the hands of session members hopefully at least one week in advance of a meeting. You may be the person which committees are to submit their reports, and will therefore need to remind them of deadlines to get those reports.

After consulting with the moderator, you are the person who sends out to session members, a reminder about the date, time and place of the meeting along with all appropriate reports that will be considered. If people wish to be excused, they should notify you so that you may record it.

Communicator with the congregation:

As the communicator with the congregation, you may be asked to write newsletter articles highlighting the business of the session meetings. You may be asked to write highlights for bulletins or post a summary of session business in order to keep the congregation up to date. Much of this function is determined by the working relationship with the pastor and it is certainly appropriate to talk with the pastor as a new clerk, about how you can be most effective in keeping the congregation informed of important matters before the session.

Communicator with the outside world:

As the secretary of the session and congregation, most correspondence is your responsibility. There will be times when session wishes to write a thank you note to some person or organization. There will be times when session may wish to invite someone to their meetings and you would ordinarily offer that invitation on their behalf. Requests for verifying information such as a baptismal date will come directly to you. Correspondence from the General Assembly and Presbytery are often addressed directly to the clerk of session.

If a member wishes to be transferred to another congregation, you as clerk will write that letter of transfer. The letter should include the person's full name, their current address and that they are a member in good standing. Likewise, if a person joins your church, you will be the contact person to write a letter to that person's current church asking for a letter of transfer. *see template "f" in appendix*

Of course, you then record these actions in your roll books!

Parliamentary Procedure

It is the clerk's job to make the pastor/moderator look good!!! As clerk, you help keep track of what is going on in debate, making sure the motions made are correctly and the business gets dealt with efficiently and correctly. As the clerk, you are the behind the scenes person who helps the moderator with parliamentary order when asked. Remember, the better the partnership between the clerk and the pastor, the better the meeting and flow of conversation and conduct of business.

You as the clerk should purchase whatever is the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure and always have it handy. You should also have a current Book of Order and a copy of the church's by-laws with you at every meeting in case there is a question. If there is ever a "conflict" between The Book of Order and Robert's Rules, the Book of Order takes precedence.

There is a pamphlet entitled: A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the Presbyterian Church (USA) by Gregory A. Goodwiller, copyright 2014. Please contact Donna Wells at dwells@atlpcusa.org for a copy.

Here are some basics of Parliamentary Procedure:

1. When a motion is made from a committee report, it does not need to be seconded.
2. When a motion is made from an individual, it does need a second.
3. It is not necessary to record the name of the maker of a motion, or who seconds the motion
4. When the motion is made, seconded (if needed) the moderator will ask if there is any debate/discussion on the motion.
5. The moderator will call for the vote, re-stating what folks are voting on. The moderator will declare the outcome. You as clerk record the results…either by specific number, by unanimous vote or by the phrase, the motion passes or fails. My recommendation is to record the number total if the vote is close…such as 6 yes, 5 no's.
6. It is possible that someone may wish to amend the motion before it gets to the final vote. This would happen during the debate. If an amendment is offered, debate shifts to the merits of the amendment (not the motion itself). When this discussion is concluded, the moderator will ask for a vote on the amendment. If the amendment is approved, then the main motion as amended is back up for debate and discussion. If the amendment is not approved, you return to the main motion, continue debate on the main motion and then vote.
7. There is an order of "rank" regarding motions and therefore the order of how they are dealt with if there are questions. The booklet by Gregory A. Goodwiller mentioned above, outlines the order of the ranking of motions and explains what each motion means.

Ballots:

On rare occasions, session may decide that it is important to have ballots at a congregational meeting…such as a vote on whether or not to take out a loan, or to purchase some new property.

If session directs that a ballot is needed, then you as clerk need to prepare the ballots and have a system as to how they will be counted…a minimum of two people is required and then you would sign off on the count. You would not be one of the two people.

A ballot is also required (by presbytery rule) when a congregation is calling a new pastor. Your COM liaison will guide you in this process

Finally, it is important to know that if someone from the floor requests a ballot be used, this is not an automatic. The body must take a vote. Per Roberts Rules, Section 30, the call for a ballot is not debatable, and must be approved by majority vote to take effect. Therefore, as the clerk, you should be prepared to have a ballot handy. It can be generic and simply kept on hand from one meeting to another. *See template "g" in the appendix*

Taking Minutes

Session Minutes:

As the clerk, it is your responsibility to take and keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the session. You are free to outline your minutes any way you want that makes sense to you; however, consistency is important. *See template "h" for a Session Minute Outline.*

Even though you are free to outline your minutes as you desire, there are several items that must be included in the minutes. The form that we use in the review of the minutes, contains those items that must be included. *See template "i", Session Review Form, and template "j": How to Prepare for your Review Sheet in the appendix.*

These items must be in every set of minutes: open and closing with prayer, names of those present, absent, and excused; the declaration of a quorum; the name of the moderator; any items of action, brief summaries of committee reports; the date, time and place of the meeting; the clerk's signature on every set of minutes.

As applicable, the following also need to be recorded: authorizations of baptisms, authorization of Lord's Supper, any call for a congregational meeting, a complete financial report, adoption of the budget, a copy of the budget, a record that the yearly financial review has taken place; the election of commissioners to presbytery and their report back to session, the election of the clerk and length of term; the election of the treasurer and term; the reception of new members; the examination of new officers; the authorization for their ordination and installation and a record of the date of the ordination/installation; and confirmation that the rolls and registers of the church have been reviewed.

There are additional items that do not necessarily occur on a yearly basis, but if they occur, must be recorded…such as taking a person under care for the ministry. See the Session review form for those items.

a. Motions and debate

Motions must be written accurately according to the maker of the motion. Feel free to clarify if needed, to be sure you have the wording correctly. However, it is not necessary nor desirable for a verbatim record of anything that has been debated. Rule of thumb is to summarize the content of the debate: (For example: A motion was made to allow the Pentecostal Church of Christ to rent our fellowship hall on Sunday afternoons from 3:00-5:00. The debate centered around those expressing concerns on wear and tear of the building, what would be the appropriate amount of rent, should they be allowed to use the Sunday School rooms, and would this be a way for the church to show hospitality to the neighborhood. The motion was approved by a vote of 7 in favor, 2 opposed.)

Clarity of intent of the motion is crucial. For example, if the Personnel Committee moves that the custodian receive a raise….the motion should be precise: The Personnel Committee moves that the custodian receive a raise from $12 an hour to $15 an hour effective on the first of next month….NOT a motion that is vague such as, we move the custodian receive a raise, OR, we move that the custodian receive an increase that we discussed in our last meeting. As the clerk, sometimes you will need to help the maker of the motion, or the committee chair form the motion so that it has all the information needed.

One of my "best examples" when I began to take the minutes of the presbytery meeting was when our New Church Development Commission was requested to receive an additional power. In going back through the minutes when the Commission was formed in order to state the existing powers and propose the additional power, the minutes simply said: the Presbytery approves the New Development Commission Powers. … and the powers were not stated! So consequently we never did know precisely what the presbytery approved! Make sure in your minutes, you know exactly what is being approved!!!

b. Committee Reports

Some churches choose to attach all their committee reports to the end of the minutes. This is perfectly acceptable. Others choose to summarize those reports and put in the minutes. This is also acceptable. Just be sure that any motions made by a committee are a part of the official minutes and not just in an attached report.

c. Attendance

The members of session are the installed pastors, and elected elders of a congregation. Members of session are the only people entitled to vote.

Session meetings are by polity, closed meetings unless someone has been invited. Per Robert's Rules *The practice of organizations operating under the Lodge System is equivalent to holding all regular meetings in executive session (Roberts Rules section 9, Executive Session).* See the definition of Lodge system: *A society shall be deemed to be operating on the lodge system if it has a supreme governing body and subordinate lodges into which members are elected, initiated or admitted in accordance with its laws, rules and ritual. Subordinate lodges shall be required by the laws of the society to hold regular meetings.*

That said, sessions may certainly declare themselves "open" to the members of the congregation either as routine or for a particular meeting, and most sessions extend standing invitations to particular staff to attend on a regular basis.

However, if the session does not make this declaration as routine for how they conduct themselves, any guests or visitors would need to be extended an invitation. The invitation needs to be approved by majority vote. If there are guests, usually those people will speak to the session at the beginning of a meeting and then be dismissed with thanks.

Many have asked, why are these meetings not routinely open and shouldn't they be open? I believe that is a session/pastor discussion. There are times when sensitive matters are discussed, when there is conflict that needs to be openly talked about in order to be resolved, and when pastoral care concerns may be shared in confidence. It may not be advisable for folks to routinely be able to attend as it make may it more difficult for the session to be open, honest and forthright about what needs to be discussed. Transparency is important as well…a delicate balance to be sure that should be discussed by session.

d. Reporting on actions of session

Transparency is important in the church. Some churches post their entire minutes for the congregation to see, others summarize. I advise a summary, reporting any major decisions in order to keep the congregation informed. Minutes are public records (which usually don't have that conversational content talked about above) so therefore it is entirely appropriate to post them or condense them for members of the congregation.

e. Electronic meetings

Technology has offered us pathways to hold meetings electronically. First it needs to be said, that if this type of meeting is allowed, **you must have a policy on the governance of such a meeting and be sure that your by-laws clearly state that electronic meetings are permissible.**

The Presbytery's policy has the following, which may be helpful in creating your policy:

It is permissible for any committee of Presbytery to hold meetings by electronic means. Electronic means include:

- *Conference call*
- *Skype, Zoom or other technology that at a minimum allows all participants to hear each other*
- *Joining one or more individuals to a meeting electronically as described above*

Rules to Govern these meetings:

- *Every participant must have the same materials before them*
- *Voting is permitted*
- *The moderator conducts the meeting and sets guidelines on how speakers are recognized*
- *Minutes of said meeting should be written up as is the norm for the committee*

As you consider your policy, think about the kind of technology that your members have access to…if not many have computers, you probably don't want to make a policy that computers are required. Does everyone have email so they can get the materials needed? Are there certain committees that you do not want to meet electronically? Just be sure to consider all the issues.

f. Email meetings

This has been one of the most challenging things in our current age. People are so much more mobile, information is more readily available and the tendency is to communicate rapidly and make decisions quickly.

Our theology informs us that we believe that God through the Holy Spirit is best heard through the voices of us together in group settings…thus we don't have a bishop who makes decisions…we have committees, and governing bodies.

All of that said, the bottom line is that Email meetings are **not** permitted per Roberts Rules of order.

It is acceptable to take an informal poll on a routine matter to get input from folks, but no official vote can take place. *"…regardless of the technology used, the opportunity for simultaneous and aural communication is essential to the deliberative character of the meeting. Therefore, a group that attempts to conduct the deliberative process in writing (such as email or chat rooms, or fax) …does not constitute a deliberative assembly …but is foreign to the deliberative process as understood under parliamentary law."* (Roberts Rules of Order, Section 9, Electronic Meetings, 11th edition)

That said, I get many calls of frustration from folks who need to do things like authorize a baptism very quickly, or get authorization for an expenditure over a certain amount of money for a repair needed right away, (**emergency matters**) and wish to get that vote through email….My advise is this: email may be used for an informal poll, with request to respond by a certain date. If 90% of the session responds and is in agreeance (for these emergency matters that CAN'T wait) then I would proceed with the action as advisory and then vote at the next regular meeting on the action even though it is retroactive.

g. Executive Session

There may be times when the session needs to discuss a delicate situation that requires confidentiality and the proceedings of the discussion need to remain confidential. A session may therefore go into what is known as Executive Session. The motion needs to be made to do this, and when the discussion has been concluded, a motion needs to be made to come out of Executive Session. The minutes would simply reflect that the session went into Executive Session. If you wish to have more content in the minutes, this is permissible however, the only folks who may read them are members of the Session.

If there are any motions or action items that result from Executive Session, it is advised that the session come out of Executive Session, the motion is proposed and voted upon so the action is recorded in the minutes. None of the content of the discussion is given. In this way however, there is a small degree of transparency as the motion is recorded in the minutes.

Congregational Meetings

a. Calling the meeting

As clerk, it is also your responsibility to take and keep accurate minutes of any congregational meetings. It may also be your responsibility to publicize those meetings with the stated purpose and date. Your church's by-laws should have the instructions/requirements needed for the calling of a congregational meeting along with what constitutes a quorum at a congregational meeting.

These minutes may be approved by session or need to wait until the next congregational meeting. Again, your church's by-laws should state how this will happen.

b. Annual Congregational meeting

The Church is required to hold at least one congregational meeting called the annual meeting. This meeting is usually held sometime in the first quarter of the calendar year, votes on any changes in terms of call for pastoral relationships, hears committee reports, hears about the budget, and in some cases, elects the nominating committee for officers of the church. Again, your church's by-laws should have specifics about when the meeting is to be held.

In the state of Georgia, the annual meeting of the Congregation can double as the annual meeting of the Corporation.

c. Proper business of a Congregational meeting

There may be other called congregational meetings as well. Any called meeting of the congregation must state the purpose for which it is being called. The appropriate business for a congregational meeting is found in the Book of Order. (G,-1.0503, BOO 2019-2021). Items include: the calling of a pastor, electing elders and deacons if applicable, buying/mortgaging/or selling real property and changing any existing pastoral relationship.

One other item that the congregation must vote on is any changes to the church's by-laws. These items must be approved by a 2/3 vote.

d. Annual Meeting of the Corporation

In the state of Georgia, the annual meeting of the Congregation may double as the annual meeting of the corporation. At the time of reunion, all churches were to incorporate with the state where allowed and that is still the current situation. (G-4.0101, BOO 2017-2019)

For your renewal of incorporation for a non-profit, Georgia's Secretary of State requires an annual renewal fee, registering the official name and address of the corporation, state the names of the CEO, CFO (usually your treasurer) and Secretary (clerk of Session). You will also need to state the name of the registered agent (the person to whom any legal documentation would be directed). However, I am the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery and not a lawyer…so it is advisable to consult with an attorney to be sure all is in order.

e. What needs to be recorded in these minutes

As in a session meeting, certain items need to be part of the minutes of the meeting: Opening and closing with prayer, the declaration of a quorum <u>and</u> what a quorum is (each church's by-laws may establish their own quorum percentages or numbers), the name of the moderator, the purpose of the meeting, the outcome of any action items.

f. Proxy voting

Proxy voting is never permitted in either a session or congregational meeting. This violates Robert's Rules.

g. Signatures

The moderator as well as the clerk needs to sign the minutes of any congregational meeting.

Annual Statistical Report

Every year, the General Assembly requires that churches complete an Annual Statistical Report. This report is to be filed electronically and is usually due sometime between February 15 and February 28 of each year. The Stated Clerk will send you the information on how to submit.

The form will give a total membership number from which you begin. This number cannot be changed. It comes from the last time an annual report was submitted with an ending membership total. So for example, if you discover that your church did not file a report the previous year, the number recorded as the membership will be the number from 2 years ago. Therefore, it is crucial that reports be filed yearly. This is the number on which the church's per capita assessment will be based.

The various questions that you will need to be prepared with to complete the report are:

1. Membership:
    - Those received age 17 and under
    - Those received by 18 or older (reaffirmation of faith)
    - Those received by letter of transfer (certificate)
    - Losses by death
    - Losses by transfer
    - There will always be a slot that is labeled "other gains" and "other losses"…this is to enable you to adjust your numbers so you get the accurate number when completed (for example, when your session purges this may be used to get you balanced)
2. Baptisms: both child and adult
3. Session distribution per gender
4. Church membership distribution by race
5. Age distribution for Christian education programs (estimation is fine)
6. Average worship attendance (estimation is fine)
7. Financial Information:
    - Investment income
    - Regular contributions
    - Expenditures in local program
    - Expenditures in local mission
    - Capital investments and expenditure (estimation is fine)

Keeping track….

One helpful hint is to carry the information over month to month by having it as part of your minutes. This is especially helpful for larger churches. *See template "k" in appendix*

The Annual Statistical Report should be approved by session before you submit it, therefore it is really helpful to get as much done in collecting information in early January as possible.

The clerk isn't necessarily expected to personally keep all this information during the year. Ask others in the church to help supply some of it such as the treasurer, the Christian Education person, and sometimes the secretary of the church has information to help.

Annual Clerk Packet

On the first day after the New Year's holiday, a packet is sent out of the Presbytery office addressed to the clerk of session. There are several pieces of information contained in the packet. Please be on the look-out, and if you haven't received it or seen it by the second week in January, call the stated clerk at the Presbytery for a new one.

In larger churches, the various pieces may be funneled out to other folks, or the church administrator may do some of the work…ultimately however, it is the clerk's responsibility to see that the various pieces have been acted upon.

Contents of the packet:

1. **Annual statistical information:** This packet will include the password and id code for your church in order to get into the system at the GA to file your statistical report. Your id code is the church's PIN number which you will be reminded of…the password is randomly assigned by GA and the same number will be repeated each year unless you go in and change the password. The web address is also provided for you. The deadline will be provided for you…the system shuts off at midnight of the deadline day so be aware. The report should be approved by session before its submittal.
2. **Parity numbers for your commissioners:** Parity is the church term used to talk about the equality of ordained leadership (Ruling and Teaching elders) in governing body work. This presbytery has many more Teaching elders due to its many validated ministries than what would normally equal in Ruling elders in our churches. Therefore, to attempt to get equal numbers of Ruling and Teaching elders commissioners, our presbytery has a parity plan to increase the number of Ruling elders to try and reach parity with the teaching elders. You will be told the number of commissioners you are allowed to send to presbytery based on this plan for parity.
3. **Necrology report:** included in the packet is a sheet in which we ask that you record the names of all the ruling elders who died the previous year, along with their date of death whether they are currently serving on session or not. At our May meeting of Presbytery, we lift these names up in thanksgiving for their service and faithfulness. The deadline of when those names need to be submitted will be included on the sheet.
4. **Terms of call:** if you have installed pastoral leadership, terms of call need to be submitted to the presbytery each year for approval as well as to help the presbytery with information on compensation rates for vacant pulpits. This information is kept confidential and only averages are released.
5. **Operations Committee requests:** The operations committee includes two reports in this packet and asks that you complete and return. One report lists the recommended insurance coverage amounts for your church with a check list; the other is to report any leases, or loans the church may carry.
6. **Session minute review form and dates of reviews:** the session minute review form is included in the packet along with about 8 dates and times to have your minutes reviewed. The dates for those reviews always begin after the statistical report deadline hoping that it is helpful to work on one thing at a time! Once you receive, please contact the stated clerk to sign up for a session.

By-Laws and Manuals of Operation

By-Laws for the Church:

By-Laws are the “skeleton” of how the church operates as a religious corporation. Certain items need to be in a church’s by-laws in order to conform to the Constitution (Book of Order). As indicated in the preface however, there is now more flexibility regarding certain ways of operating that each church needs to address in its by-laws. Items that need to be addressed are:

- Name of the church, and its purpose/mission
- How is the church related to the Presbyterian Church USA
- The church and her relation to the Constitution
- Congregational meetings, quorum for these meetings, how these meetings are called
- Session meetings , quorum for these meetings, how many in session
- If deacons, how many on the board
- Officers: Moderator, Secretary
- How a nominating committee is formed
- Officers of the church: elders, deacons if applicable and trustees if applicable
- How the by-laws are amended.
- If electronic meetings are permitted

You may see a template for by-laws that has been provided by the General Assembly in this handbook, see *template “l” in the appendix.*

By-laws can only be changed by 2/3 vote of the congregational. **You must state for the record in any congregational meeting voting on by-laws, that this is also a meeting of the corporation. In Georgia you may hold these meetings in conjunction.**

Articles of Incorporation:

As indicated in the section on Congregational meetings, churches are to be incorporated in the state of Georgia.

Your church should have Articles of Incorporation filed in the office of the Georgia Secretary of Stated. These are filed only once unless there are updates. You ought to be able to find these on line by going to the website of the Georgia Secretary of State.

This is what the annual incorporation fee discussed under congregational meetings goes towards as you update yearly the officers of the corporation.

Corporate by-laws are the rules that regulate and govern a corporation. The by-laws of the Congregation may suffice. Some churches have more in-depth corporate by-laws. Again, please consult with an attorney regarding these items.\

Manuals of Operation:

Every church should have a Manual of Operations. These manuals are for practical purposes, how the church functions on a day to day basis. The By-Laws are the skeleton, the manuals are the flesh. The Book of Order does require that churches produce some kind of Manual of Operation (G-3.0106 BOO 2015-2017). All church policies should be contained in these manuals. There are certain items that must be there:

- A policy on Child and Youth Protection
- A policy on Sexual Misconduct Prevention/Response

Optional items if they apply…seem simple but may need:

- Use of the church bus/vehicles
- Committees and their areas of responsibility
- Committee member job descriptions
- Personnel policies related to hiring and dismissal
- Use and procedures of petty cash
- Wedding policies
- Use of building policies
- Who has keys?
- Reimbursement for expenses
  And much more!!!

Policies in the manual of operations are developed and changed by vote of the session.

Archives and Preservation

Preservation:

One of the primary purposes for taking minutes, keeping rolls and records is to be able go back and find needed information, as well as to preserve the history of a particular church.

Our national office is called the Presbyterian Historical Society and its website is: www.history.pcusa.org. Feel free to go to the website and discover all kinds of information. Especially take a look at the records management and retention items. This will tell you what they would like to be retained and for how long.

For this reason, records should be kept on archival type quality paper…as indicated earlier, 25% rag content. All paper is now considered archival paper but it is best to get the "stronger" paper so it will last through the years.

If you are using a three ring binder or some other type notebook (not the red/black heavy binder books) I also suggest that at the end of year, you consider binding your minutes. It is not expensive…the presbytery minutes cost less than $100 on average per year.

Remember to keep any personnel financial records for a minimum of 7 years according to tax law.

Archives:

It is not necessary and actually not even desirable to store years of records in your church. We are fortunate that the records of the churches having belonged to the Presbyterian Church in the United States (the old "Southern" church) are now stored here at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Previously, those records were stored at Montreat Conference Center.

I suggest that you may want to keep only 5-7 years of records in the church and archive any older items. In this way, your records are safe and secure. The clerk has access to the records and the Presbytery Stated Clerk has to give permission to anyone else to view any of these records. You can call the Seminary at 404-378-8821 and ask for the archives department, or go to the website at: www.ctsnet.edu/library-resources to see what you need to do to archive those records.

Helpful hints from other clerks

The following are various suggestions that I have heard from other clerks in their work:

- Copy the session review form at the beginning of the year and keep it meeting to meeting so you can fill in the items as they happen and don't have to go back throughout the year
- Put any motions in bold or caps or italics so they are easier to find
- jot an informal "index" for yourself in the front of the year of minutes so you can find those items for your review. An example:

    January: elected clerk and treasurer, authorized communion for year
    January: annual congregational meeting
    February: took in members by transfer
    March: authorized a baptism
    April: examined new elders
    May: called congregational meeting to elect elders
- Put dividers for the months
- If your church has a person who likes to attend presbytery and usually goes for some reason or other, that person can be elected as commissioner for the year as an alternate if a regularly elected person becomes ill or can't make it. In that way, you know you will have at least one commissioner there if needed.
- This church has an action list on the last page of each month's minutes that recaps activities that need to be done. Here is what the clerk does:

    Thank you note to Hardy Flooring for the $150 contribution – Fred Christian
    -Sanctuary ceiling repair, siding on Fellowship Hall – Fred Christian – IN PROGRESS
    -Install speaker in Nursery – Rudy Stotz and Dave Wheelus - COMPLETED

    Then about two weeks prior to the next session meeting I put a copy of just the action list in each Elder's box as a reminder.

- Another suggestion sent to me: I put a general section at the front of each year's session binder, where I stash the by-laws, budget, committee structure, rolls list, etc. At the end of the year I include the list of new members, transfers, baptisms, etc. So anyone can find the relevant stuff without digging through all the minutes.

Templates

The following pages are templates that may help you in your work. Feel free to adapt or create your own.

A very important part of clerk work, is being sure that when you "pass the baton" that you help the new clerk and explain how you have done things so they may hit the ground running. These templates may help with some consistency from one clerk to the next.

Template a: Baptized Member Roll

It is helpful to provide dividers alphabetically to list. If you don't have many baptisms, feel free to simply order chronologically. Here is an example of some entries:

NAME	**PARENT INFORMATION (M=member)**	**DATE OF BAPTISM**	**NOTES**
Angelo, Manuel	Mother: Mary Angelo (M) Father: Frank Angelo (M)	May 13, 2012	
Adams, Robert	Mother: Susan Jones (M)	January 24, 1970	Made confirmation on April 15, 1983; moved to active roll
Abington, Amanda	Mother: Joy Abington (M) Mother: Cheryl Smith	April 1, 2015	Removed as parents moved before her confirmation
Amos, Timothy	Father: Joseph Amos (M)	November 3, 2008	

Template b: Roll Book Page for Active Members (be sure to make separate entries for spouses and children who are members)

It would be helpful to divide your rolls by alphabetical order.
Here are some examples of different types entries for the letter "A". You can devise whatever headings you believe are helpful and repeat for each letter of alphabet

NAME	HOW RECEIVED	DATE OF RECEPTION	DELETION FROM THE ROLL	REASON FOR DELETION	NOTES
Armstrong, Harold	Reaffirmation of faith	March 23, 1956	January 3, 2016	death	
Attaway, Joan	Transfer from First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, FL	September 30, 2002			Was ordained an elder in previous church
Adams, Robert	Affirmation of faith, confirmation	April 15, 1983	November 2, 2005	Transferred to First Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA	Notified by the church requesting a letter of transfer
Austin, Margaret	Transfer from Holy Methodist Church, Rochester, NY	July 17, 2000	August 1, 2016	Asked to be dropped from the rolls	
Arnold, William	Reaffirmation of Faith	February 2, 1999	October 2, 2010	Moved to the inactive list (*only if you have an inactive list)*	Letter sent on August 20, 2010 informing him; had till Sept 15 to respond

Template c: Elder Roll:

NAME	DATE OF ORDINATION and INSTALLATION	ADDITIONAL DATES INSTALLATION due to Re-Election
Dawson, Rebecca	March 10, 1976	6/4/82; 5/25/90; 8/4/97
Sutton, Alice	March 10, 1976	7/9/04
Price, Reginald	March 10, 1976	
Johnson, Abigail	June 26, 1977	6/26/1990
Wentworth, Ted	June 26, 1977	

Template d: Pastoral Service:

NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE	TYPE OF SERVICE
Hogan, Charles	1950-1963	Installed pastor
Duncan, Henry	1964-66	Interim pastor
Hicks, Christopher	1966-1986	Installed pastor
Miller, Carol	1984-1990	Associate pastor
Nelson, Frank	1987-1990	Interim pastor

Template e: Recording of marriages on church property:

NAMES (M- is for member of church)	PASTOR OFFICIATING	DATE
Bride: Bridgett Wells (M) of Atlanta, GA Groom: Randall Cunningham of Buffalo, NY	Rev. Simon Holder	May 2, 2014
Bride: Rita Brown, Athens, GA Groom: Tom Lane of Atlanta, GA	Rev. Simon Holder Rev. Denise Smith, Guest pastor	June 30, 2014
Bride: Christie Nolan (M), Dunwoody, GA (M) Groom: James Mitchell (M), Roswell, GA	Rev. Alison Holder	July 7, 2015

To be very complete, add the address of those getting married.

Template f:

1. Letter of Transfer from another church

Date
Name of Church
Address of Church

Dear Membership Secretary, (or if a Presbyterian Church, the Clerk of Session)

Mary Walker Jones and her husband, Cliff D. Jones
OR Mr. Daniel Blake and his daughter, Samantha Blake
(use full names and family relationships where appropriate)

…met with our session and have expressed their desire to unite with the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta (your church name) by transfer from (their church name). We would appreciate you issuing the necessary transfer paperwork at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

(And if possible, add something personal such as…Mary and Cliff have been attending regularly and have become active in an adult Sunday morning class, and have been going with our youth to feed the homeless on the fourth Sunday of the month. We are fortunate to have them in our fellowship.)

2. Letter of transfer from your church

Date
Name of Church
Address of Church

Dear Membership Secretary (or Clerk of Session if a Presbyterian Church),

Ms. Betsy Stewart is a member in good standing of this church. She has requested that she be transferred to your congregation where she has become involved in the life of your church. Our records indicate that her current address is:
Street address
City and state

We certainly commend her to your fellowship and are pleased that she has found a new church home.

(It would be helpful although not required to also include any other information such as date of baptism, if ordained an elder or deacon, date of marriage if appropriate).

Template g:

a generic ballot:

Date: ________________________

Motion: The Moderator will read the motion to be considered.

___________ Approve (in favor)

___________ Disapprove (not in favor)

___________ Abstain

Template for a ballot to elect a pastor:

Date: __________________

Motion: That the congregation extend a call to _____________________ to serve as the pastor/associate pastor of this congregation, beginning on _________________ and that the terms of call be approved.

________ Approve (in favor)

________ Disapprove (not in favor)

________ Abstain

Template h: Session Meeting Minutes

Church Name
City and State

This is a Stated/Called meeting of the session on ______________ (date), called to order at __________ (time)

Meeting location: (what room in the church)

Name of the Moderator

Those members who are Present
Those members who are Absent
Those members who are excused
Any guests

The meeting was opened with prayer/devotion led by _________________________

The clerk declared a quorum

The session approved the minutes of the stated meeting/called meeting held on ________________.

Pastor's Report:
Any information the pastor wishes to share…how time was spent, requests for weddings, baptisms, pastoral care information.

Clerk's Report:

- Any information/requests for session such as requests from those who would like their membership be transferred, or those who request being dropped from the rolls.
- Any communication that has been received

Treasurer's Report:
(I find it is helpful if the financial records are included every Stated Meeting minutes…but the Book of Order only requires a full financial account once a year to be included in the minutes)

Committee Reports:
(You can attach the entire report to the minutes or summarize the reports in the minutes. If there are any action items that the committee brings to session, those action items need to be recorded.

It is important to be specific on those items approved so they are self -explanatory and there is no need to hunt through former minutes to see what is being referred to)

- Includes Christian Ed, Worship, Evangelism, Buildings and grounds…whatever committees you have.
- Report from Commissioners to Presbytery if appropriate

Election of commissioners to Presbytery if appropriate

Old Business
New Business

Meeting closed with prayer by _______________

_______________________________________Clerk of Session

_______________________________________ Moderator (optional, but recommended)

Template h (2) …used with permission

Hillside Presbyterian Church
Stated Session Meeting
Date:

Location:

Called to order:

Quorum declared:

Attendance:
Elders Present:
Elders Excused:
Elders Absent:
Others Present:
Moderator Present:

Opened with prayer:

Docket approved:

Joys and Concerns:

Prayer of Praise and Intercession:

Treasurer’s Report:

Clerk’s Report:

Action Items:

Ministry Reports:

Motion to Adjourn:

Adjourned with prayer:

Signed Clerk of Session

Template i: Session Minute Review Form

Minute Review Form
Revised April 2015

Year being reviewed: _________ Church Name: _____________________________

Please complete this form by inserting the appropriate dates where this information is found in the minutes. Clerks will gather and go over each other's minutes for this review.

Congregational meeting information:

1. Annual Meeting of the congregation was held on ____________________________
2. Meeting where installed pastor(s) terms of call were approved __________________
3. Meeting where members of Nominating Committee were elected _______________
4. Meeting where elders and deacons (if applicable) were elected ________________
5. Moderator and Clerk's signature ____

If applicable:

6. Called meetings of the congregation regarding property _______________________
7. Pastoral relationship dissolved ____
8. A new pastoral relationship was established ________________________________
9. Any other called congregational meetings __________________________________

Session meeting information: One time events

1. Rolls of the church were reviewed ____
2. New officers were examined ____
3. New officers were installed in worship _____________________________________
4. Session approved the budget (attach the budget as well) _________________________
5. Joint meeting with Deacons (if applicable) ___________________________________
6. A financial review has taken place (see G-3.0113) ______________________________
7. Approval and attachment of Annual Statistical Report ____________________________
8. Session took an inquirer under care (if applicable) ______________________________
9. Session elected clerk on (date) _____________________ for term of _______________
10. Session elected treasurer on (date) __________________ for term of _______________

Session meeting information: May occur more than once or is routine. If routine, need only note it once. For items 1-8 you can indicate yes or no and the month.

1. Moderator named ____
2. Quorum declared ____
3. Names of present, absent and excused elders _________________________________
4. Date, hour and place of meeting is recorded __________________________________
5. Meeting was opened and closed with prayer __________________________________

6. Minutes of last meeting were approved ____
7. All action items recorded ____
8. Clerk's signature ____
9. Authorization of baptisms ____
10. Reception of members by profession of faith or reaffirmation of faith
    ____
11. Reception of members by transfer along with name of church ______________________
12. Authorization of Lord's Supper ____
13. A detailed financial report with expenditures/revenues ___________________________
14. Election of elder commissioners to presbytery meetings, reports to Session ___________

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE REVIEWER:

Items that need to be worked on for next year's review:

_______ With exception

_______ Without exception

Date of this review: ____

Reviewer's signature: ____

Presbytery Representative's Signature: ____

******** With the flexibility in the Form of Government, the following things should be part of your minutes on a yearly basis as addendums:**

1. **A copy of your most current by-laws**
2. **A list of all people baptized with date and names of parent(s) if applicable**
3. **A list of active member's names (optional…intended to help you with easy reference)**

Template j: How to prepare for your session minute review?

Preparing for your review: What do your session minutes need to include?

1. Date, time, place of meeting
2. Name of the Moderator
3. Names of elders present, names of elders excused, names of elders absent, names of any guests
4. Meeting open and closed with prayer
5. A quorum was declared
6. Approval of minutes of previous stated meetings, special meetings if any
7. Authorization of any baptisms. If a child, parent(s) names, child name and birth date.
8. A notation in minutes of the date the baptism occurred
9. Reception of members by profession of faith and reaffirmation of faith…names
10. Reception of members by letter of transfer…names and name and address of church where the transfer is coming from
11. A record of session approving the administration of Lord's Supper…if you serve on a regular basis such as the first Sunday of each month, you only need to authorize it once for entire year
12. Approval of the budget…include a copy
13. At least once a year a financial report. I recommend it be quarterly. This report should show the opening balance, total receipts, total disbursements and closing balance or some other overview indicating a clear understanding of the financial status
14. Notation of an annual financial review…when conducted, who conducted, what were the findings. This can be an internal committee of at least 3 people not related to the treasurer or financial secretary. This is NOT done by the normal financial committee.
15. Election of the **treasurer** and length of term…election of **clerk** and length of term
16. Approval of the Annual Statistical Report and a copy of that report
17. Appointment of commissioners to Presbytery and their reports to session
18. The call of any special meeting…and the business to be conducted at that meeting
19. Signature of the clerk on all minutes

Business related to Congregational meetings that need to also be recorded in the session minutes. There must be at least one meeting of the congregation each year. This also doubles as the meeting of the corporation in the state of Georgia:

1. Approval of terms of call of any installed pastors on staff
2. Election of the nominating committee
3. Election of elders/deacons if applicable
4. Minutes of congregational meetings
5. Report of completion of a period of study and preparation and the examination by Session of newly elected Elders and Deacons, prior to ordination

6. Any items related to church property that involves buying, selling, and loans
7. The election of a new pastoral relationship, the dissolution of an installed pastoral relationship
8. Signature of clerk and moderator required on congregational minutes

What does your "Roll Book" need to contain…this may be added on to each year

1. List of active members…you can either produce a new one each year, or make notations on a master list such as transferred, deceased, deleted from roll
2. List of all baptisms with name of person and date
3. List of all weddings in your building and those your pastor conducted outside your building
4. List of all elders and deacons (if applicable) and date of ordination
5. List of all deaths...name and date
6. List of all pastors who served the church including interims
7. If you keep an inactive membership list…. that list should be included

Template k: "Keeping Track of Membership for the Annual Statistical Report

At the bottom of each set of minutes, or add to a separate sheet that you put behind that month's minutes, a running total:

So for February's numbers it may say:

Total membership:	324
Losses due to transfer	2
Losses due to death	0
Gains in affirmation of faith:	1
Gains in reaffirmation of faith	0
Gains in transfers	4
Total at end of month:	327
# of child baptisms	3
# of adult baptisms	1

March:

Total membership	327
Losses due to transfer	0
Losses due to death	0
Gains in affirmation of faith	2
Gains in reaffirmation of faith	1
Gains in transfers	0
Total at end of month:	330
# of child baptisms	0
#of adult baptisms	0

Template I:

Sample Bylaws of the Particular Church
[from Appendix S, *Companion to the Constitution: Polity for the Local Church*, tweaked by Donna Wells, Greater Atlanta)

I. Statement of Purpose or Mission

The___(insert church name)_ Presbyterian Church of __(insert city)_has been called by God and organized to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, to minister to the needs of members of the congregation and residents of the community, and to promote peace and justice in the world.

II. Relation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The _(insert church name) Presbyterian Church is a member church of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta in the Synod of South Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

III. Governance of the Church

This church shall be governed in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Consistent with that *Constitution*, these bylaws shall provide specific guidance for this church. The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised) shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

IV. Meetings of the Church: Congregation

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation in the church building (*on a specific Sunday of the year, in the first quarter of the year, in the month of January ????)*, at which at least the following business shall be presented: annual reports from organizations and the session (information only), financial report for the preceding year, budget for the current year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s), nominating committee report for church officers and, electing members to serve on the nominating committee.

Public notice of meetings of the Congregation shall be given (*printed, verbal, email, from the pulpit…how shall this be given)* on (*churches need to determine what is the time frame for the calling of congregational meetings…2 Sundays, 3 Sundays, the Same day…).* When the meeting is called for the purpose of electing a pastor, the notice shall be given (*some churches want to have more notice for the calling of a pastor. This is totally optional and does not need to be included)*

Special meetings may be called by the session. Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of such special meetings, and business shall be restricted to that which is specified in the call.

V. Meetings of the Church: Session

Meetings of the Session shall be at least (*monthly, quarterly, twice a year…your determination)*.

VI. Moderator

The pastor shall moderate meetings of both the session and the congregation. If there are co-pastors, they shall alternately preside at meetings. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator appointed by the presbytery shall preside. If it is impractical for the pastor or the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery to preside, he or she shall invite, another minister of the presbytery to preside.

VII. Secretary

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary. If the clerk is not present or is unable to serve, the congregation or session shall elect a secretary for that meeting.

VIII. Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of (*a meeting of the congregation, shall be)* recorded by the secretary and attested by the moderator and the secretary. *These minutes may be approved by the session at its next regular meeting or at the next congregational meeting…your determination).* The minutes are recorded in the minute book of the session.

The minutes of a meeting of the session shall be recorded by the clerk of session and approved with any corrections by the session at its next regularly stated meeting.

IX. Quorum for the Meeting

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and *(your determination on what the quorum for a congregational meeting is…10% of membership, 25% of membership.,,,)*.

The quorum of a meeting of the Corporation shall be consistent with the laws of the state of (*your state)*, and (*your determination percentage wise)* active members. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present. Only active members may vote, regardless of age unless restricted by civil law. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

X. Incorporation

In accordance with the laws of the state of (*your state)*, the congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed. Consistent with the laws of this state, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of the congregation. (*each state needs to check to see if this is legal or if the meetings have to be held separately. I have been told that in Georgia it can be the same meeting)*

XI. Nominating Committee

The congregation shall form a nominating committee in the following manner:
You need to specify how you will form a nominating committee. Per the Book of Order, a minimum of four people are required: one ruling elder presently serving on session, and three active members G-2.0401. You may certainly have more. Some churches have formed their nominating committee by having committees appoint one person from each committee and they serve as the nominating committee; the usual practice however, is to have the congregation elect at large people to serve). The pastor should always serve as an ex-officio member.

This is from the previous form of government…this is only given for information)

(1) There shall be nine members on the nominating committee.
(2) Two of the members shall be elders designated by the session, one of whom shall be currently serving on the session and shall serve as moderator of the committee.
(3) Two of the members shall be designated by and from the board of deacons.
(4) Five of the members, not persons currently serving on the session in the board of deacons, shall be nominated and elected at the annual meeting of the congregation.
(5) Members of the committee shall be elected annually, and no member shall serve more than three years consecutively.
(6) The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote.

(7) The nominating committee shall bring to the congregation nominations only for the number of positions to be filled.
(8) The floor shall be open for nominations at the annual meeting.

XII. Elders

The congregation shall elect _(*your determination on numbers and it must be specific)* elders for a term of service of three years or less if filling a vacancy (G-2.0404). No elder *by rule of the Constitution,* shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. An elder having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the session for a period of at least one year.

The session, at (*determine when…old wording* its first meeting following the annual meeting), shall elect an elder to serve as clerk (*for a determined number of years)* and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work. At that same meeting of the session, the session shall elect a treasurer (*term of service is for you to decide)*. A quorum for the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and (*your determination…usually is at least 50%.*

XIII. Deacons (*If applicable)*

The congregation shall elect __(*your determination on numbers)* No deacon shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the board of deacons for a period of at least one year.

The Board of Deacons, shall elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work.

The pastor shall be an advisory member of the board of deacons. A quorum for the board of deacons shall be (*your determination)* including the moderator.

XIV. Vacancies

Vacancies on the session or the board of deacons may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting, as the session may determine.

XV. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended subject to the Articles of Incorporation, the laws of the state of Georgia and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by a two-thirds vote of the voters present, providing that the proposed changes in printed form shall have been distributed at the same time as the call of the meeting at which the changes are voted upon. At the time of this meeting of the congregation, it MUST BE STATED IN THE RECORD that this is also a meeting of the corporation.