

Concerning Session Records
Presbytery Committee for Review of Session Minutes

Rev. RSM 2/10/2016

The Presbytery of the Southeast (POSE), bearing in mind the trust committed to it through the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) “To implement review and control of Sessions through an annual review of minutes, to remand what may be contrary to the Constitution, and to see that all lawful injunctions of the Presbytery and General Assembly are followed.” (Book of Government 19-4, A. 7) offers guidance to churches under its jurisdiction. It therefore conveys to Moderators and to Clerks of Session certain standards and recommendations for the keeping of minutes and other church records. This is also to help the Session have records that will be accurate in the present, for historical and reference purposes in the future. This also provides guidance to the Committee for Review of Session Minutes (RSM) in its annual examination of minutes (BoG 18-2, B.2).

These standards and recommendations are not intended to supplant the authority of or any reference in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Book of Order or Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Southeast, these are offered as a reference to items appearing frequently in session minutes or questions asked by clerks in previous years.

Therefore the minutes of churches will be annually checked against the standards below and others that might be instituted:

In the matter of recommendations, it is suggested:

- 1- That Clerks and Moderators read “Rules for Assembly” 9-12 A, C, D, E, F and G. These are an appendix to the EPC Book of Order and included in the same. These are the standards set for the recording and review of presbytery minutes and are beneficial to Session Clerks, Session Moderators and the RSM when reviewing Session minutes.
- 2- That Clerks of Session make diligent efforts to record all minutes accurately and legibly. The minutes must be kept in a secure binder with pages numbered sequentially, preferably numbered permanently, and this binder should be presented to the RSM when due for POSE annual review. When minutes are presented electronically an assurance must be given on the Records Report Form that a set is permanently housed in the physical manner noted above.
- 3- That the Clerk keep a timely and accurate rolls as outlined in the Book of Government 18-2, B.3, “The Clerk of Session shall ensure that a careful record is kept in the minutes and in a separate registry of all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals and other records required regarding membership.”
- 4- That Chapter Eighteen of the Book of Government pertaining to the church Session be distributed to all new Ruling Elders.
- 5- That Clerks of Session keep a copy of these recommendations and standards in a convenient location for reference.

The RSM calls to the attention of Sessions that the minutes are to be brought to (or emailed prior to) a Stated Meeting of POSE according to a schedule authored by the chair of the RSM. If for any reason the session records are not submitted either physically or electronically at the prescribed meeting of POSE, they shall be submitted at the following meeting.

In the matter of standards, it is directed that the following be observed:

- 1- That prior to submitting the minutes for review that the Clerk accurately completes the Records Report Form including the proper page number(s) for each item being verified.

At each meeting of the Session:

- 1- Record date, time and place of each meeting.
- 2- The full name (understood to be at least the first and last names or the first initial and last name) of the moderator and full names of the ruling elders present shall be listed. The full names of ruling elders excused and ruling elders absent shall also be listed. Clearly state that a quorum is present, or not. No business can be transacted without the presence of a quorum.
- 3- For historical and reference purposes it is advisable to list all persons in the meeting room.
- 4- Record the opening of the meeting with a prayer and by whom the prayer was offered.
- 5- A full record shall be made of all actions taken by the Session.
- 6- See that pages are numbered permanently and sequentially. Avoid erasures, footnotes, insertions on separate sheets of paper, etc.
- 7- Record the closing of the meeting with prayer and by whom that prayer was offered. It is advisable to record the time that a meeting was concluded.
- 8- Record the approval of the minutes at the ensuing stated meeting. When passed by motion the records become the official record of that particular meeting.
- 9- Upon approval of the Session, the minutes are to be signed by the clerk and the moderator (BoG 18-4, C) and minutes permanently bound.

Annually:

- 1- The minutes shall show that the records of the work of the Trustees, the Deacons, the congregation and church organizations have been reviewed (BoG 18-1 and 18-3 J).
- 2- It is highly advisable, but not monitored by the RSM, that the minutes show that the Annual Church Report (ACR) of the EPC has been completed and submitted to the EPC-Office of the General Assembly prior to the deadline. For historical and reference purposes and when practical a copy of the ACR should be made a part of the Session record.
- 3- The minutes shall indicate in some manner “how many officers it will have, whether or not a system of rotation will be used, and the length of terms if rotation is chosen subject to the limitations in G. 9-15.” (BoG 6-2 and 3).

- 4- The initial terms of call for a Pastor are to be entered into the minutes of the Congregational Meeting when a call is extended and approved by the congregation (BoG 10-4, G). The Clerk is to annually complete and submit the Pastor(s) terms of call to the POSE Ministerial Care Committee.
References for ongoing commitment to support the pastor include, but are not limited to:
-In the congregational obligations at the time of installation- BoG 13-2, C, 4,
-And, in approving the annual church budget- BoG 18-3, H and P.
- 5- “Review of Rolls- The Session shall review its four rolls annually, ordinarily at a meeting in February” (BoG 8-5) and such review action clearly stated in session minutes annually.

On Stated Occasions:

- 1- Record the authorization for the celebration(s) of the Lord’s Supper (BoW 3-3, E, G, H) and record when the previously authorized celebration(s) occurred, suggested being at the session meeting succeeding the celebration.
- 2- Record the “Special times of commemoration” (BoW 3-3, G) of the Lord’s Supper that are authorized being careful to record that stipulations in this citation are being adhered to.
- 3- “Record of Rolls- The Clerk of Session shall record all deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding members.” (BoG 8-6 and 18-2, B, 3) For historical and reference purposes it is advisable that the full names of all persons noted above, accurate dates and accurate record of status or change in status or roll being referenced be recorded in session minutes.
- 4- Congregational Meetings- The minutes of the Congregational Meeting shall clearly state the purpose for the meeting (BoG 7-3) and that proper notice of meeting has been given (BoG 7-2). The meeting must meet the stipulations of the Book of Government (BoG 7) and “after approval of the Moderator of the meeting, the record shall be transmitted to the Church Session for insertion in the minutes of that body” (BoG 7-6, C).
- 5- Record the appointment of commissioners to each meeting of presbytery and to the meeting of the General Assembly. The ensuing meeting minutes are to record a report of commissioners to the meeting(s) attended.
- 6- Record changes in pastors and the ordination and/or installation of pastors, elders and deacons that serve a particular church. Nomination, election, training and the examination of officers in preparation for ordination and/or installation should be recorded.
- 7- In the event that the Pastor is not the moderator of a congregational meeting (BoG 7-4, B) care shall be taken that the moderator for the meeting is properly appointed and that name recorded in the minutes. In the event that the Pastor is not the moderator for a session meeting (BoG 18-2, A) care shall be taken that the moderator for the meeting is properly appointed and that name recorded in the minutes.

A sample format for Session minutes follows:

Minutes of the Stated/Called Meeting of the Session of _____ Presbyterian Church
Meeting held in _____ Room/Space of _____ Church in City, State on _____ date

Members present: Moderator, Clerk of Session, Ruling Elders

Members absent:

Others in attendance: Deacons, Church Staff, member observers, etc.

Establishment of a quorum and call to order- if a quorum cannot be established, no business can be conducted and the minutes record there was a lack of a quorum.

Opening: _____ (name) opened the meeting at _____ time with prayer.

Agenda: Approval of the agenda for this meeting with or without revisions

Minutes: Reading and/or approval of minutes of Called Meeting and/or last Stated Meeting. If minutes were approved at the close of the last meeting; minutes are now read for information.

Communications: Reading and/or otherwise receiving into this record communications from a higher court and/or information from other bodies.

Report of the Clerk: Matters of church membership including births, deaths, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals and other records regarding members. Communications from a higher court read and entered into minutes.

Lord's Supper: Record of approval of administration of the Lord's Supper at a future date and/or dates of administration of the sacrament as approved at a previous meeting. Approval of any exceptions to the guidelines for administration as noted in the Book of Worship.

Committee Reports: Reports may be received as information or may include items requiring action by Session:

Christian Education-
Evangelism-
Finance-
Building and Grounds-
Etc.-

Commissioners: Record the election/appointment of ruling elders as commissioners to attend the presbytery and General Assembly. Record the report of the same at an ensuing meeting.

Other actions: Record other actions adopted by Session. Minutes of a meeting are not to be a transcript but for historical and reference purposes it is important that minutes be accurate. The Clerk should record concisely the wording of a motion and action taken by Session. Motions that are passed/approved are to be recorded. Recording the name of the person making and seconding a motion is not necessary.

Adjournment- The meeting was adjourned with prayer by _____ at _____ time.

Moderator

Clerk of Session

